

Alma Transit Center



2019 Annual Report

City of Alma Commission

Matthew Schooley
City Manager
Administration

Brett Baublitz
Director of Transportation
Administration

Lead Dispatcher
Jalen Zavala

Maintenance/Training
Rod Suttan

Fulltime
Dispatcher
Renea Widman

Vehicle
Operators
4 Full Time

Vehicle
Operators
13 Part Time

The Alma Transit Center is a department of the City of Alma. It's under the direction of the City Commissioners, the City Manager, and the Local Advisory Board.

The department has one supervisor, the Department Head. The Director of Transportation, under the general direction of the City Manager, directs the City's Dial-A-Ride transportation system and inter-city agency (Indian Trails) and oversees department operations. Responsible for budgeting, grant administration, capital expenditures, personnel management, buildings and fleet maintenance, and transit system technology.

Transit currently has 20 employees. Rod Suttan is our mechanic and is also responsible for training our drivers. Jalen Zavala is now our lead dispatcher, with Renea Widman also tackling the dispatching duties. We have 4 full time drivers, and 13 part time drivers.

Last year we operated 268 days and gave 75,735 rides. We had an increase in our ridership by 12,894 rides (18%). 25,351 of those who were transported were persons with disabilities. We traveled 239,996 miles and used 27,550 gallons of fuel. While putting up these wonderful ridership numbers, our team suffered several setbacks due to medical issues. At one point, we were down a total of 4 of our drivers. To me, the way our team pulled together and stepped up to get the job done while we were shorthanded is my biggest accomplishment for the year for our department.

During the last year we were fortunate enough to receive funding for 6 new buses. We have been approved to receive 3 additional new buses and 2 full size vans this year. This should replace each piece of equipment that is past its useful life. Our first bus was delivered January 23rd, 2020!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the possible expansion of transit service. We are currently in the process of sending out 4000 postcards to conduct a survey of public interest. We have also partnered with Alma College. An entire class of political science students are conducting a study on transportation by completing a needs assessment. Once both of these studies are completed, we'll make this information available to everyone interested in contracting with their municipality. Those interested would have to obtain their own funding for the service. This would allow a gradual push towards a true countywide transportation system. It would allow for time to hire and train additional drivers, purchase additional equipment, and build an additional building to house the extra buses and vans.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the great things happening in Alma!

Respectfully submitted,

Brett Baublitz

Director of Transportation

ALMA TRANSIT CENTER 2019 RIDER STATISTICS

	Regular	Senior	Regular Disabled	Senior Disabled	Total
January	3,573	264	1,562	442	5,841
February	3,610	259	1,362	362	5,593
March	4,083	317	1,692	491	6,583
April	4,537	305	1,632	514	6,988
May	4,655	329	1,829	528	7,341
June	2,320	271	1,553	488	5,174
July	2,320	322	1,722	503	4,867
August	2,873	332	1,625	516	5,346
September	4,163	315	1,612	460	6,550
October	5,067	356	1,960	474	7,857
November	4,367	347	1,807	464	6,985
December	4,414	304	1,425	467	6,610
Total	46,524	3,721	19,781	5,709	75,735

Type of Rider	Number	Percentage of Total Trips
Regular	46,524	61.5%
Senior	9,430	12.5%
Disabled	25,490	33.5%

- Does not total 100% as senior and disable fit multiple categories

Alma Transit Center gave 75,735 rides in 268 days of operation or an average daily ridership of nearly 283 rides.

Transit Plan

The transit expansion to a countywide service has been in various stages of discussion for nearly 20 years. Over the past few years the ATC has contracted with neighboring municipalities to provide them varying levels of service. Recently talks have become more focused and the concept of a countywide millage has been discussed. The Alma Transit system is currently funded by a city millage (.96 mil) and through state and federal grants, along with fares and contracts. While the idea of a countywide millage for transit is still worth further exploration, it does not appear to be achievable at this time. There is doubt in some areas of local governments about the need, as well as the actual process it would take to form such an agency.

Transit Director Baublitz has recently partnered with Dr. Ben Peterson from Alma College and his Public Policy class. They have agreed to provide a study of the transit needs in the Cities of Alma, St. Louis, Ithaca, and the Township of Pine River. Students will be split into work groups in each of those jurisdictions as well as the medical, industrial, and small business communities where they will conduct interviews with political leaders, major community leaders, major employers, and social service agencies. A Transit Survey will also be sent out to 4000 random residences in the defined jurisdictions. The survey will ask the following questions:

1. Would you use transportation services to any of the following destinations?
 - a. Medical Appointments
 - b. To Work/School
 - c. Shopping
 - d. Entertainment
 - e. County/State Services

f. Other: Specify

g. I will not be using public transportation services for any travel needs

2. Do you support new public transportation in your area?
3. Would you be willing to contribute up to 1 millage point on your property taxes to have public transportation in your area?
4. Where do you currently reside?

Students will utilize the data from the surveys and the information gathered from their interviews to present to the individual entities along with a recommendation.

This information will be made available to the individual communities so that their commissions and councils can make an informed decision about placing the transportation issue on their local ballots in the August 2020 elections. If the individual municipalities decide they do not want to put the issue on the ballot we will make arrangements to cease any service to the area. If the item is placed on the ballot, we will continue to provide the service based on current contracts until the election.

I understand this has been a long-time issue in the county. If countywide transportation is truly a need, it must develop slowly and planned. Ridership with Alma Transit has grown from 41,000 in 2014 to over 75,000 in 2019. That amount of growth has stretched the current resources and changed the way the product is delivered to the public. The City of Alma, nor the transit department are attempting to impose any type of pressure on the other jurisdictions. Under this plan they will be allowed to make their own decisions in regard to their transit needs.

