

# STOPtalk



## School is in Session

Buzzing around town during a Champaign summer is noticeably quieter than during the fall and spring seasons. At MTD, the absence of thousands of University of Illinois students leads to reductions in demand and subsequently service.

Beginning in June 2006, MTD's Safety and Training Director Jim Dhom decided to take advantage of this slow period and create an operator retraining program. Dhom's program has evolved through the years to address challenging service areas and new equipment, as well as reinforce good driving habits. This year's retraining began Monday, June 13 and continues until the end of July.

The day of retraining begins at 7:00 am. Six operators report to the training classroom where Dhom gives a presentation. He goes through the previous service year, touches on new and old policies, and alerts operators to any changes on our vehicles and routes.

After a short break, the group meets in the training simulator room. These advanced pieces of equipment are created by [FAAC, Inc.](#) to aid in personnel training for the military, public safety, airport, and transportation sectors. MTD worked with the developers to create software that resembles the Champaign-Urbana community along with all of its operating challenges. Dhom and his trainers use the simulators for novice, as well as experienced, operators. Time spent on the driving simulators reduces fuel consumption and wear and tear on our buses. For retraining, Dhom designed two special exercises.

For the rest of the day, the class is divided into three groups of two to hit the streets. Trainers will monitor driving behaviors on campus, in neighborhoods, and on busy streets. The operators will also compete in a "roadeo" in the parking lot of the [Parkland Business Center](#). Each driver will perform seven driving skills and maneuvers. Points will be taken and totaled. Each day, the retraining class will crown a winner of the roadeo! Thanks Parkland, for letting us share the space!

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[Joining in the Summer Fun](#)

Issue 002 | June-July 2011

## Providing Mobility to Seniors and People with Disabilities

MTD provides a DASH Pass to residents of the District aged 65 and older or to individuals with disabilities. ADASH Pass provides free, unlimited rides on all fixed-routes. DASH Pass holders can also use the [Half-Fare Cab Program](#). The [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) defines and qualifies persons living with a disability. As detailed in a June 15 publication by [Mass Transit Magazine](#), many seniors are living in communities with few transit options. According to the AARP, "Seniors are more dependent on transit...12 percent of people 65 or older don't drive, and 31 percent don't drive by age 75." Currently, there are **5,583 active DASH Pass holders** receiving services in our community.

## Maintaining Independence

In Fiscal Year 2010, MTD gave **60,770 rides** to people with disabilities through our Paratransit Services. We took grandparents to their doctor's appointments and helped take care of grocery lists.

## Splitting the Bill

The Half-Fare cab program is an alternative transportation option for DASH Pass holders. MTD splits the cost of a cab for those special, last-minute trips. Last year, we shared the cost of **16,784 rides**.

## theINSIDELANE

[Visit the CUMTD Blog here.](#)

All-year round, MTD is invited to attend community events sponsored by the cities, the University of Illinois, and dozens of local advocacy organizations. The summer is an especially busy season for public outreach events thanks to the hard work of the [Champaign and Urbana Park Districts](#), the [City of Champaign](#), and the [Urbana Business Association](#).

We value these events greatly. Although the heat can be a drag, having the opportunity to interact with community members face-to-face is valuable. MTD representatives chat with riders, people with family and friends that ride, and individuals who are interested in learning about our services. We bring informational materials as well as fun and functional giveaways. Conversations can go on for twenty minutes, while others are a quick hello, a goodie snag, and a goodbye.

In the months of June through August, MTD is participating and/or sponsoring nine community events. Three of the events we are excited about are the [Taste of Champaign-Urbana](#) on June 17-19, the [Champaign County Freedom Celebration](#) Parade on July 4, and the [Urbana Sweetcom Festival](#) on August 26-27.

We hope to C-U there as we celebrate our community!

[Read our blog post on the Taste of C-U](#)



### **Promoting Excellence in Transportation**

We say it on our social media, we focus on it in our Board of Trustees meetings, and staff in operations and planning base their work on it. The "it" factor at MTD is providing better service to our customers. We're always asking the question, "What can we do to make an aspect of our service better?"

One of the projects we took on this year was our annual Maps & Schedules Book and the destination signs on our buses and vans. We hired an independent market research group, [WhiteSmith Marketing Group Inc.](#), to put together diverse focus groups to analyze these two large information pieces. Last year, WhiteSmith Marketing also convened two focus groups to analyze our website before and after its major redesign.

The focus groups from this year came back with valuable feedback. As a result, all wording, abbreviations, and trip deviations for the destination signs will be proofed and revised in time for the start of the new service year, beginning Sunday, August 14.

The Maps & Schedules Book will also receive a bit of a make-over. One new feature is a bi-fold map of our Weekday Daytime system map as well as up-close inset maps of our high density transfer areas like Illinois Terminal and Lincoln Square.

In case you haven't heard, there will be a few improvements and additions for the 2011-2012 service year. The affected routes include the 1/100 Yellow, 2 Red, and the 4 Blue. The Southwest Direct will no longer be a direct service. It will become the 180 Lime and will be van operated, running a fixed route during the weekday evenings and weekends. We are also adding a route, the 190 Plum, to operate a fixed van service during Saturday daytime to serve Parkland College.

[View the maps of the routes](#)



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