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Reporter

Celebrating 30 Years of Service 1980 - 2010

Paratransit Services is a private, nonprofit company headquartered in Bremerton, Washington.
 We have been providing high quality, accessible public transportation services since 1980.
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DIRECTORS REFLECT ON 30 YEARS OF MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS

As they arrived early for the monthly Board of Directors meeting in Bremerton recently, our Board members reflected on the 30 year history of Paratransit Services.

The beginning of Paratransit Services can be traced to the late 1970's, when Kitsap County was responsible for funding Mental Health Services. **Bill Mahan** and **Gene Lobe** were County Commissioners, and they noticed that the many different Mental Health facilities each had their own buses, drivers, and dispatchers. As a cost saving measure, the County consolidated the Mental Health transportation services. A nonprofit housing association was starting up at that time, and the County asked them to take on the new transportation service. Formation of the Kitsap Peninsula Housing and Transportation Authority in 1980 marks the beginning of the company we know now as Paratransit Services.

Board of Directors (Bill is Chairman), Paratransit Services today operates public transit programs in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. Not wanting to be a "one trick pony," we have expanded our business model to include Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) brokerages and have become the largest NEMT broker in Washington. Our competitors include large national and multi-national (for profit) companies, but we manage to win our share of contracts in the highly competitive transportation industry.

It's now been thirty years now since we drove our first passengers, and we are still going strong. Asked what has kept this Board together for so long, **Director Ken Mahan** notes that it is their diversity of experiences and viewpoints that contributes to the vitality of the company, and their shared vision that tempers their differences and keeps them together.

With those two former Commissioners now on our

As **Director**



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Paratransit Services Board of Directors, wearing commemorative 30 Year Anniversary jackets. L to R (year first appointed to Board in parenthesis): Wayne Ablitt (1988), Gene Lobe (1991), Ken Mahan (2005), Paul Pazooki (1995), Gordon Walgren (1999), <<name> Morken, wife of Lifetime Board Member Arthur Morken (1982), Bill Mahan (Chairman, 1991), Bill Huntington, Lifetime Board Member (2005), Mary Ann Huntington (2008), Lois Anderson (1993), and Dr. Paul Aufderheide (1989).

"MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY"



Paratransit Services staff put together shoeboxes full of useful gifts for schoolchildren who are homeless

Services' local involvement in this event last October, we borrowed an idea from a local church activity, where shoeboxes are filled with various gifts for children in need. "Shoeboxes for Kids" became the theme at Paratransit Services.

Corporate staff, along with their Board of Directors and a few dedicated community members, pitched in to fill shoeboxes with items such as hats, gloves, socks, flashlights, gift cards, hygiene items, and small toys or books. These shoeboxes were then delivered through the Bremerton and South Kitsap School Districts to local schoolchildren who are homeless. The small gifts really brought a lot of joy to the kids.

Make a Difference Day this year will be October 23.

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Board of Directors

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Wayne Ablitt, who is our longest-standing Board member (he joined in 1988), quipped, “We’ve had some pretty lively disagreements over strategic issues through the years, but we have always had unanimous agreement on our purpose here—to do what’s best for the company!”

Another of our Board members who has been with us for quite a while, **Dr. Paul Aufderheide** (since 1989) commented that they all know each other very well by now, and they have all become friends who understand that it is the resolution of differing opinions on any given issue that leads to sound decisions.

Building assets a key

One prescient decision that the Board made early on was to build the company’s assets through real-estate acquisition. This was an area of expertise for **Director Paul Pazooki**, who was formerly a Board member of the Kitsap Economic Development District. Paratransit Services invested in the building we now occupy as our corporate headquarters, plus other properties in the Bremerton area.

“Our real estate holdings have bailed us out every time,” recalls Wayne. “When vehicle insurance rates skyrocketed in 2002, we managed to keep running because we were able to sell one of our properties.” Director Pazooki is quick to point out that it was not fire sale. “We held our ground and got a reasonable return on the investment” he says. We were thus able to buy time while our CFO, Darlene Riley, worked on the formation of a non-profit insurance pool, “NPIP” which today insures our fleet at a good rate.

Assisting in that cause was **Director Gordon Walgren**, former Washington State Speaker of the House and State Senator. A crisis was averted through good planning and innovative thinking from a very dedicated Board of Directors.

Why they serve

But why do they serve on the Paratransit Services Board of Directors? Director Gene Lobe notes the overwhelmingly positive responses he gets from the public about the work Paratransit Services does, and the sense of community service he feels.

Director Lois Anderson noted the professional standards Paratransit Services upholds while providing services to those who need us. “Our Board of Directors represents highly principled expertise in the areas of Business, Government, and Transportation, and it combines this knowledge-base in a way that is creative, finding principled solutions to the problems we have faced as a company,” she says. **Director Mary Ann Huntington**, our newest member (she joined the Board two years ago) agreed, adding, “It’s been wonderful helping Paratransit Services grow. I know several people whose health depends on the services we provide and the courteous employees that make it all possible. It’s an honor to work on a Board with such knowledgeable and respected community leaders!”

It has been said that the average life cycle for a private nonprofit company is about 5-7 years. The key to survival is a strong Board of Directors, and Paratransit Services has been extremely blessed in that department!

We Love Our Work!

Our Board is a very “hands-on” group. They tour our various locations so that they get a true feel for what Paratransit Services does.

On the bus

Director Pazooki tells a funny story about his personal experience riding one of our buses with the other passengers. “The bus driver picked up a lady who was in a wheelchair, and secured her for the trip. She seemed to be a very quiet person, with a very pleasant manner about her.

The bus driver was talking to her the whole time he was driving, telling jokes, and laughing. The woman was just sitting back in her wheelchair and smiling.

After we got to her destination and he helped her off the bus, I asked the driver why she never said anything. ‘Oh, she doesn’t speak English’ he said.

There is no language barrier on our buses. Friendliness and caring are understood by others through the things we do, and that’s why I like being a Paratransit Services Director.”

At the airport

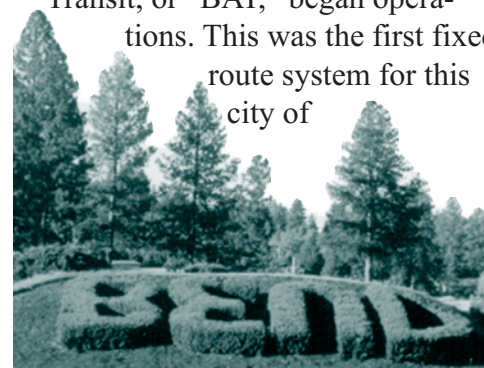
Director Lois Anderson recounts an experience she recently had when taking a shuttle to her car at the airport. When the driver noticed that Lois was wearing her “Paratransit Services 30th Anniversary” jacket, he commented that his son used our service all the time and thought Paratransit Services was a great company.

“That’s what makes me proud to be a Paratransit Services Board member,” she says.

BEND CELEBRATES ONE MILLIONTH RIDER!

When Paratransit Services began operation of the public transit system in the central Oregon community of Bend in December 2003, the system was a public Dial-A-Ride service only. Working with City staff, Paratransit Services’ team in Bend added a fixed route, and in

September 2006, the new Bend Area Transit, or “BAT,” began operations. This was the first fixed route system for this city of



80,000 people, and it marked the beginning of full-featured public transit service in Bend.

In recognition of this milestone, Paratransit Services began tracking the number of passengers, BAT plus ADA Dial-A-Ride, that had ridden our vehicles since the new system started.

After the Labor Day weekend, seeing that we were close, our BAT drivers notified Dispatch of the number of people boarding at each stop, and our Dial-A-Ride drivers also call in their passengers after each pickup. The City Council and Mayor’s office were notified, and preparations were made to officially receive the one millionth rider.

At approximately 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 8, Sintha Townsend, a student at Central Oregon Community College stepped onto a BAT bus on the outskirts of the city. She was our millionth rider!

The bus proceeded on its route to the transfer station in town where Sintha was met by the local media, the Public Works Director for the City, Paul Rheault, Transportation Director for the City, Heather Ornelas; the Bend City Council, and the Mayor of Bend! Sintha was presented with an annual bus pass, an annual pass to the High Desert Museum, a basket of BAT memorabilia, and several gift certificates from local vendors.

GENERAL MANAGER NETWORKING

Paratransit Services has established a network of transportation service areas lying predominantly along the I-5 corridor in Washington State, Oregon, and Northern California.

Our individual site General Managers communicate with each other informally to share problem solving experiences, and they get together formally once a year at Paratransit Services’ annual General Manager Conference. For these conferences, organized by our corporate office, we bring in industry experts in fields such as Human Resources Management, Safety, Team Building, Risk Management, Crisis Communication—whatever topic we feel will enhance our GM’s effectiveness in running our transit systems—to present seminars and lead workshops. (Last year’s conference was held in Klamath Falls, Oregon)

Our GMs share a variety of quality enhancing processes throughout the

year, such as:

- better tools to track operations and budget items
- safety and security improvements
- information regarding vehicle specs and experience
- grant funding (fund availability, and needs that would be eligible)
- coordination of our services with other transportation needs in the area
- customer service ideas and tools for receiving rider input
- maximizing staff schedules to control labor costs
- efficient run-cutting strategies
- vehicle maintenance issues and how they are resolved

These are just some of the ways we have seen the direct, positive effect of “site synergy.”

