

#43

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Page 1: Award Categories

Q1

Directions: Read the descriptions below and select a category for which you would like to make an award nomination.

Community Transportation System of the Year - Large System Defined as providing service in an urban area of more than 50,000 population AND/OR the agency receives 5307 funds. Typical CTAA membership demographics that would apply for this award include our small-urban and tribal transit members. Recognizes a community transportation system for:- Innovative and creative services in the community;- Being responsive to its customers' and community needs;- Actively coordinating and collaborating with other public and special services transportation;- Effectively helps the community accomplish their goals;- Creates partnerships with a wide-range of organizations, both public and private;- Providing accessible transportation service;- Building transportation alternatives that are intended to meet a wide range of the communities' needs.

Page 2: Why is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q2

Innovative and creative services in the community.

Mountain Line (Missoula, MT) was the first agency in the state (in July 2022) to increase service to seven days a week. With increased hours added then too, we expanded service by 30%, and ridership grew accordingly.

We were also the first urban system in Montana to begin fleet electrification. Our fixed-route fleet is 40% electric, with federal funding secured for 90% to be electric upon delivery of new vehicles.

Mountain Line offered the first high-frequency service in the state, with two 15-minute routes currently available.

We also operate a Shuttle Van program for riders over 60 years old who may not be eligible for Paratransit services.

Since 2015, we have been a zero-fare system through an innovative pilot project with community partners. In 2020, district voters supported zero-fare operations by a 20% margin, making the program permanent.

We have also supported Missoula's love of farmers' markets (there are three downtown every summer Saturday) with a market trolley, which has been running since 1996.

Q3

Being responsive to its customers' and community needs.

A rider survey completed through the University of Montana in 2023 showed that more than 80% of passengers use the bus because it's better for the environment than driving. Our community's strong support of sustainability and cleaner air in the Missoula Valley is reflected in our agency prioritization of sustainable, zero-emissions vehicles.

Since adding Sunday service, ridership on Sundays is nearly as high as on Saturdays, showing the community's clear need for added weekend service. This expansion was strongly supported by voters in 2020 and has been embraced by the community since implementation in 2022.

In the past six months, Mountain Line's Paratransit service has been breaking agency records, scheduling up to 400 rides each day. Paratransit ridership has increased rapidly in recent years, clearly indicating a community need for reliable, affordable, accessible transportation.

After the pandemic drop in ridership, Mountain Line's yearly ridership has returned to 1.2 million trips/year, accounting for more than half of the public transit rides in the state.

Q4

Actively coordinating and collaborating with other public and special services transportation.

MUTD has been working closely with the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, the Montana Department of Transportation, and state and local partners on a RAISE planning grant-funded project in Midtown Missoula, specifically focused on bringing Bus Rapid Transit and transit-oriented development to the Brooks Street corridor.

We also have a Community Coordination Plan, through which we help nonprofits secure accessible vehicles to transport their clients by making federal funds available to them.

We coordinate with UDASH, the University of Montana's bus system, to make sure offered services complement each other. We also partner with UDASH on trainings, such as electric bus technology training and operator assault safety training.

We are developing a collaboration with local bicycle-focused nonprofit Free Cycles to make our portable (typically bus-mounted) bike rack available full-time to their customers to educate riders and encourage multimodal transportation.

Mountain Line recently worked in collaboration with the VA to establish an accessible bus stop near their clinic, which involved rerouting a bus to ensure the safest stop location.

MUTD offers hourly airport service 7 days a week (increased during the service expansion in 2022 from 5 days a week with mid-day gaps in service).

Q5

Effectively helps the community accomplish their goals.

Missoula is located in a valley, making air quality a prime concern during air inversions that trap pollution right on top of the city. Mountain Line's commitment to a zero-tailpipe-emissions fleet by 2035 and the significant strides we've made toward that goal (40% of fixed-route fleet is electric; 90% electric fixed-route fleet is funded) support cleaner air and less pollution for residents and visitors. The City of Missoula has also committed to becoming carbon-neutral by 2050, and Mountain Line's efforts to move away from fossil fuels are closely aligned with this goal.

MUTD works closely with the city on downtown improvement projects to help all areas of downtown be more connected and accessible to transit users. In the midtown area, our work on developing BRT along Brooks Street is a major component of making that corridor safer and more permeable for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

MUTD also works closely with organizations serving people experiencing houselessness or reentering the workforce, since transportation is a vital community resource.

Additionally, we work with the City to ensure that all planned subdivisions include transit amenities and routing to reduce traffic congestion and increase mobility for all residents.

Q6

Creates partnerships with a wide-range of organizations, both public and private.

This year, MUTD embarked on a unique collaboration with the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization on a shared Strategic Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan to ensure that public transit is a core priority in future city planning. MUTD has also been working closely with state and local agencies on the Transform Brooks planning project for future Bus Rapid Transit and infrastructure improvements along the Brooks St. corridor.

Mountain Line regularly partners with Missoula in Motion to promote sustainable commuting, host community events, and offer rider training. We collaborated with Missoula Aging Services on volunteer training for the Confident Rider program, which offers mentorship to older adults who want to use public transit.

Currently, we are partnering with United Way to install a Narcan vending machine at our Downtown Transfer Center.

We sponsor and participate in numerous community events throughout the year, like the Western Montana Fair, Missoula Pride, River City Roots Fest, the Clark Fork River Cleanup, and other local institutions that invite Missoulians to take care of and celebrate our city. We are also active participants in local associations (Missoula Downtown Association, Missoula Midtown Association) and promote and partner with local businesses for public engagement campaigns and cultural events.

Q7

Providing accessible transportation service.

In addition to our robust Paratransit program and a fleet of wheelchair-accessible vehicles, Mountain Line supports accessibility in transportation through supplementary ADA training for operations staff and ongoing review of our public materials for increased accessibility. This spring, we offered a training class to paratransit users interested in booking rides through an available app (vs. scheduling by phone) and will be conducting that class regularly.

MUTD holds regularly scheduled meetings with all community stakeholders to improve accessibility and transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities.

The Bus Stop Improvement Project, which was completed in early 2024, made all stops on Routes 1 and 2 (our high-frequency routes) wheelchair-accessible and improved access for blind and low-vision riders by installing uniquely shaped bus stop posts, recognizable by touch as distinct from other road sign posts.

Mountain Line also has a seat on the access and functional needs committee of the local emergency planning committee, ensuring that the agency is included in contingency planning that supports all community members.

Q8

Building transportation alternatives that are intended to meet a wide range of the communities' needs.

In 2023, Mountain Line won a competitive FTA grant of \$39.1 million to build a new maintenance, operations, and administration base, which will enable the agency to expand service beyond the constraints of our current building, which has been at capacity for years. We have won competitive FTA grants in 2017, 2020, 2021, and 2022 for fleet electrification, a key goal of the agency that supports the community's commitment to climate change mitigation and cleaner air, and workforce development, contributing to local, sustainable job opportunities.

In 2023, MUTD conducted a study about the feasibility of on-demand transit in an effort to ensure that we consider all options in determining service area and frequency needs during Strategic Planning.

We are also working with the City of Missoula on their micro-mobility project, which would bring electric bikes and scooters to downtown.

Mountain Line recently collaborated with the Missoula Parking Commission, Missoula in Motion, and the Missoula Downtown Association to produce informational materials for downtown employers and employees sharing available transportation and parking alternatives.

Page 3: Why is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q9

Respondent skipped this question

Innovative and creative services in the community.

Q10

Respondent skipped this question

Being responsive to its customers' and community needs.

Q11

Respondent skipped this question

Actively coordinating and collaborating with other public and special services transportation.

Q12

Respondent skipped this question

Effectively helps the community accomplish their goals.

Q13

Respondent skipped this question

Creates partnerships with a wide-range of organizations, both public and private.

Q14

Respondent skipped this question

Providing accessible transportation service.

Q15

Respondent skipped this question

Building transportation alternatives that are intended to meet a wide range of the communities' needs.

Page 4: Why is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q16

Respondent skipped this question

Have demonstrated an extensive history of community engagement;

Q17

Respondent skipped this question

Have created long-standing partnerships with other stakeholders that allow its residents to flourish.

Page 5: Why is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q18

Respondent skipped this question

Providing creative, effective and continuing training and technical assistance programs.

Q19

Respondent skipped this question

Using new concepts, strategies, procedures and policies to provide support to local transit systems.

Q20

Respondent skipped this question

Communicating local transit systems' concerns and issues at the state and national level.

Q21

Respondent skipped this question

Advocating for public and community transportation at the state and local level.

Page 6: Why Is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q22

Respondent skipped this question

A record that reflects ongoing and exceptional growth in contribution to the profession and increased levels of leadership, responsibility and sphere of impact

Q23

Respondent skipped this question

A recent track-record in the transit field reflects a strong career trajectory with the possibility of forward advancement and potential for appointment at the highest levels of the profession

Page 7: Why Is This Nominee Outstanding?

Q24

Respondent skipped this question

Go that extra mile time and time again, encapsulating the spirit and professionalism of the workplace and the community transportation industry.

Q25

Respondent skipped this question

Exudes the spirit and professionalism of community transportation at its best

Q26

Respondent skipped this question

This award can include nominations from any of an agency's frontline positions (examples include drivers, dispatchers, etc.)

Page 8: Tell Us About Your Nominee

Q27

Name

Jennifer Sweten

Q28

Title

Director of Operations, Interim General Manager (effective 4/12/24)

Q29

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Q31

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Q32

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Page 9: Tell us about yourself: who is submitting this nomination?

Q33

Name

Olga Kreimer

Q34

Title

Communications Specialist

Q35

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Q36

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Q38

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