

The Year In Review: 2020

MCT kept the focus on safety, moving ahead in the past year

Despite the various challenges of the past year, Madison County Transit has worked to maintain and enhance the high quality transportation services that residents have come to depend on and enjoy – and provide those services in a manner that keeps both patrons and employees safe and healthy.

In an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, the MCT Board responded quickly by taking a series of actions earlier this year. Those actions included adjusting routes and schedules, requiring masks or face coverings, installing driver barriers on buses, closing transit centers and the base of operations, and installing informational signage about the virus on vehicles, at bus stops, and even along the MCT Trails.

While some bus routes were reduced this year, others were enhanced due to growing demand. In August, MCT expanded the No. 2 Granite City Shuttle, adding stops at vital destinations such as the Granite City Walmart and Chestnut Health Systems. Likewise, despite the pandemic, demand for bus service continued to grow at the warehouse district along IL-111 and I-270. In response, MCT added new express routes from Collinsville, Alton, and Wood River to Gateway Commerce Center and introduced the new No. 23 Gateway Commerce Center Shuttle, which provides weekday service throughout the complex, and coupled with the existing No. 20 Granite City-Pontoon Beach Shuttle offers bursts of

15-minute frequency at peak travel times.

When stay at home orders were initially announced in April, MCT launched its first of three online scavenger hunts to encourage residents to explore the ever-popular MCT Trails. The scavenger hunts were facilitated by an app called GooseChase and provided a free, family-friendly way to get people outside, for some safe exercise and entertainment. With more than 135 miles of scenic trails, and scavenger hunts spanning weeks at a time, participants had plenty of space and time to social distance. The activity proved to be very popular and not only kept Madison County moving during the pandemic, but also revealed just how great of an asset the MCT Trails are to Southwestern Illinois, officials said.

In other MCT Trails news, MCT has begun a multi-phased trail beautification effort to enhance the natural beauty of the already scenic trails. In addition to hundreds of new deciduous and flowering trees, the project also calls for planting a colorful array of bushes and flowers along the MCT Trails.

Always looking to the future, in November, MCT broke ground on a new Park & Ride facility at Eastgate Plaza in East Alton. The new facility will feature 100 parking stalls, a brick passenger waiting building, driver restrooms, and video surveillance. The location will be served by the No. 1X Riverbend Express which provides commuter service to and from Downtown St. Louis.

McKendree University builds on its cyber defense talent

Alyssa Koston, a McKendree University graduate student in the MBA cyber defense program, finished ninth among more than 200 students in the Department of Energy’s CyberForce virtual competition.

McKendree University in Lebanon students made an impressive showing in November in the U.S. Department of Energy’s sixth annual CyberForce Competition.

CyberForce provides hands-on cyber education to college students and professionals, awareness into the critical infrastructure and cybersecurity nexus, and a basic understanding of cyber security within a real-world scenario. This year’s scenario required the student competitors to secure and report on a fictitious wind energy company in charge of more than 20,000 megawatts of electricity generation that had been experiencing abnormal network activity.

CyberForce is typically an in-person competition for teams of six members. To ensure the safety and health of participants during the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 event was designed as an all-day, virtual challenge for individual competitors rather than teams.

While more than 450 college students across the nation participated remotely this year, only 201 students from 38 states earned points. Two from McKendree University’s 117th Cyber Defense Regiment team were



Alyssa Koston

among the top scorers: Alyssa Koston, of Rochester, N.Y., a graduate student in the MBA cyber defense program, placed ninth and Jakob Eddleman, a sophomore cyber defense major from Anna, Ill., was 13th. Charlie Vorhees, a first-year computer science major from Mascoutah, finished in 57th place.

“This is the 117th’s third year in existence and having three people score in the top 60, let alone two in the top 15, is amazing,” said George Kriss, director of information technology and the team’s advisor. The McKendree students outperformed others from large state schools such as the University of Illinois, Kansas State, and the University of Kansas, for example.

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Madison County Transit

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