

MCT looks back on a year of innovation

Another year has come and gone bringing challenges, opportunities, and successes for Madison County Transit. Through it all, MCT has sought new and innovative ways to enhance mobility while remaining committed to providing high-quality transportation services in a safe and efficient manner to residents of Madison County and beyond.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued to limit travel in 2021, as the year progressed and employees and students returned to work and class, passengers have also returned to MCT. Bus service on the SIUE campus, at the warehouses in Gateway Commerce Center, and Express trips to Downtown St. Louis have all seen steady increases throughout the year. This past spring, MCT also offered free fixed-route and paratransit bus service to COVID-19 vaccination sites.

In May of 2020, MCT reduced its fares and simplified its structure. Now, riding the bus in Madison County is only \$1.00 and riding to St. Louis or St. Clair County is \$3. For regular passengers, MCT offers Day Passes, Week Passes, Monthly Passes, and mobile passes that are available for purchase and download on your mobile device.

MCT's mission of improving transportation services was further demonstrated in 2021 through a series of other key initiatives. MCT provided lift-equipped vehicles to the City of Highland and Granite City Township for transporting elderly and disabled individuals in those communities and approved similar agreements with Collinsville and Nameoki townships. This fall, when the Granite

City School District 9 faced a school bus driver shortage and were forced to eliminate school bus routes, MCT stepped up and offered free rides to Granite City middle school and high school students.

In late October, MCT completed the new Eastgate Park and Ride facility located in East Alton, offering convenient parking and a covered waiting area for passengers on the #1X Riverbend Express. The new facility is located on a 2-acre site just south of Eastgate Plaza on Illinois 3 and features 104 parking stalls, a brick passenger waiting building, driver restrooms, and video surveillance.

Many exciting developments took place on the MCT Trails in 2021 as well. MCT launched a new commemorative tree and bench program, providing a way to honor or remember individuals, organizations, or businesses while adding an amenity to the MCT Trails.

MCT also began implementing its MCT Trails wayfinding signage project. During this first phase, signs are being installed at MCT Trails "Junctions" - locations where two or more trails meet, enabling trailgoers to better navigate the 135-mile MCT Trails network. In conjunction with the Glen Carbon Historical and Museum Commission, MCT designed and installed 17 new interpretive panels along the MCT Ronald J. Foster Heritage and MCT Nickel Plate Trails. The new panels depict various aspects of Glen Carbon's rich history through vivid narratives and stunning photos and are printed on 36-inch by 24-inch, high-pressure laminate that is both weather resistant and low maintenance.

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Holland Construction Services completed work on the new Keystone Place at Richland Creek Senior Living Development, a \$39 million development in O'Fallon, Ill.

In April, Metro East mayors were swept from office in a historic changing of the guard. Among those replaced were the heads of Alton, Belleville, Bethalto, East Alton, Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, Granite City, Hartford, Highland, Mascoutah, Troy and Wood River.

In May, ground was broken on a new \$20 million addition to Anderson Healthcare Goshen Campus. Gathered were representatives from Anderson Healthcare, Triple Net Management, The Korte Company, and city of Edwardsville.

In June, a joint venture led by developer TriStar Properties sold a 176-acre, 2-million-square-foot, build-to-suit campus it completed in 2019 for tenant World Wide Technology at Gateway Commerce Center in Edwardsville.

One of the biggest announcements occurred June 11, when Illinois entered Phase 5 of the COVID-19 reopening plan, meaning businesses and organizations could largely resume normal activity.

In July, after nearly three years without a community grocery store, Pete's Market opened in Troy.

Bank of Clinton County held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate its grand opening. The bank is located at 1210 E. Hanover St., New Baden.

In August, longtime public servant William Haine, of Alton, dies. He served as a Madison County Board member, state's attorney and state senator over more than 40 years.

Orchard Town Center, a long-planned business district at the site of the Foucek nursery property in Glen Carbon, targeted for a Menards store and other development, was given the go-ahead.

In September, Boeing announce a drone production facility will be built at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah.

With demand for industrial warehouse space "at an all-time high," commercial real estate firm JLL announced that Gateway TradePort in Pontoon Beach, will soon deliver its fourth and largest building, a 1-million-square-foot speculative warehouse — the first of its size in Greater St. Louis.

In October, BJC HealthCare opened its third outpatient center, this one at the former Schnuck's/Shop 'n' Save store on Troy Road in Edwardsville.

World Wide Technology Raceway in Madison is included on the coveted 2022 NASCAR schedule, with the Gateway NASCAR Cup Series race that takes place Sunday, June 5. Officials liken it to "getting the World Series."

In November, Southern Illinois University named James T. Minor as the 10th chancellor of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, to replace retiring Chancellor Randall Pembroke effective March 1, 2022.

West Star Aviation announced plans to expand three of its facilities over the next five years, including operations at St. Louis Regional Airport in East Alton.

The story of the year, beyond Covid, was the death of six employees at an Amazon fulfillment center in Edwardsville on Dec. 10. An EF-3 tornado ravaged the facility, but officials pledged to rebuild even as a federal investigation into the situation continues. First responders were praised for their work, and employees were told they would get paid time off.

Also in December, Madison County announced it will sell 15.41 acres of prime real estate along Plum Street. The site is along a key commercial stretch near Edwardsville Crossing Shopping Center at Plum Street and Governors' Parkway.

And, the Illinois Department of Transportation opened the Delhi Bypass, a widening of U.S. 67 in Jersey County. The \$18.6 million, four-lane project, part of a plan that goes back decades, was done several months ahead of schedule

Another Year in Transit

Fares	
LOCAL	\$1.00
REGIONAL	\$3.00
MCT Passes	FREE
Elderly ¹	
Disabled ²	
Children under age 5	
Police and Military in Uniform	
Half Fares	
LOCAL	\$0.50
REGIONAL	\$1.50
Elderly ³	
Disa ⁴	
MCT Senior Free with MCT	

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New Prairie Farms CEO looks to build off successes

By DANIEL GRANT
FarmWeek

Prairie Farms Dairy recently named Matt McClelland as chief executive officer, effective Jan. 1.

He'll replace longtime CEO Ed Mullins, who decided to step down and assume an advisory role as senior executive officer, after more than 40 years with the largest dairy cooperative in the Midwest.

With more than 30 years of his own experience at Prairie Farms, founded in Carlinville in 1938 and currently headquartered in Edwardsville, McClelland looks to build off successes and maintain a strong network of farmer members.

"We've got to maintain quality. That's the foundation of our business, from the farm to the consumer," McClelland told the RFD Radio Network as he envisions a Prairie Farms 2.0. "There's no reason to fix something that isn't broken. We just have to be ready to move with technology, the times or whatever it might be."

Elements of the cooperative include more than 700 farm families, 8,100 employees, 50 manufacturing plants, more than 100 distribution facilities and annual sales of more than \$3 billion.

"It all starts with our producer members," McClelland said. "We've got to do everything we can to make sure we continue to maintain and grow the market share for the products coming off the

farm and make sure they (farmer members) are getting the support they need from the company to maintain that."

Prairie Farms continues to expand its lineup of products and recently received 47 awards at the 2021 World Dairy Expo Dairy Product Contest.

Its small curd cottage cheese won grand champion for taste, quality and freshness. Prairie Farms products, including cheese, cream cheese, yogurt, ice cream, flavored milk and onion dip, also received 14 first-place awards, 19 second-place and 13 third-place at the contest.

"We continue to fight the uphill battle of declining consumption of dairy products, specifically gallons of white milk," McClelland said. "We do a lot of work to maintain that segment of our business. But, we do even more work to grow the business, whether it be value-adds or flavored products, we're always looking to expand the portfolio. Those are the things helping us grow the business."

As for his vision of promoting milk sales in a cluttered and highly competitive beverage market, McClelland said it's back to basics.

"There's no better bang for your buck (than milk) when it comes to nutrition," he said.

A key challenge during the change of leadership at Prairie Farms likely will continue to revolve around supply chain and workforce issues.