

All aboard Downtown Trolley Express!

Downtown Trolley Express is rolling! All aboard for fun, dining, shopping and more. The North Oakland Transportation Authority's newest service launched Thursday, February 10 at 4 p.m. with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Centennial Park in Oxford.

Having a trolley for regular transportation between Oxford and Lake Orion has been in the planning stages for years. With help from SMART, the DDA's of both towns and Rod Charles for bringing the dream to fruition.

The pilot program runs through March to determine interest in the program. The rides are free.

For now the trolley will run from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday and Saturdays from noon to 9 p.m. It may run from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on selected Fridays.

It's not the first time a trolley has been used in the area, but it has been many, many years.

NOTA is working on trolley tracker app to make using the system easier, so stay tuned for information on that.

For now the trolley should be making its stops in Oxford at East and Washington (M-24) streets (The Magic Brownie Box) and just west of the corner of W. Burdick and Washington streets (behind Funky Monkey Toys) and then in Lake Orion at W. Shadbolt and N. Broadway streets and the corner of S. Broadway and Front streets.

The trolley loop should take between 22 and 30 minutes.

The Oxford and Lake Orion Downtown Development Authorities are working together to pay the North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA) to house the trolley, maintain it and provide drivers. For now, it's running as part of a two-month pilot program. SMART provided the vehicle.



Time for Trolley! (More photos on Page 8)



Donations reach \$890

NOTA brightens Thanksgiving for 63 riders

Thanksgiving spirit provided 63 special dinners for a group of NOTA riders who otherwise may have missed out on a traditional holiday meal.

Organized by Nigel Clinton-Barnett with a great assist by NOTA dispatchers and \$890 in donations from drivers, staff and Heritage Manor staff, 51 Diner in Oxford provided the Thanksgiving Day dinners.

Dinners were prepared and ready for delivery at 10:30 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day. Drivers, Nigel with assistance from Aiden, 13, the son of one of Nigel's friends, Wayne Thomas and his wife Camille and Mark Bronersky made the deliveries. Many other drivers volunteered to assist, but were not needed.

Wayne and his wife made the large drop to numerous NOTA riders living at Heritage and with the professional assistance from the NOTA dispatch staff, the other volunteer drivers used the routes and phone numbers provided to make the rest of the deliveries.

For 21 amazing years, CJ's Restaurant in Lake Orion used to provide the holiday meal, including the last one that resulted in 750 dinners. When the restaurant was sold the 51 Diner in Oxford



Nigel Barnett



51 Diner

took over the effort.

"NOTA Nation is so generous and giving to this endeavor," Nigel said. "This is one of the things that shows our heart and why we do this job. This is our way of showing folks they are not alone on the holiday but are loved and thought of and that they matter to someone."

For Nigel it was also an opportunity to show Aiden, his young helper, another side of the community and the world we all live in.

After all was said and done there was \$190 left over for a future outreach project, Nigel said.

Covid Mask requirements extended

Under federal Department of Transportation guidelines the mask requirements for all riders, regardless of vaccination status has been extended to March 18, 2022. The safety measure was instituted at the beginning of the pandemic and has been extended several times due to continuing outbreaks of Covid in the country.

Riders are asked to cooperate with drivers in enforcing this mandate. As soon as the mandate is dropped we will inform our passengers.

For the safety of driver and riders, buses are frequently sprayed down during the day and always at the end of the shift. NOTA obtained a special spray machine to sanitize the fleet.

If you have questions about the mask mandates or any other safety related issues please contact the office at 248-693-7100.

A letter from Lynn

What an exciting and challenging time it has been for the North Oakland Transportation Authority. Despite a worldwide pandemic our service to the communities of Lake Orion, Orion Township, the Township of Oxford, the Village of Oxford and Addison Township continued uninterrupted.

We are proud and pleased that despite lockdowns and restrictions we were able to continue to take essential workers to their places of employment, residents to important and even life-saving medical appointments as well as providing shopping trips and even delivering groceries to residents unable to leave their residences.

Our drivers and dispatchers worked hard to ensure that buses were sanitized, that riders were kept safe and that people could still receive the NOTA service that our communities have come to expect.

It has not been easy and there are many folks to thank, but it is our honor and privilege that we were able to continue through the difficult past two years. As we emerge, hopefully, from this trying period we are looking forward to providing more service and added benefits for our residents.

For one, we are currently running a Downtown Trolley Express (see Page 1) that will provide regular service between the downtowns of Oxford and Lake Orion on Thursday and Saturday and even on some Fridays. This is a pilot program working with the Oxford and Orion Downtown Development Authorities which is reimbursing the cost along with another donor. Special thanks also to SMART for providing the trolley to us at no cost.

It is a ray of hope to see our communities “Stronger Together” as our communities recover from a terrible tragedy and rebuild by relying on each other for love and support. We are excited to be a part of this great addition to our communities and to provide service to all community residents on the trolley. Come on out and take a free ride down memory lane!

The NOTA 5 year renewal millage will be on the ballot this August 2, 2022. This is our 3rd renewal of the .25 millage that NOTA relies on to operate. The cost of .25 mils is \$12.50 a year on every \$100,000 value in your home which a great value for the service that is provided. The average cost for a private pay ride is \$30 plus \$3/mile for each way. Even the cost of a short Uber ride is more than the amount most people will pay for NOTA in a year. We will be looking for support this August on this very important ballot request.

I want you to know that our organization from the top down is committed to providing safe, caring and affordable transportation for our residents who need us. We are always open to your suggestions, comments or criticisms. NOTA provides transportation but it’s the care our drivers and dispatchers give that makes NOTA so special. We have an amazing team that I am truly grateful for who look at this job as a mission and they lead with their hearts.

This is the first of what we hope are regular editions of NOTA News. The idea is to keep the community informed as to what is new or ongoing with our organization.

If you are over 60, disabled or have other issues that prevent you from having transportation to work, doctor’s appointments or going shopping you are likely eligible for our service. Please visit our website at ridenota.org or give us a call at (248) 693-7100 for more information about getting registered for our service. You can also visit us on Facebook. We would love to hear your compliments, concerns and great ideas.



Lynn Gustafson, Executive Director NOTA

NOTA Hours—248-693-7100

Dispatch: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday—Friday

Bus runs:

Monday—Friday 5:30 a.m.—8 p.m.

Saturday— 8 a.m. — 4 p.m.

Sunday — 7 a.m. — 3:30 p.m.

NOTA Drivers



Steve



Tom W.



Lorraine



Larry H.



Rick



Nigel



Brad



James B



Ron



Tom H.



Ken



Don



Mark K.



Donald



James "Smitty"



Gordon



Larry K.



Glen



Hardy



Jimmy T.



Wayne

Not pictured: Mark B, Tony, Paula, Ed Jr.



Viki



Cindy

NOTA

Dispatchers



Nancy



Veronica

Administration



Lynn Gustafson, Executive Director



Mike Joslyn, Operations Manager

NOTA ready to help

Shuttles provided for overflow funeral traffic

When tragedy struck Oxford High School on November 30, NOTA stood ready to help in whatever way it could. In the days that followed, NOTA provided shuttle bus service for overflow funerals for two of the student victims of the November 30 school shooting.

Five NOTA buses were used on Tuesday, December 7, to transport hundreds of supporters to Kensington Church for the funeral service of one of the victims. The buses operated between the parking lots at Wildwood Amphitheater, Culver's Restaurant and Palazzo di Bocce.

Drivers appreciated the passengers who waited patiently in the cold temperatures for the transportation. Everyone made it to the church on time for the service and were quickly returned to their vehicles at the conclusion.

On Thursday, the buses operated between the Dominican property on Drahner Road and Lake-Point Community Church for another student's funeral.

Like the rest of the Oxford, Lake Orion and surrounding communities, NOTA and its employees extend its heartfelt sympathy to the families and victims of the horrific shooting and stands ready to help in whatever way it can.



NOTA Board of Directors

Mike McDonald, Chair, Village of Leonard

Chris Barnett, Vice Chair, Orion Township

Bruce Pearson, Addison Township

Ed Brakefield, Addison Township

Mike Flood, Orion Township

Ken Van Portfliet, Village of Lake Orion

Margaret Payne, Oxford Township

Tonya Waple, TTI

Ann Keltch, At Large-MORC

Lori Bourgeau, Village of Oxford

Roberta Habowski, AAA 1(B)

Jack Curtis, Oxford Township

Jerry Narsh, alternate, Village of Lake Orion

NOTA by the numbers

The year 2020 saw a dramatic drop in rides due to the pandemic, but 2021 showed increasing ridership as the year went on.

Mileage

2019	2020	2021
538,794	411,703	498,796

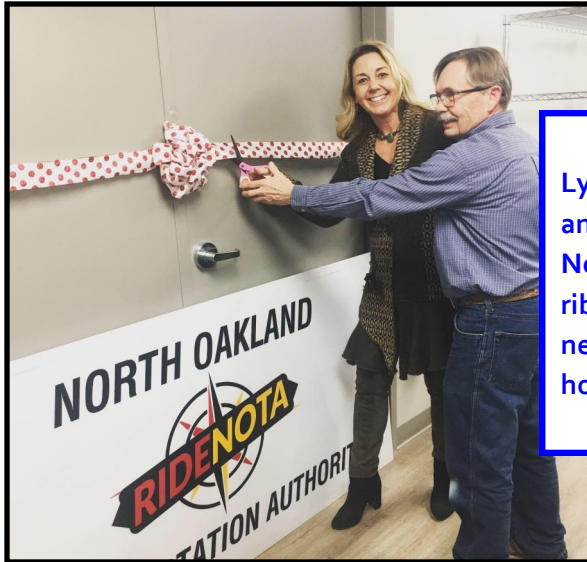
Rides

42,094	27,109	34,617
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Rides by Community in 2021

Orion	Oxford	Addison
16,253	15,764	2,600

NOTA-ble Notes and Pictures



Lynn Gustafson and Doug Noaker cut the ribbon on the new NOTA home.

NOTA drivers celebrate rider Henrietta Grubb's birthday.



NOTA Nation celebrates the retirement of Operations Manager Doug Noaker and drivers Dallas Acker And Lloyd English.



Driver Brad Jacobsen has another important job and vehicle that he drives during the Christmas season.



Mike Joslyn's birthday party

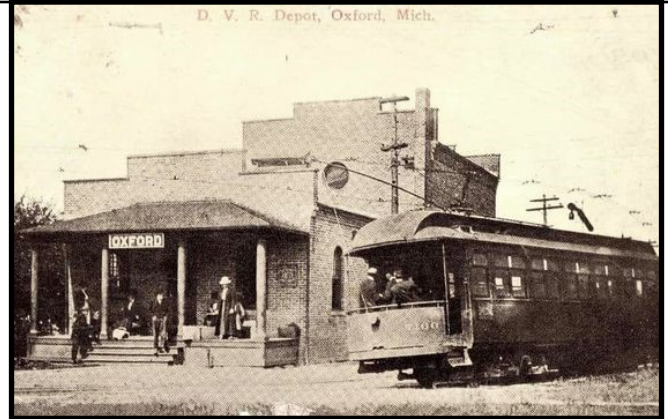


(Left) Executive Director Lynn Gustafson, drivers Gordy Kelly, Larry King and Nigel Clinton-Barnett treat three of NOTA's long time passengers to a dinner out. The dinner excursions are a way to show our riders that they are part of the NOTA family.

More Downtown Trolley Photos



New Trolley



Old Trolley



NOTA Executive Director Lynn Gustafson and Orion Township Supervisor Chris Barnett (above) ride Downtown Trolley Express.



NOTA Driver Lorraine Morical (left) and NOTA Driver Paula Millard Will be operating the Downtown Trolley Express rides.

NOTA Operations Manager Mike Joslyn and NOTA Executive Director Lynn Gustafson (right) pose next to the Downtown Trolley Express during its inaugural run between Oxford and Lake Orion.



Notes to NOTA

Riders from NOTA sometimes send notes to express their gratitude for the services they have received. Below are a sample of those letters:

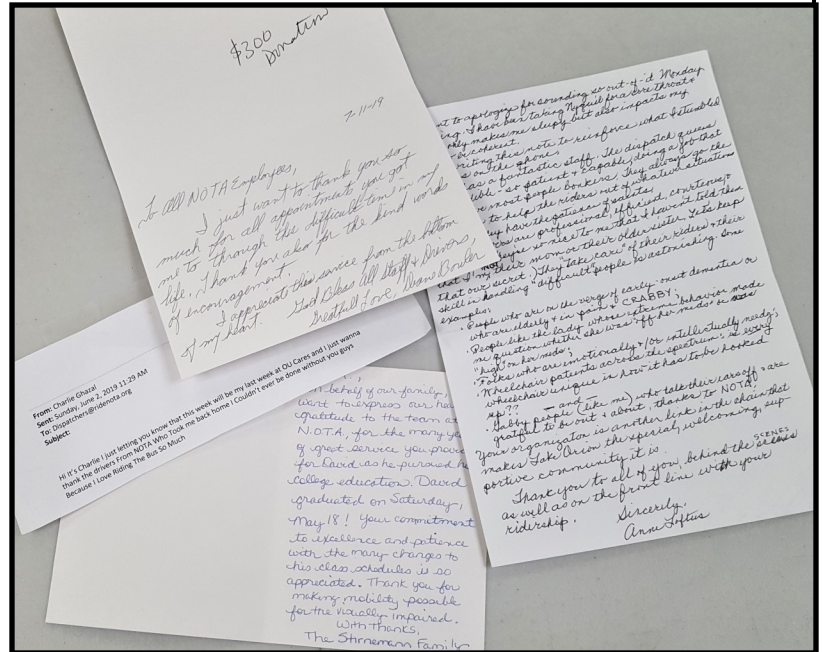
“To All NOTA Employees,
I just want to thank you so much for all appointments you’ve got me to through this difficult time in my life. Thank you also for the kind words of encouragement.
I appreciate this service from the bottom of my heart. God Bless all Staff & Drivers,
Greatful Love, Diane Bowler” (This letter came with a \$300 donation)

And this,

“Hi It’s Charlie I just letting you now that this week will be my last week at OU Cares and I just wanna thank the drivers From NOTA Who Took me back home I Couldn’t ever be done without you guys Because I Love Riding The Bus So Much. Charlie Ghzal”

And this,

“N.O.T.A.,
On behalf of our family, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the team at N.O.T.A., for the many years of great service you provided for David as he pursued his college education. David graduated Saturday, May 18! Your commitment to excellence and patience with the many changes to his class schedules is so appreciated. Thank you for making mobility possible for the visually impaired.
With thanks, The Stirnemann Family”



Ann Loftus letter here.

“I’m writing this note to reinforce what I stumbled to express on the phone. NOTA has a fantastic staff. The dispatch queens are incredible—so patient and capable, doing a job that would drive most people bonkers. They always go the extra mile to help the riders out of whatever situations they’re in. They have the patience of saints.

Your drivers are professional, efficient, courteous and friendly. They’re so nice to me that I haven’t told them that I’m NOT their mom or their older sister. Let’s keep that our secret. They “take care” of their riders and their skill in handling “difficult” people is astonishing. Some examples: People who are on the verge of early onset dementia or who are elderly or in pain and CRABBY; People like the lady whose extreme behavior made me question whether she was off her meds or “high” on her meds; Folks who are emotionally and/or intellectually needy; wheelchair patients across the spectrum. Gabby people (like me) who talk their ears off and are grateful to be out and about thanks to NOTA. Your organization is another link in the chain that makes Lake Orion the special, welcoming, supportive community it is. Than you to all of you, behind the scenes as well as on the front line with your ridership.

Sincerely,
Ann Loftus”

Home Sweet NOTA Home

Two years after the big move to 675 Glaspie Street employees of the North Oakland Transportation Authority continue to enjoy the comfy confines of their new home.

Little did anyone know at the time of the transition from the Lake Orion facility to the Oxford Township facility that the world would completely change when a worldwide pandemic arrived in March of 2020.

There was another transition to come in May 2020 with the departure of Doug Noaker and the promotion of Mike Joslyn to Doug's position as Operations Manager.

The new facility allows for most of the NOTA fleet to park indoors and out of the weather as well as more room for office staff and dispatchers.

During the first year at the new location there were some challenges as the Glaspie Street location became a main detour while extensive road work was being done on M-24.

But if there is one thing NOTA is especially good at is being flexible and able to adapt on the fly.

Work on the facility is not complete as landscaping plans are being developed with plans to complete that work in Spring 2022.

The retirement of several drivers (see below) during the pandemic led to the hiring of several new drivers. The new facility provides the extra space and capabilities needed to provide the vital service of NOTA to the Townships of Orion, Oxford and Addison as well as the villages of Lake Orion, Leonard and Oxford.

With the new facility and new employees, NOTA is positioned to serve those communities well into the future.



New NOTA sign installed

Staff Milestones



Dallas



Lloyd



Sue



Doug Noaker, Operations

Sadly we said goodbye to a number of longtime NOTA employees. Sue Townsend, who drove for 16 years, Lloyd English, who drove for 14 ears and served as a trainer for many of our current drivers and Dallas Acker who served NOTA faithfully for 19 years. Dallas joined NOTA in December 2001 and saw much growth and changes over the years. Doug Noaker, who served as a driver and Operations Manager served NOTA for 7 years. All will be greatly missed and we give them best wishes for a long and successful retirement.

NOTA client loves his ride

“Spartan” Tom Kennis talks NOTA

Tom Kennis who rode NOTA beginning in April 2021 after he had shoulder surgery that kept him from driving was one of the drivers’ favorite passengers. And the feeling was mutual.

A recent move out of the coverage area has ended, at least temporarily, Tom’s NOTA riding, but he is lavish in his praise of the service and the staff at the North Oakland Transportation Authority.

“NOTA is the best ever,” Tom said. After having his leg amputated and his shoulder surgery, Tom needed transportation to get to and from his physical therapy. The drivers and dispatchers get high marks from Tom.

“There’s not a bad one in the bunch,” Tom said.

Although his wife, Lynn, wanted to help him, after breaking her wrist she was unable to lift his wheelchair so NOTA became a lifeline for him and his family so he could work on his recovery.

About 90 percent of Tom’s rides were to physical therapy and the rest mostly to doctor’s appointments. Tom rode NOTA four to five days a week and since he had to stop riding in February he feels like something is missing.

“I miss joking with the drivers and I miss it every day,” Tom said. “They were usually a couple minutes early and if they were late it was like two minutes. I can’t say highly enough of what I think of you guys.”

The feeling is mutual as Tom frequently sent lunch to the NOTA offices for all the staff to enjoy in appreciation for the service.

A dedicated Michigan State graduate, Tom, 62, loved the banter from the few “Walmart Wolverines” who drive for NOTA, but recalled it was all in good fun. Tom was a Lake Orion High School graduate and his wife from Oxford High School. Tom ran a worldwide sales and engineering company that had offices in London, Germany, Hungary, China and other cities.



Tom Kennis and Driver Ron Etherton (holding Tom’s leg)

Riding since 2005

Rachel Oakes loves her NOTA family

Longtime NOTA rider Rachel Oakes thinks of her drivers and dispatchers as part of her family.

Rachel, 43, rides NOTA three to four days a week and has been a client and passenger since 2005. She is unable to drive so the service is her lifeline.

Currently NOTA takes Rachel to work at Kroger in Lake Orion where she has worked the past five years and previously took her to a fast food job on Brown Road in the years before that.

NOTA also helps her get to doctor and dentist appointments as well as grocery shopping trips and getting her taxes done..

“The service is outstanding,” Rachel said. “You guys are my guardian angels. We’re family and you guys are wonderful people.”

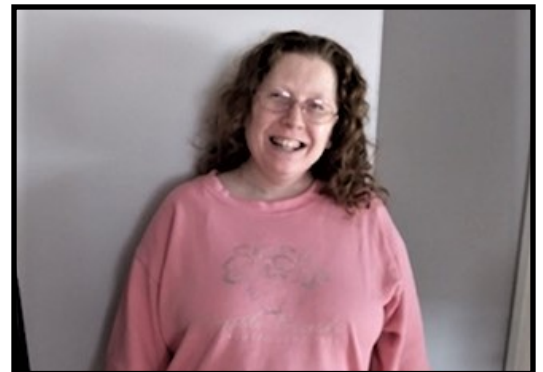
She also had praise for NOTA’s dispatchers.

“They are wonderful and help me out so much,” Rachel said. “I would be in trouble without NOTA.”

Drivers and dispatchers also appreciate Rachel’s positive attitude and cheery disposition.

Born in Farmington Hills, Rachel has lived in Clawson before moving to Lake Orion in 1997.

Rachel also appreciates that the people at NOTA have taken her out to dinner and helped her in so many ways.



Rachel Oakes

"Fortunate and blessed"

David and Henrietta Grubb learned to lean on NOTA

When David and Henrietta Grubb found themselves unable to drive a few years ago, they turned to the North Oakland Transportation Authority for help.

And help they got, Henrietta said. Along with a host of new friends at NOTA.

David, a lifelong bird dog trainer and 2008 inductee in the Field Trial Hall of Fame, needed rides to dialysis appointments and Henrietta, who was injured in an automobile accident was unable to drive him. The Grubbs moved to Orion Township in 1961.

This was quite a change for a man who had an international reputation for dog training and who traveled to Japan to educate dog trainers there as well as travels around the United States doing the same. David won hundreds of trophies and awards for his clients and himself.

Later when David was living in a Lake Orion nursing home, NOTA was the only transportation source Henrietta had to visit him almost every day.

Henrietta, a nurse for more than 50 years at the North Oakland Medical Center, was more than grateful for all the help she received from NOTA.

"Everyone at NOTA has been so sweet and nice to me, along with my husband," Henrietta said. "Dispatchers work around me and stick me in when I need to get out. The drivers all help me in and out and with my groceries."

Sadly, David died in January 2020, but not before two NOTA drivers made sure to volunteer to drive him to his son's house on Christmas Day 2019 from the nursing home so he could spend what turned out to be his last Christmas at home with family.

Henrietta continues to rely on NOTA to take her grocery shopping, to the mall where she exercises, to a local park and anywhere else she needs to go.

The association with NOTA goes well beyond just a transportation service. Recently when she was not feeling well, she had to cancel a few rides and then was surprised to receive a get well card in the mail from NOTA.

She also credits Executive Director Lynn Gustafson and Operations Manager Mike Joslyn for leading an organization where everyone tries to be helpful.

"Lynn and Mike are as sweet as can be," she said. "They're the best at carrying people ever and I couldn't do it without them. I don't have a way around without NOTA. I love all of you, you are the best."

Henrietta was even included in last year's NOTA employee Christmas party, she said.

"I am fortunate and blessed," Henrietta said. Drivers feel the same about Henrietta and David.



Henrietta Grubb

Need a ride? Here's a few tips

NOTA tries hard to accommodate ride requests. Riders can help themselves and NOTA by following these suggestions from our dispatch employees.

WHEN REQUESTING RIDES, PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING:

Priority will be given to prescheduled work rides and medical appointments.

- Advanced notice is required, a minimum of 3 business days but we encourage riders to request rides up to a month in advance for best service.
- We need the correct street address of the destination, and the length of time you'll need at the appointment so we can arrange your ride home.
- Please try to make medical appointments between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. as we have more vehicles available those times.
- Shopping trips will be scheduled around medical appointments and work rides and we will call you with available times the day before, after 2pm.
- We take calls for new ride requests M-F from 8am and 2pm.
- Please be ready on time to help our drivers stay on schedule. Drivers may run a bit early or late depending on traffic.
- Should you need to cancel a ride you may call 248-693-7100, and press 2, anytime and leave your name and date of ride on our cancel line.
- If your appointment is running late call dispatch as soon as you realize so other arrangements might be made. Also if you finish early feel free to call dispatch as they may be able to arrange an earlier pick up for you.