

END OF THE LINE



By JON BRITTON/THE TRIBUNE

CyRide Director Bob Bourne is retiring after 25 years.

CyRide Director Bob Bourne retires after 25 years

By WILLIAM DILLON
Staff Writer

CyRide Director Bob Bourne passed the torch after 25 years at the helm of Ames' public bus system Friday, his final day as director.

Looking back at his tenure purely by the numbers, CyRide has increased its number of routes from three to 10, gone from a fleet of eight rented

school buses to a convoy of more than 65 buses and increased its number of riders from 300,000 annually to more than 4 million in 2005.

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the grandfather of the system," said City Manager Steve Schainker. "Over those decades, it was through his leadership that we have accomplished so much. He

took the vision, and he implemented it."

Bourne, 57, started at CyRide on January 12, 1981, just a few months before the city entered a unique transportation partnership with Iowa State University and its Government of the Student Body. Schainker said city officials knew the growth potential that was there,

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Bourne: 'I love transportation, whether it be railroads or buses'

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it was just a matter of exploiting it. Bourne was the man brought in to do just that.

When he came to Ames at the age of 31, Bourne showed signs of a seasoned veteran in the transit industry. He had already helped grow two bus systems in Illinois. He also had several stints with the Chicago Transit Authority during his undergraduate and graduate days at Northwestern University, working in its rapid transit shops, bus overhaul shops, rapid transit terminals, bus garages and the technical services department.

For one year, he even took the wheel as a bus driver in the suburbs of Chicago.

Bourne's interest in Ames grew in 1980 when he saw its financial and stated commitment to growing its transit system.

"I enjoyed building the systems in Illinois, and here was an opportunity to do the same thing," he said.

When Bourne began at CyRide, the opportunities to collect money from state and federal programs to buy new buses were slim, said J.P. Golinvaux, transit programs

administrator for the Iowa Department of Transportation.

As Bourne puts it, the federal administration wanted the system to go but was not going to invest a lot of money into the system until it knew it would go.

Instead, Bourne built up his maintenance team and began purchasing used buses.

"We really didn't have a choice," Bourne said. "If we always would have waited to buy new buses, we never would have grown at the rate we did. You have to take the opportunity while it was there and exploit it."

During his first year, Bourne purchased and rehabilitated seven used buses. The Iowa Department of Transportation also provided grants for four

new buses that arrived during the winter of 1981-82.

During that first year alone, the number of CyRide riders jumped from 300,000 to 900,000. Within three years, ridership was up to 2 million.

"In a way, that is one of the most significant innovations that he has implemented over the years," Golinvaux said. "Throughout his career, Bob has been keen on looking around, finding new arrows, putting them in his quiver and saving them until he could figure out how to put them to good use."

Bourne has experienced his share of stress over the years, living and working through serious Midwestern floods and blizzards and well as the operational and financial chal-

lenges that face transit leaders across the country.

"If you only knew the kind of toll, the responsibilities that come with that job, it is just amazing," Golinvaux said. "Many other transit managers around the country end up having some serious stress-related medical conditions. It is just a commendable history that Bob has had."

But unlike many other transit directors, Bourne said he knew for his entire life that he wanted to work in transportation. He said even as a child, he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and work on a railroad.

"I love transportation, whether it be railroads or buses or boats or airplanes," Bourne said. "You just take those chal-

lenges on because you are really focused on the field."

Even in retirement, transportation will continue to be a large part of Bourne's life. He said his plans include touring the Midwest as a transit consultant and workplace mediator.

As far as his commitment to CyRide, Bourne said he feels it is being left in very good hands with new Director Sheri Kyras.

"I really think it's going to be neat to watch it from the sidelines," he said. "I can see what is going to happen. I can see the money coming in. I can see what is going to happen, and the future is very bright."

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What would you do if today was a

**Red
day?**