

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FALL 2009—VOL. 7, No. 3

3 SPOTLIGHT—KAREN SOMERSET

4 NEW TRAINING TOOL FOR BUS OPERATORS

5 ST. JOHNS COUNCIL 2009 STAR AWARD

6 FLORIDA RTAP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

7 CAREERS IN TRANSIT

THE FACTS ON FACTS

8 2009 & 2010 UPCOMING EVENTS

2009 TD Conference a Success

With over 240 registrants, the 17th annual Transportation Training and Technology Conference was a huge success! The conference was held at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, August 17-20, 2009.

Conference attendees participated in several power breakout and general sessions to learn about *Cultural Competency*, *Customer Monitoring and Feedback*, and *Mobility Management*, along with many other sessions. JR Harding, CTD Chairperson; and Bobby Jernigan, CTD Executive Director kicked off the opening breakfast. The breakfast also gave vendors an

opportunity to showcase their products. Following the breakfast, conference attendees had an opportunity to visit the vendor booths in the exhibit hall. The highlight of the breakfast was the unveiling of the new CTD logo.



Transportation Disadvantaged

General sessions were well attended and highlighted many national and state issues. Cathy Brown, from St. Johns County Council on Aging, was a guest speaker and left the audience inspired by her words and wisdom. Florida House of Representatives Rich Glorioso spoke at a luncheon, where he received Legislator of the Year award.

continued on p.2

National RTAP—Another Resource

Since its inception over 20 years ago, National RTAP has developed and distributed training materials, provided technical assistance, generated reports, published best practices, provided funding for scholarships, conducted research, and offered one-on-one peer assistance. National RTAP's efforts promote the goal of improved mobility for the millions of Americans living in communities with populations under 50,000 by addressing the needs of rural, small urban and tribal transit operators.

Have you utilized the free and many resources of National RTAP? National RTAP is home for R-TRAC, the Rural Technical Resource and Communication Center. R-TRAC is both physical and virtual, with the physical R-TRAC library containing over two decades of National RTAP training modules, best practice briefs, reports, brochures and primers. It is a one-stop shop for rural tran-

continued on p.3



TD CONFERENCE—cont'd from cover

As tradition, the highlight of the conference was the annual Awards Banquet. The 2009 award winners included:

- Mr. Robert Garlanger for Volunteer of the Year
- Palm Tran Connection for Innovation of the Year
- Zuni Transportation for Safety Award of the Year
- Advanced Transportation Solutions for Operator of the Year
- Lake County for Outstanding Coordination Board of the Year
- Miami-Dade MPO for Designated Official Planning agency of the Year
- Suwannee River Economic Council for Rural CTC of the Year
- Palm Tran Connection for Urban CTC of the Year
- Sunshine Line Dispatch/Scheduling Team for Dispatch/Scheduler of the Year

- Shelley Hardy for Driver of the Year
- Hector Pezzuto for Driver of the Year
- Mrs. Annette Stewart for William G. Bell Lifetime Achievement Award

The 2009 Annual TD Conference proved to be fun, informative, and educational. Plans have already been made for the 2010 Annual CTD conference, which will be held on July 12-15, 2010, at the Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld. Thanks to all the attendees, speakers, exhibitors, and staff for making this year such a huge success!

For more information regarding the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged please contact Karen Somerset, Assistant Director Program Administration and Oversight (850) 410-5701 or (850) 410-5700 or send an email to karen.somerset@dot.state.fl.us.



2009 TD Conference Award Recipients



Vol. 7 No. 3, Fall 2009

The **RTAP BULLETIN** is produced by the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research.

Please direct all questions or comments to:

RTAP BULLETIN

Center for Urban Transportation Research
University of South Florida
4202 East Fowler Avenue, CUT100
Tampa, FL 33620-5375
(813) 974-3120, fax (813) 974-5168
email: moorey@cutr.usf.edu
website: www.floridartap.org

OUR MISSION

The Florida RTAP provides training, continuing education, and technical assistance to those who provide or assist in the provision of public transportation services in rural and small urban communities in order to promote the coordinated delivery of safe, efficient, and effective transit services.

Editor: Yolanda Moore Designer: Stephanie Zavacki

Spotlight—Karen Somerset, Assistant Executive Director, CTD

SPOTLIGHT highlights one of our many energetic Florida RTAP transit professionals and allows these individuals to introduce themselves in their own words. In this issue the SPOTLIGHT is on Karen Somerset the Assistant Executive Director for the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD).

Name: Karen L. Somerset

Title: Assistant Executive Director, Program Administration and Oversight

Birthplace: Tampa, FL

Professional History:

1980-1984 — Florida Marine Patrol

1984-1985 — Office of the Attorney General

1985-1986 — Department of Transportation, Legal Office

1986-Present — Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Years Working with Current Agency: I began working with the Transportation Disadvantaged program in 1986.

Years Working in Transit Industry: 25 years

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit: I have been so surprised to learn how far reaching the paratransit industry is. The services provided affect so many people and such diverse industries. I have had the chance to share experiences with such a wide variety of folks, everyone from riders, to

paratransit managers, to vehicle manufacturers.

Biggest Challenge in Paratransit:

The biggest challenge in paratransit is trying to find needed resources to meet the demand for services.

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit:

I have been blessed with the opportunity to get to know so many great people who want to help others - wonderful people who are involved in the day to day business of providing transportation for individuals who are not able to transport themselves.

Community Involvement: I am an active AWANA's leader at my church and a school volunteer.

Personal Background: I have been married to my husband, Jesse, for 28 years, and we have three beautiful children. We have a lazy basset hound named Rosie, and a gerbil named Ricco. I enjoy sewing, quilt making, and fishing when time allows.

Inspiration: My Great Grandmother. She lived to be 103. She came to Florida in a covered wagon, saw the invention of the television and saw a man walk on the moon. She inspired me to keep an open mind and "never say never."



NATIONAL RTAP—cont'd from cover

sit operators looking for resources. Research Specialists are available through email at info@nationalrtap.org, a toll-free hotline number, 888-589-6821, and online instantaneous chat through the website to assist you in obtaining the resources you need, answering the questions you have, providing the research you might not have time to do, and even assisting you with grant writing needs.

The National RTAP Peer-to-Peer Network boasts two decades of one-on-one assistance between seasoned industry professionals and rural communities and agencies across the country. The program has recently been revamped and the peers operate in regional teams which includes interaction with regional FTA offices, State RTAP Managers and national peer partner programs. One-on-one peer assistance now includes assistance to State RTAP Managers. Online forms are available on the National RTAP website to volunteer to be a peer or to request peer assistance.

You may have noticed the new look, logo and website launched by National RTAP. Continue to check the website, www.nationalrtap.org, as new features and updates are made to the more interactive site. The National RTAP website is an excellent go-to source to keep abreast of upcoming rural transit events including conferences and webinars, new releases by partners, featured videos and postings by the Research Specialists to their blog. Also, look for recently released best practices by National RTAP including one on Driver Simulators and another on electronic grant management systems. Be sure to take advantage of the resources National RTAP offers for your rural transit needs!

National RTAP is operated under cooperative agreement between the Federal Transit Administration and Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association.

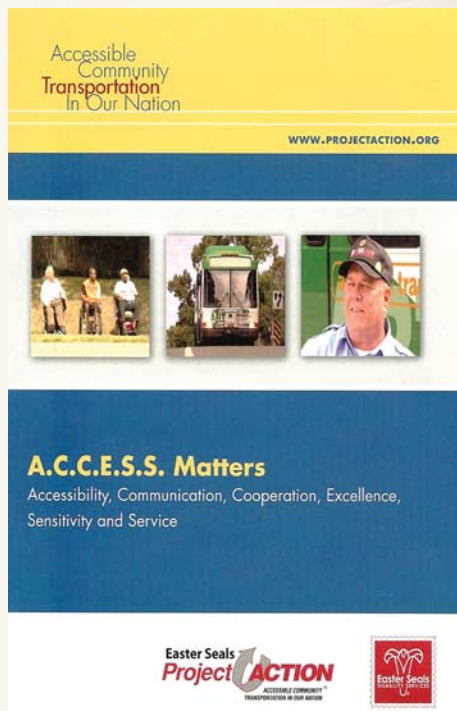
New Training Tool for Bus Operators

Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA) has announced the availability of a new training course designed for fixed-route bus operators to assist in their understanding of law and the basics of good customer service to passengers with disabilities.

The course, contained in a CD-ROM and DVD is titled “A.C.C.E.S.S Matters: Accessibility, Communication, Cooperation, Excellence, Sensitivity and Service.” The course is available free of charge and includes a video, trainer materials, a participant worksheet, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) materials.

The course can be used as part of an agency’s orientation and training for new bus operators and as part of refresher training for veteran operators. It provides useful content for a monthly in-service meeting (e.g., safety and security) or similar event.

The training course can also be used for self-study, requiring 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete. The materials guide operators through the course with a video narrator providing instructions on when to pause the video to complete sections of the participant worksheet.



If used in a group setting, trainers are provided topic-specific information, talking points and trainer notes that include suggestions for group discussion. Participant worksheets for operators to complete during the training are also included.

This course was developed with guidance provided by a design board comprised of fixed-route bus operators, bus operator trainers, and people with disabilities from throughout the United States. The design board advised ESPA staff on learning objectives and effective ways to deliver the training, and reviewed the materials that were developed to accompany the video.

Copies of “A.C.C.E.S.S Matters: Accessibility, Communication, Cooperation, Excellence, Sensitivity and Service” are available for checkout through the Florida RTAP Resource Center or you can request a DVD directly from Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA), http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_STAT_ACCESS09.

*Florida RTAP
Wishes You a Happy
Holiday Season*

St. Johns County Council on Aging Transportation Department Receives 2009 STAR Award

Beverly Foundation President and CEO Helen K. Kerschner, Ph.D. recently announced that the Trustees of the Beverly Foundation had selected the Council on Aging in St. Johns County, Florida, as a recipient of a 2009 Beverly Foundation STAR Award for Excellence.

As Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) since 1983, the St. Johns County Council on Aging (SJCCOA) has been identifying and meeting the transportation needs of senior passengers for more than 25 years. Last year 228,000 trips were provided for St. Johns County residents, the majority of whom were seniors. Many riders were transported to various medical and personal appointments such as dialysis, preventative medical screenings, follow-up care or shopping; others went to one of three SJCCOA senior centers where they enjoyed daily activities, socialization and a noon meal. The accessible and affordable COA transportation options allow an entire population of mobility challenged elders to make independent decisions regarding where they go and connects them with vital services, quality of life choices, community involvement, and the opportunity to live their best lives.

The SJCCOA has been recognized for its innovative and effective approach to transportation, receiving the 2006 FTA Administrator's Award for Outstanding Public Service in Rural Public Transportation, the 2008 Florida Regional Council, and the 2008 Community Transit System of the Year Award from the Community Transportation Association of America.

SJCCOA is adept at identifying and removing barriers like budget constraints and funding regulations that hinder responsive transportation for elders. In 2008, COA implemented a volunteer driver program, effectively eliminating trip purpose priorities, Medicaid card requirements, and specific travel time frames for those whose needs fell outside the mobility regulations "box." COA worked with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Department which donated six pre-owned sedans for the program. Just seven months later, more than 10 volunteers, most of whom were seniors, participated in the program. One volunteer transports seniors to the



(L-R) Barbara Williams, Carol Currie, Ruby Cook, and Antonia Burgos

mall for a health maintenance walking program, others take mobility challenged seniors to evening events at each of the three SJCCOA senior centers. This allows less mobile senior residents to be included in events like "Dinner and Movie Night," dances, speaker series, and special fundraisers. Volunteers also provide auxiliary transportation to senior centers during the week and transport wheelchair-bound and fellow parishioners to church. Every month, more than 25 seniors benefit from this program, still in its beginning stages! The SJCCOA also initiated a "Ride Guide" program that offers instruction and assistance to those who have never utilized public transportation; both volunteer and paid staff drivers are also trained in safety and sensitivity procedures to better assist their passengers.

The SJCCOA plans to further recruit train and retain its volunteer driver force and to expand its marketing/awareness program to the elder population, increasing its capacity to serve the mobility challenged seniors of St. Johns County. For example, after attaining additional funding in 2008, the COA was able to effectively target seniors in rural areas resulting in an 18% increase in utilization of transportation services! The SJCCOA transportation department will continue, especially during these uncertain economic times, to identify and remove barriers to independent living for seniors!

For more information about SJCCOA and its volunteer program, please contact Susan Johnson Communications Coordinator (904) 209-3662 or via email at coa13@aug.com or sjohnson@stjohnscoa.com.

Florida RTAP Training Opportunities

As we approach the end of 2009, we would like to thank many of you for your interest in and attendance at the various trainings and workshops offered through Florida RTAP at the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and other transit agencies throughout the State of Florida.

Many of you have a desire to make a difference at your job, in your communities, and the people you serve. Many see training as an opportunity to equip and be equipped, and many others want to improve on skills and feel a sense of personal and professional accomplishment. Utilizing natural gifts are important, but expounding on those gifts and nurturing a skill or talent is vital to the success of an organization, its employees and the community in which they serve.

Budget cuts and travel limitations may make it difficult for employees to attend a training course. However, through the use of technology, online course offerings provide a more cost-effective way to train employees and save money. We are looking for opportunities to provide more webinars in the future to allow those with budget issues or travel restrictions to participated in RTAP sponsored training.

Below is a listing of some of the courses that we offered to the RTAP community this year and some of the upcoming courses planned for 2010. All training courses and opportunities are announced via the Florida RTAP listserv and posted on the Florida RTAP website at www.floridartap.org/pages/training.html.

TSI 1-Day Instructor's Course in Paratransit Operator Training—March 27, 2009

This instructor-led one day course provides a standardized training program that can be used by any paratransit service provider to train qualified, professional paratransit bus operators. Instructors are trained in presentation and creative learning techniques, facilitation methods, and adult learning principles for teaching operators skills in vehicle operation, emergency management, and customer relations.

FTA Grants Management Workshop—July 22, 2009

A significant way the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) helps communities support public transportation is by issuing grants to eligible recipients for planning, vehicle purchases, facility construction, operations, and other purposes. FTA administers this financial assistance according to authorization, SAFETEA-LU. Generally, FTA funds are available to designated recipients that must be public bodies (i.e. states, cities, towns, regional

governments, transit authorities, etc.) with the legal authority to receive and dispense federal funds.

NTI Advanced Mobility Securement Train-the-Trainer—September 22-23, 2009

The National Transit Institute Workplace Safety and Security program area is pleased to announce a new course, Advanced Mobility Device Securement. The goal of this course is to assist transit operators in the best practices and principles of securing individuals and their manual and powered mobility devices.

NTI Paratransit Management & Operations Course—October 13-14, 2009

This course is intended for people who manage or operate paratransit services. This is a comprehensive course. The content is geared for people who have experience working with paratransit services. The goal of this course is to teach transit professionals the skills needed to effectively manage and operate paratransit services. The course is facilitated by industry professionals with extensive experience in paratransit service and the ADA.

NTI Securing Community Mobility Train-the-Trainer—February 1-2, 2010

This training program focuses on the specific security concerns of urban paratransit, rural transit, human service transit, resort transit, and other community-based transportation operations. It addresses threats and vulnerabilities related to workplace violence, dangerous passengers, criminal behavior, and domestic/international terrorism. The training presents practical strategies to reduce vulnerabilities and real-world methodologies for reacting to threats that occur within a community transportation environment.

NTI Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention Workshop—February 3-4, 2010

This National Transit Institute course is targeted at transit employees who work directly with the public and those responsible for cleaning, servicing, and maintaining transit vehicles and facilities.

“Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.”

Abigail Adams, 1780

Careers in Transit

The National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) at the University of South Florida has announced the availability of a 10-minute video entitled “Careers in Transit.” Public transportation has often been referred to as “the accidental occupation” because most people are not aware of the many good career opportunities that exist in the field of transit. This fast-paced DVD is designed to be seen by high school and college students who have yet to make up their minds on what field they will enter. It provides a glimpse of the kinds of jobs that are available within the industry and stresses the “green nature” of transit. It also identifies some of the technology applications that are being utilized in transit.

NCTR hopes the video will increase the interest in exploring a career in public transportation. Given the tremendous competition there will be for talent once the Boomer generation retires, the public transportation indus-

try must compete for good applicants and increase its visibility as an employer of choice.



This video has been posted on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=txg9PDWTW78.

NCTR would like to acknowledge the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority in Tampa, Florida, the Research and Innovative Technology Administration of the USDOT, and the Florida Department of Transportation for providing the funding needed to produce this video. NCTR acknowledges CUTR’s Stephanie Zavacki and Amber Reep for their diligence and patience in producing the video. The NCTR Careers in Transit video will be an excellent tool for those who wish to help young people become aware of the many good paying, interesting, and community-oriented positions there are in a field that is sure to expand in the future.

The Facts on FACTS

The Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (FACTS) is committed to building Community Transportation for all Floridians. FACTS was chartered in 1987 as a strong supporter of public transportation, statewide coordinated transportation, and Chapter 427, Florida Statutes, which establishes and strengthens the coordinated system. The organization has worked closely with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in representing the interests of riders of public transportation, Community Transportation Coordinators, Designated Official Planning Agencies, Subcontracted Transportation Providers, and vendors serving Community Transportation systems. Many of FACTS members have served on the CTD as Commissioners as well as FDOT Community Transportation subcommittees.

Our country’s need for Community Transportation has never been greater and will continue to grow as economic constraints steadily increase the cost of private vehicle ownership. FACTS members comprise a transportation knowledge base that daily benefits those who use Florida’s

Community Transportation systems as well as the Florida taxpayers that fund these services. Chapter 427, Florida Statutes, which mandates the coordination of public transportation funding, has saved millions of Florida tax dollars. FACTS promotes coordinated transportation through peer to peer networking, identifying problems and sharing solutions, and by providing information and recommendations to political leaders, agencies, organizations and individuals thereby enhancing their ability to make locally appropriate decisions. FACTS also works to support local, state, and federal agencies involved in the improvement of Community Transportation.

Help us build Community Transportation for all Floridians. Become a member of the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems today by contacting the FACTS Executive Director, Shirley Conroy at (904) 471-4618 or email shirleyconroy@yahoo.com.

2009 & 2010 UPCOMING EVENTS

The classes and conferences listed below are sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation and the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida in Tampa. If you would like to attend any of the courses, you will find a course announcement and registration form for each course at www.floridartap.org in the Training Calendar section. Click on course name to download or view training class details. If you have an idea for a training course or would like to host a course, please contact Amber Reep (813) 974-9823.

December 9, 2009

Reasonable Suspicion Determination for Transit Supervisors—Orlando, FL

January 11-14, 2010

TSI Instructor's Course in Bus Operator Training—Tampa, FL

January 15, 2010

TSI 1-Day Instructor's Course in Paratransit Operator Training—Tampa, FL

January 26-27, 2010

ITS: Defining Data Interfaces Using TCIP—Tampa, FL

February 1-2, 2010

NTI Securing Community Mobility Train-the-Trainer—Tampa, FL

February 3-4, 2010

NTI Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention Workshop—Tampa, FL

February 22-26, 2010

TSI Transit Supervisor's Certification Course—Orlando, FL

February, 2010—TBD

Conflict Avoidance: The Art of Maintaining Control—A Guide for Transit Operator Trainers—Jacksonville, FL

RTAP ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MICHAEL WRIGHT
FDOT

JULIA DAVIS
DISTRICT 1

GWENDOLYN PRA
DISTRICT 2

KATHY RUDD
DISTRICT 3

OPEN
DISTRICT 4

SANDRA HILL
DISTRICT 5

ED CARSON
DISTRICT 6

OPEN
DISTRICT 7

KAREN SOMERSET
CTD

DONNA CART
MARION TRANSIT SERVICES D5

DESIREE PAINTER
LEVY COUNTY TRANSIT D2

SHARON PEELER
J TRANS D3

BARBARA TIMMERMAN
MARTIN COA D4

RAYMOND ARCHER
KEY WEST D6

RICHARD COOK
TRANSHERNANDO D7

CATHERINE BROWN
ST. JOHN'S COUNTY
COUNCIL ON AGING, INC.

JAY GOODWILL
YOLANDA MOORE
AMBER REEP
LISA STAES
CUTR

Everybody, Somebody, ANYBODY, and Nobody

This is a little story about four rural transit professionals named **Everybody**, **Somebody**, **ANYBODY**, and **Nobody**.

There was an important job to be done and **Everybody** was sure that **Somebody** would do it.

ANYBODY could have done it, but **Nobody** did it.

Somebody got angry about that because it was **Everybody's** job.

Everybody thought that **ANYBODY** could do it, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** wouldn't do it.

It ended up that **Everybody** blamed **Somebody** when **Nobody** did what **ANYBODY** could have done.

MORAL OF THE STORY: Don't wait to get involved in the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program, be an example for **Everybody**.