

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SPRING/SUMMER 2009—VOL. 7, No. 2

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13th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo Recap

The 13th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo was held the first weekend of May at VOTRAN in South Daytona. The weather was wonderful, the lodgings at the Hilton Daytona Beach Resort on Daytona Beach were picturesque, and the hospitality of VOTRAN was magnificent!

With over thirty of Florida's best paratransit operators competing for the title of Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo Champion, the 2009 Roadeo proved to be a spirited and lively event.

At the Roadeo awards banquet on Saturday evening, an inaugural event for the Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo, the following winners and champions were announced and recognized:

Van Division: 1st place winner Peggy Shiver, Liberty County Transit; 2nd place winner Raymond Aylmer, Gulf County Transportation; 3rd place winner Michael Wimberly, Calhoun County Transit

Small Bus Division: 1st place winner Howard Jones, JTRANS; 2nd place winner Jack Binegar, St. Johns County COA; 3rd place winner Ernest Rittman, Big Bend Transit

Sure-Lok Above and Beyond Award: Lawson Willis, VOTRAN

As Florida Paratransit Roadeo Champions, Peggy and Howard went on to compete at the National Paratransit Roadeo event sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of American (CTAA) in Providence, Rhode Island in early June.

Based on the success of this year's event, be sure to make plans to attend the 14th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo which will again be held in Daytona Beach.



Van Division: (L-R) Raymond Aylmer, Peggy Shiver, Michael Wimberly



Small Bus Division: (L-R) Ernest Rittman, Howard Jones and Jack Binegar



Above and Beyond Award Winner: (L-R) Lawson Willis—VOTRAN & Chris Yaber—Sure-Lok, Inc. Representative

St. Lucie County Public Transit Launches Two New Fixed Routes

On March 12, 2009, representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners, City of Port St. Lucie, and local supporters attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at the City of Port St. Lucie Community Center, one of the local transfer stations for the Treasure Coast Connector fixed routes.

St. Lucie County Council on Aging/Treasure Coast Connector was responsible for the launch of two new fixed routes to the western region of the county. The new routes are funded by the Florida Department of Transportation with local match from St. Lucie County, through a public transit Municipal Service Taxing Unit.

Since the demand for transportation services continued to increase significantly over the past five years, it became a necessity to institute these new fixed routes. Thanks to the support of the state, county and city commissioners, as well as the residents of St. Lucie County, this dream has materialized. St. Lucie County now has six fixed routes. Four of the six routes travel along the east-west corridors of Port St. Lucie and Fort Pierce, which connects to the US 1 north-south route which travels from Avenue D & 8th Street in Fort Pierce to Martin Memorial Hospital in Martin County.

To find out more about the routes and services, check out their website www.treasurecoastconnector.com.



Left: Charles Negard, rep of LCB, Padrick Pickney (partially hidden), member of the COASL Board of Director; (back) Peter Buchwald, St. Lucie County TPO Director; (front) Darrell Drummond, President/CEO Council on Aging, Jeff Weidner, FDOT, City of Port St. Lucie Commissioner Linda Batz, St. Lucie County Commissioner Charles Grande, Mayor Patricia Christensen, City of Port St. Lucie and Katherine Hensley, member of LCB and St. Lucie County School Board

TD Commission Recognized by Florida TaxWatch

Each year Florida TaxWatch recognizes state agencies whose work significantly and measurably increases productivity, promotes innovation to improve the delivery of state services, and saves money for Florida taxpayers and businesses. This year's Florida TaxWatch Davis Productivity, State Agency of the Year Award, was presented to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

The Commission coordinates and provides accessible transportation to the Transportation Disadvantaged throughout all 67 counties in Florida. The Transportation Disadvantaged are those who cannot obtain their own transportation due to a disability, age, or income.

A recent study conducted by FSU concluded that for each \$1 spent on Transportation Disadvantaged Services the state receives 835% or \$8.35 payback on the investment. Each trip provided keeps citizens independent and healthy, by getting them to health care and out of a hospital or nursing home, or by getting them to a job or to a store to spend money.

For more information on the TD Commission visit their website at www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/ or call 800-983-2435.



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RTAP BULLETIN

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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—Mike Wright, FDOT RTAP Manager

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 Mike Wright the FDOT RTAP Manager.



Title: Commuter Assistance Program & Rural Transit Assistance Program Manager

Birthplace: Coco Solo, Republic of Panama

Education: B.A., University of Toledo (Political Science) M.S.P., Florida State University (Urban Planning)

Professional History: I have worked my entire adult life in government positions, first as a transportation planner at the MPOs in West Palm Beach and Tallahassee. Then I migrated over to the state side and have worked for the last twenty years at both the Department of Community Affairs where I was involved in the birth of the comprehensive planning process and then the Department of Transportation.

Years Working With Current Agency: I have been at DOT since 1991, working first as the Statewide MPO Coordinator in the Office of Policy Planning and for the last ten years in the Transit Office under the tutelage of Liz Stutts learning all about commuter assistance. I have been the RTAP manager since 2005 and am still learning the ropes on 5311 and the myriad of rural transit issues. Still got a long way to go!

Years Working In Transit Industry: My experience with transit has been solely from the planning and government technical assistance angle. Since I don't have firsthand experience with the transit industry I am forced to rely heavily on others to give me the guidance that I so sorely need.

Biggest Challenge in Paratransit: The biggest challenge is trying to find ways to help the industry stretch their limited funding and get the training and technical assistance they need to provide a quality service. There is still so much that we can do to enhance the quality of rural transit service across the state it is a matter of staying focused and creating a consensus on an overarching plan of action.

Personal Background: I have been married for 22 years and have two wonderful children, a daughter, who will be attending the University of West Florida to study art and

music, and a son, who is finishing up 4th grade and who has forced me to take up camping (ugh) as part of the Cub Scout activities. I like to travel and have hopes of one day making it back to South America and Europe. I love to go to concerts and plays and getting together with friends.

Childhood Ambition: As a child I always wanted to be an author and/or playwright and amazingly it is still an ambition that seems to have survived into middle-age. I just need to find some time to get past the outline stages and actually sit down and write *The Great North Floridian Novel*.

Inspiration: This is a hard one, so many things and people inspire me, but I'm most inspired by people who go out of their way to help others when there is nothing in it for them. It restores my faith in the basic goodness of humanity — which is always in need of restoration.

Favorite Books: This list is always being changed as my moods change but at this time my favorites are — *Hundred Years of Solitude*; *The Forgotten Man* (non-fiction); and, *The Sun Also Rises*

Favorite Movies: Now this list is more stable with *Die Hard*; and *It's a Wonderful Life*; those are my two favorite movies and round it out with another favorite *Louis Malle's Au revoir, les enfants*.

Favorite TV Shows: : How can you go wrong with the following? "Battlestar Gallactica"; "Burn Notice;" "Frasier"; and "The Big Bang Theory".

My Motto: "If it seems too good to be true, then most likely it is too good to be true!"

Mr. Wright Goes to Washington

Our own Florida RTAP Manager, Mike Wright, was recently appointed to serve as a member of the National RTAP Review Board.

This fourteen member board guides and informs the work of National Rural Transit Assistance Program. Composed of local operators and state departments of transportation representatives, the Review Board provides in-depth expertise and local perspectives to ensure that products and services are of the highest quality, easily accessible and useable by local transit operators.

Florida DOT Adds New Vehicle Contracts

The Florida DOT has announced new additions to its lineup of new transit vehicle contracts available for purchase through its TRIPS program (formerly Florida Vehicle Procurement Program—FVPP), as well as significant revisions to some existing contracts.

New Contracts:

Contract **TRIPS-09-CV-GM** is a Commuter Van contract provided by Florida dealer Getaway Marketing, Inc. with its manufacturing partner New England Wheels for the primary purpose as a commuter passenger van or for other special purpose vehicle for public transit systems and/or governmental agency use. Built on either a Chevrolet/GMC 2500 or a Ford E-250 Chassis, each has a center aisle seating up to 9 passengers in addition to the driver. An option is available to provide a stretcher cot and stretcher securement system with reduced seating as well as other options to be attractive to commuters.

Contract **TRIPS-09-MD-FTS** and **TRIPS-09-MD-TP** are both Medium Duty 30' long rear engine city fixed route type buses provided by either Florida Transportation System (FTS) in partnership with Eldorado National or Transit Plus, Inc (TP) in partnership with Champion Bus, Inc. FTS is providing the E-Z Rider II, a low floor bus with optional BRT exterior and mid-bus passenger doorway. TP is providing the CTS, a standard high level flat floor with optional mid-bus passenger doorway.

Contract **FVPP-05-CA-4** now has an Azure Hybrid Electric Drive option on a Ford E-450, 22', 14,050# GVWR Chassis. This second TRIPS hybrid drive

option is in addition to Contract **FVPP-05-CA-3** which provides an Eaton Hybrid Drive option on an International Chassis.

Revisions:

Ford Chassis will be added to all applicable contracts. The Ford E-450 with Azure Hybrid, noted above, will also be added to the Small Cutaway contracts. In addition, a non-hybrid regular Ford E-450 and E-350 will be added to contracts where applicable. This addition is currently in progress due to the recent uncertainty of General Motors Corp. products, so only select contracts reflect this option as of this writing.

Contract **FVPP-08-MV-FTS** or GM has changed vehicle manufacturer. Chevrolet has discontinued its Uplander Mini Van. It is being replaced by Chrysler Dodge Grand Caravan. Additionally, the Event Data Recorder will now be 247 Security System. Due to the conversion from Chevrolet to Chrysler some options have changed.

Discontinuation Announced:

GMC recently announced it will be discontinuing the 4500/5500 series chassis when the current model is exhausted. This will affect all **FVPP-05-CA** contracts except **FVPP-05-CA-3** and **3LF**, which is built on International Chassis.

To get the full information on these new and revised contracts, as well as all the latest information on the TRIPS Program, visit the TRIPS website at www.tripsflorida.org.

Sumter County Transit — Rural Area Public Transit System

The Sumter County Transit (SCT) Maintenance Unit provides a vital link for the inspection and periodic maintenance of transit vehicles, as well as the capability of performing “as needed” repairs between inspection intervals. The Unit is run by one employee, Marshall Winn, a maintenance technician who serves as an interface with various vehicle maintenance facilities utilized by Sumter County Transit for vehicle repair beyond their scope of activities.

Sumter County Transit vehicles undergo a 42 point Preventive Maintenance Inspection after each 7,500 miles of travel. A portion of the inspection includes checking brake wear, tire rotation and checking tire tread depth. Oil changes

occur every 15,000 miles due to the use of synthetic oil and recommended filters.

During each inspection, any vehicle part found to be defective is repaired. Examples of internal repair services include, but are not limited to, brake jobs, fuel pumps, ball joints, alternators, and battery replacement. The internet is utilized to locate a best price source.

Some vehicle repairs necessitate the use of an outside repair facility. Examples include;

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2009 Above and Beyond Award

The Florida Department of Transportation's Public Transit Office awarded its annual "Above and Beyond" award to an exemplary paratransit driver at the 2009 Paratransit Rodeo in Daytona Beach, Florida. The award was presented to Lawson Willis, paratransit driver from VOTRAN in South Daytona Beach.

The purpose of the "Above and Beyond" award is to honor a driver who consistently performs in an outstanding manner and shows great care and concern for passengers with special needs.

Lawson, employed with VOTRAN since 2006, has become a well-liked and respected member of the VOTRAN Gold Team. In her nomination form, Edie Biro, VOTRAN Paratransit Manager spoke highly of Mr. Willis: "He has a fun-loving attitude and his cheerful demeanor extends to everyone he comes in contact with. He doesn't let the little situations that sometimes happen get him down, he just 'goes with the flow.' Mr. Willis loves his job and the people that he helps with their transportation needs. He has received praise from his customers for his helpfulness, pleasant attitude and safe driving. He is always watching out for his customer's best interests and does his best to accommodate their needs. Lawson Willis' goal is safe, comfortable, timely transportation for all of VOTRAN's customers, and he excels in all of these areas. He is always willing to help out another driver or customer. He exemplifies what it takes to be the 2009 Paratransit 'Above and Beyond' winner."

Congratulations to VOTRAN's Lawson Willis for displaying exemplary customer service and for going "Above and Beyond" the call of duty!

17th Annual Transportation Training and Technology Conference

August 17-20, 2009

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged will be hosting their 17th Annual Transportation Training and Technology Conference at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort from August 17-20, 2009. For more information and to register for this networking and professional development event, please visit www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/events/2009Conference.htm

Sumter County—cont'd from p. 4

electronic diagnostic testing, air conditioning repair, transmission repair/replacement, major tune-ups on larger vehicles, wheelchair lift repair, and tire replacement.

When a vehicle develops a problem and repair is required between maintenance intervals, the Maintenance Technician is informed of these problems through daily communication and works to eliminate as much vehicle down time as possible. Often repair problems discovered between periodic maintenance schedules are handled the same day.

There has been a large cost savings in road call repairs. Road call repairs are assessed and repairs performed

at the site of breakdown. This enables the driver to continue with his/her manifest trips and stay on schedule. SCT's roadside repair service has helped curtail unnecessary high cost vendor repair requests and operating costs, as well as extended the life of older vehicles. Should the Maintenance Technician not be able to do the needed repairs, coordination with a wrecker service is done.

SCT's Maintenance Unit performs many functions in transit's daily operations, which permits staff the flexibility to schedule vehicles for maintenance and servicing while maintaining a very good level of cost control. During the past year, vehicle repair and maintenance costs have been reduced by 5%.

Marie Nicolette Sumter County Transit
(352) 568-6683 Marie.Nicolette@sumtercountyfl.gov



Marshall Winn, Maintenance Technician

Florida's Rural Transit Providers Turn Out for the 8th FDOT/ FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop

On May 19th, the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) hosted the eighth annual FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop in Tampa, Florida. Over 200 transportation professionals representing 40 transit systems, consultants, and other organizations attended the workshop. Many of Florida's rural transit providers attended this year's workshop including representatives from Baker, Charlotte, Lake, Levy, Martin, Polk, Pasco, and Saint Johns counties and the Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative.

Three significant changes to this year's workshop dramatically affected attendance and participation. First, in response to travel and budget restrictions placed on Florida's transit systems, the agenda was compressed to two days instead of the usual three days. This proved to be a successful change.

Second, a Workshop Planning Committee was established to assist with the development of the agenda. This committee included representatives from FDOT's Florida Operator Trainer Training Program, the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), the Transit Research Inspection and Procurement Services Program (TRIPS), the Transit Maintenance Analysis and Research Center (TMAARC), the Florida Transit Planning Network (FTPN), the Florida Transit Marketing Network (FTMN) and the Florida State-wide Transit Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAT). Each member of the committee was responsible for identifying specific training sessions within four educational tracks, including those that would be valuable to both rural and urban transportation providers.

The Workshop Planning Committee worked together to develop an outstanding agenda. Some of the more popular sessions included: "Understanding ADA;" "Your Organization's Carbon Footprint: Commuting and Business Travel;" "Balance Between Providing Paratransit Service and Fixed Route;" "Drug and Alcohol Testing for Supervisors;" and "Overview of FTA Civil Rights Program Requirements." In addition to these popular sessions, a series of "Transit—101" training classes were offered which included "Transit Service Planning;" "Basics of Transit Procurement;" "Basics of Transit Grants and Funding Programs;" and "Preparing for Triennial Reviews." All of the training sessions were well

attended and received phenomenal feedback from the participants.

The third change to this year's workshop included an offer by FPTA allowing Florida's transit agencies to receive two free nights at the host hotel, the Embassy Suites. This generous offer allowed transit systems with limited travel budget and strict travel restrictions to take advantage of the fantastic training and networking opportunities at the workshop.

The FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop continues to grow. As the African proverb states, "it takes a village..." FDOT, FPTA and CUTR have seen the workshop grow from just a small conference into a well-received and much-anticipated professional development workshop attended by transportation professionals state-wide. FDOT, FPTA and CUTR have worked together to make this workshop "a village" for Florida's transit agencies. As they continue to work together, the workshop will continue to grow, flourish and prosper.

If you have any suggested training topics for the 2010 FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop, please e-mail Amber Reep, CUTR Senior Research Associate at reep@cutr.usf.edu.



Sunshine Line Reduces Costs with Oil Filtration System

Hillsborough County's Sunshine Line provides specialized transportation for the elderly, low-income and the transportation disadvantaged. Maintenance costs have been an ongoing concern and significant financial issue for the county's fleet of 74 body-on-chassis minibuses, which log over 1.2 million miles annually.

As part of Hillsborough County's continuing efforts to provide more effective, efficient, and cost-reducing services, the Sunshine Line implemented a special maintenance program project in cooperation with Hillsborough County's Fleet Management Division. This program is designed to save both time and money. By installing a filtration system on each of the vehicles, oil consumption will be drastically reduced and service intervals for PM services will be increased, resulting in a reduction in downtime and labor costs for Hillsborough County.

The PuraDYN system has been installed in Sunshine Line vehicles. This system uses a series of filtration devices that filters and reconditions oil beyond what the primary engine

filtration system is able to accomplish, thereby reducing the need to change oil. The oil is filtered and water and glycol is removed as part of the continuous flow process. Additionally, the replaceable cartridge filter replenishes the oil additives

required to keep the engine running at peak performance. Oil samples are taken to ensure that the oil is maintaining the right viscosity and additive mixture. All of these things combine to provide longer engine life and sustained, peak fuel mileage, while helping the county to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and oil.

The current minimum projected savings per vehicle is about \$390 annually, plus a

labor savings per service. It is anticipated this enhancement will save \$28,800 annually and will reduce oil consumption by 2,220 quarts per year. Service intervals will be expanded and filter changes reduced to maximize the efficiency of the system.

For Information Contact: Ed Wisniewski, Manager, Hillsborough County Sunshine Line; Ernest Hutman, Maintenance Manager, Hillsborough County Fleet Management



Sunshine Line Maintenance Facility

Florida RTAP Resource Center: On the Road to Discovery

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather we have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." — Aristotle

Throughout the past year, the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program has undergone significant changes: a new website with links to various training and professional development opportunities; a new newsletter format to coincide with technology and easily accommodate users; and a new perspective on how to distribute new and current resources to Florida agencies.

Most agencies, if not all, are continuously learning how to do more with less and still provide quality customer service to customers. As budgets are trimmed, agencies are looking for ways to save through "in-agency" training and profes-

sional development. Providing current resources to transit agencies is essential to providing quality transportation throughout the state, and best of all — IT IS FREE!

With the help of surveys, the Florida RTAP Advisory Board, a considerable amount of funding and "on-line researching," the Florida RTAP set out to find new resource materials to meet the needs of growing rural and urban communities and transit demands throughout our state. As the dynamics of transportation needs evolve, resources to address those needs must evolve as well. The Florida RTAP Resource Center has added several new video and publication resources that focus on topics dealing with infectious diseases, safety, driver training, commercial

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2009 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/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.

July 22-24, 2009

FTA Grants Management Training Workshop—Tampa, FL

August 5-6, 2009

Transit Threat & Vulnerability Assessment—Tampa, FL

August 13, 2009

Fatigue Awareness for Transit Agencies—South Daytona, FL

August 14, 2009

Reasonable Suspicion Determination for Supervisors—South Daytona, FL

August 17-20, 2009

17th Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Training & Technology Conference, Hilton Walt Disney World Resort—Orlando, FL

August 18, 2009

RTAP Advisory Committee Luncheon Meeting 12:30 pm to 1:45 pm —TD Conference Orlando, FL

September 22-23, 2009

NTI Advanced Mobility Device Securement-Train-the-Trainer—Tampa, FL

October 25-27, 2009

The 35th FPTA Annual Conference and EXPO, Jacksonville OMNI—Jacksonville, FL

Resource Center—*cont'd from p. 6*

driver's licensing, and HR/Customer Service training.

Our goal is to be the number one source of information for Florida (rural) agencies. Please visit the Florida RTAP website (www.floridartap.org) and click on the "Resource Library" link to browse the materials available for checkout.

You are encouraged to send materials suggestions for the RTAP Resource Library to Yolanda Moore, e-mail: moorey@cutr.usf.edu.



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