

RTAP BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Summer 2004—Vol.2, No.2

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 Catherine's Corner
- 3 2004 Florida Paratransit Rodeo winners
- 4 WAZZUP?

Public Transit Comes to Nassau County

A state-funded public transportation system should soon begin operating in Nassau County. Beginning in September, Nassau County Transportation will operate 2 fixed routes, using 4 minibuses, to provide customers with service throughout the county and around Amelia Island.

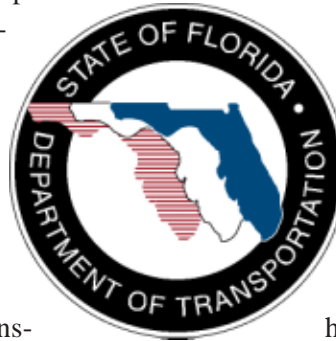
"It's a good opportunity," said Steve Arseneau, community transportation coordinator for Nassau County. "The DOT (Florida Department of Transportation) is giving us this money to get it started and see if it will fly."

The DOT is providing \$108,000 to buy two of the buses, and another \$236,000 to run the service for three years, said Gwendolyn Pra, district transit programs manager.

Nassau County will provide \$109,000 to buy two additional buses. The Nassau County Council on Aging will administer the new shuttle system.

"We have been working on it for a while," Nassau County Commissioner Marianne Marshall said. "We're really excited about it. There is a huge demand for it in our county."

The state funding comes from a service development program designed to provide seed money for innovative projects in hopes that they take hold in the community, Pra said.



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LeeTran Driver Richard Montoro Receives "Above and Beyond" Award

Richard Montoro from Lee County Transit (Lee Tran) received the 2004 "Above and Beyond Award" from Sure-Lok, Inc. for being the exemplary paratransit driver. The award was announced at the 2004 Paratransit Rodeo held in Orlando at the Adam's Mark Hotel on Friday, April 16.

The purpose of the award is to honor a driver who consistently performs in an outstanding manner and shows great care and concern for passengers with special needs. Jerry Crunk of Sure-Lok, Inc., a wheelchair securement products company, sponsored the award, which includes coverage of the award winner's travel expenses. All drivers from rural and urban areas were eligible to be nominated. There were three primary eligibility criteria:

continued on p.3



As the summer draws to an end and school is back in session, many of us realize that the year is almost over and there is still much to be done. We are making great stride with Florida RTAP. However, there is still much to be done. If you haven't visited the RTAP website, check it out at www.rtap.cutr.usf.edu.

Have you heard the saying, without a vision, man will perish? How about this, if you don't know where you are going, you may end up where you don't want to be. I'm not sure if any of this is a famous quote or maybe it's just as my kids would say I just made it up. Regardless, it is a true statement. We now know the direction we are heading with RTAP. The RTAP Advisory Committee met and the committee has defined clear mission, vision and goals for the program.

The **mission** of Florida RTAP is to provide training, continuing education and technical assistance to those who provide or assist in the provision of public trans-

portation services in rural and small urban communities in order to promote the coordinated delivery of safe, efficient and effective transit services.



Congratulations to Catherine Kelly, recipient of the "Florida Paratransit Rodeo Vendors Choice Award" for excellence in rural and paratransit operations. (Pictured with Jerry Crunk, Sure-Lok, Inc.)

The **vision** of Florida RTAP is to be customer driven, comprehensive and the model for others. Several goals were established and re-defined and we will be working to make sure they are accomplished.

If you know of any agency that would like to host our 2005 or subsequent years rodeo, please let me know. We are looking for hosts and locations.

Please take advantage of the upcoming train the trainer workshop which is hosted by JTran in Marianna. If you have any suggestions or requests for training on how best to serve your agency, please let me know. I will continue to work to provide the necessary training and technical assistance that is needed to make a difference in the rural communities. RTAP is here to serve you.

Have a great day and enjoy the rest of the summer.



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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.

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2004 Florida Paratransit Roadeo Winners

The Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems, Inc. and MV Transportation, Inc. co-sponsored the 2004 Florida Paratransit Roadeo April 16-17, 2004 in Orlando Florida. The annual event attracted over 50 drivers and another 150 vendors, judges, friends and family members.

Small Bus Winners



1st Place: Ernest Rittman of Big Bend Transit in Leon County scored 823 points (right); 2nd Place: Greg Strickland of VoTran in Volusia County scored 736 points (center); 3rd Place: Jenó Demers of SCAT + Plus of Sarasota County scored 720 points (left)

Modified Van Winners



1st Place: Tim Smith of Calhoun County Transit in Calhoun County scored 667 points (right); 2nd Place: Donna Driver of St Johns County COA of St John County scored 666 points (center); 3rd Place: Peggy Shivers of Liberty County Transit of Liberty County scored 657 points (left)

Richard Montoro—cont'd from cover

- The driver takes time on a regular basis to create a safe and secure environment for passengers with special needs;
- The driver properly secures the mobility aid and occupant restraints; and
- The driver demonstrates sensitivity toward individuals with special needs.

Here's Richard's story in his own words:

"I do the 150 Route on Wednesday, A.M., and one of my regular riders is a 70 year old woman named Alice Maran. Over the past month I had become friendly with Alice and she would share her personal life including her job and health situations. She was always prompt and was waiting for me every Thursday at 9:15 a.m. to be driven to the Publix on Bonita Beach Road where she worked.

"This particular morning, February 19, 2003, I was surprised she wasn't waiting for me in her usual spot: sitting

in front of her trailer reading her book. I waited about 15 minutes and became concerned when she did not come out. Noticing her book lying on her chair and the paper in the driveway only amplified my concern. I decided to check things out so I proceeded to knock at her door. The T.V. was on and the light in the living room was on. I knocked again and called out. I could hear faint banging on the wall near the bathroom and when I pressed my ear against the wall I could hear her calling for help. I called the office to call 9-1-1 and EMS and the fire department arrived in minutes.

"I understand she had a stroke Monday evening and lay on the bathroom floor two days unable to move. She is diabetic and takes insulin everyday.

"Fortunately after two weeks in ICU she is now home recuperating."



Richard Montoro (center) from Lee County Transit accepts the 2004 "Above and Beyond Award" from Sure Lok representative Jerry Crunk (right).

Public Transit Comes to Nassau

—cont'd from cover

A 2001 state-administered study of Nassau County in 2001 revealed a serious need for public transportation, Pra said. DOT has funded the start-up of similar bus systems in Baker, St. Johns, Clay and Putnam counties, she said.

Arseneau said many system details remain to be worked out, but the goal is to have the service started by September. Final decisions are pending on the fares and the schedule, and shelters, signs and brochures need to be made.

The minibuses likely will run 10 hours a day, six days a week, starting early in the morning to allow west Nassau County residents who work on the eastside to use the buses to get to work, Arseneau said.

“It will be limited service until we get up and running,” Arseneau said. “It will be a work in progress.”

Connecting east and west Nassau County may be just the beginning for the new bus system. Arseneau has had several meetings with Jacksonville Transportation Authority officials to discuss a possible JTA link to transport Nassau County passengers to Jacksonville.

Pra said the DOT will track the progress of Nassau County’s system. Officials will take a serious look at it six months after it’s up and running to evaluate whether riders are using it.

“We think it’s going to be a great thing for the county,” Pra said. “We think the public’s really going to like it.”

WAZZUP?

August 23-27, 2004—Paratransit Drivers Qualification Course, Jtrans, Marianna. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

September 7-9, 2004—Stress Management, Driver Wellness, Conflict Avoidance (Train-the-Trainer), CUTR. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

September 27-28, 2004—Threat and Vulnerability Analysis, PSTA, St. Petersburg. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

October 4, 2004—GIS for General Managers, Wyndham Westshore, Tampa. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

October 11-15, 2004—RTAP Train-the-Trainer Workshop, Suwannee Valley Area Transit, Lake City. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

October 22-24, 2004—NTI Senior Leadership, CUTR. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

NEW!!

October 24-27, 2004—16th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference, Roanoke, Virginia. For more information, visit www.ctav.org/trb.

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JOIN THE RTAP DISCUSSION GROUP

Sometimes the answers can't be easily found in a book, report, or website. The FDOT-funded Florida RTAP Center at CUTR has developed an email discussion group or listserv for rural transit professionals to ask each other questions and gather information about various aspects of rural transit.

Think of this discussion group as an automatic e-mail distribution system. Any subscriber may send an e-mail message to the listserv and it will be automatically distributed via e-mail to the other members of the group. To subscribe, please send an email to rtap@cutrlist.eng.usf.edu or visit the RTAP website at www.rtap.cutr.usf.edu