

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SUMMER—VOL. 11, No. 2

2 PARATRANSIT ROADEO WINNERS

PARATRANSIT ROADEO TRAINING

3 SPOTLIGHT—PAUL SIMMONS

4 ONLINE TRAINING AT APTA

FPTA/FDOT/CUTR
WORKSHOP—JUNE 18-19

5 TRAINING IS AN
INVESTMENT

6 2013 UPCOMING
EVENTS

CTD WORKSHOP

17th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

The 17th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo was held on April 20th in Fort Myers, hosted by LeeTran. The event was based out of the host hotel – the Crowne Plaza Fort Myers at the Bell Tower Shops. LeeTran trolleys transported contestants, judges and on-lookers from the hotel to the roadeo course at the FDLE parking lot. Saturday evening, the roadeo attendees were welcomed at The Forest Country Club for the Awards reception and banquet.

Florida's best paratransit operators competed for the title of Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo Champion, with several volunteer judges on hand to provide their expertise during the competition. In addition to the on-course competition, participants attended training classes and took a written skills and knowledge test.

Steve Myers, the LeeTran General Manager, and his staff provided top-notch hospitality for all attendees throughout the event.

At the Saturday evening Roadeo Awards Banquet, all participants were recognized, individual events winners were announced and the top three finishers in both categories were announced and spotlighted:

Cutaway Category: 1st place winner Chris Cowles from Lee Tran's Passport Services; 2nd place winner Linda Attaway from JTrans; and, 3rd place winner Dante Marinell from LeeTran's Passport Services.

Van Category: 1st place winner Raymond Aylmer from Gulf County Transportation; 2nd

place winner Tommy Griffis from JTrans; and, 3rd place winner Frank Dyar from Liberty County Transit.

The 1st place winner in each category will represent Florida in the *Community Transportation Association of America's National Roadeo* in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Congratulations!!!!



Operators compete in Roadeo events.

Left: Offset Street



Above: Diminishing Clearance

Below: Right Hand Reverse



Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo Winners

Small Bus Category



L-R: 1st: Chris Cowles; Jill Brown, LeeTran Paratransit Operations Manager



L-R: Robert Westbrook, FDOT; 2nd: Linda Attaway



L-R: Robert Westbrook, FDOT; 3rd: Dante Marinell

Van Category



L-R: 3rd: Frank Dyar, 2nd: Tommy Griffiths 1st: Raymond Aylmer

Paratransit Roadeo Training: Driver Safety

Friday, April 19th, was a great day for Driver Safety Training at the 2013 Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo. CUTR faculty provided a driver safety and wellness class to 26 participants from 19 Florida transit agencies.

This training course was based on a segment of the National RTAP “Safety Training and Rural Transit (START)” module that is a training tool that addresses the latest in vehicle, driver and passenger safety delivery. This class focused on numerous areas of driver safety, including railroad crossings rules, accidents at intersections, driver safety tools, the I.P.D.E Method (Identify, Predict, Decide, Execute), correct following and stopping distances, if necessary, how to safely back a vehicle and over-all safe driving techniques. Additionally, the importance of driver wellness, both physically and mentally was discussed, with an emphasis on exercise and stress management.

The class concluded with a sample test, assisting the roadeo competitors in their preparation for the written test portion of their overall roadeo scores.

Everyone appreciated the open discussion portion of the session which also gave drivers the opportunity to meet operators from other transit agencies, and discuss their policies, procedures and best practices.

Several of the class attendees placed high in various categories during the Roadeo, receiving awards and accolades from their peers and competitors.

Congrats to those drivers who won awards and thanks to everyone who took the driver safety and wellness class, and participated in the roadeo.



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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 Lewis

SPOTLIGHT—Paul Simmons, Deputy Director, Polk Transit

Each SPOTLIGHT edition 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 Paul Simmons the Deputy Director of Polk Transit.



Name: Paul A. Simmons, III

Title: Manager, Polk County Transit Services; Deputy Director, Polk Transit

Birthplace: Dayton, Ohio

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Management, Warner Southern College, Lake Wales, Florida; Certified Public Manager, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

Professional History: Moved to Florida in 1983, employed for 18 years by Star Forms, a computer paper manufacturer, as a Logistics Manager, responsible for all domestic and international warehousing, shipping and receiving for the southeastern United States.

Years Working with Current Agency: 12 years

Years Working in Transit Industry: 12 years

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit: My total lack of awareness of the county wide system in my life prior to my transit position, and the individual stories of those we serve and their need for the service.

Biggest Challenge in Paratransit: Every level of this industry has its challenges whether its operations, scheduling, dispatching, funding and so on. Currently, my focus is on maintaining our coordinated system in our county through this transition of Medicaid reform.

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit: During my 12 years with Polk County I have worked side by side with some of the most giving, compassionate and hardworking staff I have ever had the honor to be associated with. I have certainly learned more from them about this business and appreciate all my colleagues in this industry.

Community Involvement: Leadership Council, George Harris Youth Shelter, Winter Haven Leadership.

Personal Background: My wife of 25 years, Patti, and I have two children. Erik, a civil engineer and vested partner with American Consulting Engineers, located in Wesley Chapel, FL, and Brittany, a Registered Nurse Case Manager with

Medical Management and Re-Employment . We have been blessed with five wonderful grandchildren, 3 boys ,Caleb 7, Brody 7, Braden 6, and two girls, Avery, 1 and Cailyn, 11 months. I am so proud of all of them and anything we do as a family is a fun time. I'm looking forward to our annual beach trip the end of July. We also love dogs and have had many of them in our lives. Abby, our 10-year old Yellow Lab, and Max, a 2-year old black and white Shih Tzu are our fur-children! I also love golf, but I don't play as often as I would like. My main past-time is cheering for my grandsons at their Little League games!

Childhood Ambition: My childhood consisted of playing sports; football, baseball and track, and getting in trouble of course. As a child I was fascinated with airplanes partly due to the fact that my father was an aeronautical engineer for Wright Patterson Air Force base in Dayton, Ohio and head engineer on the designing of the A-10 "Warthog" plus it was cool to see the world from 25,000 ft. above, still is!

Inspiration: My mother and father, who I dearly miss.

Favorite Book: The Bible

Favorite Color: Blue

Favorite Candy: Jujubes

My Motto: It's never too late!!!

**Registration is Open
August 6-7, 2013**

**21st Annual Transportation
Disadvantaged Best Practices
and Training Workshop**

Florida Commission for the



**Transportation
Disadvantaged**

Register Today!

Online Training e-Learning Course Featured at APTA Conference

The *Disability Etiquette for Transit Operators* e-Learning course, which was released to Florida's public transportation agencies in September 2012, was featured at the 2013 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Bus and Paratransit Conference in Indianapolis in early May 2013. This online, self-paced, computer based training course provides transit operators with basic tips, skills and techniques to improve their ability to interact with persons with disabilities in an understanding and effective manner.

CUTR RTAP staff presented on the topic of "Harnessing Technology to Deliver Online Disability Etiquette for Transit Operators Training" during the APTA conference session on "Helping People with Disabilities and Older Adults Make More Use of Fixed-Route Transit Services."

As of March 2013, approximately 55 transit agencies and DOTs from 20 states and Canada have accessed the have accessed the Disability Etiquette for Transit Operators e-Learning course.

2013 FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—June 18-19, 2013

The 2013 FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop will be June 18-19, 2013 at the Embassy Suites-USF, 3705 Spectrum Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33612. The statewide workshop offers a unique professional development opportunity for Florida's public transportation supervisors, front-line employees, and other key staff in operations, maintenance, marketing, planning and administration. This one-stop-workshop offers excellent opportunities to learn from industry experts, attend professional development training, and gather information about innovative industry research, and network with peers.

Registration Information

Registration online at www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta. Registration is free to all Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) members. There is a \$75 registration fee for ALL non-members. For additional membership information, please contact Lisa Bacot at LisaBacot@floridatransit.org, FPTA Executive Director.

Who Should Attend

The Workshop is for supervisors and other key staff currently employed by Florida public agencies (e.g., Florida transit systems, FDOT, etc.), Community Transportation

Online e-Learning courses make the access and availability to training convenient and cost-effective. Advantages of online training include the elimination of travel time and costs, while providing students the flexibility to choose the learning and training times that are convenient.

Florida RTAP is pleased with the response and use of the Disability Etiquette for Transit Operators e-Learning course. With the support of FDOT and guidance of Florida's public transportation professionals, Florida RTAP hopes to continue to develop innovative and necessary online e-Learning training courses for the transit industry.

For more information on the Disability Etiquette for Transit Operators e-Learning course and other transit training opportunities, please contact Amber Reep at reep@cutr.usf.edu.

Coordinators, planning agencies, transportation providers, and/or Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) members.

Registration will close June 3, 2013

For More Information

For additional information or if you have any questions, please email Amber Reep at reep@cutr.usf.edu, Program Manager.

Registration Deadline:
June 3, 2013
Don't Delay, Register Today!
www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta

Training is an Investment that Pays Back Dividends

Hillsborough County Sunshine Line was recently selected as the 2013 Grand Prize Winner for the National Rural Transit Assistance Program Photo Contest “Putting Training to Work.”

The winning photo depicted a portion of Sunshine Line’s pre-service training program for new bus operators and shows how sensitivity training is incorporated into the hands-on training portion of the course.

The winning photo was a snapshot of the Vehicle Basic Control course. During the course, one operator puts on a blindfold and sits in a wheelchair while another operator loads and properly secures the wheelchair then drives the vehicle through a series of eight obstacles. This exercise makes the most of training time; while one operator is becoming familiar with the vehicle width, length, mirrors, wheelchair lift/tie downs, and maneuvering the vehicle; the other operator becomes sensitive to what a passenger with a visual and mobility impairment may feel while riding in the vehicle. It also stresses the importance of explaining what is going on to a person who does not see well to help reduce unnecessary anxiety and the importance of driving smoothly when transporting people with special mobility needs.

Training is a vital component to any transportation organization. The Sunshine Line has adopted a training philosophy which is an investment that pays back great dividends and has allowed the Sunshine Line to exceed performance standards and receive a number of accolades. An effective training program can increase employee morale and confidence, workplace efficiency, productivity, customer satisfaction, and help reduce accidents, complaints, and service cost.



Safety Trainer, Barry Michael (left) conducts a training session.

Commitment from managers to ensure they have an effective and up-to-date training program is important for success. It is equally important that the right person is selected to conduct the training and that they are trained to become a subject matter expert. Another critical factor for success is to train supervisors, cross-train staff for continuity, and capture events that occur to use them as teaching points.

Training needs to build upon itself in a logical sequence; it should be interesting, realistic, hands on, continuous, and periodically reviewed to ensure the training program is up-to-date with the latest industry standards.

Sunshine Line takes a three-tiered approach to training by conducting pre-service training (initial training before an employee starts performing their job functions); In-service training (refresher training) conducted throughout the year; and remedial training (additional training to help employees that are not meeting performance expectations), conducted as needed.

The payback on investment for training is empowering the workforce to perform at a higher level in order to achieve or exceed performance standards.

For further information please contact: Scott Clark, Operations Manager, Hillsborough County, Sunshine Line. (813) 276-8140 clarksd@hillsboroughcounty.org

Florida Photo National RTAP Contest Grand Prize Winner

Sunshine Line, the Hillsborough County Community Transportation Coordinator, was awarded the Grand Prize in the 2013 National RTAP Photos Across Rural and Tribal America contest focusing on “Putting Training to Work.”

The winning photo was submitted by Sunshine Line’s Scott Clark and Gus Toto.

**CONGRATULATIONS
SUNSHINE LINE!**

2013 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 the 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.

June 18-19, 2013

FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—Tampa, FL

August 6-7, 2013

21st Annual Transportation Disadvantage Conference—Daytona Beach, FL

July 15-18, 2013 (Registration is Closed)

Effectively Managing Transit Emergencies—Tampa, FL

October 27-29, 2013

2013 FPTA Annual Conference—Clearwater, FL

21st Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Best Practices and Training Workshop Daytona Beach, Florida—August 6-7, 2013

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) will be hosting its 21st Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Best Practices and Training Workshop at the Daytona Beach Hilton and Ocean Center from August 6-7, 2013. There will be a Commission business meeting on August 8, 2013 at the Daytona Beach Hilton.

As in past years, this event will feature vendors showcasing their products and services. Participants will be provided the opportunity to attend and participate in a wide variety of breakout and plenary sessions. The Awards Banquet on the final evening of the conference will recognize the best of the best in

Florida Commission for the



Transportation
Disadvantaged

the Florida TD industry – both agencies and individuals.

For more information and to register for CTD's 21st Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Best Practices and Training Workshop click on this link conferences.dce.ufl.edu/td/.

If you have any questions, contact Sheri Powers at sheri.powers@dot.state.fl.us or John Irvine at john.irvine@dot.state.fl.us or by telephone at (800) 983-2435 or (850) 410-5700.

We look forward to seeing you in Daytona Beach!