

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SUMMER—VOL. 12, No. 2

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2014 CTD Annual Conference

The 22nd Annual Transportation Disadvantaged Best Practices and Training Workshop returned to the Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld. The event, which was held on July 28-30, 2014, celebrated Florida's Coordinated Transportation 35 years of proven success with the theme: "Evolving with the Changing Environment."

The workshop's keynote speaker was Community Transportation Association of America's (CTAA) Executive Director Dale Marsico.

Conference attendees participated in several informative breakout and general sessions throughout the two day event. The traditional display of products and services by the transit industry vendors provided conference attendees with the latest in equipment, technology and services.

As tradition, the highlight of the conference was the annual Awards Banquet. The 2014 award winners included:

Legislator of the Year: Audrey Gibson, Florida State Senator, District 9

Legislator of the Year: Eula Clark, City of Stuart Commissioner

Elected Official of the Year: Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioner

Volunteers of the Year Award: Jane Walker and Michael Raposa, Pinellas County

Dispatcher/Scheduler of the Year Award: Billy Bennett, Suwannee Valley Transit Authority

Dispatcher/Scheduler of the Year Award: William Reynolds, Votran

Driver of the Year Award: Eddie Romero, Clay County

Safety of the Year Award: Collier County Transit

Operator of the Year: ElderPoint Ministries, Polk County

Innovation of the Year: Broward County Transit

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2014 CTD Conference Award Recipients

Planning Agency of the Year: Northeast Florida Regional Council

Outstanding Local Coordinating Board of the Year: Monroe County

Rural CTC of the Year Award: Lake County Board of County Commissioners

Urban CTC of the Year Award: Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority

Sheila Winitzer Shining Star of the Year Award: Sharon Peeler, JTrans

William G. & Budd Bell Lifetime Achievement Award: Joe and Kitty King

The 2014 Annual TD Conference proved to be fun, informative, and educational. Thanks to all the attendees, speakers, exhibitors, and staff for making this year's event such a huge success!

For more information regarding the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged please contact Steven Holms, CTD Director at (850) 410-5700 or steven.holmes@dot.state.fl.us.



Left to Right: Joe and Kitty King (William G. & Budd Bell Lifetime Achievement Award) and David Darm, CTD



Left to Right: Sharon Peeler, JTrans (Sheila Winitzer Shining Star of the Year Award) and David Darm, Chairman, CTD

Florida RTAP Plays Active Role in 2014 CTD Conference

To maximize the program outreach, the Florida RTAP program leveraged the annual Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged workshop to help inform and educate Florida's rural transit professionals through its sponsorship of several of the keynote and breakout sessions, including:

- Florida RTAP Roundtable breakout session was held to inform conference attendees of the RTAP efforts and to solicit input for future outreach and training efforts.
- The Florida RTAP training module on "Internal Agency Communication" was highlighted in the RTAP Roundtable session, providing attendees with

an example of these no cost training resources to all Florida transit operators.

- RTAP sponsored associated costs for two speakers from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) – Dale Marsico and Amy Conrick.
- Dan Dalton from KFG Group, Inc. was sponsored by RTAP for his two presentations on "Strategies for Providing Cost Effective Transportation Services" and "Innovative Community Transportation Service – Responding to Change."



Vol. 12 No. 2, Summer 2014

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

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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: Jay Goodwill Designer: Stephanie Lewis

SPOTLIGHT—Sheryl Hartzog, Transportation Director

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 Sheryl Hartzog, Transportation Director.



Name: Sheryl Hartzog

Title: Transportation Director, CCTM, Clay Transit

Birthplace: Jacksonville, Florida

Professional History: My experience was obtained from 30 years of hands on training. My professional career began in June 1981 with the Clay County Council on Aging Senior Center and a fleet

of 3 vehicles. In 1984, the Coordinated Transportation Program was implemented and we expanded the services and vehicles. We currently have a fleet of 41 vehicles and provide over 129,204 trips per year.

- I received my Certified Community Transportation Manager certification from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) in 2005. I am also a certified Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Instructor.
- In addition, I have attended various professional developmental training courses and participated in many Department of Transportation Workgroups.
- From 1995-96 served as a member of the original State of Florida vehicle procurement committee that was responsible for setting the state guidelines for procurement.
- From 1998-2011 served as the secretary of the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (FACTS) and serve as an active member of the association.
- In 1993 was awarded the State Safety System Award of the Year by the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged.
- In 1996 was awarded the Rural Community Transportation Coordinator of the Year by the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged.

- In 2004 Clay Transit was recognized in the National METRO magazine as “10 Most Improved Transit Systems”.
- In 2007 received the State Safety System Award of the Year by the Florida Commission for Transportation.

Years Working with Current Agency: 33 years

Years Working in Transit Industry: 30 years

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit: Every day is a new day, you never know from the time you walk in the door what the day has in store.

Biggest Challenge in Paratransit: One of the biggest issues facing para-transit or non-emergency medical transportation providers today is constant funding cuts and reductions in Medicaid reimbursement rates. As people become more aware of our services and the needs grow, we are expected to do more with less. As more and more service funding is reduced, it makes it difficult to provide the same level of service.

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit: The personal benefit to me is working through the daily challenges and helping to make a difference in the lives of the clients Clay Transit transport. We should all be required to throw away our keys for a week and depend on someone else to transport us. It would make us all appreciate even more what our staff and drivers do for our clients.

Community Involvement: Volunteer J.P. Hall Children’s Charities, Clay County Fair Board Member

Personal Background: I am involved in the community in which our family has grown up in. We have three amazing kids (adults) Brandon, Travis and Katie. My hobbies include hanging out at the beach, listening to some good ole’ bluegrass and country music. I like to stay home and play with our dogs and goat.

Childhood Ambition: Always wanted to be a veterinarian.

Inspiration: My Mom always taught us to see the good in people, she has always been there, very loving and caring.

Favorite Color: Cobalt Blue

My Mottos: Never Quit, what doesn’t kill you will make you stronger!

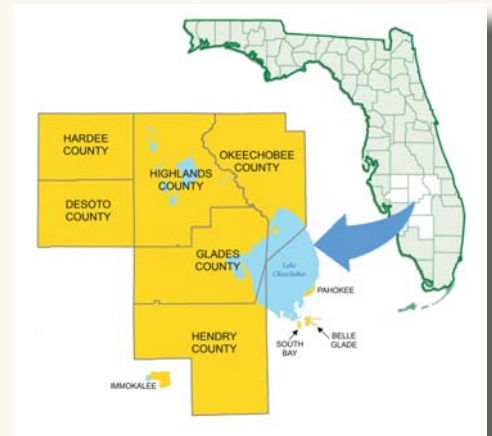
Florida Department of Transportation Districts One and Four Continue Efforts to Sustain Rural Public Transit Services in the Glades Area

The Heartland Rural Mobility Plan (HRMP), completed several years ago by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, represents a comprehensive planning approach to meet the transportation needs of residents and employers in Florida's Heartland Region. The study area for the HRMP includes six designated counties and four individually designated communities in a geographic area that covers over 5,000 square miles and is home to a diverse population with a wide range of mobility needs. The study area mirrors the South Central Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO), previously referred to as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC). RAOs are defined as rural communities, or a region composed of rural communities, that have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events or natural disasters, and have a history of economic underperformance due to chronic conditions such as low wages, lower educational levels, and higher than average unemployment. Throughout the Heartland Region, there are very limited public transportation and/or paratransit options and more than 20% of the population has no access to an automobile. This contributes to the RAO's pervasive economic underperformance in the region by affecting access to jobs, education, basic needs and services, and any type of discretionary travel.

To help improve access to opportunity, FDOT Districts One and Four began the Clewiston – Belle Glade Community Bus Route (also known as “Clew–Belle”), a fixed route transit service linking Clewiston and Belle Glade, in 2002. PalmTran initiated the route and Good Wheels, Inc. currently operates this service. It connects with the PalmTran system in Belle Glade. Good Wheels continues to report strong ridership numbers for this service, and at the end of fiscal year 2012/2013 reported a 44.7% increase in ridership over the past three years. Based on this continued service demand, Good Wheels will be putting two new larger capacity buses

into operation in the near future. These buses will replace the paratransit vehicles that have provided the service for more than five years. Since the Clewiston to Belle Glade Community Bus Route service began, a number of partners have shared in the costs to continue service, including Hendry and Palm Beach Counties, and FDOT Districts One and Four. A challenge for the future is to determine an appropriate regional management structure and stable continuing financing.

Another much-needed and well-used transportation option in the region is the Belle Glade Express, a fixed-route service the City of Belle Glade began in 2010 with a State Transit Service Development grant through FDOT District Four. Such demonstration project funding is limited by State statute to three years. It is estimated that more than a quarter of the City of Belle Glade's population does not have access to transportation. The Clewiston–Belle Glade Community Bus Route also connects with the Belle Glade Express. The Belle Glade Express stops in residential areas and transports area citizens for life-sustaining needs to and from shopping areas, hospitals and health care providers, Palm Beach State College and a variety of other locations located within the City. From the start, the Belle Glade Express had no trouble attracting riders. Even as fares increased and the City instituted service changes associated with funding, ridership continued to grow. The first two full months of service recorded an average monthly ridership of over 2,000 trips on the City's four routes. Today, the Belle Glade Express continues to provide vital links to jobs, education, basic needs



Six counties comprising the Heartland Rural Mobility Area



Belle Glade Express Bus

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and services, and offers independence to many without other mobility options. In the absence of a permanent funding source, the Belle Glade Express service is facing funding issues regarding its continuation. The City has engaged local businesses, agencies, and others to develop funding partnerships. In order to continue this vital service to the community.

Another critical issue in the region is grocery shopping due to the closure of the only grocery store in the City of Moore Haven. “Food deserts”, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), are communities with at least 500 people residing more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. Moore Haven residents have to drive over 15 miles to the nearest supermarket, and those who do not have their own transportation find it difficult to shop for healthy food. The closest communities with full-service grocery stores are Clewiston, 15 miles; LaBelle, 25 miles; Belle Glade, 35 miles; Okeechobee, 40 miles; and Lake Placid 43 miles. Recently, Good Wheels, Inc. started a trial Saturday-only route between Moore Haven and Clewiston to provide access to a full-service grocery store. Since the majority of those using the route would be using it to purchase food, transportation disadvantaged (TD) eligibility is being explored. Individuals who don't qualify for TD might be Dial-A-Ride eligible and would pay a \$1.00 fare each way.

In the past few months, staffs from the FDOT Districts One and Four, and HRMP Mobility Management staffs at the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) have been collaborating in an effort to develop a sustainable operations structure and future financial stability to provide continued rural public transit service in the Glades Area. In the months ahead, this collaboration and other stakeholders will continue working to achieve a viable long term solution. For additional information, questions or suggestions, please contact Sherry Sikes Carver, Mobility Coordinator, CFRPC at scarver@cfrpc.org or (863) 534-7130, ext. 133.

Public Transit Professionals Converge on Tampa

Close to 200 transit professionals gathered in Tampa at the USF Embassy Suites on June 2-4, 2014 for the 2014 FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop and Transit Safety Summit. The workshop and summit were jointly sponsored by the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR).

This year's event was kicked off with a one-day Transit Safety Summit, hosted by the FDOT Florida Transit Safety Network (FTSN), which attracted 100 transit professionals. State and national safety experts provided informative presentations on a wide variety of topics related to transit safety.

Over the next two days, the statewide workshop offered 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. The one-stop workshop provided public transit professionals with an excellent opportunity to learn from industry experts, attend professional development training, learn about research updates, and network with their peers. Workshop attendees participated in educational training classes and general session discussions that stimulated new ideas and identified creative solutions to problem solving and strategic planning.

The workshop sessions focused on topics such as transit planning, operations, maintenance and marketing. Additionally, there were many other professional development topics including, substance program management, public employee ethics, customer service, workplace generational issues and conflict resolution, preparing for triennial reviews, giving effective presentations, as well as business and computer skills, just to name a few.

Registration is Open

**40th Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA)
Annual Conference
October 26-28, 2014**

Waldorf Austoria Naples, Naples, Florida

For further information and to register visit: www.regonline.com/fpta2014

2014 & 2015 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 Lisa Staes at staes@cutr.usf.edu.

September 9-11, 2014

Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance (FT00465-A)—Tallahassee, FL

September 12, 2014

Reasonable Suspicion Determination Training for Supervisors (FT00546-A)—Tallahassee, FL
Note: This training will be presented twice.

September 23-24, 2014

Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport Workshop—Tavares, FL

September 23-24, 2014

Managing for Performance—Safety, Customer Service, Conflict and Work Ethic: A Guide for Transit Operator Trainers¹—Tampa, FL

October 21-22, 2014

Transit Dispatch and Supervisor Training—Sarasota, FL

October 26-28, 2014

40th Annual FPTA Annual Conference—Naples, FL

¹ Required course for the Florida Transit Operator Trainer Training Certification

NEST Training Workshops

The Florida Department of Transportation and the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) sponsored two Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport (NEST) Train-the-Trainer Workshops. The first was held on August 21-22, 2014 in Marianna, Florida (Jackson County). The second will be conducted in Tavares, Florida (Lake County) on September 23-24, 2014.

The safe handling and transporting of stretcher clients presents transit operators with a broad spectrum of challenges. These Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport (NEST) train-the-trainer workshops discuss the meaning of the terms non-emergency and emergency conditions. They raise awareness as how professionalism relates to roles of the non-emergency transport of stretcher passengers. The workshops examine various equipment types, practice and are tested in patient assessment procedures, and in the collection process of the patient's vital information.

Sensitivity issues, review of proper vehicle control procedures, and operations in defensive driving are discussed. Additionally, first responder curriculum is included. Upon completion, each attendee receives a course manual, associated training aids, and a certificate of training for completion of the two-day NEST training course.

For information on the second workshop that will be held in Tavares in late September, contact Molly Buffington at buffington@cutr.usf.edu.