

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WINTER 2008—VOL.6, NO.1

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunshine Line Enhances Training Program to Reduce Accidents and Lower Costs

by Ed Wisniewski, Manager
Sunshine Line

Hillsborough County's Sunshine Line provides door-to-door transportation and bus passes for elderly, low-income and disabled persons who do not have transportation available to them. Hillsborough County's program was named the "Urban Community Transportation Coordinator of the Year" in 2007. While the service covers the Tampa metropolitan area, the majority (70%) of the service area is considered rural.



Background

The Sunshine Line fleet consists of 67 vehicles and 59 drivers, who log more than 1.2 million miles annually, providing a specialized customer-service-oriented transportation service to frail elderly and persons with disabilities. Service is funded by the State of Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) program and various local programs.

During the past year, Sunshine Line management had increasingly more concerns about the rising number of vehicular incidents and minor accidents that were occurring on a monthly basis. Most were related to clearance issues of driving larger vehicles, such as backing into poles, overhangs, and mailboxes. The number of monthly incidents of this type averaged between 7-9 events.

Enhancements

Early in 2007, the Sunshine Line management team implemented a redesigned vehicle training program, which added several new components. The new vehicle training campaign began in January 2007. By March, all drivers had successfully completed the advanced training components.

In addition to the standard training sessions related to the provision of the paratransit service, the Vehicle Training Program now in place for all drivers consists of:

- a Defensive Driving class held in a classroom;
- an Advance Driving Techniques class held on an outdoor obstacle course with safety cones (Sunshine Line staff approached the Safety Director of HARTline about the design of such a course and the sessions are now being held on the property of HART);
- refresher training on the use of Mobile Data Terminals (MDT)/GPS while operating a vehicle, including the use of electronic vehicle inspections;
- pre- and post-trip daily vehicle inspections;

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- safety maneuvers and emergency/evacuation techniques;
- “practice trips” using a controlled schedule with hands-on monitoring by the Safety Officer;
- physical familiarization of common facilities, sites, and fuel locations; and
- a complete and expanded driver training program consisting of “pre-service,” “in-service,” and “remedial” training components.

Driver teams hold monthly training sessions and updates. Quarterly meetings are held for all employees.

Currently, two Sunshine Line supervisors have completed national certification under the newly-implemented U.S. Department of Transportation’s Instructor’s Course for Paratransit Operations.

Results

The number of accidents has been significantly reduced as a direct result of the enhanced training program. For the seven-month period prior to the training campaign, the number of total accidents was 37. During the seven-month period following all training, the total number was 12. This indicates approximately a 66% decrease in the number of total accidents.

Additionally, the MPO/Local Coordinating Board has established an annual standard for vehicle accidents of 1.2 for every 100,000 miles traveled. During the past four months, the Sunshine Line has maintained a 0.8 record, exceeding the standard for the first time in many years.

The lower number vehicle accident repairs do not represent the only savings resulting from the improved program.

Other related areas with undetermined amounts of significant savings include:

- fewer Workers Compensation claims, down from 7 in 2006 to 1 in 2007;
- less vehicle down-time;
- fewer staff hours utilized for shuttling vehicles to and from repair facilities;
- fewer staff hours utilized for accident investigations, passenger coverage, filing reports, and follow-up;
- fewer non-productive drivers in light-duty situations; and
- lessened liability exposure connected with damages to non-county vehicles.

For more information, contact Scott Clark, Sunshine Line Operations Manager, (813) 276-8140, or Arthur Jacobs, Sunshine Line Safety & Training Supervisor, (813) 276-8122.



Vehicle Control Driving Course



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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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Part I—Leadership: The Law of Intimacy

by Sandy Hill, FDOT District 5-Public Transportation

I thought I knew a few things about leadership from what I had learned at the University of Central Florida, at least in theory. But, in all practicality, I had it all wrong.

Intuitively, I thought that being a good leader meant treating everyone the same—avoiding playing favorites and creating a level playing field. However, I learned that there is a difference between the equitable treatment of people and treating people the same. Treating your staff equitably doesn't mean treating them the same. It means giving your people what they need to perform, even though those needs may differ. For example, some need structure while others need lots of freedom to perform. Some need more instruction and direction. This requires a leader to really know what makes their staff tick, learning as much as possible about each person to bring out the best.

In my previous role as a realtor, I learned early that, if I took a genuine interest in my clients, they would open up to me—not necessarily becoming friends with them or socializing with them outside of work, but getting to know them as a team member. Many managers know only the specifics about their staffs' performance on the job. The best way to really know them is to watch, listen, and, most importantly, try different ways and approaches to leading them. Remember, every team member is different and should be treated accordingly. The key as a leader is to find out what it takes to inspire people. Being a good leader is not about fancy oratory, heroism, or strategic vision—it's about teaching, coaching and helping staff excel at their tasks.

Source: *Points of Leadership* by Michael Feiner

Transportation—More Than Just a Ride!

There is never an age when mobility is not an issue or independence a goal. From the day we take our first steps, we are conditioned to utilize whatever mode of transportation is fastest, easiest and most economical. Our first steps, our first skateboard or bike, our first car—each is a stepping stone on the road toward autonomy, control and freedom. And just how difficult would it be to give up our independence, to relinquish our control over where we go, when we go there and how we'll get to where we're going? How easy is it to put our own freedom in the hands of others?

Transportation options decrease the feeling of being dependent and allow all of us—especially the elder community—to retain some measure of control over the ability to make individual decisions regarding daily activities. Even seemingly inconsequential choices, such as where to shop for groceries or where to get a haircut, can have a tremendous impact on a person's sense of well being and their perceived ability to handle life's every day challenges.

The St. Johns County Council on Aging (SJCCOA) offers a variety of mobility options to all community residents, with particular consideration given to the county's elder population who comprise 21% of the population total. The Council on Aging's paratransit services provide door-to-door pick-up and drop-off from home to doctor's office, phar-

macy, shopping and recreation, making more than 600 trips each day. It is available to the over-60 community, those with special needs of any age, and those who are eligible for transportation disadvantaged services through Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged program. Having access to convenient, safe and reliable transportation for individuals and their loved ones extends the benefits of this service to include not only the riders but their families as well.

The Sunshine Bus Company is another way community transportation is offered by the SJCCOA. The Sunshine Bus Company provides public transit through fixed route schedules with deviation options in the greater St. Augustine area. Additionally, through a partnership with the Jacksonville Transit Authority, service is available four times each day to the urban center in Jacksonville. One-day and monthly passes are available at reduced rates for the more frequent rider, and discount passes are available for seniors, students and the disabled. The Sunshine Bus Company retains that hometown feel in an ever-expanding market by allowing "call-ahead" stops for those who find the fixed stops inconvenient.

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2008 UPCOMING EVENTS

The classes and conferences listed below are sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation and the Center for Urban Transportation at the University of South Florida in Tampa. If you would like to attend any of the courses, you may find a brochure and registration form for each course at <http://www.floridartap.org> in the Upcoming Events and Training section. If you have any questions, please contact Molly Buffington at (813) 974-7810.

March 30-April 3, 2008

Instructor's Course in Paratransit Operator Training, StarMetro—Tallahassee, FL

April 4, 2008

1-Day Bus Operator Training Certification, StarMetro—Tallahassee, FL

April 11-12, 2008

2008 Florida Paratransit Rodeo, StarMetro—Tallahassee, FL

May 5-9, 2008

TSI Transit Supervisors Course—CUTR

May 9, 2008

Reasonable Suspension Determination for Supervisors—South Daytona, FL

July 15, 2008

NTI Violence in the Transit Workplace—St. Petersburg FL

June 3-5, 2008

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

Visit the Florida RTAP's new website:
<http://www.floridartap.org>

TRANSPORTATION—Cont'd from p.3

There are continuing challenges in providing mobility services concerning where people want to go and when they want to go there. However SJCCOA holds steadfast the vision that all people want and deserve to live their best lives. Creating mobility options for all is integral to this quest.

For more information, contact Susan Johnson, Administrative Coordinator, St. Johns County Council on Aging, at (904) 209-3662, sjohnson@stjohnscoa.com.

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