

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Curbing Distracted Driving

Nearly 6,000 people died last year in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver, and more than half a million were injured. Distracted driving isn't just limited to private citizens. Bus and train operators, truck drivers, and even school bus drivers have allowed distractions to interfere with the safe operation of their vehicles.

A year ago, a commuter train engineer in Chatsworth, California failed to stop at a red light signal because he was texting a friend. Due to his negligence, one of the worst passenger rail accidents in years occurred, resulting in 25 deaths and up to 135 injuries. In May 2009, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority found it necessary to ban the use of or carrying cell phones by operators of trains, streetcars and buses. This ban came in response to an incident where a trolley operator ran a red light and hit another trolley, injuring 49 people. The operator later admitted that he was sending a text message to his girlfriend at the time of the collision.

In San Antonio, Texas, a VIA Metropolitan Transit driver was caught on video driving through rush hour traffic while texting. The driver slammed into the back of an SUV, injuring the driver. The video (available on YouTube) shows the driver text messaging for almost six minutes prior to the crash.

So what is a Distractive Driving?

Distractive Driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in while operating a vehicle, that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving, increasing the risk of a crash.

There are three main forms of driving distractions that can lead to an accident:

Visual – A distraction that results in a driver taking their eyes off the road.

Manual – A distraction that results in a driver removing their hands from the steering wheel.

Cognitive – A distraction that removes the driver's attention from what they are doing.

One of the most distracted driving behaviors is the use of cell phones. The use of a cell phone can involve all three forms of distraction. Studies have shown that talking on the phone and texting while driving can have the same effect as driving drunk. According to a University of Utah study, talking on a cell phone is like driving with a .08% blood alcohol content level, which most states define as "driving under the influence."

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**Save the Date:
May 7-8, 2010**



2010 Florida Paratransit Rodeo
Hosted By: VOTRAN
South Daytona, Florida



Other studies have shown:

- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. (Source: *Carnegie Mellon University*).
- 80 percent of all crashes and 65 percent of near crashes involve some type of distraction. (Source: *Virginia Tech 100-car study for NHTSA*).
- Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (Source: *Insurance Institute for Highway Safety*).

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, drivers using cell phones are four times more likely to be involved in injury-causing crashes. In addition, these distracted drivers are more likely to commit driver errors and other traffic violations. Drivers using cell phones have slower reaction times than drivers impaired at .08% blood alcohol level. While distracted drivers are “looking” at the road in front of them, they are failing to “see” much of their driving environment.

Google Transit Coming to Sarasota

As you may be aware, there is a new passenger information service being offered to transit riders, Google Transit. Google Transit is a transit trip-planning tool that provides transit passengers with the shortest and fastest route to their destination, based on the rider's travel needs. First launched in Portland, Oregon in December 2005, Google Transit is now a feature in hundreds of transit agencies worldwide.

The Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) system has announced that Google Transit will be coming soon to Sarasota County.

Google Transit's step-by-step instructions, provided to transit users, are available via web browser or mobile phone. The user simply enters a start location, end location, date, time

of departure or arrival, and presses Go! Google Transit supplies an itinerary for the bus trip, including an integrated Google Map to help the transit user with a visual of their riding instructions.

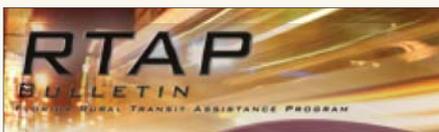
of departure or arrival, and presses Go! Google Transit supplies an itinerary for the bus trip, including an integrated Google Map to help the transit user with a visual of their riding instructions.

A fraction of a second of distraction could lead to permanent and irrevocable consequences.

For more information regarding driver safety or distracted driving, please contact Amber Reep, CUTR Senior Research Associate, (813) 974-9823 or via email at reep@cutr.usf.edu or Debbie Sapper, CUTR Senior Research Associate, (813) 974-1446 or via email at sapper@cutr.usf.edu.

Google Transit is not only a benefit for transit users but also for agencies. The reduction of telephone calls to call centers and faster response times with trip planning telephone calls can be attributed to the Google Transit feature.

For additional information on SCAT's Google Transit project, contact Jason Harris, SCAT Business Data Analyst at (941) 861-1048 or jharris@scgov.net.



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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—Richard Shine, FDOT District Public Transit Administrator, District One

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 Richard Shine the FDOT District Public Transit Administrator for District One.



Name: Richard Shine

Title: FDOT District Public Transit Administrator – District One

Birthplace: Manchester, New Hampshire

Education: Masters of Science in Human Services Administration and Bachelors in Human Services

from Southern New Hampshire University

Participated in Management and Professional Development Programs at the University of New Hampshire, American Public Transit Association, and Urban Massachusetts Transportation Administration, 39th National Massachusetts Transit Management Program at Northeastern University. While also attending numerous paratransit, transit, and planning courses.

Professional History:

- 1975-1979: Community outreach representative and regional paratransit program organizer and operator for the Tri-County Community Action Program in the White Mountains of New Hampshire
- 1979-1983: Transit Programs Coordinator for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation
- 1983-1986: New Hampshire State Public Transit Administrator for the Department of Transportation with responsibility for managing all aspects of all state paratransit and public transit programs
- 1986-1991: Operated an independent transit consultancy, known as “Shine on Transit.” Primary clients were the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States
- 1991 to present: Florida Department of Transportation, District One in the following roles:
 - Planning Liaison
 - Planning Coordinator
 - Transit Projects Coordinator
 - District Public Transit Administrator (2006 to present)

Years Working with Current Agency: 18

Years Working in Transit Industry: 35

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit: “...how large blue plastic barrels can fly through the air with such altitude and velocity, and achieving such distance, when struck by the corner of a paratransit bus during the diminishing clearance obstacle course portion of an annual paratransit rodeo, and what a great opportunity that is for exercise chasing the barrels!”

Biggest Challenges in Paratransit: “Adequate funding to serve all of the truly meritorious needs – needs that will continue to expand as the country’s demographic share of “older” adults continues to grow.

Another challenge is achieving and maintaining efficient and effective cooperative and coordinated services, when at times there may be competing interests in the paratransit arena.”

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit: “There is at this time an expression of speech many are using. It is “... at the end of the day.” In paratransit work, at the end of the day, paratransit workers at every level, from staff who receive calls and coordinate trips; to dispatchers; to people in operations, administration, and maintenance, knows without a doubt that they have helped people to access their life-sustaining activities. Each day, their agencies begin work to transport people as early 4:00 A.M to as late as 10:00 P.M in some remote long-distance rural areas, to and from their jobs at supervised job training sites, to kidney dialysis appointments, and for many more critical trip reasons. They know they might earn more driving a school or transit bus; yet, they remain dedicated to paratransit for the support they provide, and the difference they make, to their agencies’ clients. They are the unsung heroes. I appreciate them, what they do, and I am very proud of them.”

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Community Involvement: Since moving to Florida, I have been active in numerous school, community and neighborhood organizations. A special interest and outreach activity is supporting activities and services for children of migrant farm worker families. I have also served as a volunteer with the Guatemalan Rural and Adult and Children's Education Program.

Personal Background: We have a wonderful German Shepherd-Lab mix family dog, plus two fine family cats. We cherish our immediate and extended families. I like to

keep the fireplace well stocked for the apparently-more-frequently-occurring cold Florida weather, and spend time cutting, splitting and stacking firewood. This also permits me to give some firewood as gifts of warmth for others.

Inspiration: "The great courageous world, national, and community leaders, across many disciplines, some of whom are no longer with us – some of whom continue to work today – and some of whom worked under great personal peril, who have dedicated themselves to improving the life circumstances of others. "

14th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

The 14th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo has been scheduled for May 7-8, 2010 at the VOTRAN facility in South Daytona.

Participants and judges will stay on Daytona Beach at the Hilton Daytona Beach Resort.

The Roadeo will take place on Saturday at the VOTRAN facility at 950 Big Tree Road in South Daytona.

This year's event will be a two-day event that will include an award banquet on Saturday evening at the Hilton Daytona Beach Resort hotel. Registration and training will take place at the hotel on Friday with the big event taking place on Saturday at the VOTRAN facility.

Each transit agency will be eligible to send up to two drivers and two judges at the subsidized rate of \$50 per person. The fee will cover the cost of the two hotel nights, events, meals and the awards for the two day event.

Additionally, for additional participants and attendees, a non-sponsored registration rate of \$90 per person is available. This fee will cover the cost of the events, meals and the awards for the two day event – but the non-sponsored attendees will be responsible for their own hotel room expenses.

The brochure and registration forms for the May 2010 Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo is available for download on the Florida RTAP website <http://www.floridartap.org/pages/training.html>.

SO DON'T DELAY-Register Today!

**Registration Deadline:
March 31st**

FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop

The FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop will be held on June 15 and 16, 2010 at the Embassy Suites Hotel at the University of South Florida in Tampa. This one-stop, workshop offers public transportation professionals an excellent opportunity to learn from industry experts, attend professional development training, learn about research updates, and network with their peers. Florida's RTAP agencies should plan on attending the Workshop. Several classes and sessions have been scheduled that address issues facing you and provide training opportunities that will benefit you and your agency.

Registration will begin in late April. There is no registration fee to attend the Workshop. Participants will be responsible for their own lodging. Brochures and registration announcements will be emailed directly to you. If you have any questions, please contact Amber Reep at (813) 974-9823 or reep@cutr.usf.edu.

Citrus County Transit Improves Bus Service

Citrus County Transit officials recently launched a new and improved fixed bus route between Beverly Hills, Lecanto and Inverness.

Last April, using existing transit funds, the county launched a pilot fixed-bus route between Citrus Springs, Beverly Hills, Lecanto and Inverness as a test for ridership and feasibility. While the original route proved feasible, its ridership fell short of expectations. Subsequently, the Board of County Commissioners instructed the Transit Division to reconfigure the existing route using the lessons learned through the pilot. This included the elimination of service to the Citrus Springs Community Center. The new route was designed to draw more ridership, with numerous stops in Beverly Hills and Inverness.

To help attract ridership, the base fare for the new route was set at 50 cents, and there are now 23 stops in more strategic locations. The Citrus Transit buses have distinctive orange

stripes that coordinate with the orange bus stop signs. The Citrus Transit buses operate Monday through Friday, starting at 6 a.m. and running until about 7 p.m.

For additional information on Citrus County Transit contact Becky Ear at 352-527-7630 or email at Becky.Ear@bocc.citrus.fl.us.



University Taps into Student Population for Drivers! “A Drive to Excel”

Since its inception in 1997, many students have utilized the University of South Florida’s Bull Runner transit system. Not just as passengers, but as drivers. That’s right, student drivers! To help fill many part-time positions, Bull Runner trains current USF degree-seeking students to obtain their CDLs and become professional transit drivers. Coupled with “growing pains” of needing drivers for a rapidly expanding transit operation and having a valuable potential employee resource on campus Rick Fallin, Bull Runner Manager, began to explore the possibility of hiring students and training them as bus drivers. This concept was confirmed when he interviewed several college campuses across the U.S. that use students as their primary driving base. When Rick visited the University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst for an APTA conference, he observed firsthand a successful operation that is primarily operated by the students of that campus. “I returned from that conference energized by their success and implemented a program here at USF that has trained and licensed hundreds of students over the years,” says Rick Fallin.



Above: New student drivers studying the pre-trip inspection.

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The Bull Runner Transit's Training Coordinator, Brian Abrams, started as a student driver in 2004. "As a student driver I gained skills that I would never have learned from any professor. From understanding how customers think, to gaining experience working with such a complex team, to being responsible for a machine that is worth more than the average house, the knowledge obtained is invaluable. It is unique!" One current student driver, Geoff Rauchmiller explains, "I never thought I could or ever would drive a bus, but with great training it is like second nature. Being a part of Bull Runner has made me a better driver, it has made me more aware of my surroundings and helps me to gain respect for the road and the transit profession."

Bull Runner Transit's training program includes many training and development aspects that can be found in any other transit agency. CDL training includes pre-trip inspection, basic skills and over the road training to obtain a Commercial Driver's License Class B. Operator Training includes understanding policies, procedures, radio codes, bus functions and routes. Driver development includes customer service, security, safety awareness and team building. Students who successfully complete all training sections are accepted as a Bull Runner Transit Driver.

As a system that runs 7 days a week with up to 5 routes and carries about one million riders a year, student drivers are an essential component to the success of Bull Runner's mission. Rick Fallin comments, "I consider our students to be an integral part of our operation as they better connect us to our primary customer base and bring a fresh perspective. It also gives a potential professional opportunity within the transit business for students to pursue as well as

secure employment while in school. It has to this point been a win/win for Bull Runner Transit and USF students." Tom Morton, Transportation Supervisor, also comments, "At first when the student program was introduced I was very skeptical. Today I will have to say that using our students as drivers has proved to be very beneficial. They have the flexibility to be able to fill in throughout our complex schedule and the ability to become a professional bus driver."

For more information on the USF Bull Runner transit system, contact Brian C. Abrams, Training Coordinator, USF Bull Runner Transit (813) 974-9071 or babrums@admin.usf.edu.



Above: Student drivers participating in a Disability Awareness class.



Left: Practicing parallel parking.

CUTR Hosts TCIP Workshop

In late January, the Florida Department of Transportation's Statewide Transit Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAT), administered by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), hosted a two day training course in conjunction with the National Transit Institute (NTI) entitled Integrating Transit Applications: Defining Data Interfaces Using TCIP.

For most of us, TCIP is not a part of our daily vernacular. In fact, many of us probably do not know what the acronym actually stands for. TCIP (Transit Communications Interface Profile) is an American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Standard that provides a library of information exchange building blocks, to allow transit agencies and transit suppliers to create standardized tailored interfaces.

The goal of the course was to help public transit professionals, who identify, procure and implement Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), systematically define data interfaces between applications using the TCIP standard.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) are synergistic technologies and systems engineering concepts that help to improve transportation systems of all kinds, and vary in applied technologies, from basic management systems such as navigation systems in cars and buses to traffic signal control systems and variable message signs.

ITS plays an important role in many paratransit system operations including automatic vehicle location (AVL) and CASD software systems which assist dispatchers to assign demand-responsive transit customers to vehicles.

This TCIP training course defined the relationship among ITS architectures at the national, regional, and agency level while recognizing the advantages of using standards. An open discussion on how to use TCIP for transit technology procurement, as well as the TCIP Implementation and Requirements Capabilities Editor (TIRCE) tool to specify TCIP interfaces for a project or product, provided insight on how these programs are being utilized globally.

Numerous Florida public transportation professionals attended the TCIP course. Attendees also included some international students. This training offered participants a



Training participants working on an interactive group activity while attending the NTI "Integrating Transit Applications (TCIP)" class.

unique opportunity to network with their peers and understand the advantages and impact of TCIP standards.

During the second day of training, Lou Sanders, Director of Technical Services for APTA, attended the class. Mr. Sanders welcomed participants and thanked them for their interest in TCIP

The class was held at the University of South Florida's Laptop Lounge (a computer lab) which allowed each participant access to a laptop for practice in using the TCIP Implementation and Requirements Capabilities Editor (TIRCE) and to create and learn how to respond to RFPs for applications that are TCIP compliant.

It was a great opportunity for the FDOT Statewide Transit Training and Technical Assistance Program to continue to bring innovative technology for transit to all Florida's transit agencies. For additional training information contact Amber Reep, CUTR Senior Research Associate, (813) 974-9823 or via email at reep@cutr.usf.edu.

2010 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 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.

March 23-25, 2010

TSI Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance—South Daytona, FL

March 26, 2010

Reasonable Suspicion Determination for Supervisors Seminar — South Daytona, FL

April 8, 2010 (10:30 AM-11:30 AM)

Free Webinar: Radio Communications for Transit Dispatchers—Online

April 13-14, 2010

Fatigue Awareness Seminar for Transit Agencies—Palm Beach, FL

April 15, 2010 (12:00 PM-1:15 PM)

Free Webinar: Maintaining Ridership in Tough Times—Online

May 7-8, 2010

14th Annual Paratransit Roadeo—South Daytona, FL

May 10, 2010 (12:00 PM-1:15 PM)

Free Webinar: Handling Transit Customer Complaints Effectively—Online

May 12-13, 2010

Conflict Avoidance: The Art of Maintaining Control—Jacksonville, FL

May 17-21, 2010

Transit Industrial Safety Management—St. Petersburg, FL

June 15-16, 2010

FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—USF Embassy Suites, Tampa, FL

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Community Transportation Association of America's Mission Statement:

Effective public and community transportation contributes mightily to the quality of life of the people living in the cities, towns and communities in which it operates.