

RTAP BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



Spring 2004—Vol.2, No.1

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Train-the-Trainer Workshop

The Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) in cooperation with the

Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) will be presenting the Paratransit Driver's Qualification Train-the-Trainer Workshops:

■ **May 3-7, 2004**—hosted by Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT)

■ **June 7-11, 2004**—hosted by VOTRAN in Daytona.

This training program is intended to be an RTAP Train-the-Trainer for trainers of new drivers as well as existing drivers. Topics that will be covered include Train-The-Trainer, ADA Service Requirements, Passenger Assistance-Securement-Restraint, Sensitivity Training, and Quality Customer Service.

Upon completion, each attendee will receive an Instructor's Manual and associated training aids. Additionally, participants will receive

certificates of completion for each module completed.



All transit agency personnel who provide training to drivers should make every effort to attend this training. There are no registration fees for this workshop.

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Study Reveals TD Program Saves Millions

Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) recently released an independent assessment completed by the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) showing the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged has saved the State of Florida millions of dollars.

The study, "Independent Assessment: Florida Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation Waiver," concluded that the provision of non-emergency transportation to eligible Medicaid beneficiaries is cost-effective and that the quality of services is not compromised. In fact, the study showed that 87% of the users surveyed rated the transportation services provided through the coordinated system as Very Good, Excellent, or Good.

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How to Register

To obtain a registration form or to register for this course electronically, please visit www.rtap.cutr.usf.edu/registrationtrainer.htm. Registration cannot be accepted by telephone. For further information, contact Molly Buffington at (813) 974-7810, buffington@cutr.eng.usf.edu.

Mail or fax your registration to: Center for Urban Transportation Research, ATTN: Molly Buffington, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CUT100, Tampa, FL 33620-5375, fax (813) 974-5168.

Coordination Saves Iowa Taxpayers

Iowa State University's Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) recently completed its study of coordination between public transit and school bus transportation services in Iowa.

One of the most significant findings included in the report is that existing coordination between public transit and public schools saves Iowa taxpayers over \$1 million per year. This annual savings resulted from coordination arrangements that involved less than 50% of Iowa's transit systems and less than 20% of public school districts. Imagine the savings if ALL transit systems and school districts entered into some type of coordination arrangement!

How were these savings realized? Examples of coordination noted in the CTRE study include:

- In eight cities, students ride public transit.
- In one city, the transit agency contracts with the school district for vehicles to accommodate peak transit demands.

- Nearly every multi-county rural system transports students with physical disabilities.

The CTRE report can be found at http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/reports/bus_coordination.pdfresearch.

National RTAP Seeks Nominations for Achievements in Rural Transit Assistance

The Federal Transit Administration's National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) has established an "Achievements in Rural Transit Assistance" award program to recognize RTAP State Programs, products, and services that are benchmarks for the industry and are replicable by others.

Award Categories include:

- **Outstanding Achievement for an RTAP State Management Program** to recognize a State agency or a designated administering organization for cost effective, original RTAP services that go beyond the routine administration of programs and weld a partnership with local operators.
- **Outstanding Achievement for a State RTAP Product or Service** to recognize a State agency or a designated administering agency for developing a product or service that makes a real difference in local agency performance, is cost effective, and can be replicated by other State programs.

Up to two Honorable Mentions can be cited for each category. You can download the nomination form at www.nationalrtap.org. Nomination forms must be submitted by September 1, 2004.



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Please direct all questions or comments to:

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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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Transit Means Jobs in the Lake Region

Florida's Lake Region, also referred to as the Glades Region, has one of Florida's highest unemployment rates, and a significant number of residents have no access to an automobile. Additionally, significant layoffs occurred in the region's sugar industry in 2000. Subsequently, many individuals had no way of accessing education or employment opportunities.

In response to this situation, the Transportation Subcommittee of Palm Beach County's Workforce Development Board, Inc. (now called the Workforce Alliance, Inc.) looked at areas where transportation options were unavailable to the public to access jobs, education, medical facilities, and other life activities and decided to take action.

The subcommittee assessed interest in and demand for public transit service by conducting a consumer survey throughout the Lake Region in June 2001. Surveys were provided in three languages and were distributed on existing Palm Tran bus routes in Palm Beach County and at typically high-traffic locations such as shopping centers in Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade, and Pahokee. Surveys also were made available at the Community College in Belle Glade, the Belle Glade Hospital, and utility payment locations.

Over 680 surveys were completed, and respondents indicated that 75% would use the proposed transit route and almost 50% would use the service at least three times per week for shopping and work.

As a result, on October 1, 2002, the Lake Region Commuter Route began operation. The route operates daily between the cities of Belle Glade, South Bay, and Clewiston and is the first public transit route to provide service between Palm Beach and Hendry counties. Although most of the marketing is done by word of mouth, ridership continues to grow, now reaching more than 1,000 trips per month.

The service is made possible through funding from the Florida Department of Transportation District IV as a three-year demonstration program. Good Wheels, Inc. is the operator.

A rider survey will be conducted this summer to help identify potential changes in routing or scheduling that may better accommodate passenger needs.

The Lake Region Commuter Route is an excellent example of how rural public transit serves a critical role in the economic health of Florida and how it can positively impact the lives of rural Floridians.

Executive Order: Human Service Transportation Coordination

On February 24, 2004, President Bush signed an Executive Order that established within the U.S. Department of Transportation the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility.

The Council is comprised of representatives from the Secretaries of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and the Interior, the Attorney General's office, the Social Security Administration; and other Federal offices as designated by the Council chair.

The Council was established to:

- promote interagency cooperation and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to minimize duplication and overlap of Federal programs and services so that transportation-disadvantaged persons have access to more transportation services;
- facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources;
- encourage enhanced customer access to the variety of transportation and resources available;
- formulate and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms that enhance transportation services at all levels; and
- develop and implement a method for monitoring progress on achieving the goals of this order.

TD Program Saves Millions

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Further, the study showed overwhelming proof that the current Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program has saved AHCA millions of dollars. The assessment conducted three separate analyses for cost effectiveness, and all revealed “significant savings” due to the current TD Program.

Analysis 1 showed that the current coordinated system saved AHCA \$41.26 million. Analysis 2 showed that, without the current TD Program in place, AHCA would have spent \$22.22 million more in FY 2002. Analysis 3 showed that Sole Source CTCs have reduced costs per claim by over 43%, Partial Brokerage CTCs have saved over 33%, and Complete Brokerage's have saved AHCA over 28%.

The independent assessment concluded that, “Florida has succeeded in developing a program for the coordinated delivery of transportation services while generating large cost-savings.”

For more program information or a copy of the entire report, please contact Lisa Bacot at (850) 410-5711 or email at lisa.bacot@dot.state.fl.us.

Pasco County Expansion

On March 1, 2004, Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT) expanded its service on the East side of Pasco County, which includes the Dade City, Trilby/Lacoochee/Zephyrhills area.

This service expansion provides Pasco County residents with two circulator routes, one in Dade City/Trilby/Lacoochee and the other in Zephyrhills. Connecting both of these areas is a third route that runs along US 301.

WAZZUP?

May 3-7, 2004—Florida Paratransit Driver's Qualification Train-the-Trainer Workshop, SCAT. For more information, contact Amber Reep, (813) 974-9823, or Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

June 7-11, 2004—Florida Paratransit Driver's Qualification Train-the-Trainer Workshop, VOTRAN, Daytona. For more information, contact Amber Reep, (813) 974-9823, or Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

June 8-10, 2004—3rd Annual FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop, USF Embassy Suites, Tampa. For more information, contact Amber Reep, (813) 974-9823, or Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

June 10, 2004—Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Committee Meeting, 8am-noon. For more information, contact Michael Audino, (813) 974-3275.

June 13-16, 2004—Community Transportation Association of America EXPO 2004, Seattle. For more information, contact CTAA at www.ctaa.org.

July 26-28, 2004—12th Annual Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Training and Technology Conference, Renaissance Orlando Resort at Sea World, Orlando. For more information, contact Erin Schepers, (850) 410-5710, or register online at www.doce-conferences.ufl.edu.

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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