

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SUMMER 2005—VOL.3, No.1

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Taltran hosts 2005 Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

Florida's paratransit bus operators from properties around the state converged on Tallahassee on April 8-9, 2005, to compete for 2005 State RTAP Paratransit Roadeo. Annually sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation and the Rural Transit Assistance Program and supported by the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (FACTS) this year's competition was hosted by Taltran. This event is the highpoint of the year for those involved in the competition.

The winners in the Modified Van and Small Bus divisions are as follows:

Winners of the Modified Van Division

Peggy Shiver took first place in the Modified Van Division of the Florida Paratransit Roadeo in Tallahassee. Peggy is a 14-year transit driver for Liberty County. Peggy has competed in the Paratransit Roadeo for nine years, placing 3rd on two occasions and 1st this year. Congratulations, Peggy!

Raymond Aylmer was the 2nd place winner in the Modified Van Category at the 2005 Paratransit Roadeo. Raymond has been with Gulf County Transportation for almost seven years. Congratulations, Raymond!

Tracy Gortt with Calhoun County Transit placed 3rd in the Modified Van Category. Congratulations, Tracy!

Winners of the Small Bus Division

Jodi Chaquico-Lehman won first place in the

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Van Division: 1st place winner Peggy Shiver, Liberty County Transit; 2nd place winner Raymond Aylmer, Gulf City Transportation; 3rd place winner Tracy Gortt, Calhoun County Transit



Bus Division: 3rd place winner Ernest Ritman, Bib Bend Transit; 2nd place winner Terry Sue Hawks, Citrus County Transit; 1st place winner Jody Lehman, Polk County Transit

Small Bus Category. Jodi started her employment with Polk County Transit Services (PCTS) in 2001 as a fixed-route bus driver and is now part of the paratransit team. She is a devoted wife and the mother of two. Jodi's greatest satisfaction comes in transporting her clients and helping people in any way she can. After her daily route is finished, Jodi attends Polk Community College.

"Jodi is a dedicated and valued member of our transportation team, and we are very proud of her accomplishments," said Paul Simmons, PCTS Operations Manager. "Her performance in these competitions reflects her excellent training and experience."

Congratulations, Jodi!

Terry Sue Hawks from Citrus County Transit placed second in the Small Bus Category. Congratulations, Terry! Ernest Rittman from Big Bend Transit placed third. Congratulations, Ernest!

In addition, the 2005 Above and Beyond Award was given at the Rodeo to Lydia Phillips.

Lydia L. Phillips, a bus operator with Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT), has been awarded the 2005 RTAP Above and Beyond Award. Described as someone who always treats her clients as family, she regularly greets each passenger with personalized attention and a calm and caring attitude.

Phillips was previously commended in 2004 with a Safety Award for Heroic Acts related to an incident in 2003. While operating a bus, a fire erupted from the A/C compressor in the engine compartment. Phillips stopped the vehicle at the curb and quickly and calmly escorted all passengers to a secure area. She then re-entered the bus and extinguished the fire, preventing extensive damage to the vehicle. Her actions resulted in commendations from the Manatee County Fire Department, Risk Management Department, and the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners.

In 2002, she received an Above Average Service commendation for her sensitivity in transporting a 10-year-old boy who is a regular rider on her route. The child's grateful mother stated that Phillips continually watches out for her son, noting that she "is a kind, courteous driver—it's a relief to know he is in good hands."



Passenger safety is of primary importance to Phillips, who always takes time to ensure that clients with mobility aids are properly secured for transport, double-checking tie downs and safety belts. She always checks safety equipment to ensure their effective functioning, and attended and completed a Drug and Alcohol Training Program and courses in Passenger Relations, Blood-Borne Pathogens, and Passenger Assistance.

Congratulations, Lydia!



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RTAP BULLETIN

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OUR MISSION

The Florida RTAP provides training, continuing education, and technical assistance 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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New FVPP Cutaway Bus contracts announced

The Florida Vehicle Procurement Program (FVPP) recently announced awards for the new cutaway bus contracts. The new 2005 widebody cutaway contracts (#FVPP-05-CA) offer Florida transit systems a wide variety of options.

- Two types of buses:
 - Getaway Marketing, Inc., offering the Glaval Bus
 - Transit Plus, Inc., offering the Champion Bus
- Three chassis sizes:
 - Chevrolet/GMC CC 4500 Chassis, with a 17,500-pound Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR)
 - Chevrolet/GMC CC 5500 Chassis, with a 19,500-pound GVWR
 - International Chassis, with a 23,500-pound GVWR
- A variety of sizes, ranging from 23ft to 31ft:
 - Glaval CC 4500 Chassis, available in 23ft, 25ft, and 27ft lengths
 - Glaval CC 5500 Chassis, available in 29ft and 31ft lengths
 - Champion CC 4500 Chassis, available in 23ft, 26ft, and 27ft lengths
 - Champion CC 5500 Chassis, available in 29ft and 31ft lengths
 - Champion International Chassis, available in 29ft and 31ft lengths
- A choice of paint schemes, including the ability to customize

- A variety of seat layouts, tie-down positions, and seat types
- The ability to customize buses from a list of options, including five types of wheelchair lifts and two securement systems

FVPP is a program of the Florida Department of Transportation's Public Transit Office and is administered by the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research. Through participation in this unique and innovative program, Florida's public transportation agencies can access:

- Vehicle procurement in full compliance with the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration's grant program requirements
- Pre-delivery vehicle inspections by FVPP-certified inspectors either at the manufacturing plant or at the FDOT Springhill Inspection Facility prior to delivery to your property
- Quicker delivery by avoiding the lengthy and sometimes confusing and time-consuming vehicle procurement process
- Lower vehicle prices due to both the standardization and quantity of buses procured annually through the FVPP
- A bus built to specifications developed to ensure a high-quality, long-lasting, and dependable bus for your transit agency

For more information on the Florida Vehicle Procurement Program and on FVPP Contracts #FVPP-05-CA, visit the FVPP web site at <http://www.cutr.usf.edu/research/fvpp/fvpp2.htm> or contact CUTR FVPP Project Manager Hank Cusack, cusack@cutr.usf.edu, (813) 974-7834. For questions related to FTA Section 5310-sponsored vehicle orders, contact Cindy Wooten, wooten@cutr.usf.edu, (813) 974-9771.

Catherine's Corner

Catherine Kelly, FDOT RTAP Program Manager



Kelly introduces new RTAP project manager

After 11 years as project manager for RTAP, Catherine Kelly is moving on.

Since 1994, Kelly guided the growth and development of RTAP as a valuable resource for rural and TD transportation providers. Under her guidance, the RTAP annual budget grew from \$35,000 to over \$110,000. Because of Kelly's leadership, RTAP and its associated activities, the paratransit rodeo, and the CTD annual conference have thrived. Much of what you see today is due to her drive and determination to provide the best services possible.

Taking over the RTAP reins is Mike Wright, who has been the FDOT Statewide Commuter Assistance Program manager since 1998. He brings a wealth of experience in transportation, operations, and planning to the table, and he has the same strong commitment to service for which Kelly is known. If you didn't get a chance to meet him at this year's paratransit rodeo, he will be at the CTD Annual Meeting in July. And thanks, Catherine, for your dedication, talent, and energy. Your smile and positive attitude will be greatly missed.

Baker County Aims to Improve program

An oft-quoted life axiom suggests you quit digging if you find yourself in a hole. The question faced by businesses and individuals alike is what to do after the digging stops.

In Baker County, the Macclenny-based Council on Aging recently determined it was in a hole. In 2004, the non-profit agency's Board of Directors identified a number of financial, operational, and programmatic challenges that were threatening both its short-term credibility and its long-term viability. Personnel changes created uncertainty for staff, budget adjustments resulted in less service for senior citizens, and local media coverage produced questions among county residents and policy makers.

Wisely, the Board quit digging and reached out for help. With assistance from the Florida Department of Transportation and the Baker County Board of Commissioners, solutions are currently being developed.

In May 2004, FDOT's District 2 Office provided a planning grant to Baker County, which entered into an agreement with the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) to help the Council on Aging accomplish three major goals:

- improve transportation program and organizational efficiency
- enhance transportation program and organizational effectiveness
- increase transportation program visibility within the county

"We are proud to be working with the Baker County Commission and the Baker County Council on Aging to help them help themselves," said Gwen Pra, FDOT's District 2 Transportation Program Coordinator. "The residents of Baker County--particularly those who are considered transportation disadvantaged--desperately need services provided by the Council, and we are committed to seeing that those services are provided."

To provide the kind of help needed by the Council on Aging, CUTR is focusing its efforts in five areas:

- Financial Management—With Council staff, a system to monitor income, expenses and balances for

all sources of transit funding will be established; technical support in the establishment of internal grants management and accounting procedures will be provided; and internal reporting procedures to facilitate timely and accurate transit program invoicing will be developed.

- Transportation Program Review—Management guidance and technical assistance are being provided, as are service quality assessment, identification of opportunities for improvement, and development of cost reduction and revenue enhancement recommendations.
- Strategic Plan Development—In collaboration with the Council's Executive Committee and management personnel, organizational strengths and weaknesses will be assessed, a vision for the agency and the transportation program will be established, goals and action steps for the agency and the transportation program will be formulated, and a multi-year strategic plan for both the agency and the transportation program will be developed.
- Leadership Development--Strengths and work styles of the Council's leadership team will be identified, a composite of the leadership team's strengths, motivational factors, and work styles will be developed, and a series of leadership team meetings will be coordinated to establish the core features of team life.
- Public Education—A public transportation workshop for the Baker County Commission and the Council's Board of Directors will be developed and delivered.

"We believe in a taking a comprehensive approach to organizational improvement," said Michael Audino, CUTR's Project Manager. "Our efforts will help the Board create a clear vision for the agency, assist the Executive Director and her administrative team in working more collaboratively, provide agency employees with the tools they need to do their jobs, and help the County Commission implement sound public policy." Audino believes that, most importantly, these efforts will ensure that persons in Baker County over the age of 60 have access to services necessary for them to remain healthy, happy, and independent.

"We are so thankful to FDOT, the County Commissioners, and CUTR," said Council Board Chair Barbara Yarbrough. "We need them to help educate us and make sure we do a better job for seniors."

CUTR offers RTAP training workshops

For the past two years, Florida RTAP has worked in cooperation with the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and the Florida Department of Transportation to present training courses designed for trainers of new and existing paratransit drivers.

The Paratransit Driver's Qualification Train-the-Trainer course includes modules on Train-The-Trainer, ADA Service Requirements, Passenger Assistance-Securement-Restraint, Sensitivity Training, and Quality Customer Service. The five-day training is in-depth and hands-on, with students utilizing vehicles, wheelchairs, securements, and even blindfolds to get the full impact of the requirements of a paratransit driver. In addition to a Certificate of Completion, each attendee receives an Instructor's Manual and associated training aids. Eight workshops have been held throughout the state over the past two years, providing training to more than 120 participants at host agencies.

Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport Training is a new course that was introduced in March and received high marks from those in attendance. The two-day course addresses legal responsibilities, patient transfers, equipment review, clear and effective communication, safety, sensitivity, records and reports, and driving guidelines.



If your agency is interested in hosting one or both of these training workshops, please contact Amber Reep at reep@cutr.usf.edu, (813) 974-9823. For information on upcoming CUTR training courses and events, refer to "Upcoming Events and Training" on the CUTR web site at www.cutr.usf.edu.

Bus "black box" now standard

When new contracts from the Florida Vehicle Procurement Program for cutaway buses become available shortly, an EDR or Event Data Recorder will be standard equipment. The bus "black box," named Technolin (produced by Circuitlink International), is the on-board computer for effective event, vehicle, and fleet management. It is designed to provide a continuous log of vehicle activity including speed history, odometer, excessive RPM, heavy braking, fast acceleration, and idling periods, which will automatically be recorded.

A three-axis accelerometer provides a log of excessive movement in any direction. In the event of an accident, all data are permanently captured in tamper-proof flash memory for a minimum of 30seconds prior to the incident and 15 seconds after the incident. A manual driver alert button also is provided to allow driver "tagging" of an incident, an accident, or a vehicle fault condition.

Additional digital input channels are provided to allow for status monitoring of up to eight vehicle sub-systems--brake application, lights, signals, four-way flashers, driver's seatbelt, wheelchair lift, engine temperature, oil pressure, low air pressure, low voltage, and emergency exit door and passenger door operation.

All "black box" software is Windows-based, and trip data are stored in a Microsoft Access database. The software is included with the vehicle purchase, and there are no additional charges for hardware and/or software services or annual fees.

The Florida Vehicle Procurement Program is a program of the Florida Department of Transportation's Public Transit Office and is administered by the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research. To order buses or for additional information on the FVPP Contract #FVPP-05-CA, visit the FVPP website, <http://www.cutr.usf.edu/research/fvpp/fvpp2.htm>.

2005 UPCOMING EVENTS

July 11-13, 2005

Florida Maintenance Training Program: Advanced Electrical and Multiplex—Tal-Tran, Tallahassee. For more information, contact Vicki Zambito, (813) 974-9763.

July 18-21, 2005

TSI Instructor's Course in Bus Operator Training—LYNX, Orlando. For more information, contact Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

July 18-21, 2005

Florida Maintenance Training Program: Basic AC with 608 Training and Testing—PSTA, Clearwater. For more information, contact Vicki Zambito, (813) 974-9763.

July 25-28, 2005

Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged 13 Annual Transportation Training and Technology Conference—Renaissance Orlando Resort at Sea World. For more information, contact University of Florida Conference Department, (352) 392-1701 or Erin Sheppers, Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (850) 410-5715.

September 1-2, 2005

Transit Threat and Vulnerability Assessment Course—VOTRAN. For more information, please contact Molly Buffington at (813) 974-7810, buffington@cutr.usf.edu.

September 12-14, 2005

Florida Maintenance Training Program: Basic Hydraulics, Pilot Class—LYNX, Orlando. For more information, contact Vicki Zambito, (813) 974-9763.

September 26-27, 2005

Florida Maintenance Training Program: Preventive Maintenance—HARTline, Tampa. For more information, contact Vicki Zambito, (813) 974-9763.

October 10-12, 2005

Florida Maintenance Training Program: Air Brakes Systems, Air Brakes & ABS—JTA, Jacksonville. For more information, contact Vicki Zambito, (813) 974-9763.

October 16 – 18, 2005

Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) 31st Annual Conference—Sundial Beach Resort, Sanibel Island. For more information, contact Wes Watson, 850-878-0855.

November 1-3, 2005

3rd Annual NCTR GIS In Transit Conference—Renaissance Tampa Hotel International Plaza. For more information, contact Amber Reep, (813) 974-9823 or Molly Buffington, (813) 974-7810.

Florida Paratransit Drivers Place in 2005 CTAA National Roadeo

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) 16th Annual National Community Transportation Roadeo was held at the 2005 CTAA Expo in St. Louis, Missouri on May 21 and 22, 2005. The very best transit operators from around the nation participate in the roadeo. We are proud to report that Florida was well represented in both the Van and Body-on-Chassis divisions. A special congratulations go to the following individuals:

David Santos, Hillsborough County Area Transit—placed 6th in the Van division.

Joseph Padilla, Space Coast Area Transit—placed 11th in the Body-on-Chassis division.

Jodi Lehman, Polk County Transportation—placed 16th in the Body-on-Chassis division.

Peggy Shiver, Liberty County Transit—placed 25th in the Van division.

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