

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SUMMER 2006—VOL.4, No.1

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VOTRAN Hosts The 2006 Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

Florida's paratransit bus operators from properties around the state met in Daytona Beach on May 5-6, 2006, to compete for 2006 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 VOTRAN.

Winners of the Small Bus Category

Peter Day from Polk County Transit took first place in the Small

Bus Category for the 2006 State of Florida Paratransit Roadeo. Ernest Rittman of Big Bend Transit in Leon County was the second place winner for the Small Bus Category. Linda Attaway of Calhoun County Transit takes third place in the Small Bus Category. Congratulations to the Small Bus Category winners!

Winners of the Modified Van Category

Timothy Smith from Calhoun County Transit took first place in the Modified Van Division. Jesse Lindsey of Polk County Transit was the

second place winner in the Modified Van Division. Ralph Riley with J-Trans placed third in the Modified Van Category. Congratulations to all Modified Van Category winners!



2006 Florida Paratransit Roadeo Small Bus and Modified Van Winners

Each year FDOT and RTAP recognize an individual who consistently performs in an outstanding manner and shows great care and concern for passengers with special needs. This year the "Above and Beyond Award" was presented to Kathlyn L'Esperance of Polk County Transit. Kathlyn

serves the Lake Wales and Winter Haven areas as a driver providing a variety of services to her customers, including medical trips, multi-purpose trips, and trips to blind services activities. This award is sponsored by Sure-Lok, Inc., and was presented by Mr. Jerry Crunk of Sure-Lok. Congratulations Kathlyn!

Thank you to the participants, sponsors, judges, volunteers, transit agencies and FDOT for helping to make this year's roadeo a great success!

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Mobility and Economic Development

In the most recent issue of the *RTAP Bulletin*, we reported on the inaugural Rural Mobility and Economic Development Summit held in Sebring last December. The Summit was the result of a Rural Transit Planning and Marketing Assessment Initiative study, completed in the fall of 2005 for the Florida Department of Transportation's District 1 Office by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR).

The purpose of the Summit was to share information, increase understanding regarding the connectivity between personal mobility and economic development, create excitement for the future, and encourage actions that will help improve the quality of life for the residents of south central Florida. Over 50 local and state officials, transportation professionals, local and state economic developers, planning staff members, and private sector representatives participated in the Summit. The results?

- Attendees reached consensus on utilization of the District 1 Rural Transit Planning Study and the 16 recommendations.
- Attendees determined that the Transportation Committee of Florida's Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative (FHREDI) should assume responsibility for establishing a rural transit planning process;
- Attendees determined that the FHREDI Transportation Committee should expand its membership to include non-profits, education, and other enterprises with critical expertise.
- Attendees determined that the FHREDI Transportation Committee should accept the remaining recommendations from the Mobility Study as its agenda for future action.

On January 9, 2006, the FHREDI Board of Directors accepted the results from the Summit. Subsequently, much has happened.

Most notable is the effort CUTR is undertaking to prepare a Rural Mobility Development Plan (MDP) for FHREDI. This MDP process will build upon the requirements and contents of the more traditional Transit Development Plan. Specifically, the MDP will focus on a 10-year planning

horizon, with minor updates prepared annually and a major update every five years. The MDP will also provide a strategic framework for improving mobility in south central Florida and will reflect the vision and priorities of citizens.

The FHREDI Board has appointed a MDP Steering Committee to work with the FHREDI Executive Director, staff, and the CUTR project team to help guide the process.

In addition to undertaking a multi-county mobility development plan, FHREDI received a 5311 grant from the FDOT that will help support a professional staff member who will manage the organization's new transportation/mobility responsibilities.

Additional support for FHREDI's initiative will come from the Community Transportation Association of America. Lynn Topel, FHREDI's Executive Director, worked with CUTR to develop and submit an application for technical assistance to CTAA, which recently announced the award to FHREDI.

"The past six months has been amazing," said Topel. "Prior to the Mobility Summit, FHREDI's involvement in personal transportation and mobility issues was confined to highways and bridges. Now, economic developers and transportation professionals throughout Florida consider us leaders in integrating economic development and mobility. We are most grateful to the Florida Department of Transportation and CUTR; we could not have accomplished this without their expertise and support," said Topel.

The products of the Mobility Development Plan and the technical assistance from CTAA are unknown. South central Florida may eventually have a multi-county, regional Transportation entity, with traditional fixed-route and demand responsive transit service, volunteer services, and vanpools, coordinated throughout the region.

While the products may be uncertain, the outcome is clear: improved access for residents of south central Florida to health care, employment, education, and life's rich bounty.

For additional information on the rural initiative, contact Lisa Staes at (813) 974-9787 or for information related to the Mobility Development Planning process, contact Bill Morris at (813) 974-6804.



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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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Rural Transit and Lost Driving Privileges

How would you feel if your doctor told you that driving could be hazardous to your health? Or if the State of Florida decided to no longer issue you a driver's license? Or if driving was such a frightening experience that you voluntarily hung up your keys? Your imagined feelings are the new reality for thousands of Florida's citizens over the age of 70 whose days of driving are now just images in their rear view mirrors.

A recent research initiative at the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research analyzed the travel behavior changes of persons age 55 years and older who no longer had driving privileges. More specifically, the researchers investigated the subjects' interest in and ability to use public transit in lieu of driving.

The issues surrounding driving cessation and its impact on public transportation, both in rural and urban environments, are quite complex. For example, progress in medical care, improvements in technologies to mitigate the impacts of physical and mental decline, and changes in the social and cultural environment are all likely to influence the daily travel needs of the elderly population.

The baby boomer generation is characterized as suburban in concentration, and the historic tendency has been for elders to retire in place. This suggests that the next generation of elders will be concentrated in suburban, ex-urban, and even rural areas of Florida where neither fixed-route nor demand responsive transit services are available to meet basic travel demands.

Focus group findings from the CUTR research project revealed that the extent of support from family and friends to meet mobility needs strongly influences how successfully elders who discontinue driving adapt. The focus groups also addressed household relocation in order to improve access to public transportation, and the findings are not surprising: proximity to public transportation did not appear

to be a high-priority consideration in household relocation to Florida.

Focus group findings further revealed that public transportation plays a very modest role in meeting the travel demands of elderly citizens who no longer drive. Public transportation is not necessarily the logical successor to driving, and it certainly is not the preferred substitute for driving. Most often, the conditions that lead a person to cease driving also may limit his capacity to use public transportation and result in the person preferring to travel as an auto passenger. While seniors who have ceased driving are frequently reluctant to burden others, the practical reality remains that few are in situations where public transportation, in either rural or urban locations, is a viable option to meet all their travel needs.

What can Florida's rural public transportation systems do to address these challenges? CUTR researchers identified a number of strategies that can support improved mobility for persons no longer able to drive:

- Explore opportunities to provide mobility information through a single group or entity in rural areas (counties, multi-county regions). Embark upon a strategic course to become both a standardized information source and a coordinator of mobility service.
- Continue measures to place vehicles into service that more readily accommodate the needs of elderly travelers.
- Explore, support, and implement additional actions to meet overall mobility needs of older persons. Consider ride-sharing initiatives targeted to older persons.
- Expand rural transit planning functions to monitor trends in driving cessation and senior mobility.

The research concludes that a safety net of services exists for medical and sustenance trips for those most in need, but this level of service falls far short of providing quality-of-life enhancing services for persons who no longer drive. The challenge for Florida's rural public transportation professionals is to creatively implement the aforementioned strategies in ways that maximize the quality of life for those elderly residents who have lost their driving privileges.

For additional information on this study, please contact Oliver Page at CUTR at (813) 974-9768 or Michael Audino at CUTR at (813) 974-3275. For a copy of the report, please visit www.cutr.usf.edu.

Have you completed your Security Program Plan (SPP)?

The revisions to Rule Chapter 14-90, Florida Administrative Code requires that a SPP be in place on or before July 1, 2006. If you need assistance, please contact Deborah Sapper at CUTR at (813) 974-1446.

2006/2007 UPCOMING EVENTS

Small Bus Category Winners

*First Place—
Peter Day,
Polk County
Transit,
with FDOT
RTAP
Program
Manager,
Mike Wright*



*Second Place—
Ernest Rittman,
Big Bend Transit,
Leon County*



*Third Place—
Linda Attaway,
Calhoun
County Transit*

Modified Van Category Winners

*First Place—
Timothy
Smith, Cal-
houn County
Transit, with
FDOT RTAP
Program
Manager,
Mike Wright*



*Second Place—
Jesse Lindsey,
Polk County
Transit*



*Third Place—
Ralph Riley,
J-Trans*

October 17-18, 2006

TSI Fatigue Awareness Workshop—
CUTR, Tampa. For more informa-
tion, contact Molly Buffington at
813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming Events
and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

November 5-7, 2006

FPTA Annual Conference & Outdoor
Expo—Palm Beach Marriott Hotel, Palm
Beach, Florida. For more information,
visit www.floridatransit.org.

November 27-December 1, 2006

TSI Fundamentals of Bus Collision
Investigation—CUTR, Tampa. For more
information, contact Molly Buffington at
813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming Events
and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

January 8-12, 2007

TSI Bus System Safety (FT00432)—
CUTR, Tampa. For more informa-
tion, contact Molly Buffington at
813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming Events
and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

January 30-February 1, 2007

TSI Substance Abuse Manage-
ment and Program Compliance
(FT00465)—CUTR, Tampa. For more
information, contact Molly Buffington at
813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming Events
and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

February 5-9, 2007

TSI Instructor's Course in Bus Operator
Training (FT00429)—CUTR, Tampa. For
more information, contact Molly Buffing-
ton at 813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming
Events and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

March 14, 2007

Transit Response to Bus Hijackings
Seminar (FT00544)—CUTR, Tampa. For
more information, contact Molly Buffing-
ton at 813.974.7810 or visit Upcoming
Events and Training at www.cutr.usf.edu.

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