

RTAP

BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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TRIPS Hybrid Bus to Take a Trip

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) through the Transit, Research, Inspection and Procurement Services (TRIPS) Program has recently procured a 31 foot bus, built by Champion on an International chassis, using the parallel version of the hybrid drive system developed specifically for International. Hybrid Ride is the first demonstration of hybrid technology in the daily operation of paratransit services. The Hybrid Ride bus will soon be off on a trip around the state, spend a few weeks at different transit properties around the state of Florida.

“Hybrid Ride gives us the opportunity to show people just how green public transportation is while exposing them to the latest technology,” said Bobby Westbrook, FDOT Transit Operations Administrator. “Not only

will each system have the opportunity to demonstrate the technology to their community, but they will also be collecting data on fuel savings and maintenance costs for the FDOT.”

Hybrid Ride has the potential to reduce up to 90% of the particulate matter emissions of a regular diesel bus. Depending on the operating conditions, Hybrid Ride can improve fuel economy 25% to 40%. Hybrid Ride has also seen near 60% nitrogen oxide (NOx) reductions.



When Hybrid Ride returns from its statewide sojourn, it will be housed at StarMetro in Tallahassee, where StarMetro will operate and maintain Hybrid Ride for FDOT.

The project data collected by agencies will assist local governments in the decision making process as they evaluate new technologies in public transportation.

FVPP Announces Name Change



TRIPS (Transit, Research, Inspection, & Procurement Services) Program is the new name for what was the Florida Vehicle Procurement Program (FVPP). TRIPS is sponsored by FDOT and administered by CUTR. The new program name better identifies the project as it has evolved from its early days in the 1990's.

Visit the new TRIPS website:
www.tripsflorida.org



Pasco County Public Transportation Now Offers Electronic Fare Boxes for East Pasco Transit System Riders

Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT) recently installed a state-of-the-art electronic fare box collection system on its East Pasco buses and the response has been very positive. The new fare collection system makes it faster and more convenient for passengers to pay their fares. The West Pasco Transit System has used this technology for over three years and now the two systems are compatible for a future planned connection.

“We conducted numerous studies in East Pasco and found that the buses had a history of being perceived as taking too long to board,” said Pasco County Transportation Manager Mike Carroll. “The feedback we’re now receiving is that it’s much more convenient for the passengers with the new electronic fare box system.”

Previously, riders were required to pay with exact change for one-way fares and daily passes, or show the driver the monthly pass purchased at the Pasco County libraries. This new technology scans all currency as it is inserted in the



One PCPT passenger shared her comments with staff telling them how convenient the new fare boxes are. “It makes boarding so much faster,” she said.

fare box and verifies that it is valid, making it impossible to use foreign, damaged or counterfeit U.S. currency to pay the fares. Additionally, the fare box can issue the passengers a 1-Day Pass to use for unlimited rides on the day of purchase and the fare box can even issue change in the form of a ChangeCard, which is good toward the purchase of future fares.

This new technology will also make pass purchases a lot easier for the drivers, since they will no longer need to carry bundles of passes or manually log purchases. Instead, the passenger inserts their payment into the fare box, informs the driver of the type of 1-Day Pass he or she is purchasing and, with the touch of a button, the fare box creates a magnetic strip on the pass for the rider.

Pasco County Public Transportation has been providing full-time fixed-route transit services in Pasco County for almost nine years and currently has six West Pasco and three East Pasco bus routes, with services Monday-Saturday. For more information, visit the PCPT Web site at www.ridepcpt.com.

FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop

Florida RTAP agencies should take note of this annual transit training event. The FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop will be held on May 19th & 20th 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.

Best of all, there is no registration fee for this training opportunity – its FREE!

Several classes and sessions are directly related to RTAP agencies. Specific session information and on-line registration is available at www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta.

Contact Amber Reep at (813) 974-9823 or reep@cutr.usf.edu for more information.



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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—Howard Jones, Transit Driver, JTRANS

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 JTRANS' Howard Jones, the 2008 Roadeo Small Bus Category winner.



Birthplace: Marianna, FL
– Jackson County

Employment History: Dozier School for Boys for 13 years, Construction worker (helped build water tanks in Marianna, FL), JTrans

Years Working With Current Agency: 15 ½ years

Years Working In Transit Industry: 15 ½ years

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit: The confidence in my abilities that challenge me daily and that I must know and respect my purpose and position.

Biggest Challenge in Paratransit: Participation in the Florida State Roadeo of 2008

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit: Knowing that my experience, my training as a transit driver, my dedication and serving the people of Jackson County many years has enhanced me to appreciate life itself.

Community Involvement: Participation with various church activities, church member, choir member, Sunday School Superintendent.

Personal Background: Wife Lillian, five grandchildren. Enjoy being involved with grandchildren in their school activities

Childhood Ambition: To become one of the greatest basketball players

Inspiration: My father, Edward Jones

Favorite Book: The Holy Bible

Favorite Color: Sky Blue

Favorite Candy: Snicker Bar

My Motto: To strive to reach perfection

CTAA EXPO 2009 Registration Open

This spring, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) hosts its first EXPO in New England as they visit Providence, R.I., for EXPO 2009. Join CTAA from May 31-June 5 at the new Rhode Island Convention Center for an activity filled week.



To register please visit www.ctaa.org.

13th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

The 13th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo has been scheduled for May 1-2, 2009 at VOTRAN in South Daytona.

Participants and judges will stay at the Hilton Daytona Beach Resort on Daytona Beach. The Roadeo will take place on Saturday at the VOTRAN facility on Big Tree Road in South Daytona. This year's event has been expanded to be a two-day event that will include an award banquet on Saturday evening at the host hotel.

Each transit property will be eligible to send up to two drivers and two judges at the low 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, a non-sponsored registration rate of \$110 per person is available to accommodate additional participants and attendees. 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 2009 Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo are available for download on the Florida RTAP website www.floridartap.org/pages/training.html.

All registrations should be submitted by Friday, March 27th.

Mobility—What does it mean to you?

According to Webster's dictionary, mobility is defined as the "ability to move or be moved readily from place to place." And for most of us, mobility is something we don't really think too much about because most of us have an array of mobility options. We can fly the friendly skies, set our course by cruise ship or motor coach or simply hop in our vehicles and drive to our destinations. Deciding where to go is sometimes more of a challenge than getting there! But for so many others, mobility might mean something as simple as a trip to the grocery store, a visit to a friend or relative in a neighboring town, or do some shopping at a mall in another city!

The St. Johns County Council on Aging's (SJCCOA) Transportation Department has received national recognition not by devising elaborate schemes and complicated travel scenarios, but by defining the word 'mobility' in the most basic of terms—an activity that can enhance and improve a person's everyday life.

The most recent distinctions bestowed on the SJCCOA Transportation Department were being named "2008 Community Transportation System of the Year" by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and the Sunshine Bus Company received the "2008 Regional Award for Excellence in Transportation" from the Northeast Florida Regional Council.

According to Lisa Love, Director of Transportation for the SJCCOA, "It is encouraging and humbling to have recognition for our work, but our real motivation comes from the effect our efforts have on our community." SJCCOA Executive Director Cathy Brown agrees, adding that, "To us, 'mobility' means having some input into your own schedule; the freedom to shop, visit and socialize; and the empowering ability to remain independent and in control of your daily activities. And we try to never lose sight of that vision, for our elderly population specifically, but also for St. Johns County residents in general."

The Sunshine Bus Company is St. Johns County's only form of public transportation and is run by the SJCCOA in partnership with St. Johns County. It recently added a daily route from the more rural areas of Hastings, Armstrong and Flagler Estates, to the greater St. Augustine area. This widens the world for many residents who, until now, may have been unable to travel beyond the boundaries of their own communities.

Why is this so important? To those of us who have access to personal vehicles and the financial resources to pay for

maintenance, upkeep and gas, and who have a valid driver's license it's probably no big deal. But for others, public transportation means opportunity! To a family without personal transportation, it means affordable and reliable options that decrease dependence on family and friends. For an elder who no longer drives, it can mean relief from feeling isolated, alone and cut off from activities and events that create community connections. The school-aged teen can participate in more programs that encourage creativity, curiosity and a sense of personal accomplishment. And for a college student with a hectic schedule and no place to park, accessing public bus transportation can mean the difference between making or cutting a class! For everyone of every age, public bus service can mean retaining the ability to rely on themselves and remain in control of their every day lives.

Public transportation is not perfect and the Sunshine Bus Company is no exception. To make riding the bus most effective, one must coordinate and organize their individual schedules and timetables with those of the bus company. Love explains that, "our transportation department is always looking for ways to increase regional mobility for our riders. We offer safe and affordable mobility options to those who have no other way to stay connected and we have much to be proud of in that regard. But we can't rest on the strength of our current achievements; we are constantly striving to increase service capacity. Our new Teal Line is a good example of that, as is the decision to utilize volunteer drivers. Our St. Johns County community is one of our most valuable resources."

To encourage people to give public transit a try, the Sunshine Bus Company offers discounts to students, frequent riders and those over age 60 and under age 6. There are "ride guides" available to help the novice rider who may be intimidated by unfamiliar routes, schedules and stops. And while the Sunshine Bus is a fixed route system some deviation from the schedule is possible. "St. Augustine is no longer the small town we think of it as being," continues Lisa Love. "But our ultimate goal is to keep some of that small town charm and quaintness while providing big-city mobility services."

For more information about SJCCOA transportation services, please call (904) 209-3710

We Are Listening

Your Florida RTAP and the Florida Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Program have received numerous inquiries about and requests for training to assist in meeting the management responsibilities for recipients of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant funds. Specifically, there is tremendous interest in a course to prepare agencies for FTA triennial reviews and a course in FTA grants management. In response to the needs expressed by you, two classes have been scheduled. “Preparing for an FTA Triennial Review” is scheduled for May 5-7, 2009 in Tampa. We have been fortunate to confirm the delivery of this course by Mr. Randy Pine, Principle Partner, Pine and Associates, and David Norstom, CDI/DCI Joint Venture project manager. The second class, “FTA Grants Management” is scheduled for July 22-24, 2009 in Tampa and will also be conducted by Randy Pine. The specific curriculum included in each of these courses is identified below.

“Preparing for an FTA Triennial Review”

This course will fully address the 23 topic areas of a FTA Triennial Review. In addition, the following enhancements will be provided that are not included in the current FTA training.

- More complete focus on the overall Triennial Review process, including demonstration and simulation of the review from start to finish.
- Relevant examples of previously conducted Triennial Reviews, including how final reports are developed and distributed.
- Identification of helpful management practices in the three-year interim between and prior to reviews.
- One-on-one and/or small group participation with instructors to answer specific issues on how to avoid common deficiencies (review findings) and to focus on individual grantee issues.
- More thorough focus on what needs to occur in order to close open findings.
- Identification of useful resources available on-line and through networking.
- Tips on working more closely with FTA regional office staff.
- Enhanced grantee updatable workbook for participants.
- Individual attention.

“FTA Grant Management”

This course will be participant driven, i.e. designed to meet each participants individual learning goal. At a minimum, it will include extensive coverage of the following topic areas:

- FTA and its programs
- Notices of funding availability
- The grant application process
- Certifications and assurances
- The Electronic Clearing House Operation (ECHO) System
- Grant Management and Transportation Electronic Awards Management (TEAM)
- FTA resources
- Using Grants.gov
- The Triennial Review Process as it relates to grants management
- Selective coverage of other non-FTA grant programs

Each participant will be provided with a course workbook inclusive of extensive content in each topic area and more. Additionally, live demonstrations of on-line resources will be a major component of the course.

To encourage active participation and learning, each attendee will be assigned the role of “course instructor” in focused topic areas. The seminar will be diverse in presentation, encourage active involvement, use real world examples, and encourage flexibility.

Registration is limited to two participants per agency for each class so register early! Please visit www.floridartap.org. For additional information on the “Preparing for an FTA Triennial Review” class, please contact Molly Buffington at (813) 974-7810 or buffington@cutr.usf.edu. For information on the “FTA Grant Management” class, please contact Yolanda Moore at (813) 974-7748 or moore@cutr.usf.edu.

RTAP Training Survey Sheds Light on Training Needs

Training is a critical component of the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) mission. It is the program’s goal to offer relevant, timely and effective training opportunities to Florida’s rural transit professionals.

In an effort to more effectively meet the training needs of Florida’s transit professionals, RTAP program participants were recently asked to complete a survey that would help evaluate current training efforts and provide input on how to improve the Florida RTAP training and education program in the future.

Over 40 of Florida’s rural transit providers responded to the survey. Their responses provided the RTAP program with a wealth of information that will help guide the training program for years to come.

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that they, or their staff, have participated in existing RTAP training courses. Another key finding was that 82% of those respondents would be very likely or somewhat likely to “attend” training classes online through distance learning opportunities. Distance learning, sometimes called e-learning, is a formalized online teaching/and learning environment where both the teacher and students meet in an online meeting space to collaborate in real time. Distance learning is a very cost-effective and educational alternative to in-class training.

In addition to distance learning, respondents also expressed a desire to have RTAP partner with the Florida Commission for Disadvantaged Annual Conference and the FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop to offer RTAP training classes in conjunction with these events. Offering RTAP training classes at statewide conferences/workshops was seen as a means to help decrease travel costs for participants by offering one-stop resource shops for training, professional development, and networking.

The RTAP survey respondents also provided specific training topic requests in the area of operations, maintenance, human resources, safety, security, administration, grants and financing. There were several common themes among the responses. Rural transit providers requested specialized

marketing training to manage the image of today’s transit market. Respondents also requested training on the application for and management of state and federal grants. Other requested training opportunities included classes to provide a better understanding of the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how it affects transit. Several respondents indicated that bus operator training was needed specific to fatigue, stress, recruitment, retention, and management of the Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA). There was interest

3. How likely would you or members of your agency be participating in online distance learning RTAP training sessions?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very likely		53.7%	22
Somewhat likely		26.8%	11
Neutral		12.2%	5
Somewhat unlikely		4.9%	2
Very unlikely		2.4%	1
<i>answered question</i>			41
<i>skipped question</i>			2

in having RTAP offer additional operational safety related training like the loading and securement of wheelchairs/stretchers, accident prevention, and general fleet safety training.

The RTAP Training Needs Survey report is currently being finalized and the results will be posted on the Florida RTAP website.

Be In the Know... It’s Up To You!

How can you always be in the know? It’s really up to you! Keeping your contact information current and up to date allows you to be in the know of the latest information for the Florida Department of Transportation’s Rural Transit Assistance Program.

We are currently verifying and updating our records. Please take a moment to send your complete contact information today. Submit updates or changes via email to Yolanda Moore at moorey@cutr.usf.edu.

2009 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/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 31, 2009

Distance Learning: Substance Abuse Management Regulatory Updates
10:00 am—11:00 am (Online)

April 15, 2009

Distance Learning: Drug & Alcohol Service Agent Compliance Monitoring
10:00 am—11:00 am (Online)

May 1-2, 2009

13th Annual Florida Paratransit Road-
eo, VOTRAN—Daytona, FL

May 5-7, 2009

Preparing for the FTA Triennial Re-
view-Plus—Tampa, FL

May 19-20, 2009

FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop “Transit at a Crossroads”—USF Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center, Tampa, FL

May 31- June 5, 2009

CTAA Expo 2009, Rhode Island Con-
vention Center—One Sabin Street,
Providence, RI 02903. If you have any
questions about the EXPO from ses-
sions to hotel, please call (800) 891-
0590 x 726 or e-mail expo@ctaa.org

July 22-24, 2009

FTA Grants Management Training
Workshop—Tampa, FL

August 17-20, 2009

17th Annual Transportation Disad-
vantaged Training & Technology Con-
ference, Hilton, Walt Disney World
Resort—Orlando, FL

October 25-27, 2009

The 35th FPTA Annual Conference and
EXPO, Jacksonville OMNI—Jackson-
ville, FL

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The RTAP Reading Test

THE PAOMENNEHAL PWEOR FO THE HMUAN MNID

Aoccdnig to a rscheeachr at Cmabrigde Uivnervtisy, it deosn't mttar in what order the ltteers in a wrod are, the only iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Amzanig huh?