RTAP
BULLETIN
FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
10 YEARS
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CTD FACTOIDS

New Faces Lead Florida Transit Organizations

Within the past few months, three of Florida's major transit oriented organizations have welcomed new leaders to their agencys.

Jason Bittner

In late January, the University of South Florida, the College of Engineering and the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) welcomed Jason Bittner to the position of Director of CUTR. Mr. Bittner previously served as Deputy Director of the National Center for Freight and Infrastructure Research and Education at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Jason is CUTR's third director since its establishment in 1988, following Gary Brosch and Ed Mierzejewski.

Steve Holmes

In December, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged announced the appointment of their new executive director, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Holmes.

Lt. Col. Holmes served in the United States Marine Corps from 1976 to 2000, where he held a variety of leadership, operational planning and instructor positions. During

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CUTR Selected for Federal UTC Grant

In January, the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida (USF) received the good news that it had been selected as one of 22 national University Transportation Research Centers by the U.S. Department of Transportation. CUTR's National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) was selected as one of only two public transportation-focused university research programs to receive this highly competitive national grant. The CUTR consortium of four universities is led by USF and includes Florida International University's Lehman Transportation Research Center, the University of Illinois at Chicago's Urban Transportation Center, and North Dakota State University's Small Urban and Rural Transportation Center.

NCTR at CUTR
National Center for Transit Research

USF and its partners will receive a $3.5 million grant which will be matched with an additional $3.5 million, bringing the financial impact of this award to $7 million.

NCTR was originally established in 1991 and focuses on improving the nation's transportation system by conducting research, training, and teaching, and sharing information with an emphasis on public transportation and alternative forms of transportation that help to minimize traffic congestion and offer alternatives to travelers.

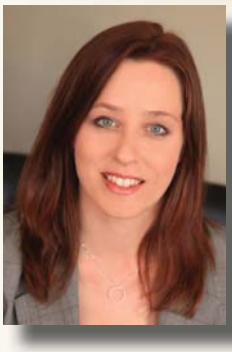
STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CUTR

USF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

his service, Lt. Col. Holmes participated in numerous operations, including Desert Shield/Storm in Southwest Asia and Operation Allied Force in the Balkans. Upon retirement, Steve moved to Tallahassee where he served Florida's most vulnerable citizens with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). While at DCF, Steve served in various positions, such as the Chief of Strategic Planning and the Chief of Staff. Steve recently served as the Chief Operations Officer of the Florida Veterans Foundation, where he assisted the Foundation in the development and operation of its charitable and educational programs. Please join me in welcoming Steve Holmes to the Commission.

Lastly, in late February the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) announced Lisa Bacot as its new Executive Director. Bacot replaces Wes Watson, who retired after more than three decades with FPTA.



Lisa Bacot

Lisa Bacot has over 17 years of experience in the transportation industry. She most recently served as the Director of Business Development for TMS Management Group, Inc., a national transportation company. Immediately prior to joining TMS, Bacot served as the Executive Director for the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, a state agency legislatively charged with ensuring transportation disadvantaged services are provided to the citizens of Florida. In this capacity, Bacot also provided the direct oversight of the Florida Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Program. Bacot has been appointed to numerous national human service transportation coordination panels, committees and advisory councils.

The Florida RTAP community welcomes Jason, Steve, and Lisa!

Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport Training

The Florida DOT's Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program sponsored a Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport (NEST) training class in Marianna, Florida, from February 22-23, 2012. The class, instructed by trainers Dave Cyra and Timothy McLendon, was hosted by JTrans at their transit facility.

The NEST class provided local transit trainers and drivers with valuable tools necessary in the safe handling and transporting of clients. Through attending the NEST course, participants discussed the meaning of, and difference between the terms non-emergency and emergency conditions; raised their awareness as how professionalism relates to roles of the non-emergency transport; reviewed all aspects of the "request for transport;" and examined the various equipment types. Participants took part in a number of hands-on activities and were tested in the patient assessment procedure and collection of vital information. Sensitivity issues were also discussed.

The NEST course participants were provided with a Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport course manual for use in conducting similar training at their local transit agencies.

If you are interested in hosting this or similar valuable RTAP training programs at your facility, please contact Yolanda Moore at Florida RTAP at 813-974-7748 or by email at *moorey@cutr.usf.edu*.

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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—Steve Holmes, Executive Director, Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged

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 Steve Holmes, Executive Director of Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged.

Name: Steve Holmes, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret), USMC

Title: Executive Director, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Birthplace: Decatur, Illinois

Education: Master of Arts Degree in Management

Professional History: Steve enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1976. As an enlisted Marine, Steve served with the Second Marine Air Wing in Cherry Point, North Carolina and as a Drill Instructor in San Diego, California. In 1981, he was selected to attend Officer Candidate School. As an officer, Steve held a variety of command, leadership, operational planning and instructor positions in both Marine Corps and Joint Service commands until his retirement in 2000. He participated in numerous operations, including Desert Shield in Southwest Asia and Operation Allied Force in the Balkans.

Upon retirement, Steve moved to Tallahassee where he served Florida's most vulnerable people with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) as the Agency's Strategic Planner and Chief of Staff.

In 2003, Steve returned to active duty to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom he served as the Team Chief of the Future Operations Planning Team in the Combined Forces Land Component Command. As Team Chief, he was responsible for leading the Operational Planning Team in planning the Combined Land Forces' attack into Iraq and seizure of Baghdad. Prior to the attack into Iraq, Steve led a multi-national team that worked with the Kuwaiti Government to break through the complex obstacle system along the Kuwait-Iraq border, which facilitated the Combined Land Forces' rapid movement into Iraq during the first few days of the war.

Once Steve returned home, he continued to serve Florida's most vulnerable people at DCF. He has held numerous executive leadership positions at DCF, such as Director, Adult Protective Services; Director, Strategic Planning; Director, Florida Abuse Hotline; Director, Veteran Services; Regional Director, Northwest Region, Senior Executive Assistant to the Secretary; and, Chief of Staff.

Steve assumed his duties as the Executive Director of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in December 2011.

Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit: Serving people who need access to transportation in order to experience a better quality of life.

Save the Date:
June 5 & 6, 2012

FDOT/FPTA/CUTR
Professional Development Workshop

USF Embassy Suites
Tampa, Florida

For more information contact
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(813) 974-9823
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Senior Citizen Customer Service Etiquette

By: Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor

My main thought is why would there even need to be a difference in treatment between age groups? Why do we need to write about the difference in treating seniors? Is there really a difference? Well, yes and no. Most of us believe customer service is customer service. However, I've witnessed some strange behavior in how seniors are treated lately, so I wanted to bring it to your attention. And whether it's senior customer service or not, these helpful tips apply to all. Following are some guidelines to help ease the pain for both the senior and you.

While the following tips are in no order of importance, they all, however, are important. And even if you are thinking to yourself, "This isn't our office, thank goodness," you might think again if you survey your customers. I hear complaints about it all the time. So, my friends, if you serve the senior group, try some of these tips.

1. Patience—This is the number one frustration of the senior set. They tend to feel as though others younger than them have little patience and sometimes no patience at all with them. Oh, it may not be that obvious to you, but a short answer to them shows lack of patience. A snippy answer without using their name shows lack of patience, and disrespect. Or an answer they didn't hear that you may need to repeat. And that repeated question has a tone of impatience and often a tone or sigh that says, "Gee whiz, why do I need to repeat everything for you all the time?" Have a little more patience with the seniors. Remember, they have family and that family may need your help one day. You don't want them not recommending you! And most of all, in whatever number of years, that will be you in all probability!

2. Be Sure They Understand—While you don't need to be a senior to be hard of hearing, undoubtedly many seniors are hard of hearing. And in many cases, especially if they don't have a hearing aid, they are embarrassed to let you know they didn't hear or understand you. Take the time to be sure they thoroughly understand what you're explaining to them. Be sure you are 150 percent the customer (senior or not) has absorbed everything you have said. And remember, just because they said yes they understand your question, that doesn't mean they did. You might ask them, nicely, to repeat what the instructions are or when the next appointment is or whatever the item is. Having a customer repeat back what they thought they heard is a great way to be sure they understand. And please be sure you ask in a very soft, pleasant tone of voice so it's not as though you're in a courtroom grilling them.

3. Memory Problems—We KNOW this is not confined to the senior set. (Frankly, none of these tips are confined to just the senior set.) All of us have, at one time or another, forgotten instructions, names, or other items. So while writing it down will help, making double, even triple sure they really understand what needs to be done is so important.

4. Company Jargon—Every industry, company, or organization has jargon they use internally. And that's fine. Using company jargon to each other will speed things along. However, using company jargon on a senior, or really anyone, can and will slow things down and confuse the issue. So if you're telling a senior to do something and use confusing jargon, best you break it down and take the time to use normal language we'll all understand.

5. Speed is Not Success—OK, let's face it, we're all busy, busy, busy. But being busy does not give us carte blanche to be rude. Slow down. Maybe not as slow as the senior you're working with at the time, but slow down. Remember, rushing threatens people. Acknowledge what they're saying. Look them in the eye. The faster you go, the more confusing it will get for them. Far better you do it right the first time than to have to repeat yourself. (Which, by the way, you may need to do anyway). Either way, remember, speed is not success. It's not a race to get rid of them. It's a chance to be nicer to someone.

6. Smile—This is something the senior set relishes. They may not have had a smile given to them for days or months. They may not have laughed in quite a while. They may be alone. They may be lonely. You may be the only contact they have to the outside. You may make such a difference to them. So when you talk with them, keep a big, big smile on your face and in your voice. They'll feel it. And appreciate it.

So, what is old? What makes a senior? A 30 year old thinks a 55 year old is old. A 55 year

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Customer Service Etiquette—cont'd from pg. 4

old thinks 70 is old. And 70 year olds think, well, you get the idea. At what age is old? At what age do we start losing patience with people? At what age do we start helping people understand? At what age do we start forgetting things and have a bad memory? At what age should we stop using company slang or jargon? And at what age should we realize that when we rush someone it threatens them?

Good Lord willing, you too will be a senior one day; whatever age that may be. And you too will want to be treated with patience, understanding and, most of all, respect.

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Registration Open
April 27-28, 2012

16th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo

Hosted by

SunTran

Marion Senior Services
Meals • Transit • In-Home Support

Register Here by March 30th

START Training in Panhandle

The Florida Department of Transportation's Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program sponsored the National Rural Transit Assistance Program's Safety Training and Rural Transit (START) course in Panama City Florida, on February 8th and 9th. The course, instructed by trainers Michael Noel and Andrew Ervin, was hosted by Gene Keen and Bay Town Trolley at their local Government Center and Bay Town Trolley facility.

The START program, updated in 2007 by the National Rural Transit Assistance Program, was developed to train new and veteran trainers and drivers in community transit safety and security. The three unit modules that are taught in this course consist of vehicle safety, driver safety, and passenger safety. Course instructors provided hands-on activities in-class and on property at Bay Town Trolley. The two day course allowed participants to gain first-hand knowledge in updated ADA policies, transit security, and passenger safety; as well as training the trainer instruction to equip the transit trainer on ways to instruct the course at their own transit facility.

One of the many hands-on highlights of the training consisted of a fire extinguishing demonstration by the local Fire Rescue and Emergency Services. This 45-minute demonstration provided participants an opportunity to extinguish a simulated fire, and provided a refresher on how to operate and maintain fire extinguishers kept on transit vehicles. Participants had an opportunity to re-enact a safety evacuation where a bus was consumed with simulated smoke. Class participants were instructed how to properly assist passengers in need and to evacuate passengers to a safe place.

The START course provided written materials for Instructors as well as a Learner's guide for training at transit agencies.

If you are interested in hosting this or similar valuable RTAP training programs at your facility, please contact Yolanda Moore at Florida RTAP at (813) 974-7748 or by email at *moorey@cutr.usf.edu*.

Right: Instructor, Michael Noel, demonstrating passenger assistance techniques in an emergency evacuation

Below: Participants in training class

2012 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 27-29, 2012
Introduction to Travel Training—Tampa, FL

April 19, 2012
Fatigue Awareness—Tampa, FL

April 27-28, 2012
16th Annual Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo—Ocala, FL

May 14-18, 2012
TSI's Transit Bus System Safety (FT00533)—Tampa, FL

May 31-June 1, 2012
NTI's Paratransit Management and Operations—Tampa, FL

June 5-6, 2012
FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—USF Embassy Suites, Tampa, FL

June 26-27, 2012
NTI's Managing Community Mobility—Tampa, FL

July 31-August 1, 2012
20th Annual CTD Conference—Renaissance Orlando Hotel at SeaWorld, Orlando, FL

October 28-30, 2012
Florida Public Transportation Association Annual Conference and Expo—Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort, Daytona Beach, FL

CTD Factoids

During FY 2011-12, the Florida Coordinated Transportation Systems:

- Permitted over 700,000 Floridians to have mobility in their local communities
- Provided over 51 million trips
- Utilized close to 5,300 transit vehicles to provide service to Floridians and provided over 111 million revenue hours and close to 9 million hours of revenue service

Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

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