



Karen Deigl

Chair of the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA)

It is a great honor to be elected as Board Chair for Florida Public Transportation Association. I look forward to supporting the advancement of all Floridians' transportation needs because I believe transportation should never be a barrier to quality of life for anyone.

When I assumed this chairmanship, I never dreamed we would say goodbye to outgoing FPTA Chairman and Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes, and I know you, too, have heavy hearts. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for Clinton's exceptional leadership and dedication.

For more than 30 years, he committed his professional life to the public transportation sector by improving transportation services, enhancing accessibility, and fostering innovation.

As you well know, Clinton restructured bus routes and spearheaded a number of new programs such as the Mobility On Demand service Go Glades in western Palm Beach County, and introduced a new transit smart card and mobile payment system. Clinton believed transit is the great equalizer and that it doesn't matter how much money someone has, everyone needs transportation to get places.

Our primary mission remains unchanged: We will continue to support and improve public transportation and mobility options through advocacy, innovation, education, and partnerships.

One essential component is using FPTA's five strategic goals set forth in an August 2023 Strategic Planning Retreat (Association Management, Advocacy, (continued on page 2)



Florida Public Transportation Association

Clinton B. Forbes' Legacy of Transit Leaders

Clinton B. Forbes's untimely passing on November 2, 2023 has left an indelible void in the hearts of those who knew him, as his legacy of innovation, intellect, and boundless enthusiasm continues to resonate within our industry.

To celebrate Mr. Forbes' influence on us, Christian Londono, Steve Anderson, Yash Nagal, and Levi McCollum share some of our experiences as his colleagues and mentees.

Christian Londono, current Palm Tran Director of Support Services (2015-2023)

I had the privilege to work with Mr. Forbes for the full eight years he served as the Executive Director of Palm Tran. During that time, I progressed through Palm Tran as a Transit Planner I (2012-2017), Special Projects Coordinator (2017-2018), Manager of Performance Management (2018-2021), Senior Manager of Performance Management (2021-2022), and Director of Support



Services (2022-current). Mr. Forbes was instrumental in my growth with the organization, motivating me to strive for greatness and never settle.

In April 2023, Mr. Forbes and I presented a comprehensive overview of the community's transportation (continued on page 2)

2023 FPTA Annual Conference & APTA's EXPO in Orlando, FL

The 2023 Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Annual Conference was held in conjunction with the APTA TRANSform Conference & EXPO in Orlando, Florida on October 8-11, 2023. Although, the structure was much different than normal for us, the joint conference gave all FPTA members the ability to attend the APTA EXPO for free and network with thousands of other attendees at the Orange County Convention Center.

Our conference registration topped 330 people, but the APTA TRANSform Conference & EXPO had close to 12,000 in attendance. Our FPTA Conference focused on general sessions that would interest the entire group, such as our annual State and Federal Updates,

our FPTA Awards Ceremony, a session on Nurturing Leadership in the Public Transportation industry, and an overview of FPTA's Five-Year Strategic Business Plan.

Thank you to all who attended! And, please mark your calendar for next year's exciting event:

September 22-25, 2024

FPTA/CTD Joint Annual Conference & EXPO

Hilton West Palm Beach & Palm Beach Convention Center

Host Property: Palm Tran & SFRTA

(Photos on page 8)

Chairman's Message (cont. from page 1)

Education, Innovation, Partnership) as a guide to increase ridership, diversify mobility options, and address staffing challenges.

We aim to improve the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of transportation, with the vision of equal access to transportation for all. Enhancing public transportation directly impacts quality of life by providing access to

health appointments, employment and other vital services. Offering clients mobility options to foster independence also decreases isolation. All of which are essential to promoting good health and well-being.

Florida continues to be a national transportation leader with FPTA as one of the most active transit associations in the nation, thanks to our members'

enthusiastic involvement. Together, we will explore new avenues, forge strategic partnerships, and remain at the forefront of the transportation industry.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to lead FPTA and your unwavering commitment to our organization and mission.

Karen

Clinton Forbes (cont. from page 1)

needs to the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners. Despite our best effort, the Board decided against our recommendations. Following the meeting, I conveyed my frustration to Mr. Forbes. In response, Mr. Forbes offered words of encouragement, stating, "Rather than viewing this situation as a lost cause, see it as a challenge and rise to it." This transformative advice shifted my perspective from frustration to motivation. Mr. Forbes' inspiring words were truly uplifting during that discouraging moment.

Mr. Forbes held the belief that as members of society, it is our duty to pay our civic rent, signifying giving back through volunteering or contributing to charitable causes. Mr. Forbes was fond of the saying, "I contribute not only for the inherent satisfaction but also because every time I give, it returns threefold." In both my personal and professional life, it has proven true that giving back and assisting others is indispensable for multiplying one's blessings.

Steve Anderson, former Palm Tran Director of Transit Planning (2015- 2020)

For five years, I worked alongside Mr. Forbes. When he arrived at Palm Tran, I was Senior Planner (2015-2018). Over the years, I worked my way up to Transit Planning Manager (2018-2019) and Director of Transit Planning (2019-2020) with opportunities that he opened up for me.

Mr. Forbes' mantra was A-E-F: Anticipate, Execute, Follow-up. This is the best phrase

(continued on page 3)



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Clinton Forbes (cont. from page 1)

ever because it encapsulates going the extra mile in an easy to understand acronym. Communication and collaboration is key in the transit industry. The best plans will not work if not properly understood and communicated. Great meetings and ideas are strengthened when follow-up notes are sent to hold stakeholders accountable.

Mr. Forbes' impact on my leadership style has been transformational. He exemplified innovation, preparation, and confidence. Lots of people work hard. The ability to work hard but also communicate effectively are what separates good from great. We had several one-on-one conversations where he communicated his belief in me and that I had potential. That belief has kept me going and climbing and reaching for better on behalf of transit passengers.

Yash Nagal, current Palm Tran Director of Transit Planning (2019-2023)

I was fortunate to call Mr. Forbes "boss" for four of his eight-year tenure at Palm Tran. Mr. Forbes' model leadership certainly influenced the way in which I carried myself. Consequently, I had the opportunity to rapidly rise throughout the organization as a Planner II (2019), Senior Planner (2019-2021), Transit Planning Manager (2021-2022), and lastly Director of Transit Planning (2023).

As a part of my graduate thesis, I had a chance to interview Mr. Forbes regarding his leadership style. Through this discussion, I learned early in my career that while technical skills are essential, soft skills play a massive role in an individual's success. Great leaders like Mr. Forbes identify what is needed

for their team's success and ensure that proper training practices are in place.

Mr. Forbes has had a profound impact on my leadership style. Since I entered the organization at a young age, almost everything I know about leadership directly resulted from watching him lead. From public speaking to professional dressing and everything in between, he inspired young professionals like myself. With his guidance and mentorship over the years, I was able to grow professionally in the agency and, more importantly, grow as a person.

Levi McCollum, former Palm Tran Director of Transit Planning (2021-2022)

My time with Mr. Forbes was short, but impactful. While I read and heard about his novel projects on the other coast of the Florida peninsula since joining the industry, it was not until 2021 that I had the opportunity to call him a colleague. I joined Palm Tran as a Transit Planning Manager (2021), and six months later, Mr. Forbes promoted me to Director of Transit Planning and Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (2021-2022). Immediately, I bonded with Mr. Forbes due to his pursuit of excellence and unwavering commitment to public service.

Though, a couple months into my Palm Tran tenure, I was timid and chose to avoid conflict during a debate in an Executive Leadership Team meeting. After the meeting, I approached Mr. Forbes about my perspective and reasoning for my actions. His response was, "Why didn't you say that in the meeting? You have to stand up for yourself." Going forward, I had the confidence, and most

importantly, his support to lead the Palm Tran Planning Department.

Mr. Forbes consistently preached the benefits of public transportation. Mr. Forbes had a deep well of ideas to market public transportation services and exercise empathy for our customers. "Access to opportunity for everyone" was not a dormant mission statement, it was Mr. Forbes' favorite refrain, and he meant it. Mr. Forbes saw public transit as an equalizer and a way for people to participate in a free society. Though I have since left Palm Tran, his perspective is embedded in the way I view public transportation's role in civic life.

Lasting Impact

Fortunately, we were able to join Mr. Forbes in his endeavor of creating a culture of excellence.

Mr. Forbes' values and legacy will live on through the four of us. He will be dearly missed.

MCAT's Spooktactical Event

Manatee County Area Transit participated in the Manatee County Sheriff's Department annual "Spooktactical" event on October 19, 2022. Staff decorated a fixed route bus for Halloween and handed out candy at the event. The automatic passenger counter on the vehicle recorded over 2,000 visitors during the event.



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Monroe County Embarks on Transformative Transit Journey: County Commissioners Announce Incremental Rollout Beginning Q1 2024

Monroe County is gearing up for a revolutionary transformation in its transportation landscape, as the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners unveil plans for an incremental rollout of a cutting-edge transit system. The first wave of services is scheduled to hit the streets in the first quarter of 2024, marking the beginning of a new era in accessible and sustainable transportation for the region.

The strategic approach to building the transit system allows for a phased implementation, ensuring that residents and visitors can gradually benefit from improved mobility options. The collaborative effort between the FDOT, South Florida Commuter Services and the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners has been instrumental in shaping this visionary project.

Monroe County Transit Executive Director, Richard Clark, expressed excitement about the upcoming launch, stating, "This incremental rollout is a testament to our commitment to providing practical and effective transit solutions for Monroe County. We are taking measured steps to ensure the success and seamless integration of this much-anticipated project."

The first phase of building the system will introduce a new micro transit service – a strategically planned, saleable service zone to connect key areas within the county. The services aim to address the specific needs of the community, providing convenient and reliable transportation options for daily commuters and leisure travelers alike.

Residents can look forward to reduced travel times, increased connectivity, and a more sustainable way to navigate the scenic beauty of the Florida Keys. The gradual expansion of the transit system will further integrate innovative technologies and eco-friendly practices, aligning with Monroe County's commitment to environmental conservation.

Community engagement initiatives will accompany the rollout, with informational sessions and public forums designed to gather feedback and address any concerns. The inclusive approach ensures that the transit system caters to the

diverse needs of the community and becomes a true reflection of Monroe County's identity.

As the first quarter of 2024 approaches, anticipation is building, and excitement is palpable among residents. The incremental rollout of the transit system signifies a milestone in Monroe County's journey towards a more sustainable and interconnected future. With the FDOT and County Commissioners leading the charge, the community is poised to experience the tangible benefits of this transformative transit initiative in just a few short months.

For more information, visit: [Monroe County Transit \(arcgis.com\)](https://monroecountytransit.com)



Bayway Celebrates One-Year Rebrand Anniversary with "Bayway Day"



Bayway, Bay County Public Transit, recently marked the one-year anniversary of its comprehensive rebranding

initiative, transitioning from Bay Town Trolley to the more contemporary Bayway. In honor of this significant milestone,

Bayway extended a warm invitation to the entire community, inviting them to participate in the festivities scheduled on September 20, marking the occasion as "Bayway Day" – a day dedicated to lively celebrations and complimentary transportation services for all.

Lamar Hobbs, the Programs Administrator for Bay County Transit, expressed, "Our community's camaraderie during the celebration of this remarkable milestone was truly gratifying. The community's unwavering support and trust have played a pivotal role in propelling our progress and enhancements. 'Bayway Day' served as a unique opportunity for us to reciprocate and convey our enthusiasm regarding the promising trajectory of public transit in Bay County."

For more information about Bayway, please visit www.baywaytransit.org.

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Article by Kristen Joyner, Georgia Transit Association

Resources: Safety4Transit.org

Is your transit agency prepared for the intersection of Human Trafficking and Public Transportation?

Why is this an important topic?

Human Trafficking is a crime against adults and children of any gender or gender identity, race, or nationality. It is a crime involving the exploitation of someone for the purposes of compelled labor or a commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Where a person younger than 18 is induced to perform a commercial sex act, it is a crime regardless of whether there is any force, fraud, or coercion.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery, with nearly 25 million victims worldwide, including in the United States. Traffickers use all modes of transportation to conduct their activities and often use public transit because it is low cost, offers greater anonymity in buying fare cards, and provides less direct interaction with government officials.

Public transportation workers and riders are presented with the best opportunities to identify and report potential incidents

of sex and labor trafficking. The challenge is letting them know what it is and how to report.

The following are indicators of a person or persons being trafficked:

- Passengers who are not allowed to speak for themselves.
- Passengers who are not dressed appropriately for the weather, have a disheveled appearance, or are agitated, or crying.
- Minors traveling without adult supervision.
- Passengers offering to exchange sex for a ride, or meal, etc.



HUMAN Trafficking
Prevention: Labor & Sex

Human Trafficking can impact all ages, genders, races, and nationalities. Victims can live in rural, urban, or tribal communities. Traffickers may be a family member, a stranger, or an authority figure.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING INDICATORS

- Under the control of another person
- Does not speak up for themselves when spoken to
- Someone else holds their identity documents
- Shows signs of physical abuse
- Fearful of employer

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are you free to make your own decisions?
- Do you sleep at the same place you work?
- Have you or your family been threatened if you seek help?
- Are you in debt to your employer?
- Can you change jobs if you want to?

Labor & Sex Trafficking
Not on my bus.
Not on my train.
Not in my community.

If you suspect signs of labor or sex trafficking, please contact 911 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 or text HELP to 233733.

- Someone waiting at a facility, but do not know the person who is picking them up.

- Anyone who makes an acknowledgement of having a pimp or needing to make a quota.

- Signs of branding or tattooing, often of a trafficker's name.

- Passengers not in possession of their own, ticket, money, or ID.

An offer to exchange sex for anything, should immediately arouse your suspicions and call for action. Otherwise, the "Totality of Circumstances" must be considered.

There are many free resources that can be utilized, for more information or questions, please contact Kristen Joyner at kristen@gatransit.org or Ph:615-390-6863.



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In rural, urban, & tribal communities.

If you suspect signs of human trafficking, contact 911 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 or text HELP to 233733.



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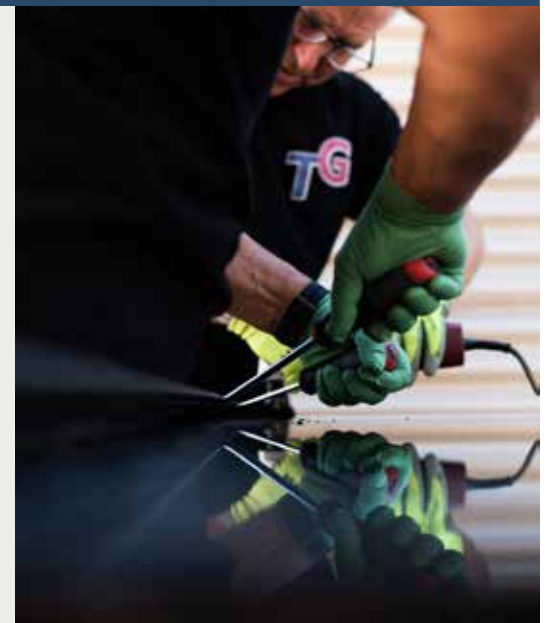


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WINDOWREBUILD

Our team at TransitGUARD will replace damaged glass on hidden framed or traditional windows for all transit and rail vehicles using our direct service method. By using our WindowREBUILD service, you will save money and reduce your out-of-service time by up to a third. Also, we can supply new windows for New Flyer and Gillig thanks to our industry partners. You can be sure that the job will be done fast and professionally.



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Miami-Dade County Better Bus Network Builds A More Connected Community

By: Calvin Sykes Jr.

In a historic development this November, Miami-Dade County launched the Better Bus Network (BBN), the biggest transformation of our public transit system in almost 40 years. It's one of the most important endeavors the Department of Transportation and Public Works has undertaken in its history, to improve service and modernize our system based on community feedback. Our bus network had remained largely untouched for the last four decades despite major population, housing and business growth.

As part of the rollout, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava announced free fares on all transit modes, including Metrobus, Metrorail, our on-demand MetroConnect, and Special Transportation Service through Dec. 31. Through the usage of free fares, a national best practice, we encourage new riders to take the bus, ease the shift for existing riders, and take fare collection off operators' shoulders while they adjust as well. "The Better Bus Network reflects our commitment to equity and progress, marking a new era for public transportation in Miami-Dade," said Mayor Cava. "We are making transit more accessible and showcasing tangible improvements in reliability and coverage. The BBN shapes the future of mobility in our county."

And the BBN is off to a running start. In addition to more frequent service every day, throughout the day, more notable improvements include on-time performance (OTP) and commute times across the county. Last November, our OTP was at 65%. This November, following the BBN launch, our OTP is 70%. However, we will continue to aspire for greater efficiency. Ridership is also up, and free fares are certainly contributing to that while the system remains safe and clean.

"With the Better Bus Network, we're seeing significant advancements in service frequency, on-time performance, and customer satisfaction," said Eulois Checkley. "The jump from 65% to 70% in our on-time performance in just one year is a clear indicator of our tireless pursuit of excellence. We will continue to refine our services with larger vehicles on busier routes and adjustments based on rider feedback. Our spring lineup change will further demonstrate our adaptive strategy, ensuring that our transit system continues



to meet current demands and anticipates future growth."

It's important for our residents to know we are still listening, as we have for the last five years during which hundreds of BBN outreach meetings took place. We have had ambassadors placed at major bus stops and on buses since early October and they remained in place now. We have also been directing riders to a feedback form and continue to monitor responses. In fact, we have already made some alterations, such as running larger vehicles

on high ridership routes. We will utilize all feedback, especially common concerns, to make any necessary adjustments in our spring lineup change this coming April. This effort must remain a community-led process.

For frequent and new riders alike, they'll notice our new and improved bus system at work and the freedom it provides. Especially in the busiest parts of our county, everyone benefits from more accessible, reliable, and efficient transportation options. Enjoy the ride.



2023 FPTA Annual Conference & APTA's EXPO (continued from page 1)



Broward County Transit's Premium Mobility Plan Will Forever Change The Way Broward County Connects!

Broward County Transit (BCT) officially launched its multi-billion-dollar Premium Mobility Plan (PREMO) that will forever improve the transportation landscape in Broward County. This transformational initiative will add over 200 miles of new premium transit services to its existing network. BCT consistently examines transit requirements and hosts outreach

million annually, we will have a 100% electrified bus fleet, a new Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) on our roads, and the facilities that support the service will reflect the community architecturally and aesthetically.

This plan also offers us the opportunity to become one of the leading intermodal transit providers in the country providing

County is the 2nd largest county in Florida and its population continues to rise. With this plan, Broward County will have the framework and infrastructure to support this growing population and comfortably travel into the future.

The PREMO plan will also be a foundation for transit-oriented development (TOD) that will take advantage of the transit system and combine walkable communities, environmental stewardship, and livable communities where people can walk, live, learn, work, and play. And the transit is there to support that.

Coree Cuff Lonergan, CEO/General Manager of Broward County Transit said, "We are so excited to bring the PREMO plan to Broward County. This data-driven plan will not only improve the way Broward County connects through the 200 miles of new premium service, but it will also create new jobs, stimulate economic development, connect major points of interest, significantly increase annual ridership, support affordable housing, expand small business opportunities, and provide Broward County residents and visitors with state-of-the-art multimodal transit opportunities."

Learn more at <https://www.broward.org/bct/premo>



events to identify optimal ways to enhance connections between individuals and locations.

This countywide network of premium transit services will provide convenient mobility that is attractive, safe, reliable, and frequent. The PREMO plan includes 11.5 miles of Commuter Rail, 23.3 miles of Light Rail Transit (LRT), 76 miles of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and 100 miles of High Frequency Bus Service with eight east/west corridors and six north/south corridors. Corridor recommendations are based on current ridership, ridership potential, community feedback, and economic development opportunities.

The goals of the plan are simple but will significantly influence the future of our county:

- Integrate and serve our community.
- Improve mobility for all.
- Implement equitable transit solutions.
- Improve safety and security.
- Ensure environmental stewardship.
- Enhance economic development.
- Ensure financial stability.

With the implementation of the PREMO plan, we will not only add over 200 miles of new premium transit service, but we will also have a ridership of nearly 23

a unique opportunity to connect Broward County's three major economic engines, the Airport, Seaport, and Convention center with fast, reliable, and convenient transit service. According to World Population Review (2023), Broward



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Senior Resource Association Celebrates Dump the Pump Day

Senior Resource Association (SRA) observed Dump the Pump on Thursday, November 9, to raise awareness on the benefits of using public transportation. Leaders from multiple counties attended SRA's Dump the Pump event, which showcased the growth of public transportation in Indian River County (IRC) and culminated with riding various routes around town.

"We want to show our community that public transportation provides an easy and convenient way to travel throughout Indian River County," said Karen Deigl, SRA President/CEO and Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Board Chair.

Dump the Pump Day, begun in 2006 by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), emphasizes public transportation as a convenient option that helps people save money. Other advantages of dumping the pump include reducing pollution, road congestion as well as wear and tear on the vehicle.

SRA is the Community Transportation Coordinator for Indian River and Martin counties, as designated by the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, and has operated Indian River County's zero-fare, public transit program, GoLine, since 1992. Lucine Martens, Planner with the Martin County Metropolitan Planning Organization, praised the transit system, "GoLine is exemplary in its ability to serve the entire community and everyone has equal

access to transit" and "sets the gold standard for equity in transit."

GoLine provides 14 fixed routes throughout IRC and transports approximately 4,500 people traveling to work, school, shopping, and other destinations each day. Last fiscal year, GoLine's 22-bus fleet provided more than 1.2 million trips. All GoLine buses are ADA accessible and are equipped with easy-to-use bicycle racks. With more than 500 convenient stops, and GoLine charging zero-fare, riders can sit back and let the buses take them where they need to go.

Deigl herself rode GoLine from home to the office and meetings throughout the week. She experienced the ease of navigating the system, loading and unloading her bicycle, and avoiding the stresses of driving. "Using the app on my cell phone to locate the bus in real-time along its route was easy, and I was happy to get work done during the commute," Deigl mentioned.

Both residents and visitors take advantage of the GoLine transit system. "During our ride on GoLine, the route included a stop at the Vero Beach City Marina where over 3,000 visiting boats come to stay throughout the year. Boaters moor at the marina," added Martens, "and GoLine gives the boaters transportation to life sustaining activities, like access to groceries and daily provisions."

Retirees Christine Robidas and Cedric Parnell live on their boat and travel to

many locations up and down North America's east coast from the Bahamas to Nova Scotia. They recently stayed in Vero Beach for the second year in a row. "We're live-aboard boaters and we have no car. Vero Beach is one of the places we come back to because we can get around easily," Parnell said. He added that GoLine "feels safe, clean and it shows up when it says it going to show up."

Finding your route(s) on GoLine is simple. First, riders can open the map app on their cell phone, enter their destination and select the bus icon. All available routes will appear and will include walking time to and from the stop.

Riders can also download the TransLoc App from Apple or Google Play and select Indian River Transit as the nearby agency. The app allows riders to see the real-time location of all GoLine vehicles.

The GoLine operates Monday – Friday from 6 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Visit SeniorResourceAssociation.org for more public transportation information.





CTAA's 2024 EXPO

CTAA's EXPO is the premier annual event for community and public transportation professionals to participate in essential learning events and network with colleagues.

Come to EXPO for

- ✓ More than 40 workshops
- ✓ Networking opportunities
- ✓ The latest transit vendors
- ✓ New training courses

Registration
opens this
December!

Dates



June 9 - 12, 2024

Where



West Palm Beach,
Florida

www.ctaa.org

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-- Business Member Corner --

Altro Transport Sales



Doug Studer, Altro Transport Sales Executive for the Southeast, announces his retirement in March of 2024. He has been an integral member of the Altro USA Transport Division, having fostered excellent customer relationships and brand recognition across his territory and we are grateful for his commitment over the past 22 years.

As Doug leaves for retirement, Altro is pleased to announce that Johnna McQuinn will be stepping into his role of Sales Executive for the Southeast territory. Johnna brings a wealth of transit knowledge & experience to the Altro family and we are confident that she will be a valuable resource for our southeastern clients.

Doug & Johnna will be working together into the spring of 2024, attending upcoming shows and customer appointments. We will be introducing Johnna and showcasing Altro Transport's newest addition to the safety flooring line – the HD+ high design metallic-look Transflor Chroma Platinum.

Please reach out to Johnna to request a sample.

Altro offers our best wishes to Doug and Johnna.

For salutations, congratulations, and introductions: Doug Studer: dstuder@altro.com and Johnna McQuinn: jmcquinn@altro.com



COMPLIMENTARY WHITE PAPER

Increase Efficiency and Reduce Operating Costs with Cloud-Based Paratransit Software

By implementing cloud-based paratransit software, your agency has the opportunity to simultaneously increase efficiency and reduce operating costs.

Learn how you can use these efficiency gains to increase system capacity in this business case!

► Scan the QR Code to view white-paper



Escambia County Area Transit's Drive Toward Excellence Has Begun

Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT) provides fixed-route bus service in the Pensacola and Gulf Breeze areas, including specialized services such as the University of West Florida (UWF) On-Campus Trolley, the Beach Trolley, and the Jury Trolley, as well as paratransit service countywide and special events such as the Blue Angels airshow. ECAT has open been thought of as a pre-historic transit agency, still functioning under outdated bus schedules and procedures. All of that is changing!

To catch everyone up on the amazing things ECAT is doing to create a more effective transit system and provide the ultimate customer experience through convenience, accuracy, and timeliness; Let's start with ECAT is building a new transit facility and improving the routes! In July 2023, Governor DeSantis announced \$187 Million in awards through the Fl. Dept of Commerce's Rebuild Florida Program. ECAT requested funding for a new state-of-the-art, energy-efficient, and resilient facility for transit operations, to include continued fixed-route as well as ADA and Transportation Disadvantaged paratransit services. By relocating operations out of its current flood zone, the new building will be built to enhanced hurricane protection area (EHPA) specifications allowing it to function as an Emergency Shelter, mitigate area flooding with a regional stormwater pond while also providing bus services to assist in evacuations as needed. The application hoped for \$31.5 Million for a new facility. A second application was placed requesting \$5 Million towards resilient streetscape improvements through new energy-efficient, solar-powered, and ADA-compliant bus shelters. To everyone's surprise, both of ECAT's projects were approved! Escambia County was awarded \$52,946,678 for multiple projects throughout the County. ECAT received \$26,550,000 of that amount for the new transit facility, as well as being awarded \$5,000,000 through the Rebuild Florida Hometown Revitalization program to enhance the safety and beautification of streetscapes throughout the County. Escambia County and ECAT are in the very early stages of creating the new facility and bus shelter improvements and certainly can't wait to provide you with updates throughout the journey!



ECAT would like to thank fellow transit agencies who have allowed us to tour their facilities for ideas for creating the ultimate transit facility for Escambia County. Your comradery and openness to networking prove that Florida transit agencies truly do care for their citizens, staff, and fellow Floridians!

Other ECAT program enhancements include the new Student Transit Empowerment Pass (STEP) Program, bus stop signage, and Wi-Fi availability across the entire fleet. In December 2022, ECAT announced a new program that offers free rides for students 18 years of age and under. This exceptional program provided 16,336 free rides, in its first year! In addition to the STEP program, and to keep up with the times by adding amenities for passengers, ECAT was sure to add WIFI access to the fleet as well as install new bus stop signage for improved route clarity.

Upgrades were also made to the fleet as ECAT rolled out three new buses, the first to be added to the fleet since 2014. Equipped with a seated capacity for 23 riders and additional hand straps for

riders to safely stand, each bus is Wi-Fi ready, contains automatic passenger counters and can accommodate two wheelchairs and two bicycles. This is a major improvement that was crucial to the continuance of ECAT services. In August 2023, ECAT was the lucky recipient of 4 cutaways that were donated by FDOT. The vehicles became available from a pilot program and were undoubtedly a welcomed addition to the fleet.

To conclude, as part of ECAT's commitment to efficiency, the agency is implementing PassioGo, a state-of-the-art tracking software. This cutting-edge solution promises real-time tracking, route optimization, and a user-friendly interface for both the agency and passengers. The anticipated "Go Live" date of January 8, 2024, marks a significant step towards a seamless and efficient transit experience.

Dream Big. Ask for the impossible. One day, you will get it.

Safe travels everyone!

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Registration Now Open: <https://floridatransit.org/roadeo>
- June 2-5 >>>** FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop
& Safety Summit (USF Embassy Suites-Tampa)
Registration opens April 3, 2024
- September 22-25 >>>** FPTA/CTD Annual Conference + EXPO
(West Palm Beach)
Registration opens June 3, 2024