



Plan For Transit



NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA TRANSIT PLANNING NETWORK

March 2011

Vol 2 Issue 2

Florida Systems Win Three FTA Grants

In late 2010, The Federal Transit Administration announced \$25.7 million in competitively awarded Alternatives Analysis grants to help community officials in 16 states and the District of Columbia evaluate and select the best options to help place new or expanded transit systems in their communities.

Alternatives Analysis has been a key part of FTA's process for advancing local fixed guideway transit projects for over 25 years. 49 USC 5309(e)(1)(A) requires that projects seeking New Starts funding be based upon the results of an Alternatives Analysis (and later, preliminary engineering). An Alternative Analysis study includes three basic elements:

- Description of study area, transportation problems, and needs
- Study goals, objectives, and measures that articulate the desired "end-state" of whatever transportation investment results from the alternatives analysis
- Description of conceptual alternatives

Conducting an Alternatives Analysis ensures that various costs and benefits, route options, and other important considerations are taken into account as part of FTA's capital planning process, known as New Starts. The analysis is complete once a locally preferred alternative is selected and adopted as part of the affected region's long-range transportation plan.

Of the twenty three winning proposals, three Florida properties submitted successful Alternative Analysis grants as shown in the table below:

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2011 NTI Transit Trainers' Workshop and FDOT/FPTA/CUTR Professional Development Workshop
April 10-12, 2011
Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay
2900 Bayport Drive
Tampa, Florida 33607

For more information, contact Amber Reep at reep@cutr.usf.edu.

System	Project	Grant Amount	Description
RTS Gainesville	Bus Rapid Transit	\$425,000	The corridor under consideration may connect Santa Fe College and Gainesville Regional Airport via downtown Gainesville and University of Florida (UF). Currently, there is heavy use of transit service, particularly around the UF campus. The project would improve access for residents of neighborhoods on the city's east side.
LYNX Orlando	Osceola County Corridor	\$800,000	This corridor is adjacent to Walt Disney World and is heavily populated with tourist-oriented businesses. The corridor follows US 192 in Kissimmee between the Florida Turnpike and SR 27 with portions currently well served by transit. Congestion and tourist volumes are motivations for this project.
StarMetro Tallahassee	Future Transit System Development	\$400,000	This corridor is an arterial undergoing higher-density, mixed-use redevelopment. The corridor runs along Tennessee Street/Mahan Drive between Capital Circle East and West, through Florida State University, Tallahassee Community College and downtown. The project team will evaluate transit-supportive changes to city plans and codes as part of the work plan.

For additional information on the LYNX project contact Keith Melton, FTA, Planning and Environment, keith.melton@dot.gov or Tajsha LaShore, FTA, Grant Development and Management, tajsha.lashore@dot.gov.

For additional information on the RTS or StarMetro projects contact Parris Orr, FTA, Planning and Environment, elizabeth.orr@dot.gov or Darreyl Davis, FTA, Grant Development and Management, darreyl.davis@dot.gov

State of Good Repair Grant Program

A 2010 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) study estimated the cost of bringing the nation’s rail and bus transit systems into a state of good repair at \$77.7 billion. In addition, a yearly average of \$14.4 billion would be required to maintain the systems. “Transit remains one of the safest forms of transportation, but this report shows the clear need to reinvest in our bus, subway and light rail systems,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. While most of the \$77.7 billion backlog can be attributed to rail, more than 40 percent of the nation’s buses are also in poor to marginal condition. “State of Good Repair” for the country’s transportation network is one of the five system-wide goals included in Secretary LaHood’s proposed [Strategic Plan for the Department of Transportation](#).

In April 2010, FTA Administrator Rogoff announced the availability of \$775 million through a competitive State of Good Repair funding program. The FTA received approximately 400 project applications and more than \$4.2 billion in requests for the \$775 million.

The Florida projects selected to receive funding are shown in the table below:

System	Project	Grant Amount	Description
Broward County Transportation Dept.	Transit Asset Management	\$1,000,000	The Broward County Transportation Department will use the funds for the development of an asset management system to track the condition of the agency’s fleet, facilities, and equipment in order to assist in decision-making.
RTS Gainesville	Maintenance Facility	\$10,666,846	The City of Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS) will use funds for the first of a four-phase project to replace its 30-year-old bus maintenance facility - which is too small and outdated to accommodate its growing fleet of buses and ADA vans - with a bus operations, and administration facility that will eventually accommodate a bus fleet of 230 buses and approximately 478 employees. RTS will also replace 42 aging fareboxes.
JTA Jacksonville	Skyway Bus Hub Civil Repair Refurbishment	\$2,384,244	The Jacksonville Transportation Authority will use funds to make electrical and structural repairs to major bus hubs of the Skyway Transit System, an elevated dual track automated transit system with eight stations all within or adjacent to the Jacksonville downtown area. The Skyway’s three bus hubs allow passengers to transfer from the Skyway to buses, from buses to the Skyway, or between buses.
MCAT Manatee County	Construction of Transit Administration /Fleet Maintenance Facility	\$15,948,237	Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) will build a new 116,000 square-foot transit facility to replace its outdated and undersized transit administration building and related facilities. The new facility will house administrative offices, a fleet bay area, a bus fueling station and a bus wash, and will include a 200-space parking area. Currently 23 administrative employees and 72 transit drivers work out of a 5,900 square-foot facility that was built in 1961.
St. Lucie County BOCC	Transit Vehicle Replacement	\$4,550,000	N/A

For additional information on the BCTD or JTA projects contact Keith Melton, FTA, Planning and Environment, keith.melton@dot.gov or Tajsha LaShore, FTA, Grant Development and Management, tajsha.lashore@dot.gov

For additional information on the RTS, MCAT, or St. Lucie projects contact Parris Orr, FTA, Planning and Environment, elizabeth.orr@dot.gov or Darreyl Davis, FTA, Grant Development and Management, darreyl.davis@dot.gov

Federal Transit News

Congress Clears Surface Transportation Extension

One day after the House overwhelmingly passed the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2011 by a final vote of 421 to 4, the Senate approved by voice vote on March 3, 2011 vital legislation to extend highway, transit and highway safety programs through the end of September, clearing the measure for signature by the President.

“This legislation will provide some stability for transportation departments in every state and allow DOTs to continue planning and constructing transportation projects through the summer construction season,” said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John L. Mica (R-FL). “This extension of transportation programs will allow more time for the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to develop a fiscally responsible, long-term reauthorization of transportation programs to create jobs and build our nation’s infrastructure.”

“With unemployment in the construction industry at an all-time high, it is imperative that we extend the surface transportation programs through the end of the fiscal year,” said Highways and Transit Subcommittee Chairman John J. Duncan, Jr. (R-TN).

H.R. 662, the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2011, was introduced in the House by the Republican and Democrat leaders of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The legislation freezes funding at fiscal year 2010 levels for highway, transit and highways safety programs. The previous extension of programs expired March 4, and this legislation is critical to ensuring that transportation programs and projects are not shut down and that infrastructure construction jobs are not threatened.

Rapidly Rising Gas Prices Give Public Transit Riders Highest Savings in Two Years

According to a [March 4, 2011 report](#) released by The American Public Transportation Association, gas prices had increased 28 cents a gallon in the prior 10 days and were expected to continue rising. As a result, riding public transportation saves individuals, on average, \$9,904 annually and \$825 per month based on the average national gas price (\$3.47 per gallon-reported by AAA) and the national unreserved monthly parking rate. This is the highest savings for public transit riders in two years. “As gas prices rise, using public transportation is the quickest way people can beat high gasoline prices,” states William Millar, president American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

APTA releases this monthly “Transit Savings Report” to examine how an individual in a two-person household can save money by taking public transportation and living with one less car. The top 20 cities with the highest transit ridership are ranked in order of their transit savings based on the purchase of a monthly public transit pass and factoring in local gas prices for March 4, 2011 (based on gasoline prices as reported by AAA on 3/4/2011 and the local monthly unreserved parking rate. New York ranked #1 with reported monthly savings of \$1,198 per two-person household. In 20th place was Las Vegas, with \$764 monthly savings. Miami ranked #16 with total monthly savings of \$815 or \$9,781 annually.

New Transit Facilities in Florida

Grand Opening of St. Johns County Transit Center

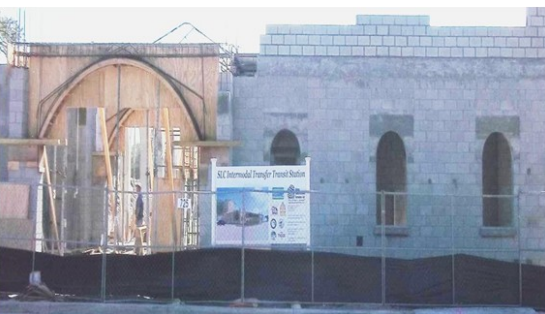
The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners and the St. Johns County Council on Aging hosted a Grand Opening for the public on Sunday, October 3, 2010 at the new St. Johns County Transit Center located at 2595 Old Moultrie Road. The celebration included an old-fashioned Oktoberfest with music, festivities and plenty of food.



The ceremony included comments by US Congressman John Mica, FDOT Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos, COA Executive Director Cathy Brown and County Commission Chair Ron Sanchez. The new facility, funded through federal grants, will provide much-needed headquarters for the COA Transportation Department and Sunshine Bus Company, the official public transportation provider for the County.

Federal funds were used for the transit center, including a \$1.54 million 2009 federal appropriation secured by Congressman Mica. This funding was paired with \$1,025,382 of stimulus funds in March 2010 to allow the facility to be built in its entirety. The transit center belongs to St. Johns County, but it will be used by the Council on Aging Sunshine Bus Company to improve public transportation and paratransit services. County Commission Chair Ron Sanchez is also proud of this new community asset. "Access to reliable public transportation is a key component of our community's future success," Sanchez said.

The new transit center is 6,600 square feet and allows more efficient operations in areas such as maintenance, administration, wash areas, fueling stations, dispatch, storage, and secure paved parking.



St. Lucie County Intermodal Transit Facility Under Construction

On February 11, 2011, Federal Transit Administrator (FTA), Peter Rogoff, toured the site where construction workers are building the new St. Lucie Intermodal Transit Facility. The \$3.2 million energy-efficient building is being constructed with support from \$1.4 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars. Rogoff flew in Friday from Capitol Hill to tour the construction site. "One of the reasons I came here instead of any other community, is that Ft. Pierce is really doing it right," said Rogoff.

The 5,400 square foot bus terminal and transfer station includes an open colonnade waiting area for transit riders, space for ticket sales, a drivers' lounge, handicap accessible public restrooms, a park-and-ride lot, bike racks and a pedestrian/bike trail. This sustainable "green" facility is equipped with photovoltaic roof panels and a cistern system for reclaimed water just to name a few green features. The funding includes \$750,000 in funds from the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency along with money from federal and state grants. Administrator Rogoff said, "These investments will bolster our economy now, while providing the residents of Florida with improved, energy efficient transit options for generations to come." Work on the \$2.4 million project began in October 2010 and will be completed by mid- June 2011.

Transit Agencies "In the News"

Tri-Rail introduces new EASY Card

Tri-Rail recently introduced its new EASY Card automated fare collection system which allows passenger to add up to \$150 cash value to the card to pay fares or load different fare products including a Monthly Pass, 12-Trip Pass or daily passes.



The EASY Card, which costs \$2, contains an embedded computer chip that automatically deducts the fare when the card is tapped on any of the new validators that are clearly marked and located on all station platforms. Cards can be purchased and reloaded at EASY Card vending machines.

In addition to simplifying fare payment on Tri-Rail, EASY Cards facilitate transfers to other South Florida transit systems. To transfer to Miami-Dade Transit simply tap off when you exit the Tri-Rail train and tap on to board the Metrobus or Metrorail. If you purchased a Tri-Rail paper ticket, you may request an EASY Ticket at the Metrorail Transfer Station ticket kiosk upon presenting paper ticket to the station agent after exiting the train. To transfer to Broward County Transit or Palm Tran, you present the EASY Card and the receipt you received when you made your purchase. Additional benefits of the EASY Card include:

FREE BALANCE PROTECTION - When you register your EASY Card, you will enjoy free card protection against loss or theft. If your card is ever lost or stolen, we will issue a new one and transfer your balance. You pay a nominal \$2 card replacement fee.

FREE AUTOLOAD - For your convenience, you have the option to create an EASY Card account online and enjoy free automatic loading.

FREE ONLINE ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT - Manage your EASY Card account online for free.


PSTA adds Free WiFi at Major Transfer Centers

PSTA recently launched a new passenger amenity: free WiFi. Now, riders can connect to the Internet while awaiting their bus at Williams Park, Park Street Terminal, and Grand Central Station transfer centers. So far, passengers are excited about the service. One rider said via Facebook, "I think that's great! When I have to wait to catch my next bus, now I can check email real quick!"

To coordinate with other communications platforms, the password to access the WiFi service is RidePSTA, the same as PSTA's username on Twitter and Facebook.

Visitors to PSTA's Administrative Headquarters in St. Petersburg can also connect to WiFi for free, and a project is in the works to add WiFi for Bus Operators and Mechanics who want to use their personal laptop computers while on break in designated areas.


NOW AVAILABLE

FREE  **Wi-Fi**

at PSTA Terminals

Williams Park
Park Street
Grand Central Station

password: RidePSTA



WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS

Transit Agencies “In the News”



Florida’s Newest Fixed-route Transit System

In December 2010, Santa Rosa County introduced a new fixed route one year pilot project primarily along U.S. Highway 90, between the East Milton Industrial Park to Nine Mile Road/ University Parkway in Pensacola, where transfers can be made to Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT). The new service is open to the general public but its primary focus is to support job access and economic development opportunities.

Two 19 passenger buses serve the 23 mile route which features approximately 28 stops at shopping centers, government buildings, the Santa Rosa Medical Center, the Milton Housing Authority and other major destinations. Santa Rosa County Transit operates Monday through Friday between approximately 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Financial and “in-kind” support for the service is provided by the Santa Rosa Board of County Commissioners, the Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization, Pensacola Bay Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration.

Although ridership increased during the first several months of operations, Santa Rosa County continues to monitor the service and identify opportunities for enhancements such as additional stop locations based on public input. Staff will also continue to work with various community organizations to establish additional outlets for the dissemination of detailed route and schedule information.



Space Coast Area Transit Now on Google Transit

Space Coast Area Transit now provides an opportunity to plan a public transportation trip on-line at Google Maps. According to Jessica Wei, Strategic Partner Development Manager at Google, “As part of Google’s commitment to develop useful public-private partnerships, we are pleased to welcome Space Coast Area Transit to Google Transit. This partnership shows Space Coast Area Transit’s commitment to innovating, serving their riders, and attracting new riders.

To access the trip planner, go to Maps.Google.com and click on “Get Directions”, then placing a starting destination in “A”, an ending destination in “B” and choose “By Public Transit” from the drop down list. View upcoming departures, see a route on the map and plan ahead by setting a departure time. Step by step directions for the entire route, including transfers and travel times, are available in text and on the map. View exactly where you need to be - travel times and transfers - for each leg of the trip, plan a return trip, and print out a map and text directions.

“Being placed on Google Transit is a huge accomplishment for us. It required a lot of effort and planning, but the end result was certainly worth it,” said Jim Liesenfelt, Director of Space Coast Area Transit. “Google Transit is the best trip planner available on the market; there’s no charge to Space Coast Area Transit and there’s no charge to the user. Customers can access our schedules from anywhere on their mobile devices,” he said. The Google Transit link can also be accessed on rideSCAT.com, where printable maps and schedules for each route are also available. For personalized assistance in trip planning, contact Space Coast Area Transit at 321-633-1878.



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Upcoming Training Courses/Webinars

NTI Webinar - Managing Increasing Ridership Demand

April 21, 2011
Length - 90 minutes
No Fee
Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

NTI Webinar - Attracting Senior Drivers to Public Transportation

May 5, 2011
Length - 90 minutes
No Fee
Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Implementing Rural Transit Technology

May 10-11, 2011
Tampa, FL
For more details - visit <http://www.ntionline.com/CourseInfo.asp?CourseNumber=TRI10>

Management of Transit Construction Projects

June 7-9, 2011
Tampa, FL
For more details - visit <http://www.ntionline.com/CourseInfo.asp?CourseNumber=FP017>

Upcoming Events/Conferences

Bus & Paratransit Conference

May 22-25, 2011
Mariott Memphis Downtown
Memphis, TN
www.apta.com/mc/conferences

GIS in Public Transportation Conference

September 12-14, 2011
Hilton St Petersburg Bayfront
St. Petersburg, FL
http://www.urisa.org/gis_transit