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## After a Year, Palm Tran Sees Results From RPM Project

**A** year has passed since Palm Tran launched its Route Performance Maximization (RPM) project, its first bus system overhaul in more than two decades—and the agency in West Palm Beach, FL, is pointing to an optimistic outcome.



"More than three years of combined effort went into implementing the RPM project in the most effective way possible. We were all hoping the results of the project would be positive. I am thrilled to say they have been," said Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes.

The agency designed the RPM project to improve on-time performance and route efficiency through streamlining routes, increasing frequency and adding service on evenings and weekends.

Prior to launching the project, Palm Tran's service was hindered by inefficient service and limited service hours. Passengers who worked evenings and weekends were often required to find alternative transportation home. The RPM project revved up Palm Tran's system and increased access to opportunity by expanding access to jobs, medical appointments and recreational activities.

Palm Tran faced the challenge of implementing improvements to its system within its existing budget. The agency identified 62,600 hours of inefficient service, resulting in \$5 million in annual savings to reinvest in the system. With these additional funds, several hourly routes began running every 20-30 minutes. In addition, Palm Tran equipped all its buses with free onboard Wi-Fi and several were fitted with USB charging stations.

*cont'd on page 2*



### On-Time Performance, Ridership Increases

The agency kicked off the RPM project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Sept. 30, 2018, in West Palm Beach. On-time performance metrics began showing improvement immediately: a 6 percent increase in ridership in the first three weeks of October 2018, compared with the same period in 2017, and a 9 percent increase in on-time performance during the same period.

Throughout the year, Palm Tran's on-time performance metrics have continued to climb, reporting 80 percent for FY 2019 compared with 73.5 percent the previous year. Prior to launching the RPM project, 20 of Palm Tran's 34 routes did not meet on-time performance standards; since the launch, this number has declined by more than half.

Furthermore, ridership remains steady when some others are seeing declines, including a reported 0.7 percent increase from October 2018 to January 2019 compared to the previous year.

"As we close FY 2019 and reflect on metrics, we are very satisfied the data reveals that our efforts have resulted in substantial change and improvement," said Manager of Performance Management Christian Londono.

### Safety Improvements, New Services

In addition, the RPM project proved to be an effective safety initiative because it streamlined Palm Tran's routes, making it safer for buses to navigate without having to make unsafe turns or snake through neighborhoods. The numbers following the RPM project launch show a reduction in preventable vehicle collisions compared to previous years.

The project also ignited other upgrades such as "Go Glades," the first flex transportation service in the Glades region, a rural area of Palm Beach that includes the cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade and South Bay. Go Glades addressed constraints in travel mobility in the area by allowing riders direct access to bus stops and the option to deviate from a route to reach their destination.

Palm Tran worked on the project collaboratively with the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners and every staff member from the Executive Leadership Team to bus operators. The agency's Palm Tran Statistics teams met monthly to monitor the results and review feedback.

As a result, Palm Tran has already made updates and modifications to build upon the success of the project. On Sept. 15, 2019, the system improved 19 of its routes with extended hours, increased frequency and route extensions. According to Forbes, more improvements can be expected in the future; he added, "This is just the beginning when it comes to taking Palm Tran's system to the next level."

Palm Tran will be providing the county commissioners an updated RPM and Go Glades project presentation in the spring. For more information, visit [www.palmtran.org](http://www.palmtran.org).

*Source: Passenger Transport, November 2019*

### Agency Resources and Emergency Travel Information

[www.fdot.gov/agencyresources/emergency.shtm](http://www.fdot.gov/agencyresources/emergency.shtm)

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource Center

<https://floridatransit.org/coronavirus>

### New: FDOT/CUTR Transit Emergency Management Listserv

The Florida Department of Transportation's Public Transit Office has established a dedicated emergency management listserv for the purpose of sharing information, communication, and updating members relating to transit emergencies. This dedicated site should only be used by personnel that are responsible for providing transit agency emergency related response and coordination. FDOT and CUTR will make emergency information related to the COVID-19 pandemic available. All previous posts to the listserv will be available for review. Transit agency personnel that have been designated to access this listserv will be able to share emergency information and obtain emergency updates from FDOT Public Transit Office.

Please share this notice within your agency so designated emergency response staff can be added. Complete this brief form to process subscription: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/JSFPVSQ](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JSFPVSQ)

## Lake Nona Gets \$20 Million Federal Grant for Driverless Bus System, Other Improvements

Orange County has received a \$20 million federal grant to expand its autonomous shuttle system at Lake Nona, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao said Tuesday, part of a combined \$62 million in transportation awards to three Florida cities.

Chao was at Lake Nona, a southeast Orlando neighborhood, along with Gov. Ron DeSantis and state transportation secretary Kevin Thibault to reveal a combined \$883 million in Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants nationwide.

Orange County was among just a handful out of more than 600 applications across the U.S. to get funding. The grant to the Orange County Local Alternative Mobility Network Project at Lake Nona will create designated lanes for the already existing driverless bus system called Beep that kicked off in September.

The service, which currently includes two shuttles and runs 1.2 miles throughout a fixed route between Lake Nona Town Center and the village center in Laureate Park, will be expanded to include 25 miles of dedicated route lanes throughout the booming neighborhood.

Concerns have been raised over driverless vehicles, especially after an Uber autonomous vehicle struck and killed a pedestrian in Arizona, but proponents argue they're safer than ones with drivers.

Central Florida has been deemed an autonomous vehicle proving ground by the U.S Department of Transportation. Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer has talked about eventually getting the technology downtown in its LYMMO buses, while Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings has said it could one day be used to shuttle visitors around International Drive and the Orange County Convention Center. The Lake Nona project will also include a 21,000-square-foot "mobility hub," which Jessi Blakley, vice president for Nona developer Tavistock, said would be equivalent to a train station.

"You're going to be able to walk in and you're going to be able to see where the shuttles are, what the schedules are," Blakely said. "If you rode your bike to work, there's going to be really nice facilities where you can shower, perhaps store your bike if you're walking through the town center and just want to grab a shaded spot and a cold drink."



The grant also will help pay for a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge over six-lane Lake Nona Boulevard, as well as "recovery zone" shelters along some of the 44 miles of trails and bike paths in the neighborhood.

"It's an investment in cutting edge ... transportation for commuters and recreational users in this beautiful area," Chao said. "Among other key benefits, this innovative project will reduce congestion, increase air quality and increase road safety."

The decision to hold Chao's national infrastructure funding announcement in Florida comes as the state prepares to play a major role in the 2020 presidential campaign. A major infrastructure bill, one of Trump's first priorities, still hasn't gotten off the ground after Trump, a Republican, pulled his support for a Democratic bill earlier this year.

"With this ambitious project, we strive to create better mobility options," Demings said in a statement. "This is about looking ahead to new technologies and innovative transportation solutions to ensure the future mobility of our residents and visitors."

Dyer spokeswoman Karyn Barber said the city and county applied for separate BUILD grants for different projects, but the city backed the county's Lake Nona application and sent a letter of support. Elsewhere in Florida, Jacksonville will get \$20 million for sea terminal improvements and Miami \$22 million to improve its mass transit corridor as part of the grants.

*Source: Orlando Sentinel, November 12, 2019*

## PSTA Officials: Bus Rapid Transit Project "60 percent complete"

**P**inellas Suncoast Transit Authority plans for a "Bus Rapid Transit" system, or BRT, continue on pace, according to agency officials, but so does skepticism about the necessity of the project in some parts of Pinellas County.

"We've never seen a service like this before, but it's been in the works for over ten years," said Whitney Fox, director of marketing and communications for the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority.

Once launched, the BRT will transport users from Central Avenue in downtown St. Petersburg to the County Beach Park in less than 35 minutes.

PTSA says the project is now 60 percent complete, with successful assessments from the government and orders placed for the futuristic buses, which offer faster service and raised platforms similar to a train.

"So this is the future of public transportation," Fox explained. "Many cities all over the world and especially here in the county and even here in Florida have already implemented bus rapid transit, and we're just getting started."

"Once we get this in place, this is the first leg, this route, of what will hopefully eventually be a regional connection

between the entire Tampa Bay region," Fox added.

But the project hasn't come without some skepticism, especially from businesses in St. Pete Beach who insist the BRT isn't necessary and worry about the additional traffic it may cause.

"Just like any change, it's going to take a change of thinking," said Robin Miller, president of the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce.

Miller says this is a project her organization supports because it will bring economic growth for the area. However, she admits it has taken some time to get the beach community on board.

"We've been a community that has not been largely dependent for a long time on understanding that we need to expand our transportation options," said Miller.

Current PSTA bus routes will continue to exist even after the BRT launches in 2021.

The branding and name of the service will officially be announced next month. Construction is set to begin next year.

*Source: Bay News9, September 18, 2019*

## U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces \$16.6 Million for First Coast Flyer Southwest Corridor BRT Project

**T**he U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced a \$16.6 million grant to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) for the First Coast Flyer Southwest Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The project will improve mobility, transit travel times, and service reliability, as well as support population and employment growth.

"This \$16.6 million federal investment will provide residents of the Jacksonville region better access to jobs, educational opportunities, and other services," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao. The First Coast Flyer Southwest Corridor BRT project is a 12.9-mile BRT line from the Convention Center in downtown Jacksonville, via Florida State College-Jacksonville (Kent Campus), to the Orange Park Mall in Clay County. The total project cost is \$33.2 million with \$16.6 million in funding requested through FTA's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program.

"FTA is proud to join our partners in Florida to improve

public transportation for the people of Jacksonville," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. "The Southwest Corridor BRT project will provide fast and efficient service, improving mobility and access to a regional BRT network that carries thousands of riders every day." Funding for the Southwest Corridor BRT project is provided through FTA's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program, which provides funding for major transit infrastructure projects nationwide. Projects accepted into the program must go through a multi-year, multi-step process according to requirements in law to be eligible for consideration to receive funds.

Since January 20, 2017, FTA has advanced funding for 25 new CIG projects throughout the nation totaling approximately \$7.6 billion in funding commitments. With today's funding announcement, this Administration has executed 22 CIG funding agreements totaling more than \$4.55 billion in CIG funding.

## Accelerating Innovative Mobility

**A**ccelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) will highlight FTA's commitment to support and advance innovation in the transit industry. AIM will drive innovation by promoting forward-thinking approaches to improve financing, system design and service. Acting Administrator Jane Williams announced the plan during the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting on January 14, 2020.

### Funding

AIM will provide \$11 million in challenge grants to help transit agencies experiment with new ways of doing business, such as exploring new service models that provide more efficient and frequent service. FTA will also support outreach to both urban and rural areas to ensure widespread exposure to projects. A Notice of Funding Opportunity for the challenge grants will be published this spring.

FTA's Fiscal Year 2020 competitive grant programs, which will total \$615 million, will highlight innovation as part of their selection criteria. This will provide applicants

with an opportunity to showcase how they can incorporate new approaches to improve the rider experience.



### Technical Assistance

The AIM initiative will establish a national network of transit agencies that will test and share project results and use FTA's technical assistance centers to promote promising innovations. FTA's Technical Assistance Centers will provide targeted technical assistance to deploy successful innovative models and develop case studies and hands-on resources. The centers will hold workshops focused on bringing together transit agencies to discuss best practices, identify barriers, and advance the adoption of new technologies and practices while ensuring safety for riders.

Grant Type: Competitive

## Sun Trolley Continues Testing of Electric and Propane Buses on Select Routes in Greater Fort Lauderdale

**S**un Trolley and the city of Fort Lauderdale are continuing testing an electric bus and two propane-fueled vehicles, which were first introduced in August, to continue to explore alternative fuel options as they prepare to purchase a new fleet with funding from the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization that transferred to the Federal Transit Administration.

The electric bus, which seats 22 passengers with additional standing room, provided free service on select Sun Trolley routes through Nov. 10. The propane buses hold up to 20 seated passengers and will continue to operate on the Sun Trolley Neighborhood Link. The propane vehicles are being leased to the city of Fort Lauderdale by Broward County as part of its Community Shuttle Service program, and the electric vehicle is on loan from an electric vehicle manufacturer. "We are testing the capability of propane and electric buses for fuel efficiency, operational capacity and public acceptance as we get ready to build our new fleet," said Robyn Chiarelli, executive director of the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association (TMA), which manages the five Sun Trolley routes.

The results from the city of Fort Lauderdale's 2018 neighbor survey identified "preparing for the future" as a top priority among residents, with a goal of reducing greenhouse gas

emissions by 20 percent by 2020. Another result of the survey was the development of a plan to increase traffic flow in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

"Sustainability and efficiency are key to helping residents and visitors alike move freely through the city. These trials will help identify the best way to optimize the Sun Trolley fleet and bring us closer to our goal of being a connected, multimodal city," said Fort Lauderdale City Manager Chris Lagerbloom. These buses are the first in a series of alternative fuel vehicles that will be tested throughout the city. A survey is being distributed to obtain feedback from passengers on reliability, comfort and overall satisfaction.

"With approximately 25,000 passengers per month, the Sun Trolley continues to be a vital component to the public transportation system in greater Fort Lauderdale, and we want to ensure our new fleet will be environmentally sustainable for years to come," said Greg Stuart, TMA Board chair.

To locate the route for the electric bus, and track all trolleys in real time, passengers can download the free Trolley Tracker App on their Apple or Android device or call (954)-TROLLEY.

*Source: Transportation Management Association, November, 11, 2019*

## New Transit Hub Proposed for RP Funding Center

Lakeland officials are joining with Citrus Connection to ask county, state and federal agencies to provide funds to construct a new city transit hub within the next five to 10 years.

Chuck Barmby, the city's transportation and development review manager, said the Citrus Connection's 30-year-old public bus terminal on North Florida Avenue, has become functionally obsolete and presents safety hazards because of its small size.

A new transit hub would provide an opportunity to connect different modes of transport to a single site, Barmby said, and hopefully encourage further economic growth and development.

"We need more elbow room to be able to position ourselves for additional investments in the future," he said.

The proposed three-story intermodal center would bring the Citrus Connection and Greyhound bus stations together with Amtrak to a singular site designed to be accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians. The building's second and third floors would add at least 384 public parking spaces to Lakeland's downtown area. A pedestrian crosswalk would be built over the CSX tracks to allow travelers to get safely to and from the train platforms.

"That's with three levels," said Wiatt Bowers, a transportation planning project director for Atkins. "If you want to go higher, you can go higher."

Bowers presented the results of a year-long Florida Department of Transportation study to determine the best transit hub location to city commissioners on Friday morning. The study found land immediately north of the RP Funding Center, mostly a ground-level parking lot between Lemon and Main streets along Ohio Avenue, would be an ideal spot -- dubbing it "Downtown West." Other sites considered included the Lakeland Police Department's parking lot.

"As we started looking at the west site, we realized it provides better connectivity to ongoing investments and future growth," Barmby said.

Barmby pointed out the location is close to many projects under construction, including the Mirrorton multifamily housing complex, Bonnet Springs Park set to open in 2020 and near the New York Avenue Cycle Track that opened in June.



The proposed plans have gained the backing of Citrus Connection's board of directors and city officials in the past week.

"We are in full support," David Walters, Citrus Connection's spokesman said. "The facility is proposed to have up to 20 bus bays and 8,000 square feet of office space for us to bring our Regional Mobility Call Center from Bartow back to Lakeland, thus returning the current call center space back to the Polk County Board of County Commissioners."

There is no estimate available yet on how much the transit hub's construction would cost, Bowers said.

Nicole Travis, Lakeland's director of community and economic development, said the city owns the Citrus Connection offices on George Jenkins Boulevard and Amtrak Station near Lake Mirror. She suggested both could be sold for private redevelopment to offset the project's cost.

Travis also said she'd like to see at least more public parking included, even if it means building up.

"We need no less than 500 spaces to free up some of the surface parking that feeds the RP Funding Center," she said.

Lakeland commission unanimously approved sending requests for funding to begin environmental analysis, design and construction to Polk Transportation Planning Organization, FDOT and the Federal Transit Administration on Monday.

*Source: The Ledger, Lakeland, FL, December 19, 2019*

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## Recent Publications

### Social and Economic Sustainability Performance Measures for Public Transportation

Publication Date: 12/3/2019

[www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/179093.aspx](http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/179093.aspx)

### Analysis of Recent Public Transit Ridership Trends

Publication Date: 11/14/2019

[www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/179912.aspx](http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/179912.aspx)

### Guidance for Calculating the Return on Investment in Transit State of Good Repair

Publication Date: 11/7/2019

[www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/179880.aspx](http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/179880.aspx)

## Training & Professional Development

### Understanding How Women Travel Webinar

What are the needs and experiences of women traversing LA County? LA County Metro recently released a report, "Understanding How Women Travel," in a first-of-its-kind effort to answer this question. Developing from Metro's Women and Girls Governing Council, this study aimed to collect data and offer findings that can help improve women's safety and comfort on transit and attract and retain women to the Metro system. To ensure a comprehensive approach that captured the diverse needs and experiences of women in LA County, the project team deployed an innovative, mixed-methods approach to capture quantitative data as well as qualitative data from hard-to-reach rider populations including women experiencing homelessness, women immigrants, and women with disabilities. In this webinar, panelists will discuss the origin of the project, the methods used, and the key findings from the study. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHyfgqEWif8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHyfgqEWif8)

### Understanding ADA

May 13, 2020 (8:00am-12:00pm)

CUTR, Tampa, FL

For more information or to register visit [www.floridartap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ada051320.pdf](http://www.floridartap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ada051320.pdf)

### 2020 FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop & Transit Safety and Operations Summit\*

Save the Date: June 8-10, 2020

USF Embassy Suites | Tampa, FL

\*subject to change

FDOT is interested in your ideas about resources it can provide in support of your transit planning initiatives and professional development. Please contact Gabrielle Matthews with your suggestions for future training topics or guidance and technical assistance needs.