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## Construction Begins on SunRunner, First Bus Rapid Transit Line in Tampa Bay

The sky darkened Monday morning as transit supporters pulled masks across their faces and picked up teal shovels to break ground on the region's first bus rapid transit line.

The threat of wind and rain contrasted with the bright colors of the SunRunner bus, featuring the iconic "MR SUN" character beaming down on damp officials.

But spirits soared even as speeches were shortened. State and local officials praised the \$44 million project, which will connect downtown St. Petersburg with the beaches when it's scheduled to start running in early 2022.

"It is the start of a new way of thinking about our transportation network in the Tampa Bay region," Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority chief executive Brad Miller told the crowd at the site of a future Tropicana Field stop. "It is a fantastic day. The rain can't stop us from having a fantastic SunRunner event."

The 10.3-mile route will have 16 stops. Buses will run every 15 min in their own lane on First Avenues North and South before turning onto Pasadena Avenue South and traveling down Gulf Boulevard.

Bus rapid transit is a term for a route that has its own dedicated lane, fewer stops and quicker boarding. Half of the project will be paid for with federal dollars, which President Donald Trump allocated in May. The rest is paid for by the Florida Department of Transportation, the transit authority and the City of St. Petersburg.

*cont'd on page 2*



## Construction Begins on SunRunner—cont'd from cover

Though the project has strong support from St. Pete leaders and regional transit supporters, it faced heavy opposition in St. Pete Beach. Residents and elected officials opposed the original size of the buses and a previous plan that had the route run all the way to the Don Cesar Hotel. A revised route has it turning around at St. Pete Beach Park, near 47th Avenue.

St. Pete Beach Mayor Al Johnson attended the groundbreaking. He said he wishes the route would end at 75th Avenue instead of traveling down Gulf Boulevard at all, but he's accepted the project and is glad to see some concessions made by the transit authority.

"Personally, I think we need to be connected to downtown by some sort of mass transit," Johnson said. "My problem with the initial design was we're not a big city. ... It wasn't

sized for us.

"We've talked our way into something we can live with."

State Rep. Jennifer Webb, D-Gulfport, represents the beach communities and said she was glad to see staff at the transit authority working with them on stop locations and other features, like crosswalks.

"If we do regional transit right and we actually partner with the local communities, that will instill a lot of confidence moving forward to ensure future success with similar projects," Webb said. "We can give the local communities what they want and need."

*Source: Tampa Bay Times, August 17, 2020*

## Miami-Dade Launches Mobility Innovation 'Playground'

**M**iami-Dade County in Florida and transportation platform CoMotion have launched what they call a 'playground' for urban mobility innovation.

CoMotion Lab Miami will bring together "an unprecedented consortium of international, national and regional public and private stakeholders whose goal is improving mobility and transit in Miami-Dade County and Southern Florida".

Announced at CoMotion Miami Live, the idea is that it will attract ideas and technology to be tested locally, from which policy recommendations can be drawn in areas such as drones, smart infrastructure and public/private models in transit.

Founding members include Uber, Joby Aviation, Via and Inrix.

Mayor Carlos Gimenez said the initiative is "designed to make our county a vibrant living lab of new mobility in order to create new services for our residents and thus jobs and economic activity".

C-Lab is backed by the Miami-Dade Department of Transportation and Public Works, which will oversee pilot



zones and administration of the tech tests and mobility initiatives.

Miami-Dade has 5,500 miles of public roads, as well as airspace and maritime channels, offering "a complex and variegated testing geography, representative of different kinds of urban geographies throughout the US and beyond: dense urban centre, exurban sprawl and developer-led

communities".

Meanwhile the county has begun using the Inrix Road Rules cloud-based platform to aid the introduction of services such as ride-hailing, e-scooters and autonomous vehicles.

Using public data, it digitises local information such as ride-hailing locations, parking restrictions, speed limits, crosswalks and school zones, and makes this accessible via an open application programming interface.

"Having foundational city data made available through Inrix's Road Rules platform is a key piece of supporting mobility innovation throughout the region," said Alice N. Bravo, director of Miami-Dade DoT.

*Source: Dreamstimes.com*

## TBARTA Explores Air Taxis as Innovative Transit of the Future

Tampa Bay's 21st century transit needs will require new and innovative transit technology, and the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transit Authority (TBARTA) continues to move forward. The visionary German company Lilium made its first public presentation in the United States to TBARTA, with the TBARTA Board then voting to begin exploring next steps that could lead to a pilot project.

"Air taxis, especially if they come with requirements of certification, are among the most efficient means of transportation, if you look at it from a global economic perspective," said Tassilo Wanner, Lilium's VP of Global Public and Regulatory Affairs. "You can do the Orlando-Tampa connection, and everything else in our radius of operational range, on very, very lean infrastructure."

Lilium made big news last year with the first flight its five-seater Lilium Jet. The electrically powered aircraft can take off and land vertically, using the power of 36 engines across two wings. That makes the technology especially attractive for flying between urban areas, as it lessens the need for airports. Instead, landing pads can be built in smaller areas, even on rooftops, the same as helicopters.

The battery powered Lilium Jet has a reported range of 186 miles and a top speed of 190 miles per hour. Based on that, Wanner says a flight between downtown Tampa and St. Petersburg would take 8 minutes. The initial cost is estimated at \$60 to \$90 per trip but would come down as flights become more frequent and technology advances to allow autonomous trips without a pilot.

"Really, the ultimate vision is to be able to commute with the Lilium Jet at a price that would be comparable to being in your own car," said Lilium's Marie Masson, who participated in the presentation from Munich, Germany.

## 'OK Google, How Crowded is the Number 8 Bus?

Google has been collecting data on how many people are on trains and buses around the country, and now it's ready to share that data with Google Maps users. "Google is basing these details on past rides. For months, Google has been asking some people who use Google Maps to provide additional details about the level of crowdedness of their transit trips," Andrew J. Hawkins reports for The Verge. While these predictions won't be based on current conditions they're likely to improve as the app collects more data.

Lilium also touts its environmentally friendly technology, through no-emission electric engines and low noise operation

of the Lilium Jet. Wanner points to a very high level of safety, saying the aircraft will be FAA certified and economically efficient. "We can transport many, many people on a single vehicle, as small as it may be," he said.

"We want to move forward and implement real mobility solutions, and what you've shown us today is definitely among the innovative transit options that TBARTA wants to bring to our region," said TBARTA Chairman Jim Holton. "I think there's an incredible willingness on the part of this board and the community to move forward with air taxi service, and we would love to see Tampa Bay be the marquee project for demonstration in this state and perhaps the United States."

With that, Pinellas County Commissioner and TBARTA Board member Janet Long made a motion to continue dialogue with Lilium to better understand what is needed to make Tampa Bay a pilot project site. The Board voted 8-0 in approval, with the TBARTA staff directed to follow-up promptly and bring additional information to the board meeting in August.

TBARTA has already demonstrated its ability to lead Tampa Bay into the regional transit future. Funded with \$1 million from the Florida legislature to investigate new technologies, TBARTA has just completed its Innovative Transit Technologies Feasibility Study, which not only looked at air taxis but also examined the technical, financial, and regulatory issues of hyperloop and aerial gondolas.



"In addition, Google Maps is also launching live traffic delays for buses in places where commuters don't already have real-time information direct from local transit agencies," Hawkins reports. While many large American cities already provide this information to their riders, it could be a big help to folks riding buses in smaller communities.

[Full Article](#)

Source: Planetizen

## Fully Autonomous GreenPower EV Star Being Developed with Perrone Robotics for JTA

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) is partnering with GreenPower Motor Company Inc., and Perrone Robotics to develop and deliver a fully autonomous EV Star shuttle to Jacksonville.

GreenPower Motor Company Inc. (TSXV: GPV) (OTCQB: GPVRF) (“GreenPower”), a leading manufacturer and distributor of zero emissions electric powered vehicles serving the delivery and cargo, micro-transit, private transportation and school bus markets, announced today the development of the first fully autonomous EV Star shuttle to undergo testing for transit applications.

Perrone Robotics (PRI) is currently integrating the autonomous components and, once complete, will deliver the vehicle to JTA.

“With this new partnership, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority will expand and ramp up our AV Test & Learn activities,” said JTA Chief Executive Officer Nathaniel P. Ford Sr. “This work is laying the foundation for what will be the nation’s first public transportation network powered by autonomous vehicles.”

The JTA is currently developing autonomous vehicle solutions for Jacksonville and has been working with AV technology since 2017. JTA has hired a former Amazon executive to lead their automation team and have created the minimum specifications for autonomous vehicles, the “Golden 20”; GreenPower’s EV Star has met 19 of the 20, the most of any bus reviewed by JTA. In addition to developing a public transportation network in downtown Jacksonville, the JTA is working with local colleges, medical campuses and other partners to further validate and gain acceptance for this technology. The fully autonomous EV Star is expected to enter service later this year.

Brendan Riley, President of GreenPower commented, “This delivery will mark the first fully autonomous transit bus in the United States entering test operations and we are thrilled to partner with Perrone Robotics to serve this industry-leading AV program with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority. The speed with which the fully autonomous transit market is evolving is remarkable and is being accelerated by the current environment. Not only are we seeing the autonomous movement take hold, we are witnessing the transit footprint become smaller and more nimble which bodes well for our market position with the EV Star.”

“We are very excited to be working with Jacksonville Transportation Authority on their AV Test program”, said Paul Perrone, CEO and founder of Perrone Robotics, Inc. (PRI). “The combination of PRI’s TONY™ autonomous kit with GreenPower’s EV Star provides the most compelling autonomous transit solution out there. With rich autonomous capabilities and a future-proof architecture, TONY™ brings the best of today’s – and tomorrow’s – autonomy to the fantastic EV Star platform. We look forward to great results out of this partnership with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority.”



### Registration is Open



### Virtual 2020 FPTA Annual Conference

October 6-9, 2020

<https://floridatransit.org/annual-conference/info-and-pricing>

# The Hidden Costs of Removing the Option to Pay for Transit With Cash?

Authored by Aaron Golub Director and Associate Professor, Nohad A. Toulon School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University.

**W**ith many transit agencies across the country eliminating cash handling at ticket counters and on-board vehicles for obvious health and virus transmission reasons, one may wonder: who will be negatively impacted by this?

Some riders can still use cash at ticket vending machines or at certain retail outlets, but for many, depending on where they live and which parts of the transit system they ride, this will be inconvenient. National data<sup>2</sup> show clear disparities<sup>3</sup> in access to alternatives to cash (credit and debit accounts) as well as the other tools needed to pay for things electronically (smartphones, cell data plans and internet at home and work). What these national data don't capture are the specific issues facing transit riders.

An [ongoing research project at Portland State University's National Institute for Transportation and Communities](#)<sup>4</sup> is addressing this question directly. Using surveys of over 2300 transit riders in Denver, Colorado, and Eugene, Gresham and Portland, Oregon, the project is investigating

how the long-term elimination of cash as a transit payment medium will affect riders, and what agencies can do to assist their most vulnerable riders to ease the transition.

The project is ongoing, but preliminary results dress the question raised above - who will be negatively impacted by the elimination of on-board cash payments? While the sample is not representative of riders in all contexts (no major metro areas or small town or rural transit systems were surveyed), the general results show there are some important disparities agencies should be ready to address if cash is eliminated on a longer-term basis after the COVID-19 pandemic situation passes:

- Access to smartphones and internet and comfort using cashless payment systems is lower for our older survey respondents.
- A significant number of respondents do not use the formal banking system and almost 30% still rely heavily on cash to pay their fare.
- More than 30% of our respondents rely on WIFI as their sole source of internet connectivity.
- Almost 10% of our respondents claimed they could no longer ride if cash payments on board were eliminated.

## Collier Area Transit Launches Mobile Ticketing Application

**C**ollier Area Transit (CAT), has announced the launch of a new mobile ticketing application for riders. The mobile ticketing app, called rideCAT, was designed to offer an upgrade to current ticketing options by enabling riders to purchase and display tickets directly on their smartphones anywhere and at any time, without the need for physical contact.

rideCAT is available for download from Google Play and the App Store. Passengers can also buy tickets online using the new [web portal](#) and either push them to a mobile device or print them at home.

Riders using Collier Area Transit's mobile ticketing app, powered by Masabi's Justride fare payments platform, can pay for tickets using a credit or debit card, or via Apple Pay. Single, day, 15-day and 30-days passes are available, as well as fares with entitlements.

Once purchased, passengers activate their tickets on their phones prior to boarding and scan the barcode

on the new onboard validation units which have been installed across Collier Area Transit's bus services.

"This cutting-edge technology will greatly improve our riders' travel experience by providing seamless access to public transit and ticket purchasing anytime, anywhere," said Michelle Arnold, Director of Public Transit and Neighborhood Enhancement.

As part of the project, 26 new validation devices have been installed across the bus network. Passengers can scan their dynamic and encrypted mobile passes on the devices when boarding the bus, with an audible beep and a coloured screen identifying the ticket as valid for use. These validation units aim to help speed up boarding times making riding services faster and safer by enabling contactless fare payment and validation.

*Source: Intelligent Transport*

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## Recent Publications

**APTA Economic Impact of Public Transportation Investment**  
[www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf](http://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf)

**Equity Analysis in Regional Transportation Planning Processes Volume 2**

[www.nap.edu/catalog/25886/equity-analysis-in-regional-transportation-planning-processes-volume-2-research-overview](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/25886/equity-analysis-in-regional-transportation-planning-processes-volume-2-research-overview)

**Fundamental Financial Management for Rural Transit Managers**

<http://nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Administration/Budgeting-and-Finance-101#FTA%20Financial%20Management%20Requirements%20for%20Grantees>

**Minutes Matter: A Bus Transit System Reliability Handbook**

[www.nap.edu/catalog/25727/minutes-matter-a-bus-transit-service-reliability-guidebook](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/25727/minutes-matter-a-bus-transit-service-reliability-guidebook)

## Training & Professional Development

**Improving the Quality and Cost-effectiveness of Multimodal Travel Behavior Data Collection (recording)**

[www.cutr.usf.edu/2020/04/cutr-webinar-improving-the-quality-and-cost-effectiveness-of-multimodal/](http://www.cutr.usf.edu/2020/04/cutr-webinar-improving-the-quality-and-cost-effectiveness-of-multimodal/)

**Urban Planning, Transportation and Public Health Collaborations**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1URSmohYks](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1URSmohYks)

**Recording Available: Transit Transformation: Assessing the Role of the Florida Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

This session will feature an interactive scenario planning exercise designed to understand how participants would interpret and respond to their assigned role when addressing issues pertaining to technological innovation in transit, including planning and policy, agency coordination, operations, procurement, and workforce development.

The exercise will provide valuable input for the development of a framework and recommended strategies to enhance flexibility and identify opportunities for FDOT and MPOs to effectively support transit agencies working to develop and adopt new mobility solutions.

[www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta/register.html](http://www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta/register.html)

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.