



Texas Transit Association

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November 11, 2015

Our mission is to support the needs of Texas' public transportation systems through statewide advocacy and education.

TTA Newsletter

Happy Fall! Welcome to the October/November edition of the newsletter of the Texas Transit Association!

Full Steam Ahead!

I hope this fall edition of the newsletter finds everyone enjoying cooler weather, and more time outdoors to be able to enjoy it! I know I am! These first couple of months have been a whirlwind of setting up an office, planning events and meetings, establishing committees, and working with the board to make future plans! We're so very excited about this next year as there are so many things going on at TTA. Read on!

-Meredith



Fall Networking & Golf Tournament a Success!

On October 21 & 22, TTA members met in Waco for the October Board meeting, Night Time Golf, and a full-day Civil Rights training. The events were well-attended by people from around the state.

On October 22nd, Aida Douglas conducted a day-long training on Civil Rights for transit providers, including information on DBEs, goal-setting, Title VI, and EEO. The training went over so very well, TTA will now be offering regular trainings and workshops every fall. Stay tuned for future plans!



A huge thank you to all of our sponsors for the nighttime golf tournament and the civil rights training sessions: National Bus Sales, Creative Bus Sales, Gillig, Gerber Spatial IT, LTD, Automatic Chef Canteen, Genfare, Healer Printing & Office Supply, USSC Group, W Promotions.



Capital Metro Encourages Commuters to “Cheat on Their Cars” and Take Transit Twice a Week

In 2014, a peak-hour trip in the Austin area took 33% longer than that same trip in less congested traffic.

To help combat the region’s increasingly congested streets, Capital Metro has launched a creative new initiative urging commuters to skip the traffic drama and become “Two-Timers” by taking transit twice a week. Capital Metro is urging people who ride infrequently – or not at all – to give transit a try, which helps remove cars from the road and gives riders their time back instead of being stuck in traffic. A recent report from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute’s Urban Mobility Scorecard shows that in 2014, a peak-hour trip in the Austin area took 33 percent longer than that same trip would take in less congested traffic.

People who have never used transit before can now learn to navigate the Capital Metro system with three fun videos hosted by comedian Ted Meredith of Esther’s Follies and featuring some of Austin’s brightest local talent, who show people how to plan a trip, locate a bus using real-time information, and pay for a ticket in advance or on-the-spot with the CapMetro App.

For those who use public transit beyond their 9-to-5 commute, Capital Metro invites

people to explore five Urban Adventures in some of Austin’s hottest neighborhoods via transit, including Soco, Auditorium Shores, Lo Burn, the Warehouse District and The Domain. Capital Metro recently launched a high frequency network with 15-minute service throughout the day on five popular routes, and now offers real-time departure information across the entire local bus fleet. MetroRapid service runs through the heart of Austin, and offers frequent service, free Wi-Fi and digital signage at stations to let riders know when the next vehicle will arrive.



TxDOT Awarded \$20.8 Million in Federal TIGER Funds to Improve Rural Transit!!!!

On October 29th, USDOT Secretary Foxx announced that TxDOT's Rural Transit Asset Replacement Project was one of only 39 projects selected for funding in the most recent round of TIGER funding. The proposal was fully funded and the third largest award overall – the largest being \$25 million.

The TIGER award will help rural transit districts in Texas to:

Replace aged transit vehicles with newer, more reliable models

325 vehicles will be replaced in 32 rural transit districts across Texas.

- Without TIGER funding, 72% of Texas' rural transit fleet is predicted to exceed the FTA's useful life standards by 2017.
- Older vehicles are more likely to break down and may do so at unsafe times and situations.
- Replacing the most aged, worn vehicles in a fleet means the net safety of the entire fleet is greatly increased.
- Newer vehicles have more safety features to protect both driver and rider.
- More reliable rural transit fleets mean more reliable services for rural residents and will improve their participation in the economy with access to jobs, education, medical services, shopping, etc.

Build-out four facilities to connect Texas communities

- Four passenger facilities will Improve mobility though enhanced multimodal connections.
- Connecting more Texans with employment, education, medical care, shopping, and other needs.
- All four facilities are located in areas with economic challenges.

TTA would like to recognize and say thank you to Eric Gleason and the staff at TxDOT PTN who worked so hard to make this happen for our great state.

Thank you!!!

STAR Transit Joins in National Celebration to Honor Customer Service Employees

Customer service professionals are often unsung heroes, who go above and beyond the call of duty to provide help and support.

STAR Transit joined hundreds of companies in recognizing their customer service teams during Customer Service Week, October 5 – 9, 2015.

STAR Transit partnered with CSWeek.com to celebrate the contributions of customer service professionals worldwide.

Since 1991, the Customer Service Group sponsored Customer Service Week to raise awareness of the importance of customer service and to honor service professionals worldwide.



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“Customer service professionals are often unsung heroes, who go above and beyond the call of duty to provide help and support,” says Margaret DeWitt, Executive Director of the Customer Service Group. “This week honors those who serve customers everyday with dedication and professionalism.”

Omega Hawkins, STAR Transit’s Executive Director said, “We are thrilled to join this national celebration. Customer service is a top priority for STAR Transit and one I discuss regularly with my staff. This event gives us reason to bring to light this important topic as well as recognize our Call Center employees and all they accomplish on a daily basis.”

Around the world, the week is marked with celebrations, special events, and activities that recognize and reward those who serve customers across all industries and professions.

In addition to honoring those who serve customers, the week also provides a unique opportunity to boost morale, motivation, and teamwork among frontline staff. “Working with customers who may be angry or frustrated can be extremely challenging and stressful,” says Dewitt. “A week dedicated to celebrating successes, recognizing achievements, and honoring service can energize a team for the entire year.”

The week kicked off with breakfast and ended with lunch and spa day! The customer service team also received gifts each day. This year’s Customer Service

Week theme was Everyday Heroes™. The theme recognized that everyday, frontline customer service professionals are heroes in their customer's eyes. Plans for next year's celebration are already underway.

DART, Lyft Partnership Expands Transit Options

A new collaboration between Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and the ridesharing app Lyft means North Texas travelers have a new way to begin, continue or end their public transit trip.

If we're going to stay relevant as a transportation provider, we have to offer options so they can make a complete trip whether it's for work or fun.

"We're thrilled to work with Lyft. Our customers want choices," DART President/Executive Director Gary Thomas said. "If we're going to stay relevant as a transportation provider, we have to offer options so they can make a complete trip whether it's for work or fun. Lyft is a great way to help them begin or end their trip if they're not right next to a DART stop or station." DART's service area covers 700 square miles.

"When people have reliable, affordable alternatives to driving alone, they're more likely to leave their cars at home. We believe public transit and ridesharing are the perfect match," said Emily Castor, Lyft's director of transportation policy. "Many passengers already use Lyft to get the last mile to or from transit stations, and we're excited to partner with a forward-thinking agency like DART to make that even easier for -Dallas residents."



DART also is collaborating with the car sharing service ZipCar and the ridesharing app Uber. These three partnerships make it easier for the system's riders to use public transit for the longest portion of their trips and help the agency solve the "first mile/last mile" riddle. In cities across the country, 25 percent of Lyft passengers use the app to connect to public transit.

Lyft launched in June 2012 and is now in more than 150 cities across the country.

SWART General Manager Presented Award for Dedication to Transit

Sarah Hidalgo-Cook, SWART General Manager, was presented with an award from the Middle Rio Grande Development Council for her service to providing rural public service within the Middle Grande Region through her dedication to SWART. The award was presented to Sarah during the MRGDC Board of Directors meeting held on October 28th. Sarah also addressed the 28-member board with a presentation of SWART's Leadership Through Crisis.



VIA'S Centro Plaza Nears Completion; Dedication Ceremony set for November 20th

VIA Metropolitan Transit will hold a dedication ceremony on Friday, November 20 to mark the completion of Centro Plaza, the agency's newest, state-of-the-art transit hub. This ceremony will include an original poem offered by Texas State Poet Laureate Dr. Carmen Tafolla. The dedication ceremony will be followed by a community celebration on Saturday, November 21.

Centro Plaza, located at 909 W. Houston St., marks the completion of the second phase of VIA Villa, VIA's development that started with the renovation of The Grand, a historic train depot across the street from the plaza. Centro Plaza is an exciting new development in San Antonio's culturally and historically-rich West Side that will serve the Greater San Antonio Region. The plaza provides a comfortable waiting area for transfers, free 4G LTE WiFi, digital next-bus arrival signs, air-conditioned waiting areas, and a full customer service center. Bus service through Centro Plaza helps minimize travel times and avoid unneeded trips downtown while maintaining access to downtown destinations.

Centro Plaza's design includes a lighted tower sculpture, "Centro Chroma Tower," which will become an iconic part of the transit center. In addition to the Centro Chroma Tower, Centro Plaza features many decorative elements. The tower, created by artist Bill FitzGibbons, stands 85 feet tall at the corner of Frio and Travis Streets and glows with multi-colored LED lighting.

“Centro Plaza represents VIA's commitment to offering enhanced services and amenities to our customers and community,” said VIA President/CEO Jeffrey C. Arndt. “The enclosed, conditioned waiting area, next bus arrival information and covered boarding locations provide a safe and comfortable environment for making connections. Free Wifi and the customer service center increase passenger convenience. The striking design and iconic light tower create a landmark statement about VIA's vision for the future of public transportation in our fast-growing region.”

The Centro Plaza community event will be held Saturday, November 21, 10 a.m. – noon. The community event includes refreshments, information stations, performances, and public art activities.

VIA Metropolitan Transit provides public transportation services to 13 cities in the Greater San Antonio Region and the unincorporated areas of Bexar County. VIA operates seven days a week on 90 routes, and VIA provided 42.2 million rides across the region in 2015. VIA's mission is to enhance the community's quality of life by providing regional and customer-oriented public transportation that is dependable, cost-effective and enticing to more riders. VIA's AAA bond rating reflects the organization's sound management and financial practices. Visit www.VIAinfo.net for more information.

Retirements, Anniversaries, & Birthdays

Everardo “Lalo” Ortiz, SWART Vehicle Operator from Carrizo Springs retired in October after 28 years of service to rural public transit. Lalo plans to enjoy his retirement by spending time with his family, some home projects, and rest. Lalo primarily drove to San Antonio and Laredo starting his routes as early as 2:30 AM for the past 28 years. SWART celebrated his retirement with a luncheon in which he was presented with a watch, money clip, and pen. SWART is extremely sad to see such an exemplary employee leave, but wishes Lalo the best.



Upcoming Events

TTA has several events headed your way that you'll want to mark on your calendars for!

TTA Annual Legislative Day, Houston, TX

TTA's Board Meeting, December Networking, and Annual Legislative Conference

December 10th—TTA Board Meeting, 11-1pm
Rural Conference Call, 2pm
TTA Happy Hour, 5:30pm

December 11th—Legislative Day, 8am-3pm

TTA 2016 Conference, Expo, & Roadeo, Waco, TX

Join TTA and your colleagues from around the state for our annual bus roadeo, expo, and conference, this year hosted in Waco, Texas!

April 23rd—Statewide Bus Roadeo
April 24th—Golf Tournament & Expo Night
April 25-27th—Expo & Conference

TTA's Board of Directors

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Lylene Springer, Panhandle Community Services
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Jeff Johnson, National Bus Sales

TTA Newly Appointed Committees

Legislative Committee

Tom Jaisen, Chair
Maurice Pearl
Sarah Hidalgo-Cook

Finance Committee

Gary Thomas, Chair
Norma Zamora
J.R. Salazar

By-Laws Committee

Jeff Arndt, Chair
Rob Stephens
Lylene Springer

Wish to advertise or publish a story in our December newsletter? Have any birthdays, anniversaries, or retirements to celebrate?

Contact Meredith Greene: Meredith@txtransit.org or 512-900-0550

Thank you to our sponsors for the Fall Networking and Training Event:



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