



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

"New" Exchange Website	1
Use of Social Media for Marketing Transit Survey	2
FPTA "Tell Your Story" Campaign	3
District One Commuter Services - Try Transit Events	4
RTS - New Biodiesel Fleet	5
Spotlight On...Chip Skinner, RTS	6
On the Horizon... 2010 FPTA Marketing Awards	8

"The Exchange" website returns with a new look

The Florida Transit Marketing Network is set to unveil its new website with an updated look and new features. The FTMN has embraced the importance of social media as another outlet for transit agencies to extend their marketing focus beyond traditional media such as TV and radio. Within the last few years, several Florida transit agencies have pioneered the use of social media (i.e. HART, ECAT, Bay Town Trolley and others) by utilizing Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. to spread the word about their systems.

The mission of the new FTMN website is to act as a central hub for Florida transit agency marketing information and a tool that professionals in the public transportation marketing field can use to network and find information. Features of the new site will include descriptions of the FPTA Marketing Award winners, FTMN topical survey results, past newsletters and spotlight articles, latest news, and links to the FTMN's listserv, Twitter page, and YouTube page. The transit agencies page lists all fixed route transit systems and includes links to each system's website, Facebook and Twitter page.

Look for the new site to debut in August at www.fl-exchange.com. We will continue to add new features to the website based on user feedback, so please send any comments or suggestions to Mistretta@cutr.usf.edu.

Mark your Calendar

36th Annual FPTA Conference

October 17-19, 2010
Miami Hilton Downtown
Miami, Florida
(813) 977-7066

For more information, contact Jay Goodwill at (813) 974-8755 or jaygoodwill@cutr.usf.edu.



Published by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR)

The screenshot shows the website's header with navigation links: HOME, ABOUT, RESOURCES, TRANSIT AGENCIES. Below the header is a 'Featured Posts' section with a post titled 'Presentations from the 2010 Professional Development...' and a 'Readmore' link. A 'YouTube Videos' section follows, with a video player showing a bus and a 'Read Full Article' link. The page also features social media icons for Listserv and Twitter, and a search bar.

Use of Social Media for Marketing Transit

In the realm of social media, the internet has given rise to many additional opportunities to spreading the word about transit beyond traditional websites. Entire segments of our communities are forming their own sense of society and communication using these types of media. As with all media, there is promise and opportunity for the transit industry but also risk in terms of unpredictability.

A survey was designed to gain input from Florida transit marketing professionals as to attitudes toward social media and the possible benefits that might accrue to agencies, especially in the realm of low cost, high impact transit marketing opportunities.

There were 18 responses to the survey with the following results: a vast majority of users favor the use of social media for transit – 89 percent view it as very beneficial in communicating with customers and 67 percent view it as beneficial for marketing transit services. 78 percent of respondents have or are in the process of developing a strategy to use social media for marketing transit, so only 22 percent have not examined the possibilities.

Respondents were asked which social media sites they utilize for marketing purposes. YouTube and Facebook received the most mentions (7 each), followed by Twitter and Flickr (4 each). One agency replied that they will launch on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter in August 2010. When respondents were asked which social media tool was the most useful, it was a tie between Facebook and Twitter (3 responses each). Facebook was cited 2nd twice, by those who had rated Twitter first. YouTube got (1) 1st place vote and (3) 3rd place votes. Flickr got (1) 2nd place vote. According to the survey, the top four social media in order of usefulness for marketing transit were Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr. Another survey question revealed that 72 percent of respondents thought that YouTube likely would be a more cost-effective marketing strategy versus running a TV ad.

Another question asked respondents if they did not use social media for marketing transit, what was their top reason for not doing so. Of the reasons given, the most cited was a lack of expertise or trained staff. Since social media is a relatively new idea for marketing transit, it is not surprising that agencies lack expertise to successfully use it to their advantage. A lack of funding was also cited by two respondents, which may contribute to the inability to hire new trained staff. A few respondents claimed that decision makers are against using it or they are prohibited from using it because of the Sunshine Laws. Based on other comments received, there is also an apparent need for further research to assist agencies in designing a social media plan to address implications of social media transit marketing such as legal issues, record retention, record management, security issues, etc.

Finally, respondents were asked to share their general feelings and opinions about using social media for marketing transit. Many responses reiterated that social media is here to stay and is a vital tool in communicating information, especially with the younger generation. Its low cost as compared to other options (TV or radio ads) was also important to respondents.



FPTA Wraps Up Nation's Most Successful TELL YOUR STORY Campaign

The Florida Public Transportation Association, thanks to our members, recently completed the nation's most successful TELL YOUR STORY campaign. More than 250 Floridians sent in images, videos, and stories about their positive transit experiences. APTA has been encouraging systems to harvest stories about their riders that can be used to communicate the importance of public transportation to elected officials.



FPTA's Wes Watson said, "The TELL YOUR STORY campaign represents just the latest effort of the association in our ongoing public education strategy."

The contest was promoted by FPTA member agencies statewide and prizes were donated by FPTA business members. The winners were as follows:



FPTA contest Deanna Droira-Garcia being interviewed by a Miami television reporter.

⇒ First Place: Deanna Droira-Garcia of Pembroke Pines, who after being diagnosed with epilepsy, courageously went on to set a monthly sales record at her company -- all while using South Florida's four transit systems (Tri-Rail, PalmTran, Broward County Transit and Miami-Dade County Transit) to reach her clients.

⇒ Second Place: Rosy Weisberg and the "MDT Route 252 Breakfast Club". This group of professionals has become lifelong friends by travelling and laughing together every day on the bus while their tired counterparts fight Miami traffic.

APTA was so impressed with Ms. Deanna Droira-Garcia's story that they are flying her to Washington DC in December as part of its federal reauthorization efforts.

Check out FloridaTransit.org for a selection of stories, images and videos from riders of transit agencies throughout Florida. These and many more stories are available for marketing, PR and publication use by FPTA members.

You may contract Denis Eirikis at news@floridatransit.org for further information on the TELL YOUR STORY campaign.

District One Commuter Services—“Try Transit” events

The Florida Department of Transportation’s District One Commuter Services Program is taking a proactive approach to promote public transportation in the 12-county region of Southwest Florida. Commuter Services hosts “Try Transit” events, in partnership with local transit systems, as an interactive and exciting way to engage commuters, increase use of transit and commute options, and raise awareness of the Commuter Services program.



During a Try Transit event, commuters board the bus to travel on routes that serve government centers, downtown areas, or public attractions. The goal is to get participation from the daily commuters that drive to these locations. Targeted promotional campaigns, buy-in from management, involvement of government officials and incentives for participation are key elements that draw a crowd. Once on the bus, Commuter Services staff and transit representatives teach the commuters how to be savvy bus riders. Interactive demonstrations include how to read schedules and determine the best route, how to use the pull cord to request a stop, and how to pay for a transfer. Participants are challenged to ride the regular routes back to their destination and begin riding transit more frequently.

Collier County Area Transit (CAT) held its first “Transit Try-It Day” during Earth Week in April. Local businesses provided discounts and promotions for participants and bus service ran every half-hour. The first 50 participants received free bus passes, which went fast, as the first few trips on the bus were standing room only. Approximately 140 riders gave CAT a try during their lunch break, including County Commissioners and department directors. Riders represented numerous county departments, local media, volunteers, students, seniors, and other members of the public. Participants were surprised to learn that public transit brought them within walking distance to the beach, eliminating the need to find or pay for parking. Following the event, a survey of those who tried the bus at CAT’s Try Transit event were more likely to ride again and to educate others about the system. Commuter Services also received requests for more frequent events like this one in the area.



For Sarasota County’s “Commuter Services Day” in May, similar concepts were applied. Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) created a free “Special Route,” which encompassed multiple regular routes, and they demonstrated all of the options serving participant worksites. Staff educated riders on Google Transit and other resources available through Commuter Services. County Commissioners participated by riding the bus and interacting with participants; one Commissioner even rode his bicycle to work to demonstrate

the bus’ front-end bicycle rack and then hopped on the bus for a ride. SCAT’s Try Transit promotion, was part of a larger outdoor event that promoted other forms of alternative transportation, including carpooling, bicycling, Segways, vanpools and transit. Participants in the day’s events provided positive feedback, and despite the 96-degree weather, many riders sang praises: “the hybrid bus was refreshing; very cool and very clean.”

District One Commuter Services—“Trying Transit”

These events provided commuters with true “learning-by-doing” experiences that have been proven successful. Follow-up with registered Commuter Services participants revealed changes in commute modes, with transit being just one of the reported options. If commuters take a step to try something new, they are much more likely to take another step to make it work. Through strong partnerships with the local transit agencies and successful Try Transit events, the overall goals of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality are being achieved.



For more information on the Commuter Services program, please contact program director, Christine Diaz, at 1.866.585.RIDE or Christine.Diaz@dot.state.fl.us.



1.866.585.RIDE
www.CommuterServicesFL.com

Regional Transit System Welcomes New Buses and Biodiesel Fleet

On Tuesday, July 13 the City of Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS) held a ceremony at its Maintenance, Operations and Administration Facility to unveil 17 new Gillig buses and to announce the complete conversion of its fleet to biodiesel fuel. RTS is proud of these initiatives, as they help lead the way in implementing alternative fuel services in the Gainesville community. Several City of Gainesville and University of Florida officials were in attendance to help RTS commemorate this important event, along with RTS employees and colleagues.



City Mayor Craig Lowe helped Transit Director Jesus Gomez, Public Works Director Teresa Scott, University of Florida Associate Vice President of Finance and Administration Bob Miller and Assistant City Manager Paul Folkers cut a red ribbon to welcome the arrival of the new biodiesel vehicles.

The addition of the 17 new vehicles to the RTS fleet has reduced the average fleet age from 9.6 years to 7 years, bringing RTS closer to its goal of operating a fleet of fixed-route vehicles with an average age of less than 6 years by the year 2019. A lower fleet age means more efficient vehicles that cost less to repair and fewer break-downs for better customer service. Newer vehicles also contribute to improved fuel efficiency and better air quality in the community.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds made it possible for RTS to acquire new vehicles even while the country and the City of Gainesville face hard economic times. In addition, operating the fleet on a 20-

(Continued on page 7)

Spotlight On... Chip Skinner, RTS



NAME: Chip Skinner
TITLE: RTS Marketing and Communications Supervisor
BIRTHPLACE: Chicago, IL
EDUCATION: Cape Coral High School (1987)
University of Florida, BA in English and Minor in Secondary Ed (1992)

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY:

Prior to 1997: I held a number of marketing and sales positions with different companies, including running my own home-based business.
1997-1998: Marketing Director for Florida Scuba News. Managed entire marketing and advertising campaigns for the magazine.

1999-2002: District Manager for Entertainment Publications. Opened the Gainesville market for the fund-raising company and was a one-man show handling all business aspects.

2002-2009: Senior Public Relations Project Manager for Earth Tech – AECOM. Designed and implemented the complete public relations/information campaign for over 150 Florida Department of Transportation maintenance and construction projects in an 18 county area in north central Florida.

2009-Present: Marketing and Communications Supervisor - City of Gainesville Regional Transit System.

YEARS WORKING IN TRANSIT INDUSTRY: One in public transit – nine if you count FDOT experience too.

YEARS WORKING WITH RTS: One year anniversary is August 10.

BIGGEST SURPRISE IN MARKETING TRANSIT: My biggest surprise was how knowledgeable the public actually is about transit, especially here in Gainesville. Also, all the great people here in Florida and across the world that are involved with transit and are willing to lend a helping hand if called upon.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN MARKETING TRANSIT: Other than managing Ms. “T”?!? The biggest challenge is trying to convince those that have not ridden public transit to try it and see what it is all about.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: I actively participate in the Florida Public Relations Association (Gainesville Chapter), the Alachua County Public School Foundation, the UF Alumni Association, Gator Boosters, and as a board member for my homeowners association. I also work with the High Springs BMX track, the Sebastian Ferrero Foundation and as a volunteer at my children’s schools and booster clubs.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND: I have been in Gainesville for over 20 years. My wife and I celebrated our 5th wedding anniversary this year after reconnecting at our 10-year reunion (Cape Coral High School in Lee County). We have four children, two boys and two girls ranging in age between 8 and 16. Our family has lots of pets including a Blue Heeler (Australian Cattle Dog), two fire-bellied newts, two fire-bellied toads and two fish tanks full of fish.

As if my family and work didn’t keep me busy enough, I also enjoy scuba diving, biking, reading, fishing, golfing, gardening and UF athletic events. My interests include technology, property management, travel, the environment and politics.

Spotlight On... Chip Skinner, RTS

(Continued from page 6)

CHILDHOOD AMBITION: To be a marine biologist.

INSPIRATION: Dr. John Lombardi, former UF president and current Chancellor for Louisiana's University System. He exemplified grace under pressure and always landed on his feet. I also get inspiration from my father for his business sense and entrepreneurial spirit, and my mother for her strength and caring.

FAVORITE BOOK: The Ancient Art of War – Sun Tzu and the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. My favorite children's book is Dr. Seuss' The Lorax.

FAVORITE COLOR: Orange & Blue...of course! Go Gators...Go Bears!

FAVORITE CANDY: Mounds

FAVORITE QUOTE: "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." – Booker T. Washington

FAVORITE BEVERAGE: Mountain Dew with Espresso a close a second. Yes, I am a caffeine junkie! I also need it to keep up with "T"!

CERTIFICATIONS: FEMA NIMS, OSHA Safety, Scuba Diving, Rescue Diving, IMSA Racing, Advanced First Aid, CPR, Adobe Pagemaker/Photoshop/InDesign, FDOT Plan Reading, FDOT News Media.

Regional Transit System Welcomes New Buses and Biodiesel Fleet

(Continued from page 5)

percent-blend biodiesel fuel will enable RTS to save \$150,000 per year compared to using conventional diesel fuel.

The new vehicles and expanded biodiesel program are another step for RTS in achieving its mission of providing safe, courteous, equitable, reliable and energy-efficient transportation services to the Gainesville community. RTS also has future plans to implement a Bus Rapid Transit system in Gainesville, and to improve its Maintenance, Operations and Administration Facility to accommodate increased service and articulated vehicles, and to comply with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building certification.

The Regional Transit System feels fortunate to have a community that is so supportive of enhanced public transit service. RTS Marketing and Communications Supervisor Chip Skinner acknowledged the City and University for their support. "We got a very warm reception and response from UF," he said. He also expressed the importance of protecting the environment as a city organization. "As a city, we always want people thinking more about the environment. It just made sense to roll out biodiesel technology to the whole fleet," he said.



Florida Department of Transportation

605 Suwannee Street MS 26
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450

Program Manager: Liz Stutts

Phone: 850-414-4530

Fax: 850-922-4942

Email: elizabeth.stutts@dot.state.fl.us



Center for Urban Transportation Research

University of
South Florida



4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CUT 100
Tampa, Florida 33620-5375

Program Director: Rob Gregg

Phone: 813-974-8383

Fax: 813-974-5168

Email: gregg@cutr.usf.edu

The FTMN needs your participation!

Please participate with your
ideas, articles, and expertise.

Send materials to
Mark Mistretta,
mistretta@cutr.usf.edu

On the Horizon...

October 3-6, 2010
APTA Annual Meeting
Grand Hyatt San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

October 17-19, 2010
FPTA 36th Annual Conference
Miami Hilton Downtown
Miami, FL
Contact: Wes Watson - (850) 878-0855 or
FPTAmail@embarqmail.com

2010 FPTA Transit Marketing Awards

Attention All Transit Marketers... It's Your Time to Shine!

You planned and implemented your advertising campaigns during the year and now it's time to share your work!

The FPTA Transit Marketing Awards competition will soon be upon us. Entry is FREE, and each agency may enter up to four examples of its best work. Winners will be recognized at the awards banquet at the 36th Annual Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) conference at the Miami Hilton Downtown on Tuesday, October 19th.

Choose your best work, follow the instructions regarding mounting or audio/visual campaigns, and send them off for judging. We know this takes some time and effort, but the recognition for a job well done will more than compensate for the time spent.

All registration information will soon be made available in a "Call for Entry" email and will also be available on the Florida Transit Marketing Network website at www.fl-exchange.com. YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE A BROCHURE IN THE MAIL.

This year's marketing awards committee consists of Kelly Robertson, BowStern; Jennifer Paul, SFRTA – Tri Rail; and, Lou Ann Miller, JTA.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Miami in October. Keep an eye out for the nomination packet and information.