

SEACTivities

News from the Southeast Chapter of the Association for Commuter Transportation



Vol. 15, No. 2, Sept. 2010

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The Southeast Chapter of the Association for Commuter Transportation (SEACT) is a professional organization that regionally includes the states of: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Association for Commuter Transportation

1341 G St NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
888-719-5772
info@actweb.org
www.actweb.org

Legislative Update - Fall 2010

submitted by Sandi Moody, SEACT Public Policy Liaison

As most of you know, there has been a considerable amount of “buzz” concerning transportation initiatives on a national basis, either stand-alone or as part of other partnership-type programs (i.e., Sustainable Communities – a grant partnership between EPA, DOT and HUD). Even with all the discussion, the last few months could be termed as the “summer of hurry-up and wait”.

Most of us in the TDM world are anxious to see what the new transportation bill will bring to the table, especially since most of the news coming out of DC seems to point to an epiphany concerning transportation. The catchphrase “we can’t build our way out of congestion” has led to discussion and real plans being developed for projects and programs that center on reduction of vehicle trips and fuel savings, energy conservation and innovation, unlike anything our industry has heard before. Our time is now . . . well, maybe . . . soon.

The reality is: not much legislatively is expected to happen until after the elections in November. The outcome will have a substantial effect on policy, planning and spending, depending upon who is holding the power reins after the dust settles. Only when that is determined, can we get a real projection of when the next transportation bill will be crafted, and what it will contain.

As you will have seen in Friday’s “Caryn’s Corner”, the extension of the parity between parking and transit/vanpool subsidies (currently at \$230/month) is set to expire the end of 2010. It is highly unlikely that extension of this parity, as provided in the language for ARRA, will take place by year’s end. Assuming this is the case, it is important to understand that the **transportation subsidy does not go away**; it goes back to pre-ARRA amounts (\$120 - \$130 per month, depending upon cost of living adjustments). It is also critical to know that this issue is still a high priority with Congress, but most likely won’t be taken up until the new year. **It is imperative for ACT members to continue letting their Members of Congress know of the importance of this issue, by continuing to communicate by letter or email.**

Your ACT Public Policy Council is keeping updated and involved in this process, as well as preparing information, approved by the ACT Board, concerning ACT, its members’ interests, and policy suggestions for implementation that support commuter transportation initiatives. For those of you who wish to know more fully about ACT’s initiatives and work with public policy, visit the ACT website and click on the public policy portion of “Councils” for more information. If you have any questions, please contact Government Relations Specialist, Jason Pavluchuk at 202-249-8750 or jason@jpavllc.com. You may also reach me at: smoody@atlantic.net.

- President's Column -

Fellow SEACT Members:

Wow, I can't believe the last time I wrote this page it was a month away from the symposium in Sarasota, FL. I had the pleasure of seeing a couple of fellow SEACT members last week here in Asheville and they were still talking about Sarasota and how wonderful the symposium was – not only the accommodations, but the sessions as well. It's always a great sign of success to have people still raving about an event that happened several months ago.



Our 2011 symposium in Charleston, SC will be a joint effort with the Chesapeake Chapter (for those of you who remember the joint conference in Richmond, it was a blast!). We are currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between both chapters and then we will send out an RFP for hotels. Thank you to those who have already volunteered to help. I will contact you in the next few weeks to see which area(s) you would like to help us with.

I would also like to see us, SEACT, start working on several of the recommendations from the 2010 SEACT Goal & Priority Setting – one is establishing a *Communication Committee* – which includes several components:

- A two-way flow of information and feedback
- Regular updates regarding ongoing issues
- Immediate notice related to important concerns or crises
- Multiple avenues or mechanisms to accomplish interactive communication
- A broader and better use of technology
- More interaction through committees and projects
- Increasing opportunities and participation in conferences and other activities
- Develop an enhanced and expanded communication network

This committee will formulate action steps to develop and monitor internal communication processes and ensure that members have every opportunity to be involved in the chapter. This committee would work closely with others on testing and incorporating technology as appropriate, fostering enhanced and new networking or interactive sharing opportunities and involving members in ongoing and new activities. By implementing this important committee, many of the other items identified as priorities, such as increased member involvement and participation, will be resolved in whole or in part and allow members to focus on the most pressing needs and priorities. The first activity the Communication Committee should undertake is the **development of a communication action plan**. (*2010 SEACT Goal & Priority Setting – Workshop Summary Report – Prepared by Richard Dreyer, AICP, CCTM – Tindale-Oliver & Associates, Inc.*)

If you are interested in joining this committee, please let me know at kmolin@ashevillenc.gov or 828.232.4564.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy".

Kathy Molin, SEACT President



If winter is slumber and spring is birth, and summer is life, then autumn rounds out to be reflection. It's a time of year when the leaves are down and the harvest is in and the perennials are gone. Mother Earth just closed up the drapes on another year and it's time to reflect on what's come before.
Mitchell Burgess, Northern Exposure, Thanksgiving, 1992

Commuter Choice Certificate Training

submitted by Jennifer Iley, CUTR, iley@cutr.usf.edu

The Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida continues to offer online courses for the Florida Commuter Choice Certificate program. In 2010, students have an opportunity to earn approximately 50 credit hours toward their certificate from the comfort of their home or office. Ongoing course topics include Media and Social Marketing, Location Aware Technology, Senior Ridesharing, and many more. Online class is in session every Wednesday from 12:00pm to 1:15pm (EDT). View the complete schedule and register online at www.commuterservices.com or contact Jennifer Iley at iley@cutr.usf.edu.



State of Florida Rural Vanpool Program Get's Off to a "Vantastic" Start!

submitted by Jim Cipollone, Florida Manager, VPSI, Inc., FL

On August 17, the State of Florida Rural Vanpool Program (sponsored by the FDOT and administered by VPSI) got off to a "vantastic" start by launching four (4) commuter vanpools with employees at the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) headquarters located in Palatka, Florida. The new vanpool participants were extremely happy with their new 10-passenger luxury vehicles, and everyone looked forward to relaxing in luxurious comfort during their commute from Gainesville to Palatka.

Shown conducting the vehicle deliveries and conducting driver orientations with SJRWMD employees is Jim Cipollone, Florida Manager for VPSI.



Tampa Bay Area Honored by State Bicycling Organization

submitted by Laura Hallam, (352) 468-3430 or laura@floridabicycle.org

The Florida Bicycle Association (FBA) annual awards are presented to worthy recipients for their contributions to bicycling, to bring attention to the efforts and achievements of groups, organizations and individuals that help deliver the FBA's mission to inspire and support people and communities to enjoy greater freedom and well being through bicycling. "These awards are just a part of FBA's work on behalf of Florida's bicyclists," said Laura Hallam, FBA executive director. "Through its annual Florida Bike Summit in Tallahassee during the legislative session, ProBike/ProWalk Florida conference and its local chapters including Bike/Walk Central Florida, FBA works to improve the legal landscape for bicyclists. "Our organization also strives to make bicycling a safer alternative for more and more Floridians through education and safety programs and the "Share the Road" campaign, which includes the proceeds generated by Share the Road specialty license plate sales that helps support our efforts."

The following is an overview of honorees of the Florida Bicycling Association in 2010:

Tampa BayCycle, under the direction of Julie Bond, New North Transportation Alliance Program, and Karen Kress, Tampa Downtown Partnership, has been honored as "Program of the Year" by the FBA at its 2010 annual awards ceremony at the recent ProBike/ProWalk Florida Conference, held in Lakeland, FL.

Tampa BayCycle was created in 2007 as an initiative to encourage commuters to cycle to work, school or play during the month of May, National Bike Month. Tampa BayCycle brings together people who believe that riding a bicycle benefits everyone, from individuals to the entire community.

Bicycle commuters save money and gas, stay fit, reduce traffic congestion and, most importantly, have fun. It was the first year that a bicycling initiative of this scale was held in the Tampa Bay area and it won a Creative Excellence Award from the International Association for Commuter Transportation. Tampa BayCycle was also named as one of the Green 100 by Creative Loading during 2009. Tampa BayCycle's efforts are funded by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), New North Transportation Alliance, Tampa Downtown Partnership and various other sponsors, including bicycle shops and other private businesses. Tampa BayCycle also relies on volunteer hours contributed from the cycling community.

The initiative continued to grow over the next 3 years, adding new elements and partners as well as participants. Its new website has dramatically helped create an awareness of the now year-round campaign and a Facebook page and Twitter are also utilized. During 2010, Tampa BayCycle successfully celebrated Florida Bike Month in March, with plans for activities during National Bike Month during May.

Jim Shirk, of Tampa, was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. Jim is a citizen member of the Hillsborough County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and stands up for everyday bicyclists. He volunteers for every bicycle event in the Tampa area such as the Bicycle Bash festival and the Tampa BayCycle commuter program. As a member of the Seminole Heights Bicycle Club, Jim creates a bike route map for the Seminole Heights Home Tour, one of the most popular home tours in Tampa. He can be seen at numerous bike rodeos like the event at the Children's Gasparilla Parade in February, as well as working the downtown Tampa Crit bike race in March. Jim's tireless energy motivated him to travel to Tallahassee for the 2nd Annual Florida Bike Summit April 8 to lobby his local state legislators. Jim is a selfless bike advocate who does and acts - not just talks. As an engineering consultant, Tampa resident and 66-years young, Jim does more bicycle activities than people half his age.



Continued On Next Page

Representing the other side of Tampa Bay, **the Pinellas County MPO Bicycle Advisory Committee**, chaired by **Tom Ferraro**, was recognized as **Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the Year**.

The Pinellas County Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) was the original group to start the Pinellas Trail program 20 years ago by advocating the conversion of a 34-mile rail corridor into the Pinellas Trail. As a standing committee of the MPO, the BAC was able to advocate and support the follow-up funding for trail overpasses and filling in trail segment gaps with enhancement and CMAQ funds. The BAC successfully negotiated use of the power company corridor for the Progress Energy Trail, a corridor 20 miles long on the east side of Pinellas County. The committee also developed the Pinellas Trail Loop plan, a 75-mile loop connecting all destinations in the county by trail (including as the spine), the existing Pinellas Trail and the Progress Energy Trail (which has been approved by the MPO and is on the Rails to Trails Conservancy website). The group plans to complete this project within 10 years.

The BAC has also supported the need for and implementation of bike lanes throughout the county (initiated 10 years ago with a special joint workshop with the County Commission and MPO). The committee has been very active in educating the public concerning safe cycling. It has a close partnership with the MPO's Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) on common issues such as bike /pedestrian crossings of roadways. Most recently, the committee has been involved with FDOT in the redesign of Gulf Blvd. In summary, the Pinellas County BACS serves as a role model on how to engage the public and agencies in a positive way to further bicycling as an integral part of livable communities.

Lastly, Rebecca Afonso, of Oldsmar, has been honored with Special Recognition of the Year. After participating in the initial Florida Bike Summit in 2009, Becky provided valuable input and suggestions on ways the event could be improved. In the months leading up to the 2010 Summit, Becky visited Tallahassee to research and secure lodging options, meeting sites, and bike routes. She was even able to gain access to shower facilities at a church near the Capitol for cyclists who rode to the Summit. She also provided time and energy towards analyzing several pieces of legislation Summit attendees would be supporting. Her insight and organizational skills helped make FBA's second Florida Bike Summit an overwhelming success, and she is already working on the 2011 edition. Her volunteer work continued throughout the 2010 ProBike/ProWalk Florida conference as a logistical expert. All in all, Becky is a go-to person and is happy to take on a challenge.

The FBA annual awards are presented to worthy recipients for their contributions to bicycling, to bring attention to the efforts and achievements of groups, organizations and individuals that help deliver the FBA's mission to inspire and support people and communities to enjoy greater freedom and well being through bicycling. "These awards are just a part of FBA's work on behalf of Florida's bicyclists," said Laura Hallam, FBA executive director. "Through its annual Florida Bike Summit in Tallahassee during the legislative session, ProBike/ProWalk Florida conference and its local chapters including Bike/Walk Central Florida, FBA works to improve the legal landscape for bicyclists. "Our organization also strives to make bicycling a safer alternative for more and more Floridians through education and safety programs and the "Share the Road" campaign, which includes the proceeds generated by Share the Road specialty license plate sales that helps support our efforts."

The FBA was incorporated in 1997 in Orlando for educational and charitable purposes and is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Through its many educational tools, hands on training programs, literature, communication tools and annual events, FBA has raised awareness for everyone who rides a bike. FBA envisions a state where people of all ages see bicycling as a normal, practical and safe transportation alternative and where drivers of motor vehicles respect and appreciate the presence of bicycles on the roadways. FBA is supported by membership dues and grants for safety education for both bicyclist and motorist awareness programs. Find out more online at www.floridabicycle.org.



The TMA Group Lauded for Improving Air Quality and Reducing Traffic Congestion

submitted by Debbie Henry, The TMA Group, Franklin, TN

The TMA Group of Franklin, Tennessee has received designation as one of the Best Workplaces for CommutersSM by the National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) at the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), the University of South Florida's (USF) internationally recognized resource for transportation policy and education.



Best Workplaces for CommutersSM, a voluntary partnership program designed to cut traffic congestion and traffic-related air pollution, recognizes employers that provide environmentally-friendly commuter benefits to employees. Offering these commuter benefits identifies The TMA Group as an organization committed to reducing pollution, commuting costs, traffic congestion, and employee stress caused by single-occupant vehicle (SOV) commuting.

The TMA Group is a regional leader in customizing multimodal, non-SOV transportation solutions for employers and communities, offering an array of benefits that help employees pursue environmentally friendly and cost-effective commuting strategies. As part of the company's comprehensive commuter benefits program, The TMA Group offers commuting options and support services such as vanpool and/or carpool matching; compressed workweek programs; participation in a regional air quality program; and a lunchtime shuttle service, the Cool Springs Express, to reduce employee trips.

"Best Workplaces for Commuters recognizes employers who offer high-level commuter benefits," said Julie Bond, NCTR's national program manager for Best Workplaces for Commuters. "Offering commuter benefits is a win-win situation for employees who change their commuting habits, by saving time, money and stress and for employers who gain a competitive edge in employee recruitment and retention."

"We are proud to make this commitment to our own employees, and to employees and employers throughout our region, as well as to the environment," said Diane Thorne, TMA Chief Regional Transportation Director. "The Best Workplaces for CommutersSM program demonstrates that a healthy balance sheet and a clean environment are not mutually exclusive. We are currently the only Best Workplace for Commuters employer in Tennessee and join other companies such as Nike, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Goggle, Microsoft, Mayo Clinic and IBM, to name a few. "

The results of The TMA Group efforts will be reflected in both the environment and in the bottom line. The TMA Group programs reduce commuting costs, not only for its employees, but also for all commuters by taking cars off the road and reducing traffic congestion.

Best Workplaces for CommutersSM (www.bestworkplaces.org) is managed by the National Center for Transit Research at the Center for Urban Transportation Research. The program was initiated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and United States Department of Transportation in 2002. The purpose is to identify and recognize those U.S. companies offering employees significant incentives and programs encouraging commuting alternatives aimed at saving energy and money as well as reducing air pollution. The program challenges employers across the country to voluntarily meet the *National Standard of Excellence*. For more information, please visit www.bestworkplaces.org.



Mystery in the Triange!

submitted by Lauren B. Parker, GoTriangle.org, Research Triangle Park, NC

Employee Transportation Coordinators and Employer Outreach Coordinators team up to solve the crime!

On August 18, 2010, local Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETC) and Human Resources representatives gathered at Research Triangle Park, NC to crack the “Murder Mystery at the Roadrage Company”. In an unconventional training exercise, a lot of commute options were brought to the forefront of discussion and fun was had by all.



After hearing about the success of this activity as a training session at Caltech, GoTriangle Employer Outreach Coordinator (EOC) Shelly Epps adapted this “Hollywood Homicide” to a “Triangle Tragedy”. With the help of colleagues (who knew there are such great actors in transportation?), this murder mystery was brought to life and had local flair.

Using clues and evidence from the case – a special parking pass for employees who carpool, GoPasses for transit riders, sunscreen for those that cycle or walk their commute, and even the gas cards provided for vanpoolers - participants played the roles of detectives as they put the pieces together to identify a prime suspect and motive to “Who Killed Bert Schwinn?”

The first in a series of training workshops, the participants were able to network, get out of their offices and use some deductive reasoning skills, which was a welcome change. Throughout the year EOCs will work together to put on other workshops to foster relationships between local ETCs and provide an added value to being an ETC.

To find out who the killer was and which group of detectives solved the crime, visit our new [GoTriangle Blog](http://gotriangle.wordpress.com) (<http://gotriangle.wordpress.com>). This blog is updated on a daily basis with transportation news, information on commuter benefits, events, ways to get around town to cool events in the area by bus and more. It is used as a way to engage commuters and local companies looking to start programs. Feel free to subscribe to our RSS Feed or to receive emails when there is a new posting.

For more information, contact Lauren B. Parker @ LParker@GoTriangle.org



Commuter Assistance Programs Underscore Public Transportation

submitted by Hope Stewart, West Florida Regional Planning Council, hope.stewart@wfrpc.org

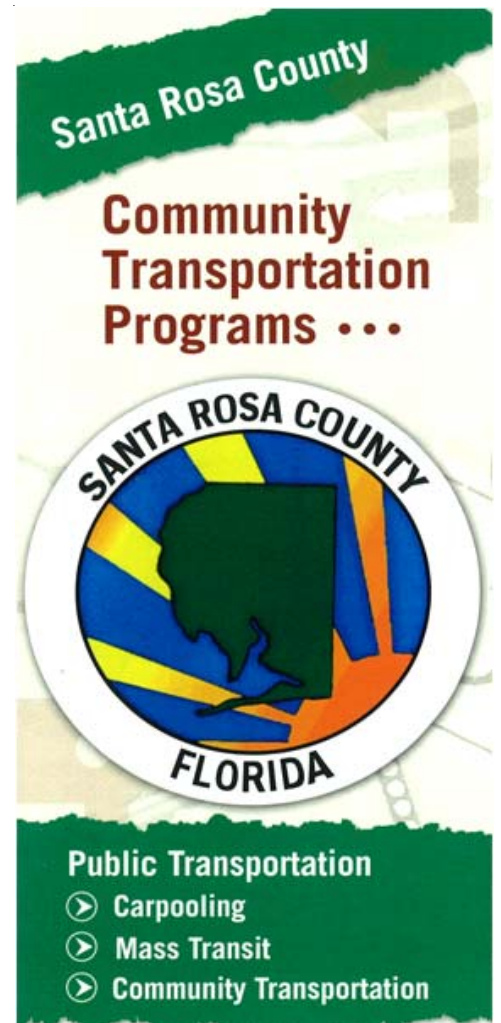
Ride On Commuter Services, operating in the Florida panhandle, has been working the past few years to develop a cohesive approach to promoting local public transportation programs. Under direction from program managers at the Florida Department of Transportation, and in collaboration with other public transportation providers, brochures for three counties have been completed and a fourth is in the works.



To date, brochures have been completed for Santa Rosa, Bay, and Gulf Counties. A brochure for Jackson County is in the works and Commuter Services of North Florida has been included in the planning, since Jackson County is one of three counties shared by the two regional Commuter Assistance Programs in the Florida Department of Transportation District Three. Each brochure prominently displays the featured county's logo on the front (for easy recognition) and highlights all the public transportation choices available in the featured county.

Fixed route transit systems are highlighted, along with community transportation services, Commuter Assistance Programs, and

Park & Ride lots. Phone numbers for each program as well as methods for accessing ADA information are also included. These brochures are not intended as an all inclusive source for detailed information, (for instance, they do not include specific route listings for individual fixed route services or existing 'pool' programs); however, they do offer a one-stop contact information resource and an overview of services that the public can use to determine what service best suits their individual needs.



For more information call Hope Stewart at 800-226-8914 x280 or e-mail hope.stewart@wfrpc.org. Dan Deanda and Hope Stewart coordinate Ride On Commuter Services for ten counties in the Florida panhandle. Ride On is a program of the West Florida Regional Planning Council made possible by the Florida Department of Transportation.

CUTR Offers Free Webinars for SEACT Members

*submitted by Phil Winters, the Center for Urban Transportation Research
at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida*

*The Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida (USF) has established a new "CUTR Webcast Online Series". The purpose of these **FREE** webinars is threefold:*

- 1. Increase knowledge of transportation professionals and policymakers in Florida and the rest of the country by sharing the latest findings of transportation research. **Editor's Note:** SEACT members are encouraged to participate!*
- 2. Increase the reach of technology transfer, especially to those transportation professionals who are unable to travel to state and national conferences, due to time and cost constraints.*
- 3. To encourage discussion among participants and receive input on subjects requiring future research.*

*These CUTR Webcasts will be held **every other Thursday** beginning on October 7 from noon to 1 PM. The link and the phone number shown below will remain the same for all webinars. The schedule of upcoming webcasts is also shown below.*

If you cannot join us, the event will be recorded and available for on-demand streaming. Go to www.cutr.usf.edu for the links.

SUBSCRIBE TO CUTR ANNOUNCEMENTS: You can subscribe to receive future announcements for webcasts, research reports, and training opportunities at http://www.cutr.usf.edu/about/about_subscribe.shtml



SCHEDULE

| Date | Title of Presentation | Presenters |
|-------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 10/7/2010 | Transit GIS Clearinghouse | Martin Catala/Amber Reep, CUTR |
| 10/21/2010 | Location Aware Technology | Nevine Georggi/Sean Barbeau, CUTR |
| 11/4/2010 | Organizational Structure of MPOs | Jeff Kramer and Alex Bond, CUTR |
| 11/18/2010 | Vehicle Assist and Automation Technologies in Bus Revenue Service | Brian Pessaro, CUTR |
| 12/2/2010 | Public Transit Marketing | Justin Begley, CUTR |
| 1/13/2011 | Motorcycle Crash Trends in Florida | Chanyoung Lee, CUTR |
| 1/27/2011 | Transit Technician Certification Using Innovative Technological Strategies | Ed Bart, CUTR |
| 2/10/2011 | Managing during tough times: Lessons Learned in Transit Efficiencies and Revenue Generation | Joel Volinski, CUTR |
| 2/24/2011 | Alternative Fuels and Public Transportation | Steve Reich, CUTR |
| 3/10/2011 | Trends in Travel Behavior | Steve Polzin |

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If you are unable to use your computer speakers or headset, use your telephone to receive the audio.

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Sarasota County “Commuter Services Day” Encourages Community to Learn about Sustainability

submitted by Christine Diaz, Commuter Services, State of Florida

Affiliated Commuter Services Partners throughout Sarasota County’s government offices combined efforts in June to host “2010 Commuter Services Day.” This event was designed to raise awareness of alternative modes of transportation, such as carpooling, vanpooling, public transit, biking and walking to encourage healthier lifestyles and reduce congestion.

A friendly competition ensued as Sarasota County Commissioner and Commuter Services Ambassador Joe Barbetta issued challenges to each of the county’s constitutional offices and downtown businesses. The challenge encouraged prospective participants to help strengthen Sarasota’s campaign in improving air quality and offering commute solutions to residents of Southwest Florida and, of course, to beat recent successes achieved in neighboring Polk County.



In 2009, Polk County held a similar event to Sarasota County’s “Commuter Services Day” with, more than 400 commuters registering to find a carpool partner – adding to the more than 3,500 individuals already participating from within Polk County. Following that May 2009 event, Polk County Commissioner and Commuter Services Ambassador Jean Reed sent an official challenge to all surrounding counties to host their own kick-off campaigns to raise awareness of alternative transportation options. Sarasota County was the first to accept the challenge. To kick off their event, the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners issued a proclamation, naming June 24, 2010 as “Commuter Services Day.”

A “Special Route” was launched by Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) to promote a “Try Transit” activity as part of the Commuter Services Day. This route offered commuters a special opportunity to experience transit, by encompassing links from multiple regular routes, with transit service personnel on hand to teach riders more about the route options surrounding their worksites and public service destinations. On board the special transit route were Commissioners Carolyn Mason, Shannon Staub, Vice-Chair Nora Patterson, and Chairman Joe Barbetta.

Commissioner Barbetta personally set the example for future cyclists. Equipped with a helmet cam ([view video courtesy of Access Sarasota](#)), Commissioner Barbetta first rode his bike to work, cruised around downtown during the event, and then transported it onto the SCAT bus to link his trips via transit. He demonstrated the pedal-and-ride option by loading his bicycle onto a front-end bicycle rack and hopping aboard the bus for a ride. By combining the bus and bicycling for trips around town, he illustrated how travelers can incorporate regular exercise with an inexpensive alternative to driving alone.

Participants in the day’s events provided positive feedback, and despite the 96-degree weather, many riders sang praises about alternative travel options. “The hybrid bus was refreshing; it was very cool and very clean,” said one new transit rider.



We hope that Sarasota County’s event motivates commuters, employers and community leaders throughout Southwest Florida to join together in an ongoing campaign to improve air quality and traffic congestion through awareness and sustained changes in travel behavior. For more information on the Commuter Services program, please contact program director Christine Diaz, at 1.866.585.RIDE, or via email, at Christine_Diaz@urscorp.com

WELCOME NEWEST MEMBERS

Ed Badey - Analysis, Center for Transportation
Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Knoxville, TN 865-946-1349

Stacey Carless - TDM Coordinator
City of Raleigh
Raleigh, NC 919-996-4036

Diane Davidson - Director, Center for Transportation
Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Knoxville, TN 865-946-1349

Elizabeth Romano - Sustainable Transportation Manager
Bank of America
Charlotte, NC 980-387-6501

Kathleen Sobush
US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Atlanta, GA 404-639-0161



SEACT Board of Directors 2010

President

Kathy Molin
City of Asheville
Asheville, NC
kmolin@ashevillenc.gov

Vice President

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Planning Council
Panama City, FL
hope.stewart@wfrpc.org

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The TMA Group
Franklin, TN
dthorne@tmagroup.org

Immediate Past President

Jeff Horton
The Marketing Institute
Tallahassee, FL
jnhorton@cob.fsu.edu

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Publisher

Debbie Henry
The TMA Group

Editor

Sandi Moody
TBARTA

Inquiries and Submissions:

The TMA Group
ATTN: Debbie Henry
708 Columbia Avenue
Franklin, Tennessee 37065
615-628-0264
615-628-0264 fax
dhenry@tmagroup.org