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Special Edition

September 2010

Sarasota County's "Commuter Services Day"

This special edition newsletter highlights resources to assist you in finding ways to get around besides driving alone. These resources offer smarter, sustainable methods of daily living. [View Event Video.](#)

On June 24, 2010, Sarasota County government and the constitutional offices combined efforts to host their first "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 sustainability.

The event took place outside of the County administration building in downtown Sarasota. Commuter Services conducted the event in partnership with local entities including [Sarasota County Area Transit \(SCAT\)](#), [Florida Department of Transportation \(FDOT\)](#), [Sarasota County, Air and Water Quality](#), [Clerk of the Circuit Court](#), [City of Sarasota](#), [Environmental Services](#), [Property Appraiser](#), [Resource Management](#), [Sheriff's Office](#), [Solid Waste](#), [Supervisor of Elections](#), [Sustainability](#), and [Tax Collector's Office](#).

Commuter Services was joined by a number of vendors providing information, food, and services to local employees. Participants included [511 - Traffic Info](#), the [Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee](#), [Coca-Cola](#), [Einstein Bros. Bagels](#), [Florida Ever-Glides](#), [Friends of the Legacy Trail](#), [Keep Sarasota County Beautiful](#), [Little Caesars Pizza](#), [New Balance Sarasota](#), [Parks and Recreation](#), [Sarasota-Manatee Bicycle Club](#), [Stay Alive...Just Drive! Inc.](#), [UF/IFAS Sarasota Extension](#), and [VPSI Inc.](#) We were met by crowds of downtown commuters and community members, looking to find options and information.

You can make a difference in your local environment and improve the air you breathe, alleviate traffic congestion, reduce traffic induced stress and [save money](#). Your efforts and local events, like Sarasota County's "Commuter Services Day," benefit the local economy through community interaction, marketing opportunities and increase mobility.



Commuter Benefits

Carpool Parking Only!



In addition to saving money on fuel and vehicle repairs, Sarasota County carpoolers can benefit from preferential parking. Signs are in place at the BOB, Administration and RL Anderson buildings, and are permitted for use on a first-come first-served basis.

Emergency Ride Home

If you currently carpool, vanpool, ride the bus, bike or walk to work, and your employer offers the [Emergency Ride Home](#) program, you qualify for free rides home in the event of an emergency.

Commuter Services will reimburse up to four rides per year via taxi or rental car; or reimburse mileage for a co-worker who drives you home.



The program can only be used for personal and family emergencies or unscheduled overtime per supervisor request. It is not intended for rides to work, scheduled appointments or planned overtime.

Just make sure you are registered and your company is offering the Emergency Ride Home, before requesting use of the program.

A Challenge from Polk County

Last year, on May 21, 2009, [Polk County held an event](#) in Bartow, FL, similar to Sarasota County's "Commuter Services Day." By the end of the day, over 400 commuters [registered](#) with the program, adding to the 1,200 already participating. Today, Polk County has nearly 3,700 registered commuters in FDOT District One's Commuter Services program. [View Polk County Special Edition Newsletter](#). [View Polk County Proclamation](#).

Following the event, Polk County Commissioner and Commuter Services Ambassador, Jean Reed, sent an official challenge to all surrounding counties to host a kick-off campaign to raise awareness of Commuter Services and alternative transportation. Sarasota County was the first to accept Polk County's challenge. To kick off the event, the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners issued a proclamation ([view video](#)), naming June 24 as "Commuter Services Day."

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 them to help strengthen Sarasota's campaign to improve air quality and offer commute solutions to residents of Southwest Florida and, of course, to beat Polk County's recent success. [View Event Flyer](#). [View Challenge Flyer](#).

The Sarasota County Government Planning Department won Commissioner Joe Barbetta's Commuter Services Team Challenge Trophy. The Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office won the award for team spirit.

A third award, the "Sustainability Awareness Award," recognized the office that encouraged the greatest participation. This was awarded to the joint efforts of the Tax Collector's office and the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office.

Presentation of the awards will be at the Sarasota County Board meeting at 1660 Ringling Blvd., at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, September 29, 2010.

At the conclusion of the event, Sarasota County now boasts twice as many bicyclists and teleworkers as Polk County. And, although Sarasota County did not beat Polk County's grand totals, the event provided many more resources and interactive opportunities, like SCAT's "[Try Transit](#)" activity.



FAQ's

How much does Commuter Services cost? This is a *free* program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation.

What does it mean to register? You are considered "part of the program," and can receive all the benefits and resources offered by Commuter Services.



What happens after I register? You will be matched with people who live and work near you and travel to and from work at the same time. Next, you will be emailed (or mailed) the name, phone number and email address of people who could potentially share your commute. To get started, check out the [carpool checklist](#), interested cyclists can organize group rides, or maybe you want to find someone to share a [transit](#) ride. For commuters with a longer drive, [vanpooling](#) is an ideal solution.

Once registered, you are not obligated to share a ride - use the program as needed. See who lives near you as a backup, in case your car is in the shop, you are unable to drive, or you have an emergency.

How do I register for the Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program? By registering with Commuter Services, you are already registered for the ERH program. Please be sure your employer is offering the program before requesting service or reimbursement.

This service helped me, now what? Update your current mode of travel in your [account](#), or give us a call 1.866.585.7433 (RIDE). Have a story to tell? We want to know - [email us!](#)

SCAT's Try Transit

"Let us pick you up for lunch!"

A "Special Route" was put into service for SCAT's Try Transit event, giving participants around town an opportunity to experience transit. This special route was abbreviated to encompass multiple regular routes, showing participants all of the route options surrounding their worksites and/or destinations for public services. [View System Map](#) or try [Google Transit!](#)



On a 96 degree day outside, many riders sang praises: "the hybrid bus was refreshing; very cool and very clean," said Liz Kaber, from the Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office. Other commuters considered taking transit as an inexpensive, regular method of travel:



Regular fare is 75 cents, 35 cents with qualified discount cards, and free for children less than 5 years of age. County employees can ride free by showing their badge upon boarding the bus. [View fare and outlet information.](#)

Also on board were Commissioners [Carolyn Mason](#), [Shannon Staub](#), Vice Chair [Nora Patterson](#) and Chairman [Joe Barbetta](#). Commissioner Barbetta demonstrated the pedal-and-ride option by loading his bicycle onto the bus' front-end bicycle rack and then hopped aboard for a ride.



Pedal-and-Ride

"Try It - You Might Like It!"

By combining the bus and bicycling for trips around town, travelers can incorporate regular exercise with an inexpensive alternative to driving alone. Commuter Services Ambassador

Commissioner Barbetta had no problem setting the example for future cyclists out there. Equipped with a helmet cam ([view video courtesy of SNN](#)), Commissioner Barbetta rode his bike to work, around downtown during the event, and then transported it on the SCAT bus. Using the bike rack is easy, and if it's your first time, don't worry! Here are some tips, [courtesy of SCAT](#):

- While holding bike, lower bike rack.
- Lift bike into the wheel wells; securely fit both tires.
- Pull the self storing support arm up over front tire.



Spotlight on Frank Lin



Back in 2008 (left), we met Frank Lin, who reported biking to work every day, rain or shine. This past June, two years later (right), he met us downtown to inform us that he is still riding his bicycle and loves our program!



What are the program benefits?

- Find co-workers that share your commute, so you can save time and [money](#)
- Find a back up, in case your car breaks down or for some other emergency
- Reduced stress induced by traffic or the costs of daily commuting
- Use of the [ERH](#) program
- Find [traffic information](#) and local services
- Notices of [upcoming activities](#), incentives and periodic prize drawings
- Other free services, and tips to save you money on travel
- [Information](#) on carpools, vanpools, biking, walking, local transit, teleworking, flexible scheduling, green initiatives and more!

[I bike/walk/ride the bus, why should I register?](#) You qualify for the [ERH](#) program, and any upcoming incentives. You will also be entered into periodic prize drawings, receive notices of upcoming [activities](#), [events](#), and [promotions](#), like [Tow to Go](#), [Bike to Work Week](#), [National Walking Day](#) or [Dump the Pump](#). Soon, we plan to launch our Trip Tracking program; an incentivized tracking system that rewards commuters for reporting their daily modes of travel.

[What are the environmental benefits by commuting by carpool/vanpool/bike/bus?](#) Changes in travel behavior, and worksite operations can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce a worksite's overall carbon footprint. Considering that one gallon of gas produces 20 lbs. of CO₂ ([fueleconomy.gov](#)), even small changes in commute behavior and fuel usage can have a positive impact on the environment.

Florida's Bicycling Friendliness Moves up 20 Places

Florida's [ranking](#) improved from 32nd to 12th place and received honorable mention as a [Bicycle Friendly State](#), from the [League of American Bicyclists](#). "These states show what can be done to promote bicycling through model policies, programs and a built environment that accommodates bicyclists of all ages and abilities."

With many communities in Southwest Florida taking the initiative to improve roadways and pathways that are more friendly and accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians, it is important to recognize the local organizations that have made friendliness a priority. Whether your organization is a veteran to this task, or just getting started, getting to know neighboring efforts is a great way to get on the road to improvement.

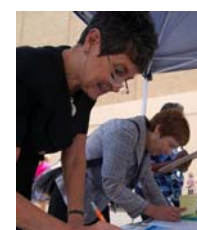
At Sarasota County's "Commuter Services Day," the [Sarasota-Manatee Bicycle Club](#) brought several bikes, a work stand and common bike repair tools. Their demonstration promoted safe cycling including proper clothing and mandatory use of a helmet. They taught attendees how to repair a flat tire and make simple bike repairs and adjustments.

Also represented was the [Sarasota Bicycle/Pedestrian Advocates](#) (BPA), which specializes in policy. BPA works with the public, the media, cities, counties, the state, the federal government, and others to make biking and walking safer and easier. [Friends of the Legacy Trail](#) shared information on [events](#), [trail maps](#), [ambassadorships](#), [volunteering](#), and [other information](#).



Special Thanks

Sarasota County's "Commuter Services Day" was made possible through the collaborative efforts, hard work, and shared vision of many dedicated individuals. We'd like to thank Sarasota County Sustainability, Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) and the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners. 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 through sustainability awareness and changes in travel behavior.



Resources

Transportation Resources

511 Free Traffic Info: Construction and traffic updates, road closures, and custom services. Dial 511
fl511@dot.state.fl.us
www.fl511.com

Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee: educates the public about ways to improve walking and biking. 941.544.7788
mikel.modem@verizon.net
www.bike-ped-sarasota.org

EPA Transportation & Air Quality regulating air pollution from motor vehicles, engines, and the fuels used to operate them, and by encouraging travel choices that minimize emissions. epa.gov/otaq

Friends of the Legacy Trail supports, promotes, enhances and protects the Venice to Sarasota rails-to-trails. legacytrailfriends@gmail.com
www.legacytrailfriends.org

Legacy Trail plenty of areas to stop, rest, learn about its history or just enjoy the natural beauty surrounding the trail. scgov.net/LegacyTrail

Parks and Recreation, your source for parks, paddling, events & more! 941.861.5000, scgov.net/parks

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT): try out Google Transit, view [schedules and route maps](#), read about [Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\)](#), [fare information](#), and [pedal and ride](#). 941.861.5000, scgov.net/scat

Sarasota Co. Health Department Check out the [Pathways to Health](#) program! 941.861.2900, sarasotahealth.org

Sarasota-Manatee Bicycle Club Recreation, fitness, exercise, sport and transportation. View [events](#), [join](#), [newsletter](#), [maps](#), and [links](#). www.smbc.us

Stay Alive...Just Drive! Inc. Crash prevention, awareness, and education program aimed at promoting safe driving. 239.340.8693
justdrivefla@embarqmail.com
www.sajd.org

Sunpass
FDOT's prepaid toll program. 888.865.5352
www.sunpass.com

Prizes - Thanks to our Donors!

Special thanks to the following businesses, whose donations helped make the day a great success. Show your support by going green and staying local!

Applebee's Main Street
1991 Main St., Sarasota
941.955.7234
www.applebees.com

Bravo and Jeffrey's Italian Eatery
1995 Main St., Sarasota
941.906.9500

Café Americano
1409 Main St. Sarasota
941.365.1026
contact@cafeamericanosrq.com
cafeamericanosrq.com

Coca-Cola
1126 North Lime Ave., Sarasota
2150 47th St., Sarasota
941.953.3151
coca-cola.com

Cold Stone Creamery
(Downtown)
1900 Main St., Sarasota
941.330.1880
coldstonecreamery.com

Einstein Bros. Bagels
3800 South Tamiami Trl.
Sarasota
941.952.0300
einsteinbros.com

Florida Ever-Glides
200 South Washington Blvd.
Sarasota
941.363.9556
FloridaEver-Glides@comcast.net
floridaever-glides.com

Little Caesars Pizza
\$5 Pizza, Everyday!
2866 Ringling Blvd.
Sarasota
941.312.5938
littlecaesars.com

New Balance Sarasota
1872 Stickney Point Rd.
Sarasota
941.921.3696
stores.newbalance.com/sarasota

Tropical Smoothie Café
900 Main St., Ste. 102
Sarasota
941.365.8423
tropicalsmoothie.com

Congratulations to the following winners!



Fred Miller
Clerk of Circuit Court
Cold Stone Creamery
\$15 gift certificate



Karen Crete
Supervisor of Elections
Applebee's
\$25 gift certificate



Brenda Luna
Supervisor of Elections
Sunpass Mini



James Sobucki
Supervisor of Elections
\$25 gas card



Trisha Oliver
Property Appraiser
Bravo! Italian Eatery
\$20 gift certificate



Jennifer McKinon
Property Appraiser
Sunpass Mini



Brian Levanti
Sheriff's Office
New Balance
\$50 gift certificate



Olga Brown
Sheriff's Office
Florida Ever-Glides
\$50 Segway tour for



Carole Wilson
Tax Collector
Sunpass Mini



Lorrie Lynch
Tax Collector
Sunpass Mini



Steven Hatcher
Tax Collector
\$25 gas card



Tracy Shinkarow
Sarasota Co.
Cold Stone Creamery
\$15 gift cert.

Resources

VPSI Inc.

Get moving in a vanpool!
813.282.8200
david.bannar@vpsiinc.com
www.vanride.com

Sustainability Resources

Air and Water Quality

Ensure the highest level of quality of air and protect drinking water in Sarasota, www.scgov.net/aqi

City of Sarasota

Sustainability, energy incentives, greenhouse gas emissions, and carbon footprints.

Contact Alison Albee
941.365.2200 x 6317
Alison.Albee@sarasotagov.com
yourgreencity.sarasotagov.com

Environmental Services

Protect, conserve, and enhance our natural resources by blending the needs of today with a vision for tomorrow. www.scgov.net/EnvironmentalServices

Keep Sarasota County Beautiful

Education, cleanup programs, recycling and other methods of reducing solid waste.
www.scgov.net/EnvironmentalServices/KeepSarasotaBeautiful/KSCB.asp

Resource Management:

Check out information on [Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program](#) and [Nature Lands/Trails](#).

Sarasota Co. Sustainability

Learn what **you**, your **business** and community can do. Read about Sarasota County's **efforts**, **renewable community**, view **interesting links**, and **outreach and education**.
941.861.5000
sustainablesarasota@scgov.net
www.scgov.net/sustainability

UF/IFAS Sarasota Extension

Developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences.
941.861.9900
amarrero@scgov.net
sarasota.extension.ufl.edu

(“Winners” continued from page 5)

Not Pictured:

Tammi Osborne
Clerk of Circuit Court
Café Americano
\$25 gift certificate

Dawn Carroll
Sarasota Co. Health
Dept.
Sunpass Mini

Todd Simmons
City of Sarasota
Sunpass Mini

Martha Marsh
Clerk of the Circuit Court
Tropical Café Smoothies
\$10 gift certificate

Renee Geraci
Sarasota Co. Tax Collector
Bravo!
\$20 gift certificate

Zachary Azimi
Sarasota Co.
Sunpass Mini

Robert Jolly
Supervisor of Elections
Sunpass Mini

Denise Sam
Sarasota Co. Tax
Collector
Tropical Café Smoothies
\$10 gift certificate

Lou Mikos
Sarasota Co.
Sunpass Mini

Jamie Mahadeo
Sarasota Co. Health
Dept.
New Balance
\$50 gift certificate

Ronald Campbell
City of Sarasota
Sunpass Mini

Leftover food and drinks were donated to the Salvation Army, 1400 10th St. Sarasota, FL. 941.954.4671.



About Us

Commuter Services is a FREE program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation, serving travelers in the 12 county region of Southwest Florida.



We work with businesses to help their employees find a better way to get to work rather than driving alone. We work with local governments and transportation partners to help build better communities that offer a wider range of transportation choices - like bicycling and walking, and better accessibility for carpools, vanpools, and transit services. We provide employers with a turnkey solution, including program development, on-site events, marketing tools, and motivation programs.

For more information:

Call: 1.866.585.RIDE (7433)

Visit: www.CommuterServicesFL.com

Email: CustomerService@CommuterServicesFL.com

