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## APTA Holds Marketing and Communications Workshop

To create an environment for sharing ideas, stories, and collaborative efforts between transit agencies, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) hosted its annual Marketing & Communications Workshop on February 28–March 2 in Phoenix, AZ. Representing the FTMN sponsored by FDOT were Tonya Ellis, ECAT; Victor Garcia, SFRTA; Mike Miller, JTA; and Mitch Spicer, CUTR.

Sessions attended by the group included: Branding, Social Media Landscape, Advertising Revenue Information Exchange, Large Event Coordination, Big Projects and the Unexpected Left Turns That May Occur, Campaigns for Customers, Creating Partnerships Between Public Transit and App-based Rideshare Services, and Social Media Strategies. The sessions concluded with a question and answer period allowing attendees to find out more about the experiences of the agencies and the results of their marketing initiatives.

Each session gave the attendees at least one important takeaway for their respective agency or organization. Examples include:

- Collaboration means great communication, and building and maintaining great relationships with the media, customers, and the community.
- Identify the problem and control the message—never underestimating the opposition to your project to mitigate the risk.
- When possible, incorporate what were once considered disruptive technologies (i.e. ridehailing services).



Another focus of the workshop was how call center representatives are the number one resource for marketing. For this, a call center challenge was held with seven contestants representing agencies across the United States and Canada competing to provide the best customer service possible in three different call scenarios. In addition, Phoenix's Valley Metro hosted a technical tour of its state of the art call center and mobility assessment center, to help riders learn how to navigate the public transportation system and determine if they are eligible for any complimentary services.

All four attendees agreed they left the workshop with new information they could take back to their organizations. The three transit agency representatives had the opportunity to speak with comparable-size organizations making it easier to relate to the challenges within transit, such as: advocacy, reputation management, declining ridership, lower fuel prices, and marketing transit to non-riders.

For more information about the workshop please contact Mitch Spicer at [amspicer@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:amspicer@cutr.usf.edu). Individual synopses from the attendees will be posted on our website.

# Pinellas Technical College Students Now Ride PSTA Free

It was standing room only in the Culinary Arts building at Pinellas Technical College (PTC) Monday morning as students, faculty, and staff gathered to share stories of gratitude for a new transportation partnership that has helped break barriers.

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) and PTC formed the partnership to create free bus rides for students and staff members at the college earlier this month.

One by one, students approached a podium to share stories of their personal struggle with transportation—a struggle that is now obsolete.

Sarah Crofoot, a PTC Medical Administration student was one of those students.

“I didn’t know how I would ever back to school,” said Crofoot. “All I knew was that my children needed me to finish my degree, and that’s when I found out about the partnership.”

Sarah was in a horrible car accident last October which left her injured and without a means of transportation. She shared her struggle of trying to find ways to buy groceries, take care of her children, and get back to school.

“I’m on track to graduate now, and I can’t tell you how grateful I am,” said Crofoot.

For one student, the partnership meant much more than just a free ride. AC Lindsey, a Northeastern High School and PTC dual-enrollment student said this bus pass will help take some stress off his grandmother.



“It takes expenses off her hands,” said Lindsey. “That’s money that we can spend on groceries or on medication for my sister,”

St. Petersburg City Councilwoman Darden Rice spoke at the event and was struck with emotion by the personal stories of the students.

“I have to tell you, that was the most incredibly powerful group of speakers I’ve heard,” said Rice. “Thank you for sharing your stories because your experience goes to the heart of our mission of why we do mass transit, why we provide buses, and why we provide these opportunities.”

Opportunities that Rice said are just another way PSTA has shown its value to the community.

“PSTA is focused on delivering value to riders, taxpayers, and the community, and partnerships like this show that focus, said Rice.”

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## Broward County Transit Donation Program in Full Gear

Many items are left behind on Broward County Transit (BCT) buses and are sent to Lost and Found. After 90 days, many of those items still haven’t been claimed. At that time, they are eligible for donation, benefiting members of the community.

In order to streamline this process, BCT initiated a formal donation program in 2015, allowing many organizations to benefit from unclaimed, reusable items left on buses.

So far, BCT has donated more than four hundred bikes and cell phones, dozens of backpacks, purses, clothes, strollers, umbrellas, lunch bags, books and more to a rotating group

of charitable or educational groups who then donate them to those in need.

As soon as the items come in off the buses or from transit centers they are logged and tagged. Customer service staff can help any customer who is looking for a lost item as soon as they believe they lost it at (954) 357-8400.

“This is a nice way to give back to the community,” said Chris Walton, Director of the Broward County Transportation Department. “By creating this donation program, many area residents helped by various organizations will benefit from items that otherwise would be discarded.”

# HART Buses Adding Wi-Fi Service to Area Commutes

## Stay Connected While You Ride!

**H**ART riders will soon be able to get more out of their commute with free Wi-Fi on all fixed-route buses. In April, you will be able to send emails, check the latest travel updates or even crush some candy without eating into your mobile data on board our buses! Starting Monday, April 4, bus passengers will be able to use high speed Wi-Fi free of charge on HART to browse the Internet, watch movies, listen to music, and more.

Installation of Wi-Fi hardware began in February with 6 buses being upgraded every day. Installers will be working during the evening and overnight hours to ensure that installation will not inconvenience passengers. Ultimately, this roll-out of Wi-Fi technology will be the foundation to support the upcoming smart card program, where passengers will be able to use their smart phones and dedicated account based cards to travel not only the HART system, but throughout the Tampa Bay region.

It's another way that HART keeps pace with your busy life. You can be productive and keep in touch yet arrive at your destination safely. The expansion of Wi-Fi is yet another reason for choosing to ride the bus whether someone is going to work, to school or to the store.

“This is a significant step toward expanding technology that not only allows HART to provide more services to its patrons, but expands the HART commitment to innovative technology and solutions throughout our system.” said HART CFO Jeff Seward. “These upgrades enhance their commute by utilizing tools available to effectively manage their internet browsing and e-mails, as well as easily finding the arrival times of their next bus stop.”

Adding Wi-Fi to the entire bus fleet should prove to be popular with the tech savvy millennial generation that places a premium on being connected.

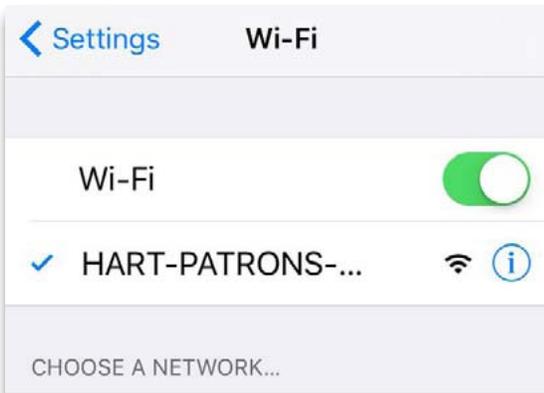
According to a 2013 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey 54 percent of millennials (ages 18 to 34) want their transportation options to include Wi-Fi everywhere they go within 10 years.

Meanwhile, forty-five percent of those surveyed said they wanted transportation options that are more connected and tech friendly within 10 years. The poll of 1,000 people in six cities also found that 44 percent of millennials use public transportation so they can socialize online.

The study concluded that fully leveraging technology, including Wi-Fi, allows transit riders to be more spontaneous and helps undercut one key competitive advantage of the car.



HART's community relations team educates riders on the Wi-Fi service.



Marketing promotional materials.

# FLORIDA TODAY Hosts Business of Transit Stakeholders Summit

## Brevard forms “Transit One”, A Council for Transit Advocacy

**S**pace Coast Area Transit and reThink, FDOT’s District 5 Commuter Assistance Program, kicked off the New Year by co-sponsoring a Community Stakeholders Summit. FLORIDA TODAY Executive Editor Bob Gabordi moderated the nine-member interactive panel discussion entitled “The Business of Transit”. The 120 attendees represented a wide cross section of the community: each municipality was represented, as was the Canaveral Port Authority, the Brevard County School Board, the Viera Transportation Management Association, Community Redevelopment Agencies, Tourism Council members, not-for-profit organizations, and numerous employers. Participants received an education on transit’s local, regional, and state-wide economic benefits, then continued the transit discussion in vanpools while on their way to a luncheon co-sponsored by Space Coast Advertising and Clear Channel Outdoor.

Jim Liesenfelt, Director of Space Coast Area Transit, started the interactive panel discussion by sharing that Brevard County’s boarding rates were higher per hour than those in Houston or Minneapolis/St. Paul, and that the number of cash transactions facilitated on their buses each day was equal to those of an average Super Wal-Mart. He went on to say that, “The transit system employs over 150 people with an 8.6 million dollar operating and maintenance budget. More than 80 % of that 8.6 million comes from revenue sources outside Brevard County, while conversely, almost 100% of that 8.6 million dollars is spent inside Brevard County.” FPTA Director Lisa Bacot provided an even broader perspective: “Nationwide, transit directly employs 400,000 people, and in the state of Florida, 35,000 people. That is just direct employment, not including the thousands of private sector jobs. Sixty-Six billion dollars is generated by private sector sales in transit related items each year. We have over 130 FPTA business members, and that’s because they know transit systems need their products and services.”

Dan Porsi, the Vice-Mayor of Melbourne, referred to his City’s transit investment as an economic development strategy stating, “We are able to have better jobs and a for way people to get to them.” Space Coast TPO Executive Director Bob Kamm added, “We all understand there is a linkage between jobs and transit, but in the past, we’ve been justifying transit as more of a social service. That’s just not

*cont’d on page 5*



*A panel discussion on Business of Transit was a featured event during reThink Your Commute Day 2017.*



*A panel discussion on Business of Transit was a featured event during reThink Your Commute Day 2017.*



*The Viera VA Outpatient Clinic was recognized as being the #1 Vanpool Provider in Brevard County.*

## Transit Stakeholders Summit—cont'd from pg 4

cutting it anymore. It has to be identified as a component of economic prosperity and job creation.” Kamm praised FDOT District 5 for creating a first-of-its-kind analysis tool that will enable justification of new or existing routes, based on estimated economic impact. “It’s something that is extremely important for us to do,” he said.

At the close of the summit, Assistant Brevard County Manager Venetta Valdengo announced the formation of a new community coalition called Transit One, a non-governmental organization that is intended to bring a diverse group of transit-interested parties together. “Transit is a vital lifeline for so many people; it’s almost a public utility,” she stated. “It demands bold, creative ways of thinking.” Valdengo envisions Transit One as a bridge that helps determine how the community wants to move forward with transit, as well as identifying the funding sources that can be used to turn that plan into reality.

Brevard County Commission Chairman Jim Barfield referred to Space Coast Area Transit’s 2013–2022 Transit Development Plan as “not being worth the paper it’s written on” because there is no funding mechanism attached to it. “What I want to make sure I am clear about today is that now is the time to take action,” he said. Time is just wasting away. I applaud Venetta’s efforts. By bringing the community together with Transit One, that’s how we solve problems,” he emphatically stated.

Courtney Reynolds, reThink Program Manager and one of the event organizers, voiced that she was thrilled to see over half of the summit attendees sign up to participate in Transit One. “One of our goals for this year’s summit was to determine if support for more transit service was in line with the interests of Space Coast Area Transit’s stakeholders. Now that stakeholder support is apparent, they take that conversation to the next level,” she said.

As a direct result of the summit, the TPO Technical and Citizen Advisory Committee voted to recommend the addition of a priority action item to the TPO’s 2016 strategic plan: Explore opportunities to expand transit services and funding. At the next TPO meeting—and to the delight of transit supporters—the priority action item passed unanimously. Transit One will hold its first meeting in March. “We recognize these are small steps,” Liesenfelt said. “But you can’t have that giant leap until you start the walk.” Bacot added, “And that’s exactly why explaining the economic benefits of transit is so important. I wish more communities were doing this!”



The panelists offered a local, regional and state-wide perspective on transit’s economic benefits.



Summit attendees were required to “join” a vanpool in order to attend the luncheon.



A goodie bag reminded attendees to reThink their commute throughout the year.



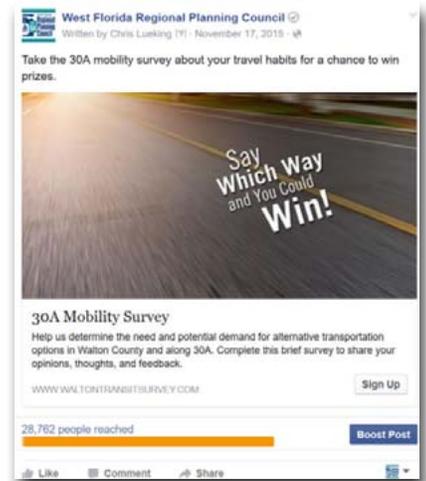
A logo was unveiled for Transit One, the new council for transit advocacy.

# Online Marketing Efforts Yield High Results for Feasibility Studies

In 2015, the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization began a study to determine the feasibility of public transit in Walton County, Florida, and utilized their planning consultant Atkins Global Consulting to conduct the research. Tallahassee-based BowStern Marketing Communications was tasked by Atkins with garnering public input, which is a required component of such projects. The study focused specifically along the congested 30A corridor and major feeder roads that provide access to the area, and it aimed to determine what transit solutions the community would be interested in. Collecting data from residents and visitors alike was imperative, so an aggressive marketing campaign was created to target different segments of the 30A community: those who live and work there and those who visit. The marketing effort included traditional marketing efforts such as public relations and community outreach, but the online marketing component was the driving force behind the data collection.

In order to make the study feel both relevant and interesting to potential respondents, BowStern branded the survey Say Which Way, Walton: A 30A Transit Survey. This branding incorporated the whole of Walton County to appeal to residents of the northern part of the county, many of whom commute south for work, and all of those who live and vacation along 30A. Because 30A has a distinct identity, it was important to include that term in the survey title, and naming Walton County ensured a comprehensive response from residents in the county's northern cities and towns. In today's tech-savvy society, many people prefer to take surveys online rather than complete traditional paper questionnaires. For this reason, BowStern put the survey online at [WaltonTransitSurvey.com](http://WaltonTransitSurvey.com) to allow the target audiences to complete it at a time and location that was most convenient for them.

Beginning in November, BowStern ran online ads via Google AdWords and Facebook to promote the survey to segmented audiences. The first audience was comprised of those who live and work in Walton County. The second audience was those who have visited, expressed interest in, or planned to visit Walton County. This strategic targeting allowed for a maximum return on investment for the ads as ads were only shown to a very select group.

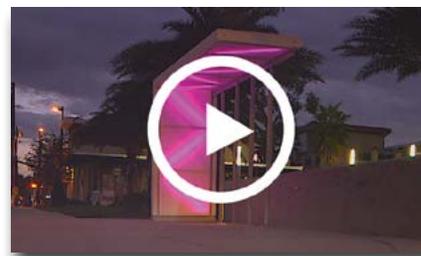


To further drive traffic to the website, an eblast was designed and distributed to multiple groups in Walton County. These groups included elected officials, local chambers of commerce, participants of community outreach efforts, people who had previously expressed interest in public transportation, and businesses along 30A. The eblast directed people to the survey website and encouraged recipients to share with their networks.

The survey was available online for six weeks, and online ads garnered more than half a million impressions. These impressions resulted in 2,100 responses from residents and visitors to the area. The survey responses were utilized by the Atkins Global Consulting team to shape their recommendations for the feasibility of transit in Walton County.

## Mills 50 Bus Shelter Unveiling

The City of Orlando District 4 Commissioner Patty Sheehan, City of Orlando District 3 Commissioner Robert F. Stuart and LYNX recently unveiled the first community-themed bus shelter in the Mills 50 Main Street district. The bus shelter is the first shelter built in the U.S. using Corian solid surface material. The shelter is also equipped with LED lighting which the agency has the ability to change. Eventually the shelters will have the capability to change color as a bus approaches.



Click on the image to learn more about the Mills 50 Community Bus Shelter!

# HARTPlus and Yellow Cab Company of Tampa Offer Same-Day Paratransit Service to Help Meet High Demand

**H**ART recently launched a new taxi voucher program, designed to make travel more convenient for those living with disabilities. The HARTPlus Customer Choice Voucher Pilot Project is possible thanks to a partnership with the Yellow Cab Company of Tampa and a FDOT grant of \$150,000 to help fund implementation of the program. This amount will allow HART to deliver approximately 9,375 trips with this pilot program. The initiative provides HARTPlus clients with quick and convenient same-day service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This groundbreaking new service launched January 1, 2016.

HARTPlus, a very popular paratransit service, serves clients with unique needs - including the visually impaired, those who use wheelchairs, and patients undergoing medical treatment. Traditionally, rides on a HARTPlus van must be booked one to three days in advance, but the new system enables patrons to call a cab for same-day service at the same price.

“HART is thrilled with the selection of Yellow Cab Company of Tampa,” said Ruthie Reyes Burckard, HART

Chief Operating Officer. “HARTPlus is a vital service for people with disabilities and seniors in Hillsborough County. We are both proud and honored to operate our paratransit service and look forward to expanding our partnership with Yellow Cab Company.”

Under the plan, those already approved for paratransit services can call a taxi and get to a doctor’s appointment or back home - or anywhere else for \$4. That’s the same price they’d pay for a one-way HARTPlus van ride. HART pays the balance of \$16 to Yellow Cab as a reimbursement. (In the event that the customer reserves a trip costing more than \$20, the additional amount will be paid for by the customer.) All customers have to do is call Yellow Cab at the direct, easy-to-remember number (813-666-6666) to schedule a pick-up.

Yellow Cab will maintain a database of HARTPlus clients that are eligible for this service. HART will also coordinate with Yellow Cab Company to help manage ridership, through productivity improvements and passenger education initiatives to ensure a seamless transition for passengers using the new service.

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## HART Sponsors Farmers Market at netp@rk Transit Transfer Center through New Pilot Program

**H**ART, Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful (KTBB), and local farmers at Florida Urban Organics have partnered up for a first-of-its-kind offering that will allow transit riders and the general public to eat healthy on the go.

Through April 2016, transit riders, as well as anyone who wants to stop by, will have an opportunity to purchase fresh fruit, vegetables and prepared foods at a farmers market located at the netp@rk Transit Transfer Center. The pilot program will offer the community a farmers market every second Wednesday, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

“We are excited to partner with Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful to provide our riders a new, convenient, time-saving way to purchase healthy food options on the go without having to deviate from their daily routine,” said HART



COO Ruthie Reyes Burckard. “These initiatives are important so that we can see which amenities work best for our customers.”

In addition, to the fresh produce offering, KTBB will host an information table that will provide the public with brochures and pamphlets on the benefits of healthy

eating and nutrition, healthy recipes ideas, wellness and smoking cessation. For consumers on the go, the farmers market at the netp@rk transit center is an ideal solution for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables and also support a local business.

HART and KTTB will monitor and evaluate the success of this pilot program closely in order to possibly extend the program in the future.



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## Volunteers in Motion Celebrates “A Life Well Lived”

Space Coast Area Transit’s Volunteers in Motion program held their annual appreciation luncheon themed, “A Life Well Lived”. Julia Davis, AICP, congratulated the program volunteers by stating, “Many of you are doing this because you like to help people who are less fortunate than yourselves. You’ve learned that volunteering is a rewarding experience, something important to do, and something that helps other people. Yours is ‘A Life Well Lived,’” Davis said.



*The Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) named Volunteers in Motion driver Joseph Leacock as Volunteer of the Year.*

The mission of Volunteers in Motion is to assist elderly individuals who would otherwise be incapable of living independently. The program provides reliable transportation to frail and elderly citizens who are physically unable to use other types of transit services by offering life-sustaining transportation to medical appointments, pharmacies, and grocery stores, all on a volunteer basis.

In a letter to the volunteers, County Manager Stockton Whitten wrote, “Some people may feel that ‘A Life Well Lived’ includes accumulating money, fame, power, and other materialistic trinkets. You have chosen to balance your life in a rich tapestry of generous calmness and kindness with your families, careers, and neighbors. You understand that ‘A Life Well Lived’ means you need to share of yourselves with others, building a richer world for those you come in contact with. Volunteers in Motion assisted 2,956 clients by providing 5,204 trips, and donating 4,227 hours of time. This program sets an example of how things might be if others were living their lives by your definition of ‘A Life Well Lived,’” he stated.

Each of the volunteers were recognized by the President’s Volunteer Service Award Program.

Additionally, David Wiltshire was recognized as a gold achiever with over 500 volunteer hours, and Joseph Leacock was recognized as a silver achiever with over 250 hours. Volunteers in Motion’s coordinator, Lori Hamilton, addressed the group by quoting Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well. Yours is ‘A Life Well Lived,’” she said.

In its 20th year of service, Volunteers in Motion was created jointly through the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners and Aging Matters in Brevard. The program utilizes Space Coast Area Transit vehicles and facilities. With the exception of one full time and one part time employee, volunteers provide all client services. To volunteer or to request services, contact Volunteers in Motion at (321) 635-7999.