

njcttp rap

New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program

Name the Newsletter Contest

The New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program is publishing the RTAP Rap with a new design and a temporary new name, the NJCTTP Rap.

We need your help to give the newsletter a new name. The name needs to complement the New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program name and provide an upbeat identity. Put on your creative thinking caps and have some fun.

The winning entry will be selected by the NJCTTP Program Review Committee and the winner will be recognized in the first renamed newsletter!

Send your suggestions, by August 30, 2007 to:

National Transit Institute
Name the Newsletter Contest
Attn: Susan Greenstone
sgreenstone@nti.rutgers.edu
120 Albany Street
Suite 250, Tower Two
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Disaster Emergency Response in Somerset and Ocean County

County transportation departments across New Jersey are adept at providing demand response transportation service to senior citizens and people with disabilities for a variety of trips, as well as general public transportation service. But the county agencies also play a crucial role in delivering transportation assistance during public emergencies.

Somerset County Flooding Emergency Response

Between April 16 and May 7, the Somerset County Transportation Division pitched in with disaster relief efforts in Bound Brook and Manville after a Nor'easter caused severe flooding. The county established a temporary shuttle route that served the disaster centers set up in Bound Brook and Manville with the food bank, the Red Cross Client Services Center at the Manville Library and a temporary housing shelter established in the gym of Raritan Valley Community College.

Buses ran continuously seven days a week from 5 a.m. until midnight from the Raritan Valley Community College gym in North Branch, the Hotel Somerset on Main Street in Somerville, and Bound Brook High School on Union Avenue. Buses stopped at all designated locations along Union Avenue to Mountain Avenue in Bound Brook.

In addition to the shuttle services, the Somerset County Transportation Division transported affected residents to work, the train station, medical appointments and for daily needs. The county fleet helped move personal belongings of the displaced residents.

The county also provided two buses for Governor Jon Corzine, FEMA and state and local officials to enable them to tour the affected areas, and kept a bus on standby to assist in shuttling firefighters who were battling blazes in the area.

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Ocean County Brushfire

Another response to a natural disaster took place on May 15 when a large brushfire swept across southern Ocean County. The fire spread towards various adult communities prompting a call for transportation assistance at about 6:00 pm from Ocean County's Office of Emergency Services to Ocean Ride. The department's staff quickly mobilized to get drivers. Because major roadways were closed due to the fire, five drivers were selected based on their ability to get to vehicles in Toms River and then drive them to the affected areas. By 8:30 p.m., Ocean Ride began evacuating nursing homes along Route 72. A total of 35 nursing home residents, 30 of whom were in wheelchairs, were evacuated, along with several residents who were using portable oxygen tanks.

The drivers were using vehicles with only two wheelchair locations per vehicle, requiring several trips to complete the evacuation. During the third round of evacuations, the fires were nearing the edge of the parking lots and the air was strong with smoke. The patients were evacuated to the Southern Regional High School in Manahawkin where volunteers provided assistance. The fire eventually burned about 17,000 acres (27 square miles), destroying several homes.

All personnel involved from the director level to the frontline operations staff, including drivers, mechanics, dispatchers and call center workers should be recognized for their dedication, not just during these emergencies, but year round for their assistance with the senior and disabled populations. O

Eight Receive Scholarships to Attend CTAA National Conference

Employees from eight local transit providers in New Jersey attended the 2007 Community Transportation Association of America conference in Reno thanks to scholarships awarded through the New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program. The program helps rural and special needs transportation agencies defray the cost of sending employees to training courses, workshops and conferences. Administered for NJ TRANSIT by the National Transit Institute at Rutgers University, the program receives federal funding through the Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and from the state through the Casino Revenue Fund.

Peggy Kelton, finance manager for the Monmouth County Division of Transportation in Freehold, attended a training session called "Thinking Like a Business." "I'm constantly juggling budgets and moving people from

grants to operating or back to grants. We're always looking for new ways to raise revenue. What I was looking for (at the conference) were any new resources that might be out there." Kelton said she gained new insights into the use of JARC and Work First grants, and discovered that Community Development Block Grants could be used for para-transit service.

"They did a lot of open forums where if you asked a question, someone in the audience with experience in the area could answer."

"The instructors were really good," Kelton said. "They did a lot of open forums where if you asked a question, someone in the audience with experience in the area could answer."

Michael J. Costello, recently hired as transportation supervisor for Monroe Township (Middlesex County), took part in the two-day National Mobility Management Conference preceding the CTAA event. "I learned quite a bit about the changing attitudes in the busi-

ness," he said. "One of the main thrusts of the meeting seemed to be a general consensus that, while a lot of these community transportation programs grew out of a paratransit background, the need now was for a good transportation system overall that can also serve the disabled and senior citizens."

Costello said he also learned that various transportation providers, such as municipal governments and local school boards, were becoming less territorial in their attitudes. For example, he said a Washington State paratransit group explained how they worked with a school board to use school buses to transport senior citizens. "They were told, 'You can't have senior citizens bouncing around on school buses.' But they got together with the school board, put their heads together and made it happen." That experience encouraged him to try the same approach in Middlesex County.

Clifton's special transportation coordinator, Carol A. Yurga, has spent 24 years on the job, won the New Jersey Rodeo twice and attended 10 CTAA conferences. "You learn more sitting and talking with people from other states networking as well as from the scheduled classes," she said. "You talk to somebody from Utah and they're driving one person 129 miles to get dialysis."

Yurga said a personnel management class she attended was invaluable and that judging the national Rodeo "was more fun than participating." Yurga uses the judging experience to help her train the Clifton agency's nine drivers on defensive driving skills. ○

Each of the scholarship recipients for this year's CTAA conference served as judges at the National Transit Rodeo event.

The other recipients were:

BETTY I. CHAMBERLAIN,

Program Coordinator for Passaic County Para Transit in Wayne. Chamberlain serves on the National Rodeo Committee.

MANDY HECHT,

Transportation Director for Cheshire Home, Inc., in Florham Park. Hecht attended a two-day training session focused on customer service.

CAROLE MILLER,

Director of Transportation Services and parking for the South Jersey Transportation Authority in Camden.

RICHARD A. PINHO,

Operations Director for the Ocean County Department of Transportation Services in Toms River. A member of the National Rodeo Committee, Pinho attended a training session on "Improving Performance."

HARRY SHERWOOD,

Operations Manager for the Cape May County Department of Transportation in Cape May Court House. Sherwood attended sessions on customer service and securement.

Burlington County Proclamation



This proclamation was presented to Kathleen Schuler, a member of the Burlington County Transportation Advisory Committee, by Freeholder Deputy Director Aubrey A. Fenton during the April 11 Freeholder meeting in Mount Holly. The proclamation recognized the importance of volunteers, including Schuler, who serve on the Advisory Committee, and recognized the need for special transportation. The proclamation declared April 11, 2007 as Community Transportation Services Day and April 22-28, 2007 as Community Transportation Services Week in Burlington County

MCAT Cited as Nation's Top

Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT) was named the 2007 Urban Community Transportation System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) at its annual conference held in Reno, Nevada in May.

NJ TRANSIT Director of Local Programs and Minibus Support and CTAA Board Member Robert Koska "began as a mobility service for people with disabilities and older Americans in the mid-1970s and has grown into a full-fledged urban operation connecting local residents with existing fixed-route bus and commuter rail operations, working with local taxi operations and the county Medicaid program, while still maintaining its top-notch specialized, community-based operations."

"This is an incredible accomplishment for the County of Middlesex, especially when you factor in that we established the Department of Transportation just two-and-a-half years ago," said Freeholder H. James Polos, chair of the county's Public Works and Transportation Committee. "This is a dynamic system that is meeting the needs of our residents who need medical transportation, commuter shuttle service and fixed-route service to reach shopping destinations."

Polos credited MCAT Director Steven Fittante and his staff "for their hard work in providing, safe, efficient and cost-effective transit services to the residents of Middlesex County."

Koska, who nominated MCAT for the national award, outlined a series of innovations the agency has undertaken in recent years. Before the reorganization, Koska said, MCAT provided nearly all of its in-house operated service as an advance reservation, curb-to-curb service, carrying approximately 220,000 one way passenger trips. Starting in April 2004, MCAT began operating a peak period fixed route service and in June 2005, expanded the reverse commute route into a full-day modified fixed route.

The CTAA award is the second for MCAT, which received the Outstanding System of the Year Award from the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (COST) in September 2006. COST President Michael M. Vieira said the system's reorganization, increased services and innovative programs earned MCAT top honors.

MCAT has developed working partnerships with a number of New Jersey human service funding agencies, including the state departments of human services, labor and workforce development, and health and senior services. Joint funding from the Federal Transit Administration and Work First New Jersey has financed transportation services for individuals who are transitioning from welfare to education, job training and employment.

In the Spotlight

If your agency or someone within your agency deserves recognition for a job well done, or has already received recognition or an award, please let us know. Email or send a brief description, photos, and contact information to sgreenstone@nti.rutgers.edu or to the National Transit Institute, attn: Susan Greenstone, 120 Albany Street, Suite 250, Tower Two, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-2130.

Urban Transportation System



Steve Fittante, MCAT Director



Bob Koska, NJ Transit with
Steven Fittante, MCAT

History of MCAT

The Middlesex County Department of Transportation was created in November 2004 by combining the Central Vehicle Maintenance division with AWTS, the county's paratransit service. The name AWTS was changed in January to MCAT - Middlesex County Area Transit - to better describe the service and a new blue-and-yellow color scheme was introduced for the fleet. The MCAT fleet includes 67 vehicles, ranging from 34-passenger buses to station wagons; over half of the vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

Over the next two years, a combination of state and federal funds were used to start up three additional fixed route shuttles to passengers to a variety of medical, shopping, employment and recreational destinations. By the end of 2006, the shuttles utilized 12 percent of the peak fleet, but were carrying over 25 percent of the total MCAT ridership of 280,000 annual passenger trips.

Prior to 2005, MCAT program was using contract taxi service on an exclusive ride reimbursement to transport individuals in the NJ Work First program. In May 2005, the new county contract switched to a shared ride reimbursement that reduced the overall cost per trip by nearly 20 percent.

In 2005, MCAT was approached by an advocacy organization, Open Road, which promotes the transport of persons with disabilities to houses of worship. MCAT developed a contract in which the agency would assume the avoidable costs of driver labor and fuel so that service could be expanded to twice per month for individuals to share rides to a number of houses of worship on Saturdays and Sundays. ○

NJ State Paratransit Rodeo 2007

A first-time competitor from Cape May County's Fare-Free Transportation captured top honors in this year's 23rd Annual New Jersey State Paratransit Rodeo. David Smith of Erma, who joined Fare-Free just eight months earlier, won the competition which was held in late April at NJDOT headquarters in Ewing. Smith and second place winner, Adele Jones, also of Fare-Free, went on to represent New Jersey in the National Paratransit Rodeo in Reno, Nevada during the Community Transportation Association of America Expo.

Somerset County Transportation driver, Jean Valade, placed third and Middlesex County Transportation driver, Gary Schaffer, placed fourth. About two dozen drivers representing 15 agencies took part in the Rodeo.

The Rodeo is a joint event sponsored by NJ TRANSIT and the NJ Council on Special Transportation. Drivers demonstrate and test their skills on an obstacle course simulating a number of driving challenges. They also take a written exam and are tested on properly securing a person using a wheelchair. The competition is open to drivers from the state's 21 county transportation agencies, NJ Transit's Access Link and other non-profit agencies that receive federal funding.

Fare-Free Director Kathleen A. Belles, CCTM, said Fare Free began holding its own in-house rodeos two years ago as a training tool. "We use that as one of our training days," she said. "The drivers take the course and we then evaluate what they are lacking on or didn't do so well in. We work on those various skills, such as backing or wheelchair securement, and use it to evaluate how they do their job on the road."

Fare-Free Transportation has been in operation since 1973, growing from a fleet of four "senior citizen shopping buses" to 40 accessible mini-buses plus 10 mini-vans used to deliver mobile meals. Modified fixed-route bus service is provided to the 16 municipalities in Cape May County at least two times per week to a local shopping area.

Adele Jones has been a driver with Fare Free Transportation since 1994 and was recognized in 2006 for completing 210,000 miles of accident-free driving over the past seven years. She placed 2nd last year in Fare Free's Rodeo and was recognized by the Freeholders in July 2006 for 7 years and 210,000 miles of accident free driving. O



Preparing to negotiate the course



Adele Jones secures a wheelchair



Checking the engine



The winners in this year's New Jersey State Paratransit Rodeo were (from left):

David Smith, 1st Place;
Adele Jones, 2nd Place;
Jean Valade, 3rd Place;
Gary Schaffer, 4th Place

Andy's Axioms

PLEASE...Don't Get Too Comfortable While Operating Your Bus



When the beautiful, sunny and warm weather arrives, it is so easy to become relaxed, overconfident and more than a little complacent. We sometimes forget to follow correct safety procedures and tend to bend the rules. We carry on conversations with passengers when we should be paying attention to the road. We talk on our cell phones when driving down an extremely busy street. Simply put...we loose focus.

In 2006 a commercial airliner crashed while taking off from an airport here in the United States. Forty-nine of the fifty people onboard were killed and one was critically injured. Recently the National Transit Safety Board (NTSB) revealed their findings as to what caused the crash. The findings of the accident showed the crash occurred due to pilot and co-pilot error. The pilot and copilot were carrying on personal, casual conversation in the cockpit during their pre-trip inspections in preparation

for takeoff. This is strictly against airline safety regulations. Conversations are to be kept solely to the task at hand. Perhaps these two professionals became too complacent in carrying out their duties. We will really never know for sure. But one thing is for certain...the plane entered the wrong runway...a runway much too short for that type of aircraft, crashed, and people died.

Airlines function much like a transit company. They have designated routes and schedules similar to bus routes and runs. There are rules and regulations governing the operations of the aircraft, much like transit has for operating buses. They carry passengers who rely on their professionalism and high regard for safety. Passengers also rely on the airlines to take them where they are going in a safe and timely fashion. The pilot has a huge responsibility that must be taken seriously each and every time they take their seat in the cockpit. People's lives are in their hands.

As with pilots, people's lives are literally in your hands. Abide by your company's safety rules...they are there for a reason. Please do not carry on distracting conversations with passengers or anyone else while operating your vehicle. The next time your cell phone rings, think about all of the customers onboard your vehicle who are trusting in your professionalism to provide them with a safe ride to and from home, work or school.

Remember...SUMMER IS HERE!....Don't be distracted, don't get complacent, don't get in a hurry and don't... "take the wrong runway."

Until next time,

Andy

Visit us at www.njcttp.org

New Jersey Transit and the National Transit Institute have teamed up to provide online registration for the New Jersey Community Transportation Training Program. The website, www.njcttp.org, features announcements, course offerings, a calendar of upcoming training courses and events, online course registration, scholarship program information, and United We Ride information.

Sign up for a user account and you will receive notice for upcoming training courses AND it will make online registration a snap!



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