

# Florida Transit association

APRIL 2003



## “From The Capitol”

By: Wes Watson

As this is written, events are unfolding in the Legislature which may make everything written here “old hat” by the time it is printed.

Due to the make-up of the Legislature’s Membership and the budget crisis, and Constitutional amendment requirements, a “perfect storm” of threats to public transit has blown up with gale force winds.

The Governor’s proposed budget would remove \$40 million from the 15% public transportation portion of the DOT Work Program, affecting not only transit, but ports, rail, aviation, and intermodal projects. To combat this FPTA has partnered with all other transportation interests to fight the overall \$200 million diversion of which the \$40 million is a portion. Unfortunately, even this “large tent” partnering effort has not succeeded as both Houses stuck with the Governor’s recommendation and pulled the \$200 million into General Revenue. Conference committees are still working on a final budget.

The Senate is showing a more pragmatic approach to issues generally than the House, even being willing to look at some new sources of revenue. But, the House, leaning more rightward and ideological, seems bent on “staying within our means” and has shown no willingness to consider anything remotely like a tax or fee.

The High Speed Rail project is completely up in the air, but it is possible that it may still be returned to the voters one more time to see if it

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## New DOT Secretary: Jose Abreu



Governor Jeb Bush tapped someone from “in-house” to be his next Florida Department of Transportation Secretary. Jose Abreu had been District 6 Secretary, based in Miami-Dade, since 1995. He began with the

Department in 1984.

Abreu graduated from Miami-Dade Community College before completing his education at the University of Miami where he received a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering in 1977. He is a licensed PE and a certified engineering contractor active in his profession. Abreu was born in Cuba on April 1, 1954. He and his wife, Miriam, have two grown children, Marisa and Jose.

When asked of his hobbies Abreu says candidly, “I don’t fish, I don’t golf, I do nothing besides trying to provide a safe, efficient transportation system for our citizens, visitors and citizens.”

In his early DOT career Abreu worked in the first version of the Office of Public Transportation Management. He has publicly stated that in the urban environment transit is the only real alternative. Under his District 6 leadership Miami-Dade was the beneficiary of several transit, multi-modal projects, including the Busway, the East-West multi-modal corridor, and the Palmetto extension of Metro-Rail. This commitment to looking at problems in a multi-modal manner has been reflected in his comments during the Senate confirmation hearings.

The Florida Public Transportation Association welcomes Jose Abreu to his new position and looks forward to a warm, working relationship.

## FPTA Receives Record Federal Earmarks



The state of Florida received a record \$36,950,000 in Bus and Bus Capital “earmarks” for F.Y. 2002-03. This easily topped the previous high of \$29.1 million in F.Y. ‘01-02.

The record funding followed an intense effort by Florida’s transit systems and FPTA with its annual February group trip to Washington, D.C., and earlier individual trips by FPTA members and the Executive Director.

Florida’s Congressional delegation deserves great credit for working together as well. The Senate went into Conference far below the House level, but to the credit of Senators Nelson and Graham, and their hardworking staffs, the ultimate result was spectacular.

FPTA’s attention to consolidating a portion of the overall request into several coalitions paid great dividends, as well. The East Central Florida Coalition garnered \$6 million and the West Coast Coalition brought in \$8 million. Senate staffers had told our group that “coalition requests go to the top of our list.”

Individual House Members came through for their districts as well, as can be seen by the individual earmarks as listed below. Special thanks goes to Appropriations Chairman, Bill Young, for his powerful assistance in the House and in Conference for helping to keep the state’s overall transit earmarks, at last, on a level proportional to our population.

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## **“From The Capitol” (continued)**

can be rescinded. Unfortunately, funding for the project, some \$75 million per year, may yet come from “our” 15%. Anti-HSR members are trying to make the project as unpalatable as possible for the voters, and raiding transit and rail is one way. Road and bridge interests are also pushing this direction in the event that the project should eventually have to be fully funded.

On the positive side we were able to make a compromise on an early Session issue with Greyhound who wished to tap into the Transit Block Grant. The compromise has held up so far.

FPTA was also instrumental in highlighting the portion of the DOT reorganization bill that would have pushed Public Transportation’s visibility down a layer in that department.

FPTA has also been in the midst of an “Intermodal Working Group” composed of the non-road modes in the 15% portion of DOT’s budget. The group meets weekly, usually with the two Transportation Committee chairs, and discusses issues of mutual interest. This “15% United Front” has been able to move, meet, and influence in ways that were not possible on an individual basis.

It is clear that while FPTA and transit has had much success recently on both the federal and local levels, the state Legislature seems in some way to be “disconnected.” No better example can be given than the effort to create the SE Florida Transportation Authority which is backed by strong business and political interests in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties. Yet, even with this massive support, the Legislature continues to balk at a local option \$2 tag fee increase and seems not to mind at all to jeopardize the effort to capture more federal funds or reward the local efforts behind this regional approach.

Though we are in a difficult time right now it is important we stay together, keep working to partner with similar interests, limit the damage as much as possible and wait for the storm to pass. I can’t express enough the importance of messages from “back home” in support of transit to reach our legislators. And the messages are best coming from your local political leaders and business interests.

## **Bay Town Trolley Press Conference at City Hall**

Bay Town Trolley is holding a press conference in front of City Hall. The Trolley announced the 2002 Trolley ridership numbers and presented the new trolley shelter design plans. The event concluded with the awarding of 2002 Trolley Rider of the Year and 2002 Friend of the Year.

Gerry Clemons, Mayor of the City of Panama City understands the importance of public transportation,

Chemical, Berg Steel Pipe, Northwest Florida Improvement Foundation and People’s First Community Bank. Bayne Collins of Collins Associates designed the trolley shelter plans free of charge.

As always, the Trolley was excited to recognize their rider of the year. The rider of the year is someone who uses the Trolley as his or her sole means of transportation. Without the riders’ support, the



“Public transportation plays an important role in improving the quality of life in any community. I’m pleased to see the level of service increase and improve in the Panama City /Bay County area,” he said.

Over the years, the number of Trolley riders has increased dramatically, thus indicating the necessity to have public transportation in the Panama City community. In 1997 the number of riders was slightly more than 40,000. Last year the numbers exceeded 90,000.

With this necessity for public transportation comes the need for shelters to protect the riders. Gulf Coast Women’s Club volunteered to plan an event to raise money for the construction of these shelters. Already, \$4,250 has been donated by local sponsors including; Arizona

Trolley would not survive. A new addition to the Trolley’s award ceremony was the announcement of an award given to the community friend of the year. The friend of the year is an individual who has gone beyond the call of duty to enhance the services of public transportation in Bay County.

Bay Town Trolley is an award-winning transit system that serves Bay County, Monday through Friday, with hundreds of stops daily.

## Southern Transportation Plaza Opens In Downtown Tampa

The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) introduced new architectural interest to downtown Tampa with the opening of the Southern Transportation Plaza on January 30, 2003.

Nestled among three of downtown Tampa's most active venues – the Tampa Convention Center, the Marriott Waterside Hotel and the St. Pete Times Forum – Southern Transportation Plaza will offer something no other city structure does: intermodalism.

The Plaza serves the needs of Tampa's local residents, downtown workers, and visitors by providing access and connection to HARTline's Uptown/Downtown Connector, the TECO Line Streetcar System, taxis, and charter buses.

Located at the corner of Franklin Street and Ice Palace Drive, the Southern Transportation Plaza was designed as an artistic urban space. Three walkways guide pedestrians safely and easily between major downtown venues within a park

setting. Directional information kiosks are positioned along each path.

The heart of Southern Transportation Plaza is a round, glass-domed structure that encompasses the southern terminus of the TECO Line Streetcar System. Passengers get on and off the streetcar inside the open-air shelter.

The TECO Line Streetcar System opened October 19, 2002. It is a 2.3-mile long electric streetcar line that runs between historic Ybor City and downtown Tampa. HART operates the streetcar system.

Portals located around the Plaza shelter allow passengers to board the streetcar from any point within the park. The streetcar shelter is evocative of a roundhouse, updated with contemporary details and color.

The architecture of the Plaza points to the future of Tampa, while the replica streetcars reflect the city's past.

Two bus shelters adjacent to Southern Transportation Plaza serve

HARTline's Uptown/Downtown Connector buses.

HART has reserved 10,000 square feet on the Southern Transportation Plaza site for future joint development opportunities and the City of Tampa improved traffic flow around the property by creating a traffic island at Florida Avenue and Ice Palace Drive.



## Marion Transit Center Offers A New Level Of Service To Hartline Bus Patrons

With the opening of the Marion Transit Center on February 14, 2003, the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) established itself not only as a provider of public transit but also as a community partner that values its role in shaping Tampa's future.

The Florida Department of Transportation's widening of the 1-4 / I-275 interchange necessitated the construction of HART's new bus terminal and transfer facility. The previous downtown bus facility, the Northern Terminal, was located underneath I-275.

The new site at 1211 N. Marion Street sits on 1.23 acres just west of Tampa's historic Oaklawn Cemetery. The facility consists of two structures: a larger main building housing a patron lobby, customer service area, drivers' lounge, restrooms, and office space; and a clock tower with a ground floor

concession area. A pedestrian-friendly courtyard, decorated with tile mosaics and lined with cast iron lampposts, connects the two structures.

About 8,500 people will pass through the Marion Transit Center each day. The center serves as a pickup, drop off and transfer location for 17 local HARTline bus routes, nine express routes, the Uptown/Downtown Connector and the inter-county Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority Route 100X.

The Marion Transit Center is a modern facility with an "old world" feel. A wonderful blend of art and architecture, the design of the center evokes a Tuscan villa decorated with floral-themed art pieces.

The creation of the Marion Transit Center is a pivotal step in the future development of the northern end of Tampa's Central Business District.

"Because of the Marion Transit

Center's attractive architecture, exceptional public art, and garden-like atmosphere, it will not only improve the general area but also provide a very inviting location for the public to make bus connections," said Wilson Stair, Urban Design Manager for the City of Tampa. "This new center will serve as a significant focal point and benchmark for the northern end of Tampa's Central Business District."

With the Marion Transit Center, HART intends to change the conception of what a bus facility can mean not only to its customers but also to its community.

"The Marion Transit Center reinforces HART's commitment to its patrons, while establishing an artful landmark for the City of Tampa and the region," said Jan Platt, Hillsborough County Commissioner and HART Board of Directors Chair.

## RTS Success Explained in Interview

RTS Transit Director, Jeffrey F. Logan, explained RTS' success in a recent interview with Harrell Kerkhoff, Editor of Busline magazine.

Increased student enrollment at the University of Florida (UF), commencing in the early 1990s, led to a crush in area traffic congestion by the mid-1990s. At that point the university, the city and the county agreed that there needed to be some method for trying to alleviate this congestion. It was eventually decided that unlimited [prepaid] access to RTS by university students should be provided to help with area traffic congestion issues.

Mr. Kerkhoff summarizes in his forthcoming Busline article about RTS.

Growth is a way of life for much of Florida. Longtime residents have seen the Sunshine State transformed from large areas of rural orange groves and open spaces to bustling urban regions filled with full-time residents, tourists and 'snow birds.'

...To handle this increase in population and reduce the number of travelers on Florida's busy highway system, public transportation has become a key tool in getting people where they want to go in the safest and most direct way possible.

This positive direction, perhaps, is no truer than in the North Central Florida community of Gainesville. Although there are bigger cities in the state, few can match the transit growth of this city. A large percentage of Gainesville's 110,000 residents depend on its Regional Transit System

(RTS) to get them to school, work and play on a daily basis. Ridership figures speak for themselves. In the past 10 years, bus ridership at RTS has increased over 200 percent. Not bad for what once may have been considered a sleepy Southern college town.

With the University of Florida within its city limits, Gainesville has become a transit success story. With parking limited, RTS has been counted on to reduce traffic congestion and parking dilemmas. And as the numbers show, RTS has come through this challenge with flying colors.

UF Students agreed to pay a fee per credit hour per semester for unlimited access to RTS. RTS had to prove its reliability and ability to get students where they wanted to go. In 1997, the student-assessed fee was 19 cents per credit hour and has steadily risen to \$3 per credit hour in Fall, 2002, keeping pace with RTS' increased level of service to the UF community.

The University of Florida also pays another \$1 million for RTS' fare-free shuttle service on the UF campus. Out of RTS' FY2003 operating budget of \$11.5 million, approximately \$5 million comes from the University of Florida. RTS' ongoing partnership with the University of Florida was and continues to be the catalyst for increased ridership in Gainesville, Florida.

Other Funding Partnerships: RTS partnered with several other transit properties to form a consortium of Florida West Coast transit systems  
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## Roosevelt Bradley Appointed Miami-Dade Transit Director



Roosevelt Bradley, newly appointed Director of Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), assumes his new post with a background of over 25 years experience

in bus passenger transportation, heavy and light rail, and freight transportation systems. As Director of the second largest department in Miami-Dade County and the 16<sup>th</sup> largest public transportation system in the U.S., Bradley presently manages over 2800 employees, an operating budget of \$227 million, and a capital budget of approximately \$104 million.

With the successful passage of a half percent sales tax transportation initiative on November 5, 2002, Bradley heads MDT at a critical time in the transit system's history. Approval by the voters of the People's Transportation Plan directs Mr. Bradley to double the bus fleet (within the next three years) and expand Metrorail another 89 miles. When the expansion is completed, the MDT budget will more than triple and the number of employees will double. Mr. Bradley is responsible for ensuring that the current service operates safely and on time, and that the service expansion comes on-line as scheduled.

Mr. Bradley began his career at Seaboard Systems Railroad, now CSX Transportation, and joined MDT in 1985. Moving progressively through the ranks, his latest position was Assistant Director for Transit Services responsible for the operation and maintenance of Metrorail, Metrobus and Metromover.

The Florida Public Transportation Association congratulates Mr. Bradley on his new position and stands ready to move forward with Miami-Dade Transit toward a bright public transit future in Florida.



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## Jo Ann Hutchinson Retires



Jo Ann Hutchinson, the Executive Director of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged will be retiring from public service effective June 30, 2003. She has devoted thirty-six (36) years as a public servant with twenty-three (23) of these years dedicated to the implementation of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. In the early 80's, she served as the first Statewide Program Manager with the Department of Transportation, overseeing the implementation period of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Ms. Hutchinson then became the Director of the former Coordinating Council on Transportation Disadvantaged in 1985, and has served as the Executive Director of the Commission ever since its inception in 1989.

The program has flourished under her leadership and Ms. Hutchinson is known nationally for her "go get-um" attitude and her dedication to the idea of coordinated transportation. Ms. Hutchinson has served as a past President and Vice President of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and is currently an active board member representing the eight (8) southeastern states. Ms. Hutchinson currently serves, on numerous state boards, including, but not limited to: AbleTrust Advisory Council, Florida Clean Fuel Advisory Board, Florida Advisory Team for Self-Determination, Florida Council on Aging, State Clearinghouse on Human Services, Florida Coordinated Transportation Systems and the Florida Public Transportation Association.

Ms. Hutchinson has tirelessly fought for the accessibility of transportation services to be brought to the forefront of all elected officials and has organized a statewide advocacy effort to assist with this educational process. Other states turn to Ms. Hutchinson when they need advise or assistance, and she has helped offer suggestions for similar programs all across the nation.

A retirement dinner was held in her honor on March 19, 2003, at the Silver Slipper Restaurant.

## Ubaka: "Public Transportation Employee of the Year"



On February 18, 2003, at the Florida DOT Administrative Council Meeting, Ike Ubaka of the Transit Office was presented with the Public Transportation Employee of the Year Award. He had earned the Transit Office Employee of the Year Award earlier.

He was selected as an extremely productive and model employee who has made significant contributions to the status of transit planning in Florida, benefiting the Department as well as each of our urban transit systems.

Ike served as an Adjunct Professor at the Florida State University Department of Urban and Regional Planning, has been a workshop moderator at Geographic Information Systems (GIS) symposiums and recently started a transit planner association: FTPN (Florida Transit Planning Network). His

peers recognize him as a skilled modeler.

Projects he has managed have been exceptionally productive, resulting in tools and resources for transit planning, many of which have gained national attention. He presented a paper on Bus Rapid Transit at the Transportation Research Board. FTIS, (Florida Transit Information System), ITSUP (Integrated Transit Demand and Supply Model), and RTFAST (Regional Transit Feasibility Analysis and Simulation Tool) have been presented and published in the Transportation Research Record.

Additionally his contributions include FAMOS (Florida Activity Mobility Simulator), RPTS (Resource for Advanced Public Transportation Systems), FSUTMS (Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure) mode choice study, Transit 2020, and TDP Tools.

FPTA congratulates Ike on his well deserved award.

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### DON'T FORGET!

#### May 15-18, 2003

FPTA Mega-Roadshow  
Hilton Hotel (downtown on the St. Johns River)  
Contact: Joe Trottie 904-632-5543  
(contact for local, state and international competition)

#### June 16-18, 2003

FPTA/CUTR/FDOT MidYear Professional Development Workshop  
Embassy Suites Hotel (Next to USF Campus)  
(Indoor Exhibits Welcomed) Must be FPTA Member to Exhibit  
Contact: Amber Reep, CUTR at: reep@cutr.eng.usf.edu

#### November 9-11, 2003

FPTA's 29th Annual Conference  
Wyndham Casa Marina Hotel  
Key West, Florida  
Indoor Exhibits Welcomed (Must be FPTA Member)  
Contact: Wes Watson at wfltransit@aol.com

# RTS Success

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requesting federal funding of \$10 million for bus purchases in fiscal year 2003. RTS' FY03 budget request also included an additional request of \$2 million for an intermodal center. RTS received a great Valentine's day gift on Friday, February 14th, when Representative Cliff Stearns notified the City of Gainesville's Regional Transit System that congress had passed the fiscal year 2003 federal budget that included \$1 million for the Gainesville Multi-Modal Center and \$1.7 million for new bus purchases. The City of Gainesville's efforts and success are beginning to show results at the federal level. RTS credits this accomplishment to the ongoing efforts of U.S. Representatives Corrine Brown and Cliff Stearns, U.S. Senators Bill Nelson and Bob Graham, the Mayor of Gainesville and Gainesville City Commissioners, Alachua

County Commissioners; and the partnership with the University of Florida.

The overall funding challenges facing RTS highlight the importance of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Block grant. The block grant is operations funding from the State and differs from Federal funding in that it is based on transportation service and ridership - not population. The block grant represents a significant amount of RTS' projected funding. RTS projected \$943,256 FDOT Block grant funding for FY 2003, or .08% of RTS' FY 2003 operating budget of about \$11.5 million.

RTS, The City of Gainesville, and the University of Florida have shown what public transit can do with the right partnerships and public policies.

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## Additional Trolley Service Inaugurated in Jacksonville



The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) introduced a fourth free trolley route Feb. 28 on the south bank of downtown Jacksonville in the quaint area of San Marco.

The Hibiscus Loop, named for the flower as are the other three downtown

trolley routes, is a weekday lunch time service running from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Three trolleys operate every 10 minutes and make 26 stops at hotels, businesses and restaurants.

For people on the North Bank of downtown, using the Hibiscus Loop

is convenient because of the Skyway station connections at Kings Avenue, where the trolley originates, San Marco and Riverplace.

The Hibiscus Loop service compliments the three trolley routes on the north bank that operate weekdays, with two providing Saturday service. This demonstration is funded for one year through a partnership with JTA, the Florida Dept. of Transportation and the City of Jacksonville.

## Tri-Rail On Track

Tri-Rail closed out 2002 by recording a fourth quarter growth in ridership of 10.5%. Ridership at stations that serve the region's three international airports has shown double-digit growth during the past year. Traffic through the West Palm Beach Station grew by 35%; the station serving Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport by 32%; and Miami Airport Station by 11%. Residents and visitors are realizing that Tri-Rail offers a convenient and economical alternative to the airports' congestion, construction and high cost of parking.

The fact that this growth is occurring at a time when Tri-Rail has embarked on the largest construction project in its history makes the increases all the more significant. On February 14, 2002, Tri-Rail issued a notice to proceed on the final phase of the Double Track Corridor



Improvement Program. At a cost of \$333.8 million, the multi-year design/build project will complete the final double tracking of approximately 45 remaining miles of single track. Once

completed in 2005, Tri-Rail will be able to run trains every 20 minutes during rush hour and will have the ability to operate more trains on the weekends, at midday and late in the evening.

## Seniors Enjoy Special Promotion To CityPlace

Daily ridership reaches almost 12,000 passengers

Tri-Rail's special weekday promotion exclusively for senior citizens, "Free Senior Tuesdays," was a great success drawing approximately 3,000 riders. Available every Tuesday throughout the month of January, the promotional effort offered seniors a free ride on Tri-Rail, plus a complimentary trolley connection from the West Palm Beach Train Station to City Place.

CityPlace, a \$550 million development in Downtown West Palm Beach reminiscent of a European town center, offered seniors a wonderful opportunity to stroll up and down the outdoor promenade, dine at popular restaurants and shop at the many stores. Couples and groups of



friends from all over South Florida filled Tri-Rail seats and kept the shops and restaurants at CityPlace very busy.

"Seniors are a vital part of our South Florida community, and this special program offered them a great leisure activity," said Tri-Rail's Executive Director, Joseph Giulietti. "This was another fine example proving that Tri-Rail is a terrific transportation alternative for seniors to enjoy the best that South Florida has to offer."

The promotional success of "Free Senior Tuesdays" resulted in huge ridership increases. Tri-Rail recorded record-breaking daily ridership figures, with the highest at 11,884 passengers.

"We were thrilled to partner with Tri-Rail for this promotion," said Shaun Castillo of CityPlace. "CityPlace's unique combination of stores and restaurants within a relaxed outdoor setting was perfect for the many seniors that arrived by Tri-Rail."

# CUTR/FPTA Professional Workshop

The second annual Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA) Professional Development Workshop has been scheduled for June 17-19, 2003 at the USF Embassy Suites Hotel next to the University of South Florida campus in Tampa. This exciting three-day event will bring together Florida's public transportation professionals for a unique professional development and networking opportunity. The best news is, that due to financial support from FPTA and the Florida Department of Transportation, this event is offered at no cost to public sector employees.

Brochures announcing the workshop will soon be in the mail. Please mark your calendars to keep these dates open. Additional

information on the workshop can be obtained by contacting CUTR's Molly Buffington at (813) 974-7810 or by e-mail at: [buffington@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:buffington@cutr.usf.edu). Additional information and registration will be available on-line at [www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta](http://www.cutr.usf.edu/fpta).

The newly created "Florida Transit Planning Network", which held their organizing meeting last October at the FPTA Annual Conference in Tampa, will hold their second meeting during the final day of the workshop — Thursday, June 19th. All existing and interested FTPN members are encouraged to contact CUTR's Jay Goodwill ([jaygoodwill@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:jaygoodwill@cutr.usf.edu)) if you have suggestions or ideas for the FTPN session agenda.

See You In Tampa in June !!

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## Broward County Launches Reduced Fare Photo I.D. Program

Broward County Transit (BCT), in South Florida, has introduced their new Reduced Fare Photo Identification Card program, which began January 2003. This new card will make it easier for BCT riders, who qualify for a reduced fare due to age (65 or older) or a disability, to obtain their discounted bus fares.

Broward County Mayor, Diana Wasserman-Rubin, helped to launch this new program by appearing at Broward County's Central Terminal, in downtown Ft. Lauderdale. She discussed the impact this new reduced fare photo identification card program will have on Broward County's transit riders and encouraged the public to participate in this program.

Also in attendance was BCT's Manager of Marketing and Communications, Phyllis Berry, who stated, "Last year, BCT's reduced

fare program impacted over 8-million rides for senior citizens and disabled riders. We feel this new photo identification card will make it easier to use Broward County Transit's reduced fares. It will also promote greater access to our transit system for seniors and disabled riders who might be on fixed incomes."

This new photo identification card will be required by BCT for all people who receive a reduced bus fare and can prove their eligibility for this reduced fare program. This new procedure has been established to provide more security for BCT's identification cards and to help ensure the credibility of their reduced bus fare program. Further information on this new program can be received by calling Broward County Transit's marketing department at 954/357-8355.



# PalmTran Enhances Services

The involvement of Palm Tran CONNECTION, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners and County Administration with the cooperation and input of our carriers and riders, have implemented ongoing service enhancements in order to improve our performance and control our costs. This team philosophy among all participants promotes a positive attitude within the community and increased consumer advocacy.

CONNECTION riders are used as an asset. Users of the system are invited to take part in provider meetings, Software demonstrations, and other transportation related meetings. Feedback from these meetings is used to better the overall service. There is no one that knows more about improving the service than the actual users. CONNECTION lets them voice their opinions and found that their ideas are priceless.

The involvement of the riders has created a group of Advocates that support not only the paratransit program in Palm Beach County, but also the overall public transportation system. They are some of the same people that would speak against Palm Tran at the public meetings a few years ago. They are now willing to participate in a positive way in meetings and they help promote CONNECTION through our outreach efforts and also represent our community in Tallahassee during Legislative Day to lobby for increase funding for the Transportation Disadvantaged program.

CONNECTION is in the process of converting to the Trapeze Operational Software that will enable real-time dispatching and more efficient multi-loading. The Medicaid Billing Module will allow for direct billing and eligibility maintenance in-house and eliminate the provider's involvement. The complaint procedure will be simplified with the software's report capabilities. The BCC has approved a resolution to increase staff by at least 12 positions

and has acquired more office space to accommodate CONNECTION's accelerated growth.

As a result of improved service

delivery and word of mouth, new and former users are beginning to utilize the system. An example of CONNECTION's accelerated growth:

DATE	SCHEDULED TRIPS	VANS
Monday, October 2, 2000	1,503	108 runs
Tuesday, October 2, 2001	2,067	138 runs
Wednesday, September 4, 2002	3,004	150 runs
Wednesday, February 5, 2003	3,174	159 runs



February 5, 2003 was the highest one-day total for scheduled trips since Palm Tran assumed the responsibilities of the Community Transportation Coordinator in October 2000. CONNECTION is now averaging over 2,900 trips a weekday, and over 3,000 trips each Wednesday.

With the collective efforts of everyone in the agency, CONNECTION continues to improve our service delivery and increase customer satisfaction. Increased consumer confidence has resulted in unprecedented increases in ridership. Our trip growth during Fiscal Year 2002

averaged 16% higher than the same time period for Fiscal Year 2001. Even though CONNECTION experienced this explosive growth in ridership, there was a downward trend in overall complaints. The Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners has been extremely supportive with their funding. CONNECTION's greatest challenge is funding the rapid rise in ridership.

# Federal Earmarks

(continued from pg.1)

Special thanks to the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) for their assistance in preparing our Consolidated Booklet's Preamble, showing former funding years and a series of helpful graphs to make our point.

In addition to the earmark \$36.95 million, HARTline received \$4 million in ITS funding; four systems (JTA, HARTline, Key West, and LYNX) received \$3.525 million in "Reverse Commute" funds; and Tri-Rail received just over \$29 million in New Start funding for further double tracking.

FPTA's federal lobbying effort has come a long way in just four years when it began to approach our delegation as a group rather than as individual properties. Funding in 1999 was only \$14.5 million.

Florida:	
Broward County Buses and Bus Facility	200,000
Collier Area Transit, Transit Facility	750,000
DeLand Intermodal Center (VOTRAN)	1,750,000
East Central Florida Transit Coalition Bus and Facilities	6,000,000
Ft. Lauderdale, Transit Shuttle Vehicles	1,500,000
Gainesville, Multimodal Transportation Center	1,000,000
Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART)	500,000
Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA)--Buses	1,250,000
Key West Buses and Bus Facilities	1,000,000
Lakeland, Citrus Connection	500,000
Lee County, Bus Facility	750,000
LYNX buses, bus facilities, and passenger amenities	750,000
Miami Beach Intermodal Transit Center	1,500,000
Miami-Dade Buses	3,000,000
Pinellas County Bus Replacement	4,200,000
SunTran Transit Maintenance Facility--City of Ocala	800,000
Tallahassee (TALTRAN) buses	1,250,000
Tallahassee (TALTRAN) Intermodal Center	500,000
West Coast Florida Bus Coalition	8,000,000
West Palm Beach, Trolley Buses	1,250,000
Winter Haven Transit Terminal	500,000

American Public Transportation Association

HART Access to Jobs Program	700,000
Jacksonville Trans. Authority Choice Ride Program	1,625,000
Key West	1,000,000
LYNX Central Florida Regional	200,000

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**FIRST CLASS**