Never down. Never out.

Always in your corner. The QRT MAX.
"Commercial passenger vehicles are our only business"
Converted ADA Mobility Paratransit Vans and Buses in stock for quick delivery
ADA Lift vans and Buses, OUR SPECIALTY! Wheelchair Accessible Mini-vans
Center aisle transit vans, Prisoner transport vans 30 years experience

Fast Delivery!
Visit our website for more information: “mobilitytrans.com”

Vans
NEW 2010 ADA PARATRANSIT VANS
EXAMPLES:
ADA 17’ van w/ Lift, holds 5 + 2 wheelchairs  ADA 20’ van w/ Lift, holds 8 + 2 wheelchairs
Price $29,900 $31,667
Sale $0 down $0 down
60 mo. payment $599 mo. $634 mo.

New, well equipped vans with R. A/C & heat, V-8’s, Cruise control, 18” raised roof,
60” lift doorway and much more. 20’ vans inc. - P. windows, P. locks, and P. mirrors.

Custom floorplans available
Leasing and fleet finance plans available

Buses
NEW 2010 ADA PARATRANSIT BUSES
EXAMPLE:
15 passenger Paratransit Wheelchair bus (13+2 w/c) $47,350
Price $0 down
Sale $0 down
72 mo. payment $865 mo.

Custom floorplans and larger buses available. New, well equipped quality buses.

Quotes based on information as of 9/01/09. Net cost may be higher or lower in your state.
Some qualifications apply. Delivery additional. Please call for a fast detailed custom quote.

Call: 1-800-496-4280
Or Email: info@mobilitytrans.com

Pre-built Paratransit vans and buses in stock for fast delivery
Features

14 The Commentary: Community Transportation Magazine’s Lessons from Transit in California

16 Paratransit, Inc. Creates Mobility Through Innovation
Paratransit, Inc. specializes in the management of mobility for thousands of passengers every day through a blend of diversified services, determined leadership by the organization’s transportation professionals and well-cultivated partnerships within the community.

20 California Courage: Transit Takes on the Powerful
Three years ago, both the staff and membership of the California Transit Association embarked on a courageous legal journey to safeguard state tax investment that had been set aside for transit for more than 30 years by the California State Legislature.

23 Age Well: Mobility in the Continuum of Care
The work of Age Well Senior Services in Laguna Woods in providing unique mobility options is an effort that augments other transportation connections in the region while complimenting a range of activities and services to ensure full community participation for older adults in Orange County.

26 The Los Angeles Bus Riders Union: A Voice for Better Bus Service
In the pantheon of transit riders groups, few have done more to impact the direction and provision of local transit service than the Bus Riders Union (BRU) in Los Angeles, California — and certainly none are more passionately committed to their members.

30 Fresno County’s Myriad Paths to Mobility
Mobility providers like the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency and the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission – along with a score of other transit systems and community organizations – enrich life for the region’s residents through connections to work, health care, community services and many other elements.

34 Sprinter: Rails to the Heart of San Diego’s North County
Winding through the communities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos and Escondido, SPRINTER neatly parallels California’s Highway 78 but represents more than a new travel conveyance. It marks the renaissance of passenger rail in the corridor after more than six decades.

Departments

6 From the Editor-in-Chief

10 Voices from the Community
Green Transportation Taxes and Fees: A Survey of Californians
Asha Weinstein Agrawal, Jennifer Dill and Hilary Nixon

12 Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa’s 30/10 Plan Moving Forward
Tim Rutten

8 A Note from CT Magazine

14 The Commentary

44 Advertiser Index

46 Perspectives
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
TRANSPORTATION LENDING SERVICES

Transportation Facilities & Multimodal Centers

A special loan fund to develop transportation facilities and multi-modal centers to improve community mobility and enhance economic development

CDTLS can provide funding in support of transportation facility construction or renovation. Across the country local transit services are building facilities and promoting economic development through transportation. Sustainable economic development can be dependent on an intermodal transportation system that includes rail or bus. Financing is meant to facilitate or enhance community transportation activities and to promote intermodal activities and mobility.

Why use CDTLS?
- Flexible financing options
- Negotiable interest rates
- Key partnerships

Financing available with negotiable terms and low interest rates.

Eligible Applicants: Private companies, non-profit organizations, and state or local governments supporting community transportation and intermodal activities.

Criteria: Adequate collateral and a priority of promoting economic development in low-income areas.

For further information or a loan application contact:

Patrick Kellogg, CDTLS
1341 G Street, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202.415.9682
Fax: 202.737.9197
E-mail: kellogg@ctaa.org
Web: www.ctaa.org

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LENDER
From the Editor-in-Chief

Our California Adventure

This special California edition of Community Transportation Magazine emerged out of a series of meetings held last February in Long Beach between the Community Transportation Association of America’s Board of Directors and a cross-section of Golden State transit operators, transit associations and passenger advocates. The Board was interested in getting a first-hand understanding of the community and public transit climate in California at a time of significant economic uncertainty and upheaval. What we heard that day wasn’t a series of complaints, but a powerful affirmation of the dedication of individuals and organizations throughout the transit industry in California.

Universally, this message was that transit — along with many other governmental services in California — was facing budget shortfalls not seen since the Great Depression. In fact, many of the session participants referred to today’s economic environment as the Great Recession. Yet there was no sense of resignation on the part of the discussion participants; rather, one sensed an increased commitment to service and to the passengers and communities being served.

The people and organizations that inspired us that day in Long Beach are — not surprisingly — well represented in the pages of this magazine. CT Editor Rich Sampson and I had the opportunity to travel a vast stretch of California talking to transit professionals and advocates from small towns and big cities. And in addition to acknowledging the woeful condition of the state budget and its impact on their operations, we heard about exciting transit innovations and fruitful collaborations. The spirit of service that’s always highlighted the state editions of Community Transportation is alive and well in California, in this our tenth state edition.

In all, we covered nearly 600 miles — from Laguna Hills in the south to Sacramento up north. We paid a visit to seven transit operators and three transit advocacy organizations; we fought traffic in Los Angeles and fog in the San Joaquin Valley.

Near the end of our journey, one of California’s great transit leaders we were interviewing — Paratransit’s Linda Deavens — summed up what I like to call the spirit of California: “Yes, the economy makes our job tougher, but it also makes our work more important as people need our service today like never before. We’ll be here to see that important work done… and done right.”

Publisher
Dale J. Marsico, CCTM

Editor-in-Chief
Scott Bogren

Editor
Rich Sampson

Contributors
Eileen Boswell
David Bruffy
David J. Cyra, PE
Anthony Frederick
Alden S. Raine, Ph.D.
Caryn Souza

Circulation
Please direct circulation questions to circulation@ctaa.org

Finance
Don Browner

Editorial Offices
1341 G Street, N.W., 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
E-Mail: cteditor@ctaa.org
Web: http://www.ctaa.org/ct

Advertising Sales
Bill Shoemaker, A.H.I.
118 Church Street, P.O. Box 519
Selbyville, DE 19975
Phone: 302.436.4375
Fax: 302.436.1911
E-Mail: Convene@aol.com

Community Transportation magazine (ISSN 0895-4437) is published by the Community Transportation Association of America, a national professional membership association of organizations and individuals committed to removing barriers to isolation and to improve mobility for all people. Subscriptions to Community Transportation are $50 for one year or $90 for two years. Foreign subscribers add $12 for postage. Postmaster: Send address changes to 1341 G Street, NW, 10th Floor, Washington, DC 20005.
With this much riding on your securement system...

You have to be sure.

**TITAN Retractor Systems**

Choose TITAN and give yourself and your passengers the peace of mind that comes with today’s leading retractor system:

- Unique yellow “locked” indicator tag
- Fully automatic; unique auto-tension, auto-lock system
- Self-retracting; no belts left on the floor
- Wheelchairs secured in seconds with one hand

Experience the confidence, performance, and safety that only TITAN can deliver. For more information, visit Sure-Lok.com/TITAN today.

Sure-Lok.com • 800-866-0004
If you pay close attention to detail, you might notice that every cover of Community Transportation magazine includes the phrase: Your magazine. Your story. We added this slogan a decade ago to remind everyone that this magazine is totally dedicated to what we know as community transportation, and that it is our vehicle to telling that story not just to those that already know about us, but to the wider world that needs more education about who we are and what we do.

Through the years, we’ve done some really great work in telling the stories of community transportation — featuring themed state issues (like this California edition), important topics (for instance rural transit, medical transportation and economic development) and breaking news. We’ve done this because telling the truth about community transportation is the best way we know to educate not just policy makers and ourselves about our values, but the nation as a whole.

It’s time for us to increase Community Transportation magazine’s influence and to begin a national campaign to even further spread the word about what you do. To do so, we’re planning some significant changes to Your Magazine. Increasingly, you — our valued readers — receive greater amounts of information and resources from electronic sources like websites, email and even social networking than ever before. So, in the same spirit of innovation and responsiveness you’ve come to expect from CTAA and Community Transportation magazine — frankly, the spirit with which this magazine was first launched — we are exploring exciting new ways by which we can provide you with the same high-quality content in an electronic or digital format. It’s the best way we know to broadcast the positive stories about the work you do to the widest audience possible.

To be clear, we’re not considering simply posting a series of PDF documents on our website and hoping you navigate your way to and through them. After all, www.ctaa.org already offers you those opportunities to explore the complete magazine catalogue. Nor does it mean we will eliminate printed material altogether — we are planning to continue printing several editions of Community Transportation magazine every year. Rather, we’re looking at developing the most accessible and usable communications tools that will allow us to communicate with you in real-time, while also incorporating new amenities and tools to enhance the value you receive out of this publication. This new digital Community Transportation magazine, literally, will shave weeks between the moment when a magazine edition is finished, and the time it arrives at your organization. It will allow us to link directly to source documents and resources within our articles and even give us the opportunity to share videos, audio and other interactive elements that are impossible in the print medium. At the end of the day, we’re sure that this digital publication will provide our loyal readers with a better product that reaches a far wider audience in a more timely fashion, as well as one that saves us environmentally.

The final design and appearance of this product is still very much under consideration, and I would greatly welcome your thoughts. Please send me your ideas right away by emailing me at cteditor@ctaa.org. Community Transportation magazine will always be Your Magazine and Your Story. This transition to a digital publication promises to both honor and augment our commitment to you.

We’ve Changed History – Now History is Changing Us
PASSENGER SERVICE AND SAFETY

The Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Driver Certification Program ensures that community transportation drivers have expertise in passenger assistance techniques and sensitivity skills appropriate for serving persons with disabilities. The PASS program is either a three-day Train-the-Trainer program to certify trainers who can then train drivers, or a two-day Driver program in which our skilled instructors train your drivers.

Some of the advantages of offering the PASS certification program are: the ability to reduce organizational liability; comprehensive, up-to-date training on the assistance drivers should be providing to passengers with special needs; intensive emergency situation training; certification oversight provided by national leaders in the community transportation field; and updates for all participants on relevant regulatory changes.

The course outline for both the two-day driver certification program and the three-day trainer certification program includes:

**Day 1: Driver Certification**

Trainer Certification
- Introduction: Pre-test, stress management, Americans with Disabilities Act
- Driver sensitivity, awareness and communications
- Mobility equipment (including walkers, canes, crutches, braces, etc.)
- Hands-on assistance (including body mechanics, transfers and guiding the vision impaired)
- Wheelchair types and features (including scooters)
- Lift operations
- Securement

**Day 2: Driver Certification**

Trainer Certification
- Principles of crisis management
- Evacuation techniques and emergency procedures
- Bloodborne pathogen protection
- Handling seizure disorders
- Responding to passenger abuse and neglect
- Driver/passenger sexual improprieties
- Review and final examination

The course curriculum for the three-day trainer certification also includes a Day 3 train-the-trainer activity outlined below:

**Day 3: Trainer Certification Only**

- Analyzing tasks and setting objectives
- Working with course outlines, lesson plans and audio-visual aids
- Delivering training both in the classroom and on the job
- Using training tools and evaluating training results
- Practice presentation of the training curriculum
- Developing an action plan and follow-up to maximize training benefits
- Review and final examination

For further information, go to www.ctaa.org/training/ or contact Len Cahill at 202.415.9563/email cahill@ctaa.org

“Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Certification has been a tremendous asset to us in that we now have a first rate training module for passenger assistance.”
Steve Kurtz, WYTRANS, Casper, WY

“PASS training is extremely educational, enlightening and enjoyable! The training provides knowledge and expertise necessary to provide safe, professional service to people with disabilities.”
Beverly Fontenot, GA DOT

“I attended/hosted the PASS training in September 2003. This engaging, highly interactive program helped me think differently about how we transport our most precious of cargo — people!”
Kristina Umbricht, Pullman Transit, Pullman, WA

What do the drivers say?

“By far the best course I’ve ever attended.”

“The blind walking is excellent and the wheelchair experience was outstanding. All should be a part of new-hire’s first training.”

“Finally, some training that I can use.”
Voices From the Community

Green Transportation Taxes and Fees: A Survey of Californians

by Asha Weinstein Agrawal, Jennifer Dill and Hilary Nixon

Results of a public opinion poll show that Californians support the concept of “green” transportation taxes and fees. These are taxes and fees set at variable rates, with higher rates for more polluting vehicles and lower rates for those that pollute less.

To gauge public support for green taxes and fees, the poll asked respondents their views on several hypothetical tax and fee options, including a green vehicle registration fee and a green mileage fee. It also asked about a “feebate” program for new vehicle purchases under which more-polluting vehicles would be charged a tax and less-polluting vehicles would receive a rebate. In every case, Californians favored green approaches to transportation finance compared to flat-rate options.

Why Pursue Green Transportation Taxes and Fees Now?

Three converging trends point to green transportation taxes and fees as a promising approach to revising the current system:

• A desire for new transportation funding sources that are politically acceptable, as well as technically desirable for other reasons.
• A growing desire to encourage people to choose transportation behaviors and vehicles that will reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
• Increasing support for market-based policies, such as tolls, that encourage socially desirable transportation choices.

How Was the Research Done?

The authors conducted a random telephone survey of 1,500 Californian adults to test their support for the general concept of green transportation taxes and fees. The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their level of support or opposition to five different transportation taxes or fees that would raise funds for maintaining and improving highways, mass transit, and local streets. Three of these were green options, while two were more traditional flat-rate versions of the green taxes tested. By having both flat-rate and green versions of the two taxes, the survey could identify how support levels might vary between the two options.

What do Californians Think?

The survey results show that the concept of green transportation taxes and fees strongly appeals to Californians.

Majorities support all 3 green taxes and fees

Majorities of the respondents supported all three green taxes and fees tested. Even the green mileage fee, the least popular option, had 50% support. By contrast, the green vehicle registration fee and feebate policy both had support levels over 60%. Californians prefer green to flat-rate taxes

Respondents greatly preferred green transportation taxes and fees to flat-rate versions. When asked if they would support increasing the vehicle registration fee from $31 to a flat rate of $62 for all vehicles, only 41% supported the increase. By contrast, almost two-thirds (63 percent) supported a green version of the fee that raised the fee to an average of $62 per vehicle, but varied the rate according to the vehicle’s emissions. In other words, converting the fee increase from a flat-rate one to a green version boosted support by 22 percentage points, from less-than-majority support to almost two-thirds support. Similarly, respondents preferred a green mileage fee to a flat-rate version, with 50% support for the former but only 28% support for the latter.

Respondents favor spending green-tax revenue on green transportation programs

The survey revealed that respondents would be more likely to support the green vehicle registration fee increase if the revenues were dedicated to transportation programs that would reduce smog and greenhouse gases. Sixty-four percent said they would be more likely to support the fee if the revenues were so used.
Support for green taxes holds across most population subgroups

Another key finding is that support for the green taxes and fees held at 50% or higher across most population subgroups. Also, when comparing support for the green and flat-rate vehicle registration fee and feebate proposals, in every subgroup more people supported the green than the flat version of the two taxes tested.

Despite broad support for the green taxes and fees, there were a few population subgroups that stood out as the least supportive of the green taxes and fees. Among these groups with lower support levels were people who:

- Were Republicans
- Drove the least fuel efficient vehicles
- Did not hold pro-environment attitudes
- Lacked accurate information on transportation finance matters and on the relationship between motor vehicle use and environmental problems such as smog and greenhouse gas emissions.

Although these sub-groups were less likely to support the green taxes and fees, many of them nevertheless showed majority support for at least the feebate and green vehicle registration fee. For example, majorities of Republicans supported both these options, even though the support level was considerably lower than among Democrats.

Policy Implications for Transportation Professionals and Policymakers

The survey results suggest that the concept of green transportation taxes and fees is a promising avenue of exploration, as well as strategies that might increase popular support for raising additional transportation revenues.

Published as a Research Brief by the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) in April, 2009. Please visit MTI’s website for related sources www.transweb.sjsu.edu. For more details, download the full report at www.transweb.sjsu.edu. Click on Research then Publications. There is no charge.
Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa’s 30/10 Plan Moving Forward

by Tim Rutten

The 30/10 transit plan is the most important initiative ever proposed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. If, as seems increasingly likely, it’s embraced by Congress, it will become one of the nation’s most significant public infrastructure projects.

Essentially, 30/10 proposes leveraging the half-cent sales tax increase to which 68% of Los Angeles County residents agreed when they passed Measure R with federal loans secured by those tax revenues. Those loans would allow the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to build the 12 crucial projects specified in the measure in just 10 years rather than the projected 30.

When Villaraigosa first proposed 30/10 last fall, it seemed like the least of shots, but his tireless lobbying — and the initiative’s self-evident merits — won over powerful congressional allies, particularly Rep. Jane Harman (D-Venice) and Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, as well as Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. In fact, 30/10 is one of those ideas that gets better under close examination. Consider, for example, that completion of the 12 transit projects would reduce annual particulate emissions by at least 500,000 pounds, reduce annual gasoline consumption by 10.3 million barrels and, by conservative estimates, cut automobile travel by 208 million miles each year.

Over the next decade, it also will create at least 166,000 well-paying construction jobs.

That hasn’t been lost on the Obama administration, which continues to struggle under the burden of intractable unemployment. As Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky put it when the MTA board unanimously voted to back Villaraigosa’s initiative: “You can’t turn the economy of this nation around unless you turn around the economy of California. The antidote to the recession is the 30/10 plan. It’s a huge investment in jobs right now.... We’re ready to do it, and we’re ready to pay for it.”

In fact, in a recent conversation with the mayor, President Obama called the proposal “a template for the nation.”

It is, however, still an innovation, and Congress needs to approve a novel way of funding it. Late last week, Washington took two long steps in that direction. On Thursday, LaHood wrote to Boxer, promising that the administration would include 30/10 funding “in the next transportation reauthorization bill.” The senator also said that LaHood already is “working with me on finding every opportunity under current law so we can accelerate 30/10 now.” Equally important, Boxer announced that the Federal Transit Administration, which also reports to LaHood, has agreed that, for funding purposes, it will accept a single environmental review for the entire 9.3-mile subway extension west under Wilshire Boulevard rather than the three different assessments the project normally would require.

“That’s a big deal,” said Deuty Mayor Jaime de la Vega. “Now we can treat the whole extension as one project as we should ... and the savings will be huge.” According to De la Vega, construction bids submitted in anticipation of 30/10’s accelerated schedule are coming in 15% to 30% under projected costs for Measure R’s 12 projects. “With those savings, we actu-
ally could build more transit” than the ballot proposition included, he said.

“Eight months ago, people in Washington thought we were nuts,” Jeff Carr, Villaraigosa’s chief of staff, told The Times this week. “Now, the feds have come around to seeing this as a model for the nation.” In fact, LaHood told Boxer in his letter that he shares her belief “that the 30/10 model — leveraging a comprehensive long-range transportation plan and a sustainable local funding stream — has the potential to transform the way we invest in transportation projects across the nation.”

Carr and De la Vega point out that this isn’t the first time Los Angeles has been at the cutting edge of transit funding. The Alameda Corridor — the dedicated 20-mile rail line that now links the busy ports of San Pedro and Long Beach to the intercontinental railway line east of downtown — was first conceived by local planners and officials in the early 1980s. They began piecing together rights of way, but it took until 1997 for Congress to pass the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, which gave the project what it needed: federal loan guarantees secured by the corridor’s future revenues.

Measured against that history, 30/10 has moved forward at the speed of light. Perhaps that’s because, as Carr put it, “It’s good policy and good politics.” How often can you say that?

*This article appeared in the Los Angeles Times on June 9, 2010 and is reprinted here with permission.*
Community Transportation’s Lessons from Transit in California

In this space, we typically present arguments on strategies or policies to improve community and public transportation through the lens through a particular topic or issue, such as technology or veterans’ mobility. In this issue of our Commentary, however, we instead offer a slate of ideas and approaches that have been successful in sustaining or expanding mobility in California, based on our magazine staff’s visits to transportation providers across the state earlier this year. Although every community has its own distinct challenges and needs, and each state presents a unique political and bureaucratic atmosphere, these trends and concepts are universal to all those working to improve mobility in their community. And even amongst the most challenging financial times in generations – like those experienced in California – dedicated leaders and professionals can always find a way to help those who need it most.

Focusing on Passengers

Achieving responsive and sustainable transportation options is impossible without a fundamental focus on the needs of those most responsible for a successful service: the passengers. Time and again, as we journeyed across the Golden State, we heard transit professionals describe the genesis of their programs as a response to a specific need in their community for mobility. This was true for the programs like Age Well Senior Services in Laguna Hills, which initiated transportation service to address gaps that couldn’t be filled by existing providers. Moreover, as transit systems were established and expanded, those same leaders noted that a continual process of dialogue and interaction with their riders ensures that evolving needs continued to be met, but also limited resources were being used efficiently and thoughtfully. Linda Deavens of Paratransit, Inc., in Sacramento noted their ongoing outreach to their own passengers has produced vitality and sense of purpose throughout their organization. For no matter how many vehicles a system operates, or whatever cutting edge technology they might employ, the ultimate measure of success for any mobility provider is how well it gets people where they need to go.

Becoming Mobility Advocates and Defenders

A powerful theme that emerged from our time in California was the need for transit’s leaders and professionals to also serve as its most outspoken advocates. When times are tough, not only are all streams of public investment subject to cuts or outright elimination by elected officials or bureaucrats, but those who rely on those programs are struggling to make ends meet themselves and often do not have the time or resources to articulate their needs. During those occasions, those who oversee and administer these vital links must become staunch defenders for the importance of continued investment and support from all levels of government. The work of advocates such as the Bus Riders Union in Los Angeles and the statewide California Transit Association demonstrate that we must look to ourselves to speak for those without a voice and defend the good work has been undertaken by so many for so long to improve mobility for everyone. And – as we proclaimed in the pages of this publication five years ago as transit providers along the Gulf Cost responded heroically to the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina – that work isn’t only necessary in bad times, or in good times, but all of the time.

The Importance of Leadership

The necessity of both responsiveness to riders and advocacy efforts is always underscored by dedicated and innovative leaders. For while mobility programs are inherently combinations of the efforts of drivers, mechanics, dispatchers and supervisors – among many others – a steady hand is needed at the helm to guide their collective work. In every community we visited, the vision and passion of those charged to head these crucial agencies and organizations was inspiring. In any of the profiles presented in the following pages, the template for effective leadership is easily discernible: experience and professionalism, commitment, compassion and innovative thinking, along with a well-trained eye towards the needs of their community. When such a leader is in place, a spirit of competence, dedication and enthusiasm will follow throughout the larger organization, and allow their mission to become real through the service provided by all its employees.

Encouraging Innovation

California has always been known as a place of excitement and opportunity, from the gold rush days to the microchips and gizmos of Silicon Valley. That sense of experimentation and innovation is no less true in the state’s transit programs and systems. From a transportation service that shares space with community food programs – as witnessed in the work of the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission – to a modern version of an in-
Terurban rail line in North County’s SPRINT that boasts a series of intermodal connections, transit in California is exceptional in the truest meaning of the word. And while organizations and agencies across the state share in their ability to be distinctive, the fundamental reason for their uniqueness is not a desire to be different, but rather a very rational assessment of how to best serve the needs of their community, as efficiently and responsively as possible. Innovation is the natural byproduct of those efforts.

Achieving Coordination

In as much as innovation occurs by satisfying local needs with a forward-thinking approach, one of the most trendsetting concepts in California’s mobility direction occurred more than three decades ago, and on the statewide level. Responding to the needs of many communities and regions across the state, the California State Legislature passed the Social Service Improvement Act in 1979, replicating a framework already established by Paratransit, Inc., to create a Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) in each county. The legislation for the first time allowed human service transportation to be coordinated amongst various agencies to improve efficiency and provide better service. By adopting this approach, county-wide programs like the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency can combine the services of many disparate agencies into a comprehensive transit network. Today, the program is a national model for transportation coordination and ensures that those California residents in need of these vital programs have access to mobility options in communities of every size and location.

California Scrapbook

Long Beach (left) was in the midst of preparations for the 2010 Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach during our visit. Just over a month later, the city hosted the Community Transportation EXPO.

The iconic Bakersfield sign (right), stationed near Buck Owens Blvd and the Golden State Freeway, heralded our arrival into the San Joaquin Valley city.

The northernmost reach of our visit was in the state capitol of Sacramento, where we visited the extraordinary California State Railroad Museum and the nearby Sacramento Southern Railroad’s Old Sacramento depot (left). Visitors can take excursion train rides on the weekend and observe their collection of historic rolling stock.

In our previous state edition of this magazine – which focused on Connecticut – Editor-in-Chief Scott Bogren and Editor Rich Sampson took in a minor league hockey match between Hartford and Bridgeport. In that tradition, we attended a weeknight minor league baseball game between the High-A level Bakersfield Blaze and the Stockton Ports at Historic Sam Lynn Ballpark in Bakersfield, with its famous center field fence (right).

During our visit to Paratransit, Inc., in Sacramento, the organization proudly displays the trophies earned by its drivers in Roadeo competitions (left). In May, at the 21st Annual National Community Transportation Roadeo in Long Beach, Paratransit, Inc., driver Hardev Rakka added to the collection with a 3rd place finish in the Body-on-Chassis division.
Any traveler who has ever ventured through the grand hall at New York City’s Grand Central Terminal can relate to the station’s description as a dynamic sea of humanity. On a smaller scale, the same intensity of activity can be found at Paratransit, Inc., on the south side of Sacramento, Calif. – in a transit system headquarters that was once, ironically, an automobile dealership. When CT Magazine staff visited on a weekday afternoon, drivers and maintenance workers were constantly on the move to shifts and assignments, while a fleet of body-on-chassis vehicles out back were scurrying to trips and routes throughout the region.

And much like Grand Central could be understood both as a monument to passenger transportation and a venue that concentrates and organizes the movement of so many New Yorkers, Paratransit, Inc. also specializes in the management of mobility for thousands of passengers every day. Through a blend of diversified services, determined leadership by the organization’s transportation professionals and well-cultivated partnerships within the community, the mobility activity that is generated and supported through the work of Paratransit, Inc. is nothing short of grand.

A Trendsetting Tradition

In the late 1970s, many Sacramento area agencies and programs serving older adults and people with disabilities were encountering challenges in connecting people with their services due to limited mobility options. By 1978, leaders of these various community service organizations came together to form a new entity that would be responsible for improving transportation services for these individuals and formed Paratransit, Inc. as a nonprofit organization. The new operation began service with only two vehicles that July – donated by the Los Rios Community College District – offering rides to senior centers and programs, employment and training activities for people with disabilities and other destinations. This new service struck a chord with local residents. Just two years later, the system had already provided more than 100,000 rides.

As word spread about the growing and vital service offered by Paratransit, Inc., leaders at the state level sought to replicate similar options throughout California. Specifically citing Paratransit, Inc. as an influential model for such social service transportation, in 1980 the California State Legislature passed the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act, which established a Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) in each of the state’s 58 counties. Given that it was already providing such services in the Sacramento region, Paratransit, Inc.
was the first organization designated as a CTSA in California. The Act also marked the first legislative effort anywhere in the nation to coordinate mobility options at the local level, and began directing state investment to support the CTSAs.

“We were doing the work of a CTSA before there was even a term for it,” says Linda Deavens, Chief Executive Officer for Paratransit, Inc., who has worked with the agency since 1979, and was honored at this year’s Community Transportation EXPO in Long Beach with the Association’s Founders’ Award for her lifetime service to improving mobility. “They looked to our approach as a model to help other communities serve seniors and people with disabilities.”

That same year, following the state’s leadership, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments determined that the existing demand-response services provided by the region’s public transportation provider – Regional Transit – should be combined with the work of Paratransit, Inc. It’s an arrangement that has been maintained to this day, with the two entities working in partnership to ensure that the transportation needs of residents throughout the region are addressed.

Ever the Innovator

Recognizing the value of the transportation connections provided by both Paratransit, Inc., and Regional Transit, in 1988, Sacramento County voters approved Measure A – a one-half percent sales tax to support the operations of both systems. The partnership cultivated by the two entities demonstrated its value in the effort, as the agencies worked together to craft the ordinance structure and build support for its passage. In 2004, voters overwhelmingly extended the measure for another 30 years with more than 75 percent of voters approving the extension. The relationship between the two organizations was further strengthened in 1990 following the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as Regional Transit reaffirmed its commitment to Paratransit, Inc., as the provider of those services mandated under the federal legislation.

With an increased volume of trips to provide, the agency became one of the first community transportation operators in the nation to develop and implement automated scheduling and dispatching service. Such a technological advance was necessary to improve the operation’s efficiency, but it also allowed the agency to provide better service to its customers. It’s a theme that would be repeated throughout the organization’s development. Those upgrades were rewarded by riders, as Paratransit, Inc. celebrated its one millionth trip in November 1985.

“We’ve always been an early adopter of innovative technology to improve our operations and maintenance activities,” says Deavens. “It can help to protect our financial situation but, more importantly, makes our service work better for our customers.”

Growth Through Collaboration

With the strong growth in both ridership and service achieved by Paratransit, Inc., the agency required new facilities to accommodate its operations as it approached the end of its second full decade of service. Due to its active engagement with other community
groups and organizations, a local benefactor – Arika Koomorian – donated a former car dealership on Florin Road in South Sacramento in 1998. The new location would not only offer improved and expanded space for administration, dispatch, vehicle parking, fueling stations and other amenities, it would also allow the agency to offer substantial maintenance services that would benefit the community beyond Paratransit, Inc.’s own needs.

After the organization moved its operations to the Florin Road facility in June 2001, it expanded its 10-bay maintenance and service operation. On the day of our visit, a line of taxis idled out front – awaiting appointments – while other mechanics attended to a group of body-on-chassis vehicles hoisted on inspection lifts. As we toured the facility, Deavens described a series of unique inspection and maintenance procedures developed by the system’s own mechanics.

As Paratransit, Inc., had been providing maintenance service to other community organizations – such as United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Sacramento – since 1979, in addition to its own vehicles, the city of Sacramento also determined the agency would perform maintenance inspections for all taxi vehicles in the County. The steady stream of work not only keeps the organization’s more than 15 maintenance personnel busy and provides additional investment in its mobility options, but also reinforces the agency’s presence in the community.

“All the repair services and inspections performed on our commercial vehicles at Paratransit’s repair facility can be summed up as quality service, competitive rates and customer service that’s second to none, from management down to their experienced mechanics,” says Mike Steiner, Chief Executive Officer of Yellow Cab Co. of Elk Grove.

Beyond its region-wide maintenance program, Paratransit, Inc., also extends its community partnership efforts to further expand transportation options to greater numbers of people. In 2008, the agency provided two of its retired vehicles to Sacramento’s Asian Community Center to arrange trips to employment, medical appointments, social services and other activities. The new service offered more than 7,000 trips that year utilizing trained volunteer drivers, expanding opportunities to new riders but also producing less-costly transportation than possible under ADA-required service. Paratransit, Inc., has established more than a dozen similar partnerships with other community organizations to continually improve the efficiency of the region’s paratransit service they operate, but also cultivating more responsive service through organizations more closely attuned to their clients’ needs.

“We look at our organization as a provider of innovative community transportation services,” explains Mary Steinart, Deputy Executive Director and also a Paratransit, Inc., employee since 1979. “Of course that means providing quality transportation service, but it also means finding other avenues to expand our business. Our maintenance services and community partnerships are part of that approach.”

Managing Mobility

One of the most commonly discussed concepts in community and public transportation these days is mobility management, or the process by which those in the community can take full advantage of the transportation options available to them. In many ways, Paratransit, Inc., has been utilizing mobility management practices since its inception more than 30 years ago. After all, the agency was created because those working with people in the community worked to respond better to their transportation needs. Today, the organization provides a full range of mobility management activities to help people navigate the region’s transportation services.

Once again working in partnership with over 41 human service agencies, Paratransit, Inc., operates the region’s Mobility Training Program, which provides training to utilize Regional Transit’s light-rail and bus routes. The program’s trainers work on an individual basis to arrange an individual transportation plan, improve familiarity with the system, and incorporate specific needs such as employment and training services, health care appointments and treatment, day centers and recreational programs and senior centers, among other elements. Since initiating the program in the mid 1980s, the Mobility Training Program has worked with more than 11,000 passengers to improve their understanding and access to existing travel options.

“Everything we do is related to mobility management,” says Deavens. “Our main principle is that we help everyone get where they need to go. This is not a new concept, it’s just a new buzzword elsewhere. We’ve been doing it all along.”

With the agency’s established vision for mobility management as a cohesive aspect of its overall mission, in recent years Paratransit, Inc., has expanded the reach of its Mobility Training Services to other communities far removed from the Sacramento region. Under its Mobility Training Consulting Services, the program has been deployed in Spokane, Wash., Honolulu, Hawaii, and several California communities, including Davis, West Sacramento, Woodland, Stockton, and San Jose to help more people in those regions access existing transportation services. While the specific needs and travel resources available differ significantly in each community, the program’s approach has always focused on providing methods and tools that always consider the individuals’ mobility needs first and matching available services and programs to meet those needs.

“Before coming to work at Paratransit, I worked for eight years as a child care supervisor, and at Sierra Adoption Services and Mercy Rehabilitation Center,” says Bridgette Longero, who’s served as a trainer under the agency’s Mobility Training program. “Since I came here in 1998, I’ve trained over...”
350 people to use public transportation, including many Spanish speakers. It is thrilling to watch people regain their freedom and independence.”

A Sophisticated View of Mobility

From its inception, Paratransit, Inc., has constantly delivered new ideas – and applications of those ideas into practice – to improve mobility in a broad array of locations and capacities. After establishing a model for providing transportation to those who need it most, the agency has leveraged ongoing community partnerships to underscore its own service and introduce new approaches to serve the community.

It’s an approach that has repeatedly earned the agency recognition, in the form of awards from the Community Transportation Association as its System of the Year in 1992 and its 1996 Community Transit Leadership Award, along with the Outstanding Paratransit Operation Award in 2007 from the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT). Not only are those – and other – awards proudly on display in Paratransit, Inc.’s front continued on page 43

The vehicle fleet of Paratransit, Inc., which now is comprised of more than 150, provides service for more than 40 partner organizations and agencies in the Sacramento region.

The Transportation-to-Work Toolkit for the Business Community gives businesses the information they need now to assist their employees in achieving a timely, cost-efficient commute that promotes productivity and job satisfaction.

The Toolkit provides businesses with strategies and resources that meet employee commuting needs while advancing business goals. Included are flyers, fact sheets, resources and examples of transportation initiatives undertaken by employers nationwide. Each approach is straightforward to launch and simple to manage.

Visit www.ctaa.org/transportation_to-work to access these valuable resources.
The California Transit Association’s (CTA) conference room offers an excellent view of the California State Capitol grounds across the street. On more than one occasion during the prior three years, CTA staff and members must have peered across the street and wondered whether their legal strategy of suing the state to protect transit investment was wise. In that same room, Community Transportation magazine staff spent several fascinating hours with CTA Executive Director Josh Shaw and his excellent staff discussing the events that led up to the lawsuit, as well as the eventual and ongoing outcomes. What emerged is a twisting tale of victory and defeat, vindication and perseverance, and most all, the courage to stand up for transit passengers and providers all across California.

Three years ago, both the staff and membership of the California Transit Association embarked on a courageous legal journey to safeguard state tax investment that had been set aside for transit for more than 30 years by the California State Legislature. It was a voyage that took three years, produced three separate court decisions, cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and that ended with a total — and somewhat inconclusive — victory.

“We knew exactly what we were getting into,” says California Transit Association (CTA) Executive Director Josh Shaw. “At the end of the day, my job and the job of this association is to work on behalf of the state’s transit systems and their passengers.”

Building the Spillover

Beginning in 1971, the California State Legislature — with then-Governor Ronald Reagan’s consent, no less — set aside fuel tax revenues specifically for the purposes of, “mass transportation and transportation planning.” State Senator Jim Mills — who went on to serve on the Amtrak Board and who is widely regarded as the father of modern light rail — led the effort to create what became known as the spillover fund.

It was Mills’ intention that SB 325, the Transportation Development Act (TDA), would provide a stable source of funding for transit operations by extending the sales tax to motor fuels as an offset to a drop in the overall state sales tax. The counties could then adopt a 1/4-cent local sales tax to support transportation programs and projects, which, according to Mills himself, all of the counties quickly moved to do. Any extra revenue that the state’s tax on motor fuels generated was to go into a spillover fund for transit. At the time, the bill was widely supported and these funds became part of the public transit account of the state transportation fund.

The People Have Spoken

In 1990, California voters passed Proposition 114 — known as the Clean Air and Transportation Improvement Act of 1990 — which amended the state’s public utilities code to require that revenues in the public transit ac-
count be available only for transportation planning and mass transportation purposes. Further, the proposition amended the state’s revenue and tax code to require the state controller to transfer specified motor vehicle fuel taxes to the public transit account.

Fast forward a decade and two trends emerged that immediately concerned the CTA staff and membership and that eventually led to the wholesale raiding of the public transit account by the state of California for use in decidedly non-transit ways.

“The mechanisms in certain parts of the public transit account were set to grow faster in more difficult economic conditions,” explains Shaw. “When those hard times hit California, our transit fund grew swiftly and we all began to worry that its growth would make it a prime target to be diverted to other parts of the state budget.”

CTA undertook more than a year of research and began to explore the options it had available to protect transit investment — even as the state began to siphon resources away from their intended transit purpose.

“We could see that we were losing the battle,” says Shaw. “We knew we wouldn’t have any help with either the executive or legislative branches of state government, so we began to focus on the legal side.”

A Legal Approach Takes Root

Sure enough, in fiscal year 2006-2007 the transit funds in dispute crossed over the $1 billion threshold (they had previously remained steady in the $100-$200 million level). Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, with what he thought was the consent of both the people and the press, went on the offensive. The Association and its board began to have serious and difficult discussions on how to proceed with a lawsuit challenging the state’s right to raid public transit funds. A collision course was set.

“This wasn’t an easy decision or something we entered into lightly,” says Shaw. “We knew there could be retribution, that we could lose everything and that, at the very least, we’d be burning some bridges.”

Shaw notes that some of his members may have initially questioned the CTA Board’s decision to pursue legal options, but he is quick to laud the quality of his leaders’ conversations, and the overall courage of their convictions. In the end, Shaw found himself signing documents in September of 2007 initiating Shaw v. State Controller John Chiang and Department of Finance Director Mike Genest — California state law requires that a certified state taxpayer bring forward the legal action.

The initial petition charged that the state had been illegally diverting funds away from the public transit account since fiscal year 2001-2002. Further, the petition sought to squelch such diversions beginning in 2007-2008 and beyond. As examples, the Association specifically cited the 2007-2008 budget’s planned $268 million diversion for state bond debt service, $609 million reimbursement to the general fund for previous highway bond debt service, $99 million diversion to fund home-to-school and small school district transportation and $129 million to the state department of developmental services for vocational rehabilitation transportation.

The petition noted: “This matter may appear complex because of the varied budgetary provisions used to divert revenues from the public transit account... That issue is not complex. Authorized expenditures from the public transit account were narrowed by Proposition 116 from merely transportation purposes to only transportation planning and mass transportation purposes. Transportation planning and mass transportation purposes are not complex terms.”

The Association’s goal, in the petition, was to prohibit such diversions from the public transit account and to enjoin any future such diversions.

The Decisions

In late January of 2008, the Sacramento County Superior Court ruled partially in the California Transit Association’s favor. The transfer of public transit account revenues to the general fund for past debt service was ruled illegal and $400 million was to be restored to the account. However, all other aspects of the petition — includ-
ing the diversion of spillover funds and the intent of voters when safeguarding revenues for mass transportation — were denied.

In little more than a week, the Association filed for an appeal with the state appellate court, citing inconsistencies regarding the legislature’s ability to divert public transit account revenues and making the case that school transportation cannot be the same as mass transportation.

“We felt from the beginning that we had a case to make in the appeal process,” says Shaw.

Indeed, on June 30, 2009, California’s Third District Court of Appeals upheld the section of the Superior Court’s initial decision that the California Transit Association had won and overturned all of the parts of the verdict they had lost. In other words, a complete victory for transit. The State Supreme Court finalized this decision in December 2009, ruling that nearly $1.2 billion in diverted state funding away from transit was invalid.

“We hoped this would be the end of the legal battling,” says the California Transit Association’s Legislative Advocate Gus Khouri. “But another tactic emerged.”

The Inevitable Reaction

After all of the appeals, wrists and wrangling were done, the Governor turned to another, more unsalable legislative tactic to divert state tax revenues from going solely to transit. Rather than comply with the courts, Governor Schwarzenegger announced a plan in the beginning of 2010 that would eliminate the sales tax on gasoline and diesel fuels and replace a portion of that revenue source with an increase in the excise tax on fuels — none of which would be allocated to transit. Instead of diverting money from the public transit account, the new proposal would remove the funding stream that is supposed to flow into the public transit account in the first place, effectively eliminating state funding for transit.

“Once again, the Governor offered shell games instead of solutions, and transit riders in California again suffered the consequences,” says Shaw. “The Governor wants to disguise this as some sort of tax relief for families.

What about the thousands of families who depend on public transit to get to work or to go out and buy food to put on their tables, the kids who need transit to get to school, or the elderly and disabled persons who rely on transit to access medical services? I guess they don’t count.”

- CTA Executive Director Josh Shaw

The inevitable result of this action by the Governor — particularly when combined with the stagnant federal transit investment — has been a series of service reductions and fare increases across California. [Though Shaw, in a conversation subsequent to CT magazine’s visit, reveals that CTA has succeeded in getting the legislature to retain the sales tax on diesel fuel — and, bump up the rate. Thus, there is now a stable $430 million revenue stream for the public transit account. The new ballot measure would protect THAT, as well as local TDA funds.]

Seizing the Initiative

Foreseeing that even success in the courts might not halt the funding grabs, CTA has partnered with the League of California Cities and the California Alliance for Jobs on a statewide ballot initiative that would prevent further raids on state funding for a variety of local services, including public safety, libraries and parks, in addition to public transit. The campaign on behalf of the measure is currently collecting signatures with an eye toward qualifying for the November, 2010 ballot. As of early June, CTA officials reported that they had the requisite signatures to get the initiative on the ballot.

“Frankly, it’s disappointing that we would have to resort to another initiative, but that’s apparently what it’s going to take to prevent future governors from exploiting such loopholes and put an end to the annual budget shenanigans,” Shaw says. “Not only will this measure protect the vital funding for local services that voters have repeatedly and overwhelmingly demanded, but it will help to hasten the serious reform of the budget process that is long overdue.”

In June, the CTA and its broad coalition got word that its initiative would indeed make the November ballot.

“Local transit agencies up and down the state are cutting routes for buses, shuttles and commuter trains as a direct result of continued state raids of local transit funds,” says Shaw. “These cuts are creating real hardships for working families who have no other mode of transportation to and from work, school, health care appointments and other life responsibilities. The decisions made in Sacramento are harming real people who rely on local services. Enough is enough.”

The work of a state transit association in these difficult economic times — both in California and nationally — is to ensure that the real value of public and community transportation is understood by those making the votes in the state capital. And when that value is ignored, to stand up and fight for public transit systems and riders. In May, the California Transit Association was awarded (along with the California Association for Coordinated Transportation, CalACT) CTA’s State Organization of the Year for 2010 — recognizing the extreme measures its leaders and members have undertaken to protect and preserve public transportation investment and agencies.
Age Well: Mobility in the Continuum of Care

by Rich Sampson

Nestled in between Southern California’s dense urban centers of Los Angeles and San Diego are the prosperous communities and neighborhoods of Orange County, many identified by tranquil-sounding names like Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo and San Juan Capistrano. CT Magazine staff journied to Laguna Woods – among these suburban enclaves – to experience a new vision of community vitality in emerging, one driven by the continuum of service to older adults not restrictions by programs and mandates, but rather a continuum of care, of which mobility is a vital element.

The work of Age Well Senior Services in Laguna Woods in providing unique mobility options is an effort that augments other transportation connections in the region while complimenting a range of activities and services to ensure full community participation for older adults in Orange County. For more than 15 years, Age Well has linked older adults not only with medical appointments and treatment facilities, but more importantly, has made quality health care accessible for those with limited options.

A Settlement Brings Better Service

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) – 2004 winner of the Community Transportation Association's Urban System of the Year Award – provides traditional fixed-route and paratransit service throughout the county of more than 3 million people. Like many transit systems, its ACCESS paratransit service is focused on providing demand-response service to people with disabilities who cannot use fixed-route bus lines. And while thousands of passengers ride ACCESS each year, many older adults in Orange County require more flexible transportation alternatives to reach crucial medical appointments and other health care services. Enter Age Well Senior Services.

As a provider of a range of programs and services for older adults, Age Well Senior Services – formerly South County Senior Services – has helped Orange County seniors maintain their quality of life since 1975, a generation of service. As they worked with many of the older adults who participated in more traditional activities and programs – such as Meals on Wheels, congregate meals and senior centers, Age Well also focused on more trend-setting approaches like adult day care and health and wellness programs – the agency’s leaders and staff became increasingly aware that lack of transportation was an obstacle to achieving a better quality of life.

To respond to the growing mobility needs of the county’s older adults, the then-South County Senior Services initiated its own transportation service in April 1994. The operation began modestly, with a few vans providing trips to the organization’s senior centers and area medical appointments, augmenting those connections offered through OCTA’s service network. By developing transportation options, the agency not only improved access to medical care for Orange County’s older adults, but also improved the effectiveness of its programs, as more seniors could participate in the activities and services.

“Sometimes we have to find alternative solutions in urban settings to make these programs work,” says Dan Palumbo, Chief Operating Officer for Age Well, who has overseen the organization’s transportation services since the inception of those programs. “We’ve been able to expand, little-by-little, to reach more people and provide more service.”

An important aspect of the expansion of Age Well’s transportation options was new investment made possible by the 1998 national tobacco settlement, which was the result of lawsuits filed by the Medicaid programs of 46 states, including California. By 2001, California had distributed portions of that settlement to county governments. Working with Orange County’s Board of Supervisors and Office on Aging, Age

Age Well drivers help move more than 40,000 passengers each year in throughout Orange County.
Well negotiated an agreement whereby 15 percent of the settlement resources would support programs for seniors, including transportation services. The increased investment allowed the agency to provide even greater levels of needed medical transportation.

“The tobacco settlement investment really allowed us to strengthen the program,” explains Palumbo. “We now have a very robust system to get older adults to dialysis, rehabilitation and outpatient care.”

Supporting a Growing Service

Spanning a service area from Irvine and Newport Beach in the north to San Clemente in the south, Age Well’s transportation program – fueled by the investment made possible through the tobacco settlement, and other resources – is a significant mobility provider in Southern California. In 2009, Age Well carried more than 40,000 passengers to medical appointments, adult day care and senior centers, among other destinations, totaling about 60-70 patrons each day with an average age of 83. The agency’s management structure has allowed the program to recover 20 percent of its costs through the farebox based on a $2, per-trip fare.

Passengers of the transportation services can take a total of eight one-way trips each month, although travel to recurring treatments such as chemotherapy, dialysis, radiation and physical therapy is unlimited. Meanwhile, trips to more routine appointments, such as dental, hearing, medical tests and filling of prescriptions are all supported by the service as long as they are located within 15 miles of the program’s service area. Moreover, Age Well provides travel to the Kaiser Lakeview facility in Anaheim as well as the Veterans Hospital in Long Beach.

“Our transportation services allow us to establish a more personal connection with our clients,” says Becky Lomaka, Director of Fund Development for Age Well. “We’re not a transportation agency; we serve older adults. But mobility is essential to creating a continuum of care.”

Clearly, Age Well’s transportation services are well-integrated with the organization’s broader mission. Those efforts are not limited to the routine movement of vehicles or arranging trips. After our arrival at Age Well’s Laguna Hills facility, Palumbo leads us around a corner, where a post-lunch sing-along is underway in a social room – a tune that sounds like a Pete Seeger folk classic. Through another door, drivers on break between their morning and afternoon runs huddle with their colleagues in Age Well’s adult day care section sharing notes on the needs of their afternoon riders.

“The work is focused on social interaction to ensure we look after all our participants’ needs as effectively as possible,” explains Lomaka. “We keep track of each person and let our services, like transportation, help identify those needs and changes as they occur.”

Holding Steady

Community and public transportation services have been among those most affected by recent economic challenges – particularly in California. Fortunately, the positioning of Age Well’s transportation program within the context of a larger senior service organization – along with the continuing investment through the tobacco settlement that is unaffected by state and local fiscal constraints – have allowed the operation to maintain existing levels of service. Nonetheless, professionals at Age Well are focused on building sustainable services that endure.

The organization is currently preparing for the increased levels of medical

Age Well Chief Operating Officer Dan Palumbo oversees the agency’s vital and growing transportation services.
care that will be supported by the passage of health care reform legislation. Anticipating an even greater demand for transportation to medical appointments and outpatient treatment locations, Palumbo and his colleagues are working with other community organizations and agencies to improve coordination among mobility programs and health care services. As we observe a bustling, but organized departure of many Age Well clients who came for lunch and socialization on the day of our visit, Palumbo describes about the value of those linkages that have been established and their importance as the senior population expands and requires new connections to health care.

“There has to be a willingness among providers and stakeholders to be transparent on the information and the trends” says Palumbo, as he monitors passengers being assisted aboard a nearby vehicle. “Certainly there’s a way to manage care across these programs, but we all need to be aware of each others’ interests to make progress in responding to needs.”

A New Kind of Partnership

A part of Age Well’s approach to responding to these shifting needs and trends is its partnership with American Logistics to provide service beyond the program’s regular hours and service limitations. On a contracted basis with Age Well, American Logistics arranges trips on accessible taxis during early morning, mid-day and late night periods when service provided directly by Age Well would be cost-prohibitive. Although the arrangement represents a new strategy for non-emergency medical transportation, Palumbo believes it could transition into a valuable aspect for similar services elsewhere.

“The partnership between Age Well and American Logistics has merged the best qualities of non-profit paratransit and private accessible cab service to meet the special needs of the frail elderly and disabled throughout our county is a model that could be quite valuable to public transit and all industry stakeholders,” says Palumbo. “Their willingness and desire to create a safe, cost-effective and high-quality program through coordinated training, driver certification, scheduling and customer education is commendable and has proven to be successful.”

“Working with Age Well represents a new concept in shared-ride transportation for providers working with older adults,” says Gregg Prettyman, Director of Marketing for American Logistics. “By offering improved efficiency in low-volume travel periods, Age Well not only realizes better fiscal opportunities in its operations, but can provide improved and more responsive service for its clients.”

People and Mobility

By focusing on a range of services – of which transportation is a single, but vital component – Age Well Senior Services has cultivated an approach to mobility that is less defined by the types of vehicles it operates or the number of trips it provides, and more by the quality of life attained by its participants. The interactions of drivers and care managers consider the ongoing needs of a passenger, and new partnerships and agreements between the agency and other entities leverage the investment provided by local leaders. When combined, these methods of doing business have allowed Age Well’s transportation operations to match the mission of its organization – a nonprofit serving Orange County’s older adults.

Or, as Dan Palumbo prefers to describe their efforts, “what really motivates us are the people, not the programs.”

The continuum of care in action, as Age Well staff focus on extensive and responsive care to each client’s needs.
The Los Angeles Bus Riders Union: 
A Voice for Better Bus Service

by Scott Bogren

In the pantheon of transit riders groups, few have done more to impact the direction and provision of local transit service than the Bus Riders Union (BRU) in Los Angeles, California — and certainly none are more passionately committed to their members.

In 1996, Community Transportation Magazine first covered the Bus Riders Union, highlighting its landmark work on behalf of Southern California bus riders in an article entitled, A Tale of Two Transit Networks. At a time when public transit was beginning to reassert itself into the Southern California landscape through — among others — a number of new passenger rail projects, CT magazine spotlighted the need for a modal balance as well as more regional strategies as potential solutions in the Los Angeles area.

Flash forward 14 years and CT Magazine staff knew that spending some time with the Bus Riders Union at its headquarters along Wilshire Boulevard would be an important part of understanding current transit issues and trends in California, particularly from the perspective of passengers for whom the bus is often the primary transportation conveyance. Our morning spent with the Bus Riders Union did not disappoint.

A Voice to the Unheard

The BRU formed in the early 1990s to fight to maintain and cultivate Los Angeles’ bus service and to ensure the system’s affordability and availability to its largely transit-dependent passengers. In fact, winning an injunction against the elimination of a monthly pass was the Union’s first significant victory in 1994.

Eric Mann, one of the Union’s founders, famously said at the time: “You’re making people choose milk or their bus pass.”

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LAMTA) has too often been mis-cast — to use the local Hollywood vernacular — as the villain in this process. Beginning in the early 1990s, the transit agency found itself — as many politically governed, large-urban transit operations often do — being buffeted by conflicting objectives and overall investment...
shortfalls. The expense of retrofitting subway, commuter rail and light rail into the landscape of the nation’s second most populous city, covering 470 square miles cannot be underestimated; to say nothing of the planning demands for such an undertaking.

In fact, the Bus Riders Union’s signature accomplishment — the 1996 10-year, court ordered consent decree to improve all facets of bus service in Los Angeles — is the result of consent on the part of LAMTA officials. The agency, had it been so inclined, could easily have tied up progress on the decree in the courts for years. Clearly, it chose not to do so, a decision for which it should be lauded.

The relationship that has emerged between the Union and LAMTA since the conclusion of the consent decree is understandably icy. The Union serves as a vital and vocal check on virtually all of the the transit agency’s activities, ever vigilant about the impact of service changes, fare increases and system planning.

“We want the city of Los Angeles to lead the way in developing a bus system that meets the needs of the people who rely upon it and need it the most,” says BRU Organizer Esperanza Martinez. “We’re here to make sure that the needs of these riders — our neighbors — are always considered in local transportation policy development.”

The key issues before the Union today, not surprisingly, are preventing what it sees as disastrous service cuts and painful fare hikes that threaten to undermine the bus service built by the consent decree. What’s more, the Union is taking a more national approach to transportation policy development, understanding that the origins of many of the local challenges stem from national policy. Environmental issues, congestion mitigation efforts and national energy policy are just a few of the issues the Union is now embracing.

“We’ve come to understand that national politics and issues can impede our success,” says Organizer Sunyoung Yang. “So we’re looking to broaden our perspective — out of necessity.”

These are not mere words or ideas that the Union’s organizers use — far from it. The commitment and passion of their convictions is best exemplified by their actions. For example, in late May, members staged a hunger strike at what they called the Rosa Parks Tent City to protest bus service cuts and fare increases. Clearly, there is no lack of passion or commitment on the part of the BRU.

Making History: The Bus Riders Union and the Consent Decree

The BRU first emerged in 1992 — born out of a campaign by the Labor/Community Strategy Center (LCSC) entitled Fight Transit Racism: Billions for Buses. Seeking to defend the transportation needs of low-income people of color all around the Los Angeles area, the LCSC and the BRU employed environmental justice to point to budget disparities between rail and bus service by the Los Angeles MTA. It was a controversial stand — in essence, pitting two modes of public transit against each other, but one that ended with agreement to improve bus service for Angelenos.

“It seemed to us that the MTA was directly transferring the savings achieved by cutting bus service and bus fare increase revenues to rail spending,” says Yang. “Rebuilding rail into the LA landscape was being paid for by cannibalizing the bus service so many people depended upon as their only mode of transportation.”

Eventually, in 1994, Federal Court Judge Terry Hatter issued a temporary restraining order to the LAMTA to delay a proposed bus fare increase. This intervention led, two years later, to Judge Hatter’s oversight on a negotiated 10-year consent decree that required the MTA to, among others, reduce overcrowding on its buses, hold bus fares steady and initiate a regional bus service.

“We could talk about all the specifics in the decree — the load factor standard, the new service plans and more,” says Martinez, “but what it really did was force the MTA to do the right thing. And the MTA was an active part of the decree, agreeing to work on the issues raised by the BRU.

The load-factor standard began by mandating that, on average, there would be no more than 15 standees on a bus. By 2002, the consent decree lowered the acceptable figure to eight riders, on average, standing. Bus fares — for the 10-year duration of the agreement — could not be raised above $1.35; and monthly, bi-monthly and weekly bus passes had to be both maintained and capped in terms of cost at $42, $21.50 and $11, respectively. Lastly, and perhaps most intriguingly, the consent decree sought to initiate regional bus service linking passengers with educational and medical institutions throughout Los Angeles County.

Perspectives on the impact of the consent decree, as one might imagine, are diverse. Robert Garcia, the BRU’s lead attorney in negotiating the agreement notes: “The MTA consent decree is the best thing that happened to the MTA and the transit-riding people of Los Angeles. The basic premise — that people are entitled to equal access to resources — is what the MTA case stands for.”

LIVE LINKS

Los Angeles Bus Riders Union

Transit Consent Decree

Los Angeles MTA

Transit Riders for Public Transportation

CTAA’s Alliance for Transit Operating Assistance
Los Angeles’ Mayor in 1996, Richard Riordan, was an instrumental leader on the MTA board in getting the decree approved. In retrospect, he says he made a mistake. Riordan, who has since served as California’s Secretary of Education, has said: “The board of the MTA has the duty to give the best, most flexible transit … In my opinion, the consent decree makes this extremely hard to do, or impossible.”

For the BRU’s Martinez the message was clear: “If you develop a transit system that meets the needs of everyone, especially the people who need it and use it the most, everyone wins.”

While the ultimate legacy of the 10-year consent decree will long be debated, an inarguable outcome was the leverage and power of the Bus Riders Union to galvanize Los Angeles bus passengers into a potent force.

Building on Success

Some of the most modern buses in the Los Angeles MTA’s fleet serve the Wilshire Boulevard corridor, which, not coincidentally, is home to the Bus Riders Union. Nestled into the mixed-use mid-Wilshire neighborhood of super stores, office buildings and what locals call Koreatown, the Union occupies the top floor in a fabulous art-deco structure that harks back to a different era entirely. From the conference room, the view north reveals the famed Hollywood sign in the distance, but the work of the Bus Riders Union is anything but.

Munching on a breakfast of rice cakes and almond butter, Esperanza Martinez personifies the passion and commitment that the Union has for its members and for its work. She and fellow BRU Organizer Sunyoung Yang pepper their discussion with phrases like, “poorest of the poor” and “people with no other way to get there.” It’s a stark reminder that isolation and immobility are not only concerns for rural areas, but cities, as well.

When Community Transportation Magazine staff paid the Union a visit, preparations were already underway for a multi-pronged approach designed to block the LAMTA board from raising bus fares and cutting service. In fact, the Board is currently considering a 20 percent across-the-board fare increase and eliminating nearly 400,000 hours in bus service. MTA leadership points to the lack of operating assistance flexibility, as well as the exceedingly tough economic climate in California, as offering the system few options.

“We know that we’re going to have to bring a lot of people to the next board meeting who will be negatively impacted by the proposals,” says Martinez. “They need to know that their decisions have very real impact on the lives of people.”

The MTA’s 13-member board needs a two-thirds majority to approve any fare increases, so vote counting is important to the BRU. One vitally important voting group on the board is the Los Angeles Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa and his three appointees. Martinez and Yang characterized the Mayor’s support for the BRU’s efforts as, “vacillating.” Efforts were underway to attempt to bring 500 BRU members to the May MTA board meeting.

The lead up to the May 27 MTA Board Meeting was highly charged as some BRU members went out on hunger strike at the aptly named Rosa Parks Tent City and the board moved to approve its budget outside of its regular session that, typically, include a public comment period.

Eventually, the meeting was heavily protested by the BRU and its members and the contentious nature of their relationship with the board was publicly displayed. In the end, several people were arrested and the Board was forced to meet in closed session.

Martinez was quoted after the session on local radio: “The board, for the last four months, has basically lied to us, saying they were going to hold a public hearing on the fare increase. They crossed the public, they crossed bus riders and instead had a sham of a meeting.”

The Board, facing a more than $200 million gap in its operating budget, sees no options and feels strongly that it is acting in good faith. An MTA spokesperson notes that even with the proposed increases, bus fares in Los Angeles will likely remain less than those in Chicago or New York City. The system also declined to increase fares for seniors, students, people with disabilities and Medicare recipients.

Update: On July 1, the bus fare increases in Los Angeles went into effect – ed.

Seeking a Broader Perspective

In the years since the end of the consent decree, the Bus Riders Union — in addition to continuing its efforts to build bus service in the Los Angeles region — has sought to broaden its voice by adopting positions on such topics as clean air, environmental and economic justice, the green economy and federal transportation policy.

“We’ve come to realize that some of the issues we’re dealing with here in L.A. originate elsewhere — like in Washington,” says Yang. “Our challenges aren’t just local ones, they’re national ones, too.”

The Union has, in fact, launched its own national campaign — Transit Riders for Public Transportation — which serves as its main arena of engaging Congress, the Federal Transit Administration and The U.S. Department of Transportation on national transportation issues. Today, the BRU’s key demand is to flip the historic 80-20 highway-transit funding formula on its head so that 80 percent goes into public transit across the country — a demand they see as critical to move the nation towards greenhouse gas emissions reductions and clean air. The campaign also has helped highlight the dire need for operation funding for transit and has joined with CTA’s Alliance for Transit Operating Assistance.

“With the multi-tiered bus system that we support – local and regional – we can turn L.A. around and reconnect this city. Public transit needs to be for everyone.”

- Bus Riders Union Organizer Esperanza Martinez

Summer 2010 www.ctaa.org
Interestingly, this stance on the vital need for operating assistance flexibility on the part of all urban transit systems has brought the BRU and the LACMTA into agreement – at least on this issue. Both have come out in favor of Rep. Russ Carnahan’s HR 2746 which now enjoys 136 co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives and bipartisan support.

The BRU is an active member of the Transportation Equity Network (TEN) – a grassroots network of more than 350 community organizations in 41 states working to build a more just, prosperous, and connected America. Through TEN, the Union has access to a national campaign consistent with its own at the local level, as well as numerous resource and educational offerings.

This broadened perspective has allowed the Union to connect its key issues in Los Angeles with ongoing national transportation and other policy issues, giving context to its efforts.

“We’d like to see a basic de-prioritization of the automobile,” says Martinez. “Affordable public transit is more than a mobility issue, it’s also a serious health and safety issue.”

Several Union-produced resources cite numerous studies that show that 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the Los Angeles area come from private automobiles. Accordingly, the group now actively supports auto-free zones, transit-only lanes on local freeways and complete streets planning.

“With the multi-tiered bus system that we support — local and regional — we can turn L.A. around and reconnect this city,” says Martinez. “Public transit needs to be for everyone.”

The inherent conflict illustrated by this tale of passenger advocates at odds with transit provider is not simply a local issue, but is, in fact, a symptom of a larger issue that undermines public and community transit service and impedes its growth. It also illustrates a vital opportunity. Somewhere along the line, transit systems can lose contact with their passengers, and in some cases even seem to turn against the very people for whom these bus and rail systems were intended to serve. When this pattern emerges, public and community transit agencies often lose the best and most valuable advocates they have. Imagine, for a moment, the potential for all forms of public transit in the Los Angeles area if the Bus Riders Union and the LACMTA worked in concert with one another to both guide and build local transit solutions that fused together rail, bus, bus rapid transit and all forms of transit.
After venturing over the Transverse Mountain Ranges north of Los Angeles and through the Tehachapi Pass, a northbound traveler encounters a verdant swath of valley as it emerges below. At the heart of that valley – the San Joaquin, home to some of the most fertile agricultural land in the world – lies Fresno, Calif., and the larger county surrounding it of the same name. Here between the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the east and the menacing-sounding Diablo Range to the west, farmers and harvesters grow fruits and vegetables to feed the nation, and the world.

In concert with this bountiful agricultural production is another form of vibrant activity, in the work of mobility providers like the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency and the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission. Through their efforts – along with those of a score of other transit systems and community organizations – life is enriched for the region’s residents through connections to work, health care, community services and many other elements.

Organizing Around the CTSA

Access to quality transportation has been crucial to the vitality of the San Joaquin Valley, and the Fresno region, in particular, since its agricultural potential was first eyed in the mid-nineteenth century. Two competing railroads were serving Fresno by the 1870s – the Southern Pacific first, followed by the Santa Fe – to move both people and goods to and from the burgeoning valley. In the same way, local transportation services have always found an important role in moving people within the city of Fresno and its surrounding smaller cities, towns and communities. A succession of horse-cars, streetcars and interurbans that began in 1889 were replaced by buses by the late 1930s, and in 1961, the city had assumed control of the municipal

A score of transportation connections span Fresno County, linking rural communities with the city of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley.

Fresno County’s Myriad Paths to Mobility

by Rich Sampson
transit network. Today, that system is known as the Fresno Area Express – or FAX – and provides more than 50,000 trips each day.

Even as transit service grew in the city of Fresno, local leaders sought a more comprehensive approach to mobility than services offered only within the city. When the California State Legislature passed the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act in 1980, the area had a mechanism around which to organize its public transportation resources: a Consolidated Service Transportation Agency (CTSA). The legislation required the establishment of such an agency in each county in the state to coordinate local transit options. The effort not only designated Fresno Transit – the predecessor to today’s FAX – as the provider of urban transit service in Fresno County, but also identified two additional agencies – the existing Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission and the relatively new Fresno County Rural Transit Agency—as partners with FAX in the CTSA to ensure greater mobility services throughout the county.

Beyond being charged with a mission to improve transportation options in Fresno County, the trio of organizations would also be supplied with investment to make those improvements possible. One quarter of one cent of the state’s sales tax would be directed to the CTSA to maintain or expand service on conventional bus routes and paratransit operations, as well as efforts to connect the county’s rural regions, smaller cities and towns with each other and the city of Fresno. The state’s investment would be augmented with local resources, and then ultimately with federal investment, to cultivate an expansive network of transportation programs and services that would be organized through the CTSA arrangement between the three agencies.

“The CTSA approach here grew out of models from public works programs,” explains Moses Stites, CCTM, of the California Public Utilities Commission and Community Transportation Association Board member from the West Region, who worked with the Economic Opportunities Commission for many years. “It was a way to focus on the unmet transit needs through a cooperative approach.”

A Vision for Rural Transit

Although Fresno County could be easily understood as a single unit of governance, population and territory, the bow tie-shaped area is the sixth-largest in California and today hosts a population of nearly one million located in a dozen communities. As a result, transportation services have never been provided through an all-encompassing single entity, as witnessed by the need to create a tripartite CTSA. However, a unifying need did exist to ensure that all of the county’s residents received the same mobility opportunities regardless of where they lived.

That vision resulted in the establishment of the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency in 1979. At the time, 13 separate transportation providers served the county, in addition to the City’s Fresno Transit. It became the work of the new agency to coordinate those disparate services into a network of transit programs with common fare structures, transfer locations and policy focus, namely to provide mobility to those who needed it most. The arrangement would also benefit the individual transit operations by pooling
administrative costs, vehicle procurement, maintenance, insurance and other activities.

“Our agency really was formed as a coalition, in the truest sense of the word,” says Jeff Webster, General Manager of the Rural Transit Agency since its inception, who also serves as the California delegate to Community Transportation Association’s State Delegates Council, and one of only two employees of the agency, along with an administrative assistant. “By uniting these different programs under a overarching structure, we could meet the needs better while also improving overall efficiency to provide a better deal for taxpayers.”

Even though there were more than a dozen transit systems in operation in 1979, those systems only operated a total of 20 vehicles. Today, that number has more than doubled to more than 50 vehicles across 19 different rural transit operations, with names such as Firebaugh Transit, Orange Cove Transit and South Sierra Transit. Providing a diverse mix of service options from fixed-route bus lines to demand-response van operations to volunteer-based programs, these systems are oriented towards the specific travel needs of their communities and the type of transit provided can vary greatly from one operation to the next. Moreover, some systems extend beyond the county’s borders into neighboring Kings County.

Due to the multifaceted approach to rural mobility in Fresno County, Webster’s most important work through the Rural Transit Agency is to target the investment the agency receives through the CTSA to maintain and improve service throughout all 19 operations. Those resources support the ongoing provision of service, acquiring and replacing vehicles, purchasing fuel and the many other elements that make up a vibrant transportation operation. For Webster, that work must be multiplied by 19. That effort also entails providing ample and updated information on all the programs, through the agency’s website at www.ruraltransit.org as well as an extensive country-wide Transportation Guide – produced by the Council of Fresno County Governments, which also shares office space with the agency – printed in both English and Spanish, listing all county transportation options from the Rural Transit Agency’s supported services to FAX, as well as Amtrak, Greyhound, intercity bus and ridesharing options.

“We work with our providers to serve those who need transportation the most – low income workers, youth, seniors and people with disabilities,” says Webster. “We need professionals to provide these services, and my job is to make sure they all have what they need to do their jobs.”

A New Kind of Nourishment

Few transit providers can claim their operations share space with an expansive food services program that prepares more than 5,000 meals each day. And yet, that comingling of services is precisely the working environment in which the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission’s transit program operates. More than a simple serendipitous meeting of two programs in the same location, the vehicles needed to deliver thousands of daily meals also have regular maintenance needs and drivers who require training and certification, matching the same needs as transit’s drivers and vehicles. This sensible approach to doing business is reflective of the organization’s work in providing mobility options to residents across Fresno County.

Since 1965, the Economic Opportunities Commission has cultivated a broad array of programs and services – from education to energy assistance – to help people weather tough times and ultimately improve their economic status. Common among all these various and important needs was the necessity of mobility, and one that was all the more vital for people with disabilities, low-income workers and seniors. By the early 1970s, the organization has established its own transportation program to connect its program participants to its services, and the larger
“Many of our clients have always been dependent on others for transportation,” says Roger Palomino, who served for 15 years as the Executive Director of the Economic Opportunities Commission until his retirement in 2009. “Because of that, part of our thinking has been that people need access to the community through transportation.”

The organization’s prioritization of transportation services was augmented in 1980, when it was incorporated into the CTSA to provide door-to-door and curbside transportation for people with transportation disadvantages beyond the Handy Ride paratransit services offered through FAX. The Commission’s Transit Services would work with the Rural Transit Agency to ensure that those people who could not access the numerous local rural transit systems would still receive public transportation service. Indeed, Transit Services joined the family of mobility options overseen by the Rural Transit Agency.

“Jeff Webster and the Rural Transit Agency is a tremendous resource to us,” says Gary Joseph, Director of the Commission’s Food Services and Transit Services programs. “Our arrangement helps us all run a more cohesive transportation network in Fresno County and makes sure we have the opportunities to improve our operations and try new things.”

As the program grew, it not only expanded its vehicle fleet to respond to the increasing demand for service, it also was combined with the Commission’s food and nutrition programs as a single administrative unit. Beyond the improved organizational capacity and efficiency, the combined programs could continually reinforce each other by monitoring of the quality of life of participants in either program, and respond to their changing needs as they developed. It’s an approach the Commission’s staff takes seriously.

“Our joint administration of the food and transportation programs means that some hidden cost savings are realized,” says Joseph. “It means better service for both programs while also working more efficiently.”

Moving forward, the Commission’s Transit Services will continue to explore new methods of serving the community. Already, the program has introduced new late night service for employment trips as well as improving access to childcare. At the same time, the organization is constructing a new administration, training and maintenance facility at its currently crowded location west of downtown Fresno that will accommodate the greater growth anticipated for both programs. For Roger Palomino, Gary Joseph and the hundreds of workers across all the Commission’s programs, the organization’s focus on linking these efforts to improved mobility is essential to their ultimate success.

“There’s a tremendous need for help,” explains Palomino. “We have to make sure that someone’s there for that help to be productive and responsive to those needs. Our transportation program is a substantial part of that.”

A Methodology That Works

From the expansive farmlands that stretch across the San Joaquin Valley to the unique combination of transportation services that span Fresno County, numerous aspects of life in this part of California are truly exceptional. Whether it’s the distinct trio of transportation providers that work together through the structure of the CTSA or the innovative approaches of the Rural Transit Agency and Economic Opportunities Commission to blend resources and services, community and public transportation here has found its own path to achievement. The ongoing efforts of so many have been made possible through a mix of investment, leadership and opportunities that are not common in many other communities, but also not so foreign it cannot be achieved elsewhere.

“We’ve been way ahead of the trends on coordination, and have instituted ideas that are still concepts in other places,” says Stites. “At the end of the day, it comes down to having the right investment, good people who care about their work and the right timing for it to come together. For us, it’s a methodology that works.”

“The CTSA approach here grew out of models from public works programs. It was a way to focus on the unmet transit needs through a cooperative approach”

- Moses Stites, CCTM, California Public Utilities Commission

Moses Stites
On the sandy shores of the Pacific Ocean between Los Angeles and San Diego is the appropriately-named city of Oceanside. Beyond its crowded beaches and coastal breezes is the Oceanside Transit Center, a multimodal waterfront destination for Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner, Metrolink commuter trains north to Los Angeles and COASTER trains heading south to San Diego. And as of March 2008, the Oceanside Transit Center also hosts the SPRINTER regional rail service of the North County Transit District (NCTD).

Winding through the communities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos and Escondido, SPRINTER neatly parallels California’s Highway 78 but represents more than a new travel conveyance. It marks the renaissance of passenger rail in the corridor after more than six decades.

Rail Through the Grapevines

Regional rail — a fixture in Europe and abroad for decades — in a sense developed its local roots in San Diego’s North County during the mid-1800s. The first Santa Fe Railroad train rolled into San Diego on November 16, 1885, bringing an influx of new residents that created a flurry of growth from the Mexican border north.

To Escondido’s developers, a railroad connection was crucial to continued prosperity. In 1886, Escondido Land and Town Company owners and a group of businessmen planned a railroad from Oceanside via Escondido, Poway and El Cajon to San Diego. Santa Fe won the contract and formed the San Diego Central Railroad, which was later consolidated with other branch lines into the California Central Railway. Construction began in early 1887 and the new service commenced December 31, 1887, with an invitation-only junket for thirty prominent San Diegans.

By May 1888, through trains operated between Escondido and National City. Later, three daily local trips ran in each direction between Escondido and Oceanside, connecting there to mainline trains. Despite its nickname, the Grapevine Flyer, as Escondido was known for its vineyards — it hardly flew down the tracks. A one-way trip took about two hours with a 35-cent fare.

San Diego’s economic boom collapsed in 1889. Half of San Diego’s population left for other communities and railway construction beyond Escondido ceased. Passenger services gradually receded, until just one freight-hauled passenger coach operated until 1945. Escondido remains the line’s eastern terminal, however its train station has been relocated as a museum in Grape Day Park.

By Gena Holle

Sprinter trains offer cross-platform connections to three rail services in Oceanside: Coaster and Metrolink trains to San Diego and Los Angeles, respectively, and Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner, which spans the entire corridor.
After the bust, the Santa Fe was reorganized, merging several railroads – including the California Central – into a new company, the Southern California Railway. Santa Fe declared bankruptcy in 1893, but reemerged in 1895 as the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway.

Reviving Passenger Rail in North County

After more than 30 years without passenger trains on the Escondido Branch, in 1977, Jerry Harmon, an Escondido City Council representative on the North County Transit District’s (NCTD) Board of Directors, suggested a rail revival to John Jontig, NCTD’s Executive Director. Jontig agreed the high demand for transit services between Escondido and Oceanside warranted considering alternate public transit modes. NCTD’s board voted to study an Oceanside-Escondido passenger train, followed by the endorsement of the county’s director of transportation and the Oceanside City Council.

Jontig envisioned self-propelled rail vehicles, “a sort of bus on rails,” he said, referring to the Budd diesel-powered trains that didn’t use locomotives, also known as rail diesel cars. Budd Cars were popular on the East Coast, Canada, and called rail buses in Europe.

Although the Santa Fe initially dismissed the idea of restoring passenger trains on its tracks, NCTD leadership persevered. In 1987, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) – the region’s planning agency – formally recommended buying Santa Fe’s right of way for the rail bus concept. The agency also had capital planning and fare-setting powers for the county’s transit systems. NCTD officials launched negotiations with Santa Fe, and in 1990, county voters approved a half-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects.

When the regional rail line was approved in 1990, the cost was forecasted at $60 million. Planners projected 16,000 daily riders and completion in 2000. The project’s name – SPRINT-ER – was chosen in a public contest in 1993.

The Santa Fe’s financial woes, along with nudging from Congressman Ron Packard finally convinced it to sell 330 miles of Southern California tracks for $500 million in 1992. San Diego’s share was $90.5 million for 82 miles shared between the NCTD and San Diego’s Metropolitan Transit District for its light-rail system. This track purchase made much of the San Diego region’s passenger rail revival possible.

Besides the Escondido Branch, the sale included the coastal tracks where the NCTD has operated its Oceanside to San Diego COASTER commuter trains since 1995. In 1996, Santa Fe and Burlington Northern merged, becom-
The Sprinter utilizes 12 Siemens’ Desiro DMU vehicles to transport riders on the 45-minute trip between Oceanside and Escondido.

ing BNSF. The railroad now has an agreement with NCTD to run freight on the Escondido Branch during late-night and weekend periods due to the relatively low volume of freight traffic.

Once the district acquired the right-of-way, it began to consider the rolling stock needed for the SPRINTER service. Project officials investigated the relatively higher cost of diesel multiple unit (DMU) vehicles versus the faster, less expensive light-rail vehicles that produced fewer emissions than diesels.

“There was no need to electrify this system,” says Walt Stringer, Manager of Light Rail for the NCTD. “The capital costs would have been way too high for what we’re doing. The only advantage of electrification is the system’s speeds might be a little faster. However, the line is full of grades and curves and even with a higher performance vehicle, this will still be a relatively slow local service.”

SPRINTER Becomes a Marathon

Although the project attracted little opposition between 1987 and 2003, objections surfaced after funding was approved. The NCTD faced lawsuits from residents and the cities of San Marcos and Vista over noise, pedestrian issues and a new loop of tracks to reach the campus of California State University – San Marcos. The legal actions were eventually dismissed. Meanwhile, other local opponents claimed the project was irresponsible since no passenger rail projects produce more revenue than operating costs.

“The message we knew we had to reinforce that passenger rail is a public works project,” says NCTD Spokesperson Sarah Benson. “Does your library ever make money? Are your freeways making money? No, these are publicly funded projects for the good of the community.”

NCTD received a $152 million full-funding grant agreement from the Federal Transit Administration in February 2003, while state and local sources provided investment to match the federal support to build the SPRINTER. The overall project cost would, ultimately reach $480 million by completion, which was initially planned for a late 2005 launch. As construction moved forward, the NCTD contracted with Siemens AG Transportation Systems in March 2004 for twelve Desiro model DMUs for $53 million, which included production, shipping, import duties and warranty coverage.

Delays ensued during the project’s 25 years, federal and state regulations and permitting requirements had changed dramatically, obtaining federal investment took years and there were delays for project approvals, funding and certifications. The SPRINTER was classified first as commuter rail, and today as light rail.”

“We, as an industry, tend to use either light rail or commuter rail because that’s our project definition,” says Stringer. “During the project’s developmental stages, they called it the Oceanside - Escondido commuter rail because that was the historical name of the project and also I think at that time, we had access to certain types of funds — commuter rail funds — whereas light rail didn’t necessarily qualify for these funds.

Additionally, buying Siemens’ German-made rolling stock set the schedule back. Though popular in Europe, the DMUs weren’t yet certified for use in the United States. As a result, the California Public Utilities Commission had to ensure the equipment met American standards. NCTD also had to contend with increases in materials costs, design challenges, weather delays and flooding incidents.

Besides the railcar order, three other major contracts were awarded with a starting value of about $230 million. The most substantial covered trackage, signals, stations and high-level platforms. Another was to build a loop to reach the campus of California State University, San Marcos.

“The loop did not follow the existing right-of-way,” says Stringer. “It had a lot of curvature and a lot of structure, five bridges, and grading and filling because it was all new.”

The system also had built the Escondido yard, shop and control center near the Escondido Transit Center, which included centralized traffic control for dispatching and a security monitoring system.

Creating the Oceanside-Escondido Connection

According to be NCTD’s contract with BNSF, the railroad needed to continue freight service to its clients along the route even as construction was underway. During the three-year construction project, freight trains didn’t run during the week. Every Friday, crews restored the line for weekend freight service.

“There was a night-time freight on Friday and Sunday,” says Stringer. “Except on rare occasions, we always kept the track open for the freight because we have a thriving freight business in Escondido with three customers out there and they couldn’t take a lengthy
interruption.”

Another challenge appeared. Gaps between the platforms and the DMUs required building retractable bridge plates into the platforms to accommodate the SPRINTER and the slightly wider freight trains. The bridge plates were raised at night for the freights.

The Desiro DMUs started arriving from Siemens’ Krefeld factory near Dusseldorf, Germany in 2006. Shipped via the Panama Canal, they landed at Port Hueneme, Calif., and then were trucked to Escondido in halves for assembly and testing. The vehicle’s sleek aluminum bodies are 135-feet long and can seat 136 with 90 standees. Seating is on two levels with ample room for bikes, wheelchairs, scooters, strollers and surfboards up to six feet long. Some of the seats fold up to make room for wheelchairs, bikes and strollers. Overhead shelves hold belongings and wide picture windows offer a spacious feel. Coupling two trains increases capacity to more than 450 passengers. The Desiro is environmentally friendly and meets state and federal emissions and regulatory standards.

“So far, the SPRINTER is the only place Siemens has this technology in the U.S.,” says Siemens spokesperson Becky Sabin. “It is the right type of technology for those short-line railroads to link destination points for passengers.”

“There’s a rail renaissance that’s been underway,” says Sabin. “It think it started when gas prices started getting astronomical, and now with the Obama administration’s rail – especially through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – a lot of smaller areas are looking at light rail or SPRINTER-type lines. We can’t build ourselves out of the problem with more roads, especially in California. There’s definitely potential for this type of technology. We’re eager to showcase this more than just with the SPRINTER, which is one of our proudest projects, and it’s such a great complement to the region’s rail lines.”

SPRINTER’s Opening Day

SPRINTER’s certification from the California Public Utilities Commission was received two days before the revised opening March 9, 2008. More than 100 riders caught the first train at 4:33 a.m. Nearly 13,000 people rode that day along the lengthy 22-mile 15-station line at speeds of up to 55 mph, dipping in and out of rural areas past small farms, skimming by business parks and shops. SPRINTER’s route resembles the less mainstream European destinations found on DMU lines like Breil-sur-Roya to Nice-Ville on France’s Transport Express Régional. BNSF’s freight trains and SPRINTER share the rail line, but at different times; the two modes are never on the line at the same time.

“It’s a temporal separation,” says Stringer. “That’s what allows the freight to run at night, so that’s significant. Only a handful of systems have Federal Railroad Administration shared-use waiver that we operate under.”

On weekdays, SPRINTER runs 64 trips, with a one-way journey taking 53 minutes. Service begins at 4:00 a.m. and ends at 9:30 p.m. All but two stations have parking. The NCTD offers a regional day pass that is valid not only on SPRINTER and the system’s buses, but also the San Diego Trolley and MTS bus routes for $5 ($2.25 for seniors).

NCTD contracted with Veolia Transportation for SPRINTER’s 17 train operators and four fare enforcement officers. Veolia employs about 17,000 workers in the U.S. and Canada.

SPRINTER’s on-time performance has been near perfect, and ridership is steadily climbing towards the 11,000 daily riders predicted in 1987. About 7,000 riders travel on SPRINTER on weekdays and another 4,000 ride on weekends.

“It’s remained steady,” says the NCTD’s Benson. “We looked at the bus services that the SPRINTER replaced and we’re moving 200 percent more than we ever did on the bus routes.”

Riders give SPRINTER high marks for its cleanliness, attractive interiors and comfortable seats. Good insulation masks the diesel engine noise under the passenger compartment so it’s a quiet ride. The new continuously welded rail, concrete ties and track bed reduce noise, too.

Nathaniel LeGare, from Vista, a student at North County’s High Tech High School, rides SPRINTER with his bike and calls the train, “a very useful invention so I can go around to more places.”

Others echo his sentiments and say the train has cut their travel times up to 45 minutes. In many ways, SPRINTER ridership is a cross-section of the Southern California population it serves. Young families are regular riders, along with surfers heading to Oceanside to catch a wave and business travelers connecting to Amtrak’s Pacific Surfliner to San Diego or Los Angeles.

With three schools nearby, SPRINTER has become a magnet for students. Palomar College is among the biggest...
community colleges in the nation with 30,000 full- and part-time students. California State San Marcos’ student population is more than 8,000 and is expected to grow. Mira Costa College connects with SPRINTER via a 10-minute bus ride.

“When you look at an aerial shot of the SPRINTER, it really goes through the heart of all four of the big cities in North County: Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos and Escondido,” says Benson. “So it’s a great community connector.”

Oceanside is exploring development of land near the Crouch Street station and along the Oceanside Boulevard corridor. In Vista, shopping is close to the SPRINTER, such as Vista Village, which hosts a multiplex theater, retail and eateries.

“Two San Marcos neighborhoods served by SPRINTER are under redevelopment,” says Jerry Backoff, Planning Division Director, City of San Marcos. “Both were high-crime areas with dilapidated buildings. Working with nonprofits and for-profits, the Paso del Oro mixed-use residential and retail project in Richmar have turned the neighborhood around.”

Meanwhile, San Marcos has plans for 200-acres of development in the university district. Backoff says they’re looking at student housing, retail, office, and hotels adjacent to the Cal State SPRINTER station.

“We’re also trying to develop a free shuttle to connect people from these projects to SPRINTER stations,” he says.

Palomar Station is a project near the SPRINTER and NCTD’s bus hub at Palomar College. It was approved in 2007, but the current economic challenges have delayed the plan, call for mid-rise buildings with 333 condominiums, retail and offices.

“SANDAG is hosting or sponsoring a corridor land-use committee that is actively looking into smart growth opportunities along the corridor, which means that someday we’ll see more intense development around the SPRINTER stations,” says Stringer.
The Value of Perseverance

Currently as a single-track route, SPRINT trains can only run at 30 minute frequencies.

“There are three 3.5-mile passing segments,” says Stringer. Double-tracking the rail line is a capital investment that’s slated, Benson notes, but its timeline is still in development. Stringer adds that double tracking will be expensive because it will require building more bridges and relocating existing signaling.

High costs put original plans on hold for a SPRINT extension to malls at Escondido’s North County Fair and Carlsbad’s El Camino Real. The North County Fair line – along all new right-of-way through southern Escondido – is still a possibility, but it’s currently not funded or programmed, says Stringer.

“Since SANDAG is considering right now diverting more capital funds to operating expenses to offset California’s state budget crunch, any SPRINT expansion will be considered in the future,” says Stringer. “Plus we’re carrying about 7,000 a day. With that level of ridership, we’re not having overloading or delays due to overcrowding, so we can act judiciously when it comes to expansions.”

A sense of perspective for the new rail line is crucial, according to NCTD’s former marketing director Peter Aadland.

“The true measure of the rail line’s success will not come overnight. In 10 years, I think the ultimate goal would be for people to say, ‘Wow, we’re so glad somebody persevered with that train, because we can’t imagine our world without it.’”

San Marcos leaders are moving forward to use their Sprinter stations (below) to leverage economic development. Meanwhile, platform bridge plates (above) allow both Sprinter and freight trains to operate over the same rails.
New Service for Veterans

Clatsop County (Ore.) Introduces
issues on the campus as well. "We saw this as an opportunity to provide a service to this very significant population," said Carl Sedoryk, General Manager and CEO of Monterey Salinas Transit. "This is something that the University administration wanted to see happen as [it] would help them to mitigate traffic issues on the campus as well."

With the inauguration of the Clatsop County (Ore.) Disabled Veterans Medical Transport Service, local area veterans receive regularly-scheduled transportation service to medical appointments at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Portland, as well as the Portland Regional Office, and the Camp Rilea Community Based Outreach Clinic near Warrenton. The service is free to all veterans with scheduled medical appointments. Recently, Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD) received investment to acquire a new van for use by the Clatsop County Veterans Affairs (VA) to transport disabled veterans.

The van is equipped with a wheelchair lift, two spaces for wheelchair tie-downs, and seating for seven. The transit district secured the investment, while Clatsop County VA supplied the required matching funds. The new van service is unique, in that there are very few lift-equipped VA Vans in the nation.

The agency’s approach is based on evidence from other transit providers that when service is cut and fares are raised, even greater ridership loss occurs, further exacerbating the problem. Instead, by making their services more attractive to riders during difficult economic times, the agency expects ridership to hold steady or return to previous levels. Only the commuter-oriented Montpelier Link Express was held at its existing fare levels.

“Whether that’s because people are losing their jobs and not needing a ride to work or are not able to afford the ride to work, we haven’t been able to determine that.”

LaCrosse Readies Grand River Station for Opening

On August 25, officials from the LaCrosse Municipal Transit Utility and other local leaders will officially open LaCrosse’s (Wisc.) Grand River Station. Beyond a 10,000 square-foot transit center on the ground level, the station acts as a mixed-used development, combining residential, retail and commercial spaces in the same location. Of the 72 rental units included in the facility, 59 will be designated for low-income residents. All eight Municipal Transit Utility routes will serve the station, offering convenient transfers for riders and easy access to transit for building residents. The $20 million project is supported by investment from the Federal Transit Administration, state and local sources.

Green Mountain Transit Cuts Fares, Increases Service

Although many transit systems across the nation have raised fares and cut service in response to the challenging financial climate, Vermont’s Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) recently acted in the inverse, cutting fares and increasing service as ridership numbers lagged last year due to the economy. Taking effect in early July, Green Mountain’s fares were reduced by 50 percent and additional services, including a new midday route between Montpelier and Burlington that is focused on moving older people to medical appointments in Burlington.
“I think that not only does this help within the city of La Crosse from a transportation standpoint, using mass transit, but I think it’s got an awful lot of potential of bringing communities together,” said La Crosse Mayor Mark Johnsrud.

Southampton (N.Y.) Offers Seniors Free Rides to Cooling Centers

Responding to several days of stifling summer heat, the Southampton Town, N.Y., Senior Services Department offered free rides to area seniors to reach the town’s cooling center. The cooling station was established at the Hampton Bays Senior Center and operated daily until 4 p.m. on days of extreme heat for the benefit of those seniors whose homes were not air-conditioned. The town arranged the free service through a phone line staffed by Senior Services Department employees.

Bus Driver Saves 10 from Fire

In the midst of an early-morning run, Richard Lucas – a bus driver for the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, which serves the Buffalo metropolitan region – noticed smoke billowing from the back of a two-family home in South Buffalo. Lucas safely stopped his bus mid-route and banged on the front door of the house, waking all 10 people in the house, all of who escaped the blaze. After ensuring all the occupants of the house had escaped safely, Lucas continued on his run. The house sustained about $80,000 worth of damage.

Lucas, interviewed later that day by a local TV station after finishing his work, said of returning to his route, “people have got to go to work. That’s what we do.” Meanwhile, Buffalo Interim Fire Commissioner Garnell W. Whitfield Jr. praised Lucas’ actions, saying, “You could call him a hero. Who knows how this turns out if he hadn’t done what he did.”

RICON Introduces Bi-Fold Ramp

RICON, a Wabtec Company, and a leading manufacturer of vehicle accessibility products, has introduced a new, double folding ramp for low-floor buses. The Model BR2C Bi-Fold Ramp is wider and longer than comparable ramps, and when mounted in the ARBOC “Spirit of Mobility” bus, provides a 1:6 slope, the lowest slope available in the industry today.

“The mobility impaired community has been asking for lower ramp slopes,” said Tony Ward, National Sales Manager for the Ricon Corporation. “The new Bi-Fold meets this requirement and we are pleased to offer this new ramp to our customers. Additionally, unlike competitive ramp systems, the BR2C does not require any special tools or procedures to manually operate the unit in the event of power loss.”

Hawaii Launches Shuttle for Homeless, Working Poor

A consortium of Kalaeloa, Hawaii, organizations are partnering to offer transportation services to the community’s homeless and working poor populations. Through investment from local, state, private and non-profit investment, Hawaii Helping the Hungry Have Hope (H-5) began a shuttle service on August 9, for homeless people to connect to transit services in nearby Honolulu, area homeless shelters and community services. H-5 program officials expect an average of 100 daily passengers to utilize the service, which will be provided with a motorcoach bus and 15-passenger van donated by Roberts Hawaii, a local tour company.

“Families used to walk up with their children,” said local shelter resident Evan Tatuena. “You know there are never really sidewalks to walk to so they got to walk through the bushes and everything around. Plus also being on time to their appointments, finding employments to go to it’s really hard and some couldn’t make it on time, so it’s a struggle.”
Reliable comfort. Depend on it with Carrier. With a comprehensive offering of rearmount, roofmount, and split systems to meet virtually any application. As always, Carrier systems excel at bottom-line results...with low life cycle, operating, and maintenance costs.
Call Carrier Transport AC, 1.800.673.2431. Or visit our Web site. Depend on the people who have comfort and reliability, yes, down cold.

www.transportaircon.carrier.com

New Benefits for Members! Join Today!

Becoming a member of the Community Transportation Association of America presents an ever-growing pool of benefits and services, including:

• New Certified Safety and Security Manager (CSSM) Training
• Access to the Insurance Store at CTAA
• The Latest Policy Analysis and an Effective Voice in Washington
• Technical Assistance Programs and Information Resources

Become a member of the Community Transportation Association today by contacting our Membership Director, Caryn Souza, at 202.294.6527 or souza@ctaa.org, or visit www.ctaa.org/join.
American Public Transportation Assoc.
1666 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006
202.496.4800
202.496.4324
www.apta.com

Carrier Transport Air Conditioning, Inc.
50 Grombacher Road
York, PA 17402
Tel: 717.767.3386
Web: www.carrier.transicold.com

Diamond Manufacturing
2330 Burlington Avenue
North Kansas City, MO 64116
Tel: 816.421.8363
Web: www.diamondmfg.com

LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.
516 North Tejon St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
719.633.2868
719.633.5430
atstoddard@lsccs.com
www.lsccs.com

Mobility Transportation Services
42000 Koppemick #A3
Canton, MI 48187
Tel: 800.496.4280
Fax: 734.453.6708
E-Mail: dbrown@mobilitytrans.com
Web: www.mobilitytrans.com

Q’Strait
5553 Ravenswood Road, Bldg. 104
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312
Tel: 954.986.6665
Web: www.qstraint.com

RouteMatch Software
1180 W. Peachtree St. #1130
Atlanta, GA 30309
Tel: 888.840.8791
Email: beth.noland@routematch.com
Web: www.routematch.com

Supreme Corp.
16500 County Road 38
P.O. Box 463
Goshen, IN 46526
Tel: 219.642.4888
Web: www.supremeind.com

Sure-Lok, Inc.
2501 Baglyos Circle
Bethlehem, PA 18020
Tel: 610.814.0300
Web: www.sure-lok.com

StarTran Software, LLC
24 Court Street
Dedham, MA 02026
781.801.9696
781.329.4255
Web: www.startransoftware.com
The Competitive Edge: Making Community and Public Transit the Best Alternative for Medical Transportation

Today there is never-before-seen complexity in the non-emergency medical transportation field. Limited funding combined with growing patient loads has states seeking intermediaries that can control costs through competition. Community and public transportation providers must become efficient, safe, cost-effective and accountable to maintain these important medical transportation services. The Community Transportation Association, in response to requests from its members, is introducing a new initiative this fall — the Competitive Edge — which will give community and public transit providers the tools, resources and benefits they need to make them central players in this new medical transportation environment. Here’s what the Competitive Edge encompasses:

The Competitive Edge Training
CTAA has developed an all-new training course that combines and emphasizes the following topics:
• Value: Determining the true cost of service
• Pricing: Lowering your costs to be competitive
• Negotiation: Winning through persuasion
• Accountability: Building a recordkeeping and reporting process
• Training: Focusing on the patient

Access to the Transit Industry’s Best Resources and Training
You don’t need to have all the answers, you need to have access to them when you need them. Here’s how the Competitive Edge helps:
• Peers and Information Sharing: CTAA will put you in contact with your industry peers, where you can learn from experience
• On-Line Library and Resource Holdings: The most timely resources, news and research, all housed on CTAA’s medical transportation website
• CTAA staff: Our professional staff are always available to offer analysis and insight
• Important training and certification programs such as the Certified Safety and Security Manager, PASS Driver Certification, and the soon-to-be released Medi-PASS Driver Certification.

Valuable CTAA Member Benefits
As part of the Competitive Edge initiative, the Association has developed a cohesive set of benefits to ensure your operation is efficient and cost-effective:
• The Insurance Store: Through an exclusive agreement with Arthur J. Gallagher Insurance, members can access the best coverage at the lowest price
• Energy Program: CTAA members pay less for fuel and energy with our FleetCards program and other energy management initiatives

Please go to www.ctaa.org/competitiveedge to learn how you can bring the Competitive Edge to your state. As always, CTAA training staff are available to help tailor this new program to your precise needs. Please call Charles Dickson at 202.247.8356 or email dickson@ctaa.org for all the details on this unique opportunity!
on display in Paratransit, Inc.’s front lobby, but also a growing collection of trophies earned by the system’s drivers at state and regional Roadeo competitions. These overt representations of achievement reflect a more pervasive sense of commitment and professionalism that is apparent to anyone who interacts with any of the organization’s staff as they go about their work.

In the coming years, the organization plans even more innovation, exploring opportunities to introduce child care for both its own employees and the larger community, expand service for employment-related travel and introduce new technologies to increase efficiency and improve service. Already, it has deployed a series of solar panels on the roof of its Florin Road facility to reduce energy costs and contribute to a more sustainable environment. According to Linda Deavens, their work is a continual effort at raising – and meeting – expectations.

“We’ve become much more sophisticated over the years,” says Deavens. “But as our service has grown and developed, so too have our riders’ expectations. It’s our job to always be challenged by these expectations, and do everything we can to meet them every day.

**LEARN MORE:** Paratransit, Inc.’s website offers detailed and informative descriptions of their programs and partnerships and complete backgrounds details on their innovative approaches. Visit www.paratransit.org.

---

**StarTran Software**

**Fleet Maintenance and Inventory Software for Transit**

Our signature product:

TransitFleet is the only fleet maintenance and inventory software package designed and developed exclusively for small and medium size transit systems.

- Quick access to the information you need most often.
- Easy implementation with no dedicated IT necessary.
- Reliability, cost-effectiveness, and features that fit small to medium size systems and budgets.

**Contact us for information and a tour of TransitFleet**

info@StarTranSoftware.com

Tel: 781-801-9696 *www.startransoftware.com

---

**ABOUT US**

Community Transportation magazine is the voice of the Community Transportation Association, a national association dedicated to making mobility alternatives available to all Americans. The Association’s Board of Directors provides national leadership and direction for the Association. The Board relies on the special expertise of its State Delegate Council to assist in their important efforts.

**OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Charles Carr, President; Ann Gilbert, Vice President; David White, CCTM, Treasurer; Barbara Cline, CCTM, Secretary; Ann August; Rochelle Cotey; Santo Grande, CCTM; Robert P. Koska, Dave Marsh, John McBeth; Dave O’Connell; Fred Schmidt, PhD.; Moses Stites, CCTM; and Linda Yaeger, CCTM. Ex-Officio Directors: Dan Dirks CCTM; Jo Ann Hutchinson, Reginald Knowlton, CCTM; William McDonald; Roland Mross.

**OUR STATE DELEGATE COUNCIL:**

Alabama • John Sorrell, CCTM; Alaska • David Levy; Arizona • Sam Chavez; Arkansas • Ken Savage; California • Jeff Webster, Colorado • Hank Braaksma, CCTM; Connecticut • Tom Cheeseman; Delaware • Ken Bock, CCTM; District of Columbia • Dianne Nock Smith; Florida • Lisa Bacon, Georgia • Robert Hett, Hawaii • Don Medeiros, CCTM; Idaho • Cecelia Hockett, CCTM; Illinois • Tom Zucker, CCTM; Indiana • Sue Chapelle, CCTM; Iowa • Cecelia Hockett, CCTM, Kansas • Lisa Koch; Kentucky • Beecher Hudson; Louisiana • Donna Lavigne, Maine • Jim Wood; Maryland • Sherry Burford, CCTM; Massachusetts • Jack Mastrangelo; Michigan • Dan Wedge; Minnesota • Jacqueline Forner, CCTM; Mississippi • John Johnson; Missouri • Randy Beem, CTPA; Montana • David Jacobs; Nebraska • Georgia Janssen; Nevada • John Andoh, New Hampshire • Van Chesnut; New Jersey • Yvonne Manfra, CCTM; New Mexico • David Harris, AICP; New York • Damon Mustaca, CCTM; North Carolina • Vincent Brown, CCTM; North Dakota • Darrell Francis, CCTM; Ohio • Kristina Reider, Oklahoma • Charla Sloan, CCTM; Oregon • Elaine Wells; Pennsylvania • Martha Pierce, Rhode Island • Doug Wood; South Carolina • Lynnda Bassham; South Dakota • Ronald Baumgart; Tennessee • Chris Kleehammer, Texas • Margie Lucas, Utah • Todd Beutler, CCTM; Vermont • Jim Moulton; Virginia • Mark McGregor, CCTM, Washington • Kelly Scalf, West Virginia • David Bruffy; Wisconsin • Greg Seubert; and Wyoming • Sean Solan.
Perspectives

Head West!

As the precursor to iconic California transportation achievements such as the Transcontinental Railroad, Pacific Coast Highway, Golden Gate Bridge and today’s vibrant network of transit systems, the first mobilizer of the Golden State was its stagecoach lines, which offered connections throughout California and to the rest of the nation. The Butterfield Overland Mail route connected San Francisco with the Southwest, Texas and St. Louis in the mid-1800s on a then-record 25-day, non-stop trip. Today, much of that same route can be explored – in far less time – on Amtrak’s Texas Eagle.
Congratulations

Paducah Area Transit System

CTAA 2010 Rural Community Transportation System of the Year
Riding in Style

Get onboard a Senator, Senator SII, Candidate, or Candidate SII and discover engineering excellence, style and quality.

• Manufacture 32 models of transit, paratransit and tour buses
• Passenger capacities from 7 up to 39 with various wheelchair placements

2582 East Kercher Road
Goshen, IN 46528
574-642-4730 • 877-258-1391
www.STARTRANSBUS.com