

U.S. TRANSIT RECEIVES D- IN ASCE'S 2017 REPORT CARD

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently published their 2017 Infrastructure Report Card. The Report Card, released every four years since 1998, grades America's infrastructure on an A through F scale and provides recommendations for 'raising the grade' through investment and innovation. The ASCE grades the Nation's infrastructure as a whole and provides detailed evaluations of a wide range of infrastructure categories, including roads and bridges, dams, schools, aviation, rail, and public transportation. Grades reflect the capacity of each infrastructure category to meet current and future demand and to prove resilient to future challenges.

The 2017 Report Card gives the Nation's infrastructure a D+, citing a \$2 trillion investment gap across all infrastructure categories and threatening widespread economic effects if the status quo is maintained. The Report calls for large-scale refocusing on the nation's infrastructure challenges. It encourages a large commitment to investment, visionary planning and leadership, innovation in funding, and solutions that are sustainable and resilient in the face of future challenges.

The ASCE Infrastructure Report Card gives public transit infrastructure a grade of D-, worse than any other infrastructure category. While transit ridership is growing across

America and services are being expanded, the Report finds that the Nation's public transportation systems suffer from maintenance shortfalls and overall disinvestment. These issues may be having an effect on transit users. Although the 10.5 billion transit trips in 2015 show a long-term increase in ridership over the past two decades, in the short-term, there were 250 million fewer trips than in 2014. The report cites a \$90 billion gap in funding needed to rehabilitate current public transportation infrastructure. Most of the funding shortfall is focused on fixed-guideway systems like subways and commuter rail, which are in need of major upgrades to tracks, stations, and rail cars. Services that use existing roads and bridges are in a better position. Though buses—the most widespread and widely-used

public transit mode—fared better in the Report, it revealed that 1 in 10 buses are in need of repair. Nearly 4 in 10 transit stations, including bus stops, are not in a state of good repair.

The Report also finds that transit service is falling behind demand, especially in cities. Though urbanites have more transit access than those in suburban and rural areas, over half of all households in urban areas cannot access grocery stores using transit services. Rural and suburban transit includes paratransit, buses, commuter services, and vanpools. These services provide mobility options to those who live in isolated areas and who have limited vehicle access or who cannot drive due to physical limitations.



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NOTES FROM THE TOP

Hello Spring!

As always, this is a busy time of year for the Public Transportation Staff. Currently, we are finalizing the review of the Elderly and Disabled, Rural, JARC, and New Freedom applications and selecting projects. We will be submitting them to FTA for review by the end of March. We are continuing to conduct annual compliance reviews, workshops, and trainings; preparing new fiscal year contracts; and conducting outreach to parishes without public transportation services.

Over the past few months, we've had staff changes and new employees have joined our Public Transportation Team. I'm happy to announce the most recent promotion of Stephanie Barthelemy as the new Rural Program Manager. Stephanie has been the Assistant Rural Program Manager since August 2014. In January, Warren Morgan joined our team as the new Elderly and Disabled Assistant Program Manager and comes with a wealth of knowledge on vehicle and fleet management. Lastly, Melissa Cormier joined our team in March as the new Rural Assistant Program Manager. Melissa has extensive experience in financial reporting, procurement, and contract administration. Please join me in congratulating Stephanie and welcoming Warren and Melissa to our team!

As some of you may know, we held STTARS (Statewide Transit Tracking and Reporting System) training for transit providers receiving Section 5310 (Elderly and Disabled) operating assistance in February and March. Section 5310 providers receiving operating assistance will be required to use STTARS scheduling, financial reporting, and trip summaries beginning July 1, 2017. Karen Harris will be conducting additional training

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during April, May, and June. Be sure to watch your emails for more information and sign up promptly as space is limited. If additional training is needed, please contact Karen Harris or Jamie Ainsworth.

Speaking of training, Keycha Alexander-Green, RTAP Program Manager has been working with the Louisiana Transportation Research Center (LTRC) here in Baton Rouge to provide basic computer training for our transit providers. Training includes Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Publisher. The first class was held in early March and was very successful. She will be emailing the dates and registration for upcoming trainings soon. Again, space is limited so be sure to sign up quickly.

Also, just a gentle reminder for all providers and MPOs, the end of the fiscal year is approaching. To ensure payment for FY 2016-2017 invoices, final invoices must be submitted to our office no later than July 10. We will be sending out notices as we get closer to that date.

Finally, we would like to encourage you to send topics or articles for future newsletter editions. If you would like to highlight your transit system or recognize one of your staff members, we will provide a forum to do so. We encourage you to share innovative ideas, techniques, and uplifting stories about your transit system and/or a special client. We want the transit newsletter to be an informative publication that addresses issues of interest to you and others.

That's it for this time. Thanks for all that you do in providing safe and reliable transportation services for the citizens of Louisiana! Wishing everyone a blessed and Happy Easter!



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ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

Please be sure to submit all FY 2016-2017 final invoices to the DOTD Public Transportation Office by **July 10th!**



DOTD EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: DOTD Public Transportation Section

APRIL 19-20

Microsoft Excel Training.....Transportation Training & Education Center
Baton Rouge, LA

MAY 10-12

Certified Community Transit Manager Training..... Lafayette, LA

APTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.apta.com

APRIL 3-5

Fare Collection/Revenue Management & TransiTech
Conference..... San Antonio, TX

MAY 7-10

Bus & Paratransit Conference..... Reno, NV

JUNE 11-14

Rail Conference..... Baltimore, MD

AUG 6-9

Sustainability & Multimodal Planning Workshop..... Minneapolis, MN

FTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.transit.dot.gov

APRIL 18-20

Drug & Alcohol Program National Conference..... New Orleans, LA

NATIONAL TRANSIT INSTITUTE COURSES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.ntionline.com

APRIL 4-6

Public Involvement in Transportation Decisionmaking... Philadelphia, PA

MAY 2-4

Ridership Forecasting w/ STOPS for Transit Project Planning... Chicago, IL

SPOTLIGHT ON...

TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSIT (PART 3) | AUTONOMOUS BUS EZ10 STOPS IN BIG EASY

The future of bus transit might be hitting the road sooner than expected. The autonomous bus known as EZ10 recently took a cross-country road trip, making stops in select cities to give demonstrations and take passengers on short rides. In January, the all-electric, fully autonomous vehicle made a stop in New Orleans to show off its cutting-edge technology and friendly appearance.

The 2017 Autonomous Vehicle Road Trip has made stops in Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and California so far. The demonstration in New Orleans involved free rides for the public as well as a display of the vehicle's safety features. Sensors on all four corners of the EZ10, as well as a built-in radar system, help the bus safely navigate its surroundings and even detect when a person walks in front of the vehicle, allowing it to safely come to a complete stop. The bus is also equipped with a red "SOS" button that can be used in the event that an emergency stop needs to be made. While the bus drove passengers around outside the convention center in New Orleans, the entirely electric propulsion system would allow for such a vehicle to operate quietly and cleanly indoors as well.

While the EZ10, priced at about \$200,000, is cheaper than a typical New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (NORTA) bus, which normally costs about \$500,000, it will most likely not be in large-scale use in the immediate future due to the vehicle's relatively low capacity as well as current traffic laws that restrict where such a vehicle can operate. However, a small-scale transportation system that utilizes



autonomous buses could easily be incorporated into university and corporate campuses, business parks, convention centers, and transportation hubs, such as airports.

The EZ10 is the product of EasyMile, a French high-tech startup based in Toulouse, France. The mini-bus has room for twelve passengers, cruises at a casual speed of about 12 miles per hour, and can operate almost anywhere along "virtual tracks" that can be reconfigured to meet shifts in demand. Three different modes of operation—including metro, bus, and on-demand—allow for flexibility and the ability for the vehicle to easily meet the needs of any transportation system. Several cities throughout the world have already initiated pilot programs or are planning on initiating pilot programs that utilize the EZ10 autonomous vehicle. EZ10s

have been deployed throughout Europe, Asia, and Australia, and the first shuttles to begin operation in the US started in the summer of 2016 in San Francisco.

While driverless vehicles are not entirely new, the EZ10 is one of the few commercially available vehicles that is intended to be utilized in a transit system. Similar vehicles have been in operation at London Heathrow Airport since 2011, but they operate along a physical guideway, rather than a more flexible "virtual track." Time will tell whether or not these vehicles will be adopted by transit agencies, but it is clear that the technology exists and that there is potential for this technology to be incorporated into transit systems.

DOTD ON THE GO...



One of the DOTD PT Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit providers in Louisiana in order to assist them in meeting their requirements for FTA funding. These activities come in many different formats and venues. DOTD PT provides numerous training courses, workshops, and training materials, as well as a website and an annual conference. To keep all of our constituents up to date on DOTD PT's activities, DOTD On The Go features just a few selected items each quarter.

SITE VISITS

Part of the outreach and assistance that LaDOTD provides to the Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311) and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers are site visits from the program managers. In the last quarter, LaDOTD conducted three site visits to 5310 providers (Beauregard ARC, Calcasieu VCOA, and Calcasieu ARC), and one site visit to 5311 providers (St. Helena COA).

OUTREACH

To further the goal of providing some form of public transportation in all 64 parishes, as listed in the Louisiana Vision 2020 Plan, LaDOTD has been conducting educational visits to all the parishes in Louisiana that do not currently have some form of public transit service. Last quarter LaDOTD completed outreach for St. Bernard Parish and for Caddo and Bossier parishes' JARC program.

TRAINING

DOTD staff provided LA-TEAM Online Application training in January and STARS training at DOTD in February and March for Section 5310 providers receiving operating assistance. DOTD also held an online Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Recertification training, a Vehicle Maintenance Management and Inspection (VMMI) Workshop, Microsoft Word training, and Effective, Efficient Dispatching and Scheduling training. Future training opportunities include Microsoft Excel training in April and Certified Community Transit Manager (CCTM) training in May.

If your agency or someone within your agency deserves recognition for a job well done, or has already received recognition or an award, please let us know. Email or send a brief description, photos, and contact information to Michelle.Horne@la.gov or to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development/Public Transit Section, attn: Michelle Horne, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804.

Capital expenditures for transit providers are funded in large part through federal grants, which are tied to the Highway Trust Fund. The Fund is sourced from the federal gas tax which has not increased since 1993. Due to inflation, the value of the gas tax has decreased by 40%. Moreover, improving vehicle fuel efficiency means that the Trust Fund revenue per mile driven is decreasing considerably. The Report calls for broad overhauls in the funding of transportation infrastructure, including public transit, to bring services into a state of good repair and to allow for future innovation.

The Report points to several developments that are likely to affect the future of transit services. From a funding perspective, many

taxpayers in cities across the U.S. are willing to support ballot measures to improve local transit services. In 2016, nearly 70% of local transit-related ballot measures passed, with voters committing \$200 billion in spending. To reduce operating costs and decrease their environmental impact, many transit providers are turning to alternative fuel sources. While diesel is used to power most buses, 2015 saw 30% of buses fueled by compressed natural gas, liquid natural gas, propane, hydrogen, or battery power. The Report highlights opportunities for transit service providers to piggyback on recent transportation and technological innovations. Bikeshare and carshare services offer opportunities to fill in transit service gaps and address the “first-mile/last-mile” challenge.

Smartphone and GPS technology can provide real-time information to passengers and allow riders to better plan their journeys.

Despite these opportunities to innovate and provide new services, the ASCE recommends that transit providers prioritize current challenges. In order to raise the grade, policymakers should focus on fixing the Highway Trust Fund and prioritizing transit funding at the state and local level. For transit service providers, priorities should include reducing the backlog of rehabilitation needs, especially in fixed-guideway services; focusing on ensuring reliable, attractive service that meets the needs of core transit users; and smart management of current assets in order to minimize long-term costs.

FROM CAPITOL HILL...

In February, APTA released a toolkit to help public transportation agencies reach out to Congressional Representatives and advocate for not only continuing the federal transit program but increasing investment in transit and transportation infrastructure. The toolkit encourages agencies to meet with members of Congress, Congressional staff, and elected officials to explain the importance and benefits of transit to the communities and businesses served by public transportation.

The toolkit provides talking points and guidance to help agencies convey the need for public transportation and includes customizable invitations for agencies to invite members of Congress to visit the communities in which the agencies operate. Some of the main talking points include strong return on investment, universal benefits, bipartisan support, economic growth, and better communities. The toolkit also provides informational materials, as well as a contact list and social media information for all the Senators and Representatives. The overall purpose of the APTA toolkit is to equip public transportation agencies with the materials necessary to promote transit and encourage increased investment in transit resources from the new Administration.

The toolkit can be found here: <http://www.apta.com/members/memberprogramsandservices/advocacyandoutreachtools/august-extension-toolkit/Pages/default.aspx>

