



## Public Transportation Concerns Over Rising Fuel Costs

In 2007, Americans took the most public transit trips in 50 years, and in the first three months of 2008, Americans took almost 85 million more transit trips than in the same period last year.

Public transportation provides an affordable alternative to driving, saving the average household \$6,251 every year. Public transportation reduces dangerous carbon dioxide emissions by more than 4,800 pounds per year per person (according to recent studies), and yet nearly half (46%) of the population has no access to public transit.

However, the huge increases in the cost of gasoline and especially diesel are having an increasingly negative impact on public transportation agencies and their ability to serve the increased ridership. Since 2004, the price of diesel has increased from \$1.25 to \$3.32 a gallon, an increase of 166% in just four years (figures reported as of April 1, 2008).

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) conducted a survey of member agencies in April of 2008 to determine the effect of rising fuel costs on public transportation agencies. The survey concluded that... "APTA member agencies are experiencing a rapid increase in fuel and electricity prices affecting agency budgets, fare policies, operations, and fuel purchasing strategies.

Since 2004, the price of diesel has increased from \$1.25 to \$3.32 a gallon, an increase of 166% in just four years (figures reported as of April 1, 2008).

*The survey results indicate a distinct difference in cost escalation between diesel fuel and electricity. While diesel prices have almost tripled in just four years, electricity prices have increased less than 20 percent. Agencies relying more heavily on diesel to power public transportation vehicles, most often bus operators, are likely facing the most immediate and substantial effects on operating budgets.*

*Agencies are responding with increased fares, delayed service improvements, deferred capital investments, additional funding from state and local sources and in some cases, service cuts. At the same time, nearly all agencies are experiencing increases in ridership. Increased fare revenue is unable to generate sufficient revenue to offset increases in fuel costs and transit agencies have had to take budgetary actions over time, including fare increases and service adjustments. Agencies are attempting to reduce fuel costs through various changes in purchasing strategy, though no clear consistency in approach is occurring. Many are also facing increased difficulty in obtaining long-term contracts, leav-*

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# Notes from the Top

*by Donna Lavigne*

This has been a very busy quarter for the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), Public Transportation Section staff. We hosted several workshops, participated in the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Roadeo and Expo in New Orleans while continuing to plan for our 2008 Public Transit Conference.

The DOTD PT staff hosted and sponsored the first CRRAFT training workshop, a Human Services Transportation Coordination Workshop and the CTAA Supervisory Skills Training. A total of 30 rural transit providers attended the CRRAFT Training. The training provided an overview of the CRRAFT software and prepared the transit providers for the next phase of implementation. The Human Services Transportation Coordination Workshop was very successful.

J.D. Allen and Debra Harvey with Alliance Transportation Group presented information on the Transportation Coordination efforts in Louisiana. The participants included Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), Rural transit systems, and Elderly and Disabled specialized systems. The presentation included the history of coordination in Louisiana, possible opportunities, and challenges for coordination. It was evident from the participation and networking that everyone enjoyed the workshop and developed a new understanding of transportation coordination. The Spotlight article in this newsletter provides more information on the coordination workshop. For those who were unable to attend, please feel free to visit the Public Transportation website at <http://www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit/> to review the coordination information presented at the workshop.

The DOTD PT staff attended the CTAA Expo Conference in New Orleans on June 1-6, 2008. Harold Beck, Public Transportation Assistant Administrator, and Mike Watts, Elderly and Disabled Program Manager, provided valuable assistance and served as Roadeo judges. Congratulations to all the drivers that participated, espe-

cially the Livingston Council on Aging for receiving the "most spirited" award. Special thanks to Jefferson COA, Lafourche COA, Lafourche ARC, St. Charles ARC, St. Charles COA, St. Tammany ARC, and Special Educational District No. 1 for providing vehicles for the CTAA Roadeo.

We are happy to announce that you will be greeted by a new face in the Rural Program – that of Ms. Debra Lang. Debra is the new Rural Program Manager and previously worked in the DOTD Information Technology Section. Debra has experience in areas of budgeting, fiscal management, purchasing, and managing contracts.

All of you attending the conference in September will get a chance to meet and welcome Debra to the world of public transit.

The Annual Public Transportation Conference is around the corner

and we are all excited about the conference agenda and attendance. The conference will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in New Orleans September 15-18, 2008. Our Keynote speaker is Dr. William D. Ankner, Secretary, LA DOTD. Dr. Ankner will speak at the Welcome Luncheon on September 16, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. He is an advocate of transit and believes transportation is a system, not simply a mode of travel, like highways. The conference will provide an excellent opportunity to network with your colleagues and learn about the latest federal and state issues. If you have not yet registered, see the information on the Announcements Page of this newsletter or visit our website at [www.dotd.louisiana.gov/intermodal/transit/](http://www.dotd.louisiana.gov/intermodal/transit/)

I would like to give special thanks to our consultant, Mr. J.D. Allen and his colleagues at Alliance Transportation Group for their diligence over the past three years in providing the Public Transportation Section with excellent assistance.

Thank you for your continued support of public transit and we look forward to seeing you at our conference. 



# Announcements

## 2008 Annual Public Transit Conference

**When:**

**September 15-18, 2008**

**Where:**

**Sheraton New Orleans Hotel**

**Theme:**

**Public Transit: A Continued Commitment to Quality Customer Service—Inside and Out**

**More Information:**

**Contact Wanda Walker at (225) 274-4302  
or by email at [WandaWalker@dotd.la.gov](mailto:WandaWalker@dotd.la.gov)**

**Registration and Reservations:**

**[www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit](http://www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit)**

**Hurry—the deadline for hotel conference rates is August 22nd**

## Events Calendar

### APTA Conferences

State Public Transit Partnerships  
Conference  
August 5-7, 2008 Providence, RI

Annual Meeting & Expo  
October 5-8, 2008 San Diego, CA

Bus Technical, Maintenance &  
Procurement Workshop  
October 5-8, 2008 San Diego, CA

For more information: [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

### Other Upcoming Conferences/Training:

SWTA ADA & Paratransit Workshop  
August 17-19, 2008 Corpus Christi, TX

SWTA Transit Marketing Seminar  
Sept. 7-9, 2008 Oklahoma City, OK

For more information: [www.swta.org](http://www.swta.org)

TRB 18th National Rural Public &  
Intercity Bus Transportation Conference  
October 19-22, 2008 Omaha, NE

For more information: [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org)

### LA DOTD Public Transportation

Annual Public Transit Conference 2008  
Sept. 15-18, 2008 New Orleans, LA

For information: [www.dotd.la.gov](http://www.dotd.la.gov)

### NTI Courses:

For information: [www.ntionline.com](http://www.ntionline.com)

### Transportation Safety Institute Classes

Courses are offered around the country  
on various topics throughout the year.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.tsi.dot.gov](http://www.tsi.dot.gov)



Spotlight on...

## DOTD Holds Workshop on Public Transportation Coordination

Human Services Transportation Coordination has been a hot topic for the past several years. The concept began many decades ago, but has recently been given new life through several federal initiatives.

In 1995, President Bush signed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. SAFETEA-LU mandated that all Section 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317 programs be part of a locally developed human services transportation coordination plan by 2007. In addition, President Bush signed an Executive Order in 2004 mandating that all federal agencies that fund transportation services expand their coordination efforts.

In response to the SAFETEA-LU mandates, DOTD Public Transportation provided consultant assistance to regional planning agencies across Louisiana during 2007 to develop regional coordination plans. Those plans outlined the potential for coordination in each of the eight coordination districts identified by DOTD. Those districts were identified in the Statewide Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan that DOTD developed to tie the eight regions together.

In an effort to strengthen coordination efforts across Louisiana, DOTD PT recently held a workshop on human ser-

vices transportation coordination. The workshop was a HUGE success. Several regional planning agencies showed up along with many of the rural transportation providers.

The workshop was held in late June at the Cypress Bend Resort near Many, LA. Cypress Bend provided a great atmosphere for the workshop. The facilities are located on Toledo Bend Lake and are surrounded by a golf course and a nice nature trail through the piney forests. The conference facilities are first rate.

Workshop attendees were provided with up to date information on the latest coordination efforts in Louisiana and across the nation. However, the highlight of the workshop was the interaction between providers and planners from each region.

Most of the providers knew each other from their contact and networking at the Annual Conference and other DOTD sponsored workshops. Everyone in attendance learned something new about what others in their area were doing and how they might help each other or further coordination efforts in their area.

To further strengthen this effort, DOTD has offered funding to the regional planning agencies to update their regional coordination plans and provide leadership in the coordination planning efforts in their region. Look for more on this topic in the months to come. 

One of the DOTD PT Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit



providers in Louisiana 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 material 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.

#### **Sponsored CTAA Certification Course**

The DOTD PT Section recently sponsored a CTAA Certified Community Transit Supervisory workshop held July 16-18 in New Orleans. The training was for front-line transit managers and supervisors. This training addressed core supervisory skills in front line management, human resource management, operations and safety management, and performance-based management. Twenty seven people attended and took a test to become a Certified Community Transportation Supervisor (CCTS).

#### **Fixed Guideway Safety & Security Training**

Harold Beck, Assistant Public Transportation Administrator, recently attended a Transit Rail Incident Investigation Class in St. Louis, MO. The course is part of a certification that Harold is obtaining to enhance DOTD's role as the State Safety Oversight Agency. DOTD is charged with overseeing safety & security related to fixed guideway operations such as the streetcars in New Orleans. Harold will be attending two more courses to complete the certification this year.

#### **Transportation Coordination in Louisiana**

DOTD held a workshop to further the human services transportation coordination effort in Louisiana. Many of the rural provider agencies and several of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations were in attendance. The workshop was held June 26-27 at the Cypress Bend Conference Resort. Attendees learned about coordination efforts in Louisiana and in their region. DOTD has committed resources to further regional coordination efforts during the coming months and years. For more information, see the 'Spotlight' article on Page 4.

#### **First CRRRAFT Training Class**

DOTD held the first training class to begin implementing CRRRAFT in Louisiana. The Alliance for Transportation Research Institute came to Baton Rouge for an initial training course on CRRRAFT in late May. The CRRRAFT software will be primarily web-based and provide a mechanism for scheduling rides, invoicing, and tracking vehicle maintenance. The CRRRAFT software will be implemented over the next several months.

#### **In The Spotlight**

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

#### ***Contact Information Announcement***

In our attempt to keep everyone informed of special events, workshops, conferences, and important information regarding public transportation in Louisiana, DOTD PT maintains a Contact Database. If information about your organization - new phone number, new director, new address or email - has changed, please help us keep our database current. Email your updated information to: [publictransportation@dotd.la.gov](mailto:publictransportation@dotd.la.gov)

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*ing agencies more vulnerable to future fuel increases. Overall, the rapid increase in fuel prices is clearly having a notable impact on agency operations."*

Another significant fact detailed in the report is that... "On an annual basis, public transportation providers consume more than 760 million gallons of diesel and gasoline and more than 5.8 billion kilowatt hours of electricity. For every penny added to the cost of diesel and gasoline, public transportation providers face an increased cost of more than \$7.6 million dollars. In just a four year period, the share of operating costs dedicated to fuel has increased from just over 6 percent to almost 11 percent."

As more people choose public transportation over driving their cars, public transportation's ability to meet the increased demand is being compromised by that same increase in fuel costs coupled with a sluggish economy. In response, Congress is taking up the battle cry.

On June 26, the House of Representatives passed the "Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act, H.R. 2052." The bill gives grants to mass transit authorities to reduce public transit fares giving consumers a cost-effective alternative to \$4 per gallon gasoline. The bill's \$1.7 billion in mass transit grants for the next two years could also be used to expand transit services and for escalating operating costs of public transportation; the money would be available to both rural and urban areas. The bill also:

- ✓ Requires that all Federal agencies offer their employees transit pass transportation fringe benefits. Currently, federal agencies within the National Capital Region have successful transit pass benefits programs.
- ✓ Increases the Federal cost-share of grants for construction of additional parking facilities at the end of subway lines from 80 to 100 percent to cover an increase in the number of people taking mass transit.
- ✓ Creates a pilot program for vanpool demonstration projects in urban and rural areas.

- ✓ Increases federal help for local governments to purchase alternative fuel buses, locomotives and ferries from 90 to 100 percent.

Further action by Congress on the bill is uncertain. The Senate may not consider a similar bill and the Bush Administration is opposed to the bill's use of federal funds for operating purposes.

However, it is clear that fuel cost will likely continue to increase. The expected increase will have two competing results: 1) more people will choose public transportation over driving their cars, and 2) public transportation agencies will continue to struggle to meet the new demand. The federal government and states will have to step up the plate to meet this oncoming crisis.

For more on legislative action or the full APTA survey results, visit [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com) 



## From Capital Hill...

On July 23, the House passed the Highway Trust Fund Restoration Act, H.R. 6532. This critical legislation is needed to address a projected shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund and help achieve the funding levels for highways and public transportation authorized by SAFETEA-LU of 2005. The bill restores \$8.017 billion in highway-user taxes to the Highway Trust Fund that were transferred from the Trust Fund in 1998. 