



PROPOSED SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL: THE GROW AMERICA ACT



Fixing and Accelerating Surface Transportation (FAST): Jointly administered by the FTA and FHWA, this program would introduce a \$1 billion per year competitive grant program “designed to incentivize State, local, and private stakeholders to demonstrate forward-leaning solutions to transportation challenges in areas such as safety, congestion management, environmental performance, or regional collaboration” (USDOT, 2014b).

According to the United State Department of Transportation (USDOT), President Obama and Secretary of Transportation Foxx have presented their proposed multi-year surface transportation bill to Congress. Titled the Generating Renewal, Opportunity, and Work with Accelerated Mobility, Efficiency, and Rebuilding of Infrastructure and Communities throughout America Act or GROW AMERICA Act, this is a four-year and \$302 billion reauthorization proposal. Funding for this Act is proposed in the form of current revenues supplemented by \$150 billion in one-time transition revenue from “pro-growth business tax reform” (USDOT, 2014c).

For transit, this Act proposes an average annual increase in transit spending of almost 70 percent by calling for \$72 billion over the four years to expand transportation options and to invest in transit systems (USDOT, 2014b). The following new transit programs and modifications to existing transit programs have been proposed:

NEW PROGRAMS

Rapid Growth Area Transit Program: According to USDOT this program would help fast-growing communities establish bus rapid transit (BRT) systems as one component of their transportation bundle by providing capital funds on a competitive basis.

Local Hiring: Currently prohibited by federal regulations, this program would allow the use of local hiring preferences in contracts that use Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for projects that meet the following conditions:

- Cost is over \$10 million, and
- Work is in an area with a low per capita income, OR
- Work is in an area with higher than average unemployment

USDOT says that the use of preferences may not compromise the quality, schedule, or cost of a project, and may not require the hiring of workers without the skills necessary to complete the job (USDOT, 2014b).

CHANGES TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

Bus and Bus Facilities Program: Under GROW AMERICA, 10 percent or more of this program’s funds would be distributed to rural transit agencies. Overall, this program would see an increase in funding, and a discretionary, competitive process would be introduced for dissemination of 30 percent of the program funds, while 70 percent would follow current formula distribution. Finally, the statutory requirement that funds be channeled through a designated recipient would be removed, allowing State and local government entities that operate fixed-route bus service to become eligible to secure grant funds directly (USDOT, 2014b).

Workforce Development: FTA’s workforce development efforts would be expanded by the creation of a new Ladders of Opportunity Program, and the establishment of a new Public Transit Institute to replace the current National Transit Institute. Additionally, transit agencies would be permitted to use up to 0.5 per-

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NOTES FROM THE TOP



BY DONNA LAVIGNE

We are moving forward in developing our online grant application and management system. Training on the new online grant application – LA-TEAM (Louisiana Transit Electronic Application Management) system will be included in the agenda during our fall application review workshops. Stay tuned for more information regarding the progress of the online grant application.

During the month of July, we conducted one-day mandatory meetings for our Section 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317 Executive Directors and their Transit Coordinators in three locations across the state. These one-day meetings provide an opportunity for Executive Directors and their Transit Coordinators to discuss program requirements, federal funding availability, safety and security requirements, training opportunities, as well as share innovative ideas, and network with peers. DOTD staff will also be available to provide one-on-one technical assistance to address agency concerns following the meeting. Meetings were conducted on July 14, 15, 21, and 22. Tentative meetings are still scheduled for July 31 and August 1, 2014.

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 special client. We want the transit newsletter to be an informative publication that addresses issues of interest to you and others.

Thanks for your continued support of public transit. We look forward to working with your transit agency this fiscal year and look forward to seeing you at the director's meetings!

It's been a very busy year..... As we close-out FY 2014 and prepare for the new fiscal year, below is a highlight of this year's activities and accomplishments.

- Hosted the 2013 Annual Public Transit Conference resulting in an 85% customer satisfaction rate
- Conducted 11 Workshops state-wide
- Conducted 37 Site Visits state-wide
- Conducted 11 Outreach Meetings
- Executed FY 2015 Operating Contracts

Kudos to the Public Transportation Staff for their hard work in exceeding the 2014 Public Transportation Goals!

Since our last newsletter, we've had some changes in the Public Transportation Section's staff. Jamie Ainsworth and Tina Athalone, have both been promoted to DOTD program managers. Jamie is the new Rural Transit program manager and Tina now serves as the Elderly and Disabled Program Manager. Also, joining our team is Dortha Cummins, the new Training Program Manager. Dortha comes with a wealth of experience including conducting trainings, marketing, procurement, and safety.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

STAY TUNED FOR
INFORMATION ON
MANDATORY
DIRECTOR'S MEETINGS
TENTATIVELY
SCHEDULED FOR JULY
AND AUGUST



NTI COURSES

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

AUG 27 - 28

Introduction to Transit Asset Management Oakland, CA

SEPT 30 - OCT 2

Public Involvement in Transportation Decisionmaking Columbia, SC

APTA COURSES

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

AUG 11 - 13

2014 Multimodal Operations Planning Workshop Chicago, IL

AUG 13 - 15

State Public Transportation Partnership Conference .. Philadelphia, PA

FTA TRAINING

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: <https://transit-safety.fta.dot.gov>

JULY 28 - AUG 1

Instructors Course in Bus/ Paratransit
Operator Training..... Salt Lake City, UT

SWTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: www.swta.org

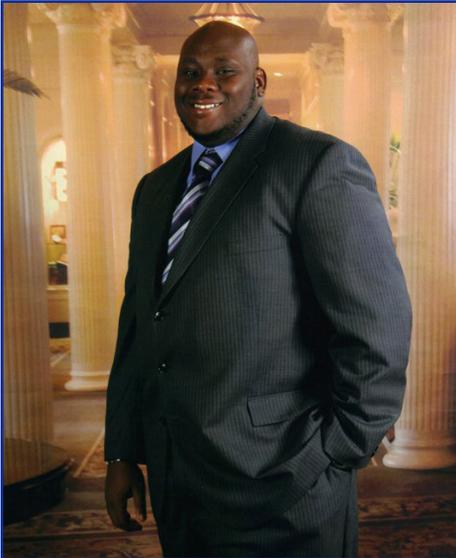
AUG 18 - 20

The SWTA Community Mobility PLUS
NCMM Performance Measures Workshop..... Flagstaff, AZ

Registration is now open. For more information, visit:
http://www.swta.org/news_events/details/swta_community_mobility_workshop

SPOTLIGHT ON...

SPORTRAN'S NEWEST GENERAL MANAGER, DINERO' WASHINGTON



Public transportation has been an integral part of the Shreveport area for many years. SporTran traces its history to the 1870s with mule-drawn street cars. Electricity replaced the mules in the 1890s, and then rubber-tired trolleys replaced the street cars in the 1930s. Gasoline-powered buses became part of the fleet in the 1950s, followed by diesel in the 1970s. Today, SporTran runs on "clean diesel" with engines that reduce emissions. Some buses are hybrid and the newest buses and cutaways are powered by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). The current fleet includes 50 buses (14 CNG) on 23 fixed routes.

LiftLine, the Demand Response Paratransit Service, operates 18 paratransit vehicles (3 CNG) to maximize mobility for customers with disabilities. Three new CNG cutaways will be added to the fleet this August and SporTran hopes to have all paratransit vehicles using CNG by 2016.

SporTran's newest General Manager, Dinero' Washington took the reins in October 2013 and has been with the agency since December 2011. He was born and raised in Shreveport, attending Captain Shreve High School. He received his Bachelor's Degree at Northwestern State University and completed his MBA at Strayer University. In addition to his responsibilities as SporTran GM, Dinero' also has recently

agreed to serve as the next Louisiana Public Transit Association (LPTA) Board President beginning August 1, 2014. In his spare time, he loves spending time with his wife and kids and playing music.

Dinero' is excited about SporTran's "Next Generation Campaign." It is intended to attract new ridership by utilizing advanced technology. The plan will be implemented in three phases.

Phase 1: "Where's My Ride" - With this app, riders will be able to track real-time locations of Shreveport buses via computer or mobile device. In addition, "Plan My Trip" - with Google Transit Trip Planner, riders will be able to plan a trip using station, route, stop and schedule information on Google maps. Phase 2: Mobile Ticketing - with a mobile app, riders will be able to purchase tickets and provide identification needed for special services all from their cell phone or other mobile device. Phase 3: Broadening the online access of the ridership by providing Wi-Fi access on buses.

SporTran has designed and will shortly break ground on a beautiful new Downtown Intermodal Transfer Center that will open late 2015. It will be located between I-20 and I-49 to provide easy access to interstate travel via Greyhound. They will be restructuring routes to provide even better service to riders in Shreveport and Bossier City.

As a part of SporTran "Safety Culture", a colorful ongoing safety initiative involves repainting the buses pink, orange, blue, purple and lime green. The bright colors are done with high visibility paint to draw the attention of both riders and drivers.

SporTran Family has taken to heart their new branding statement "We're Going Places" by working to build a safe, reliable, and respectful system for Shreveport and Bossier City, Louisiana.

SporTran recently participated in the national "Dump the Pump" campaign, promoted by the American Public Transit Association (APTA). Participating for the second year, the agency closed down two streets for a party with a DJ, games, and balloons for kids. They provided hot dogs (thousands), soft drinks, water, chips, popcorn and fun, in addition to free rides. Great local media coverage, donations by area merchants, and attendance by local officials helped make it a great success! On an average day, SporTran's ridership is 10,200. On Thursday, June 19th, SporTran transported an amazing 26,000 riders. For more information on "Dump the Pump," visit www.apta.com. For more information on SporTran, visit www.sportran.org.

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 DOTD provides to the Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311) and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers, are site visits from the program managers. LaDOTD conducted a total of 37 site visits for Rural, Elderly and Disabled, JARC and New Freedom during the 2013/ 2014 fiscal year. More recently, LaDOTD conducted site visits at Rapides ARC, St. Martin Parish, Terrebonne ARC, Greater King David Baptist, ARC of East Ascension, Calcasieu Parish, St. Mary Residential Training, and Cameron Parish.

OUTREACH

As most of you know, one of DOTD's primary goals is to provide some form of public transportation in all 64 parishes. It is a goal listed in the Louisiana Vision 2020 Plan. To further this goal, DOTD has been conducting educational visits to all of the parishes in Louisiana that do not currently have some form of public transportation service. Extensive outreach was conducted in 2013 and will continue in 2014. In May of this year, LaDOTD conducted an outreach meeting at the St. Charles ARC for JARC and New Freedom.

WORKSHOPS

In the second quarter of the year, DOTD hosted the following training opportunities:

- Substance Abuse Management;
- Reasonable Suspicion Training; and
- 4 Regional STARS Trainings.

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 Donna.Lavigne@la.gov or to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development/Public Transit Section, attn: Donna Lavigne, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804.

cent of their Urbanized Area Formula and Capital Investment Grant Programs funding for training under the Ladders of Opportunity Program and Public Transit Institute (USDOT, 2014b).

Buy America: GROW AMERICA would increase the domestic requirements for manufacturing rolling stock components and subcomponents to at least 70 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2016, at least 80 percent in FY 2017, at least 90 percent in FY 2018, and 100 percent by FY 2019. Final assembly in the U.S. would be required as it has been under MAP-21 (USDOT, 2014b).

Safety: Three main changes to this program would occur under the Act. First, an opt-out provision from the law's Safety Oversight Program would apply to states with fixed guideway public transportation systems,

which either have fewer than one million combined actual and projected revenue miles per year or provide fewer than 10 million combined actual and projected unlinked passenger trips per year. Second, the FTA's enforcement authority would be strengthened; and third, resources would be provided to fully carry out the program (USDOT, 2014b).

For more information on GROW AMERICA, as well as a roundup of organization reactions and evaluations, see:

<http://www.dot.gov/grow-america>

<http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/obama-transportation-proposal-seeks-%E2%80%9Cgrow-america%E2%80%9D>

<http://www.apta.com/mediacenter/press-releases/2014/Pages/140429.aspx>

<http://www.aashtojournal.org/Pages/News-ReleaseDetail.aspx?NewsReleaseID=1417>

Sources:

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). 2014a. "GROW AMERICA Act." Available: <http://www.dot.gov/grow-america>.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). 2014b. "Summary of Federal Transit Administration Provisions." GROW AMERICA Act. Available: <http://www.dot.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/GROW%20AMERICA%20Act%20-%20FTA%20Modal%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). 2014c. "GROW AMERICA: An Overview." Available: <http://www.dot.gov/grow-america/fact-sheets/overview>.

FROM CAPITOL HILL...

According to the Annual Report on Funding Recommendations issued by the United States Secretary of Transportation, the FTA is recommending \$2.5 billion in Capital Investment Grant Program funds for FY 2015. This \$2.5 billion would be distributed in the following way if the proposal is accepted:

- \$1.41 billion for existing Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGAs)
- \$578 million for proposed New Starts FFGAs
- \$275 million for Core Capacity Projects
- \$199 million for proposed Small Starts Grant Agreements
- \$37.5 million for management and oversight

This budget would promote the completion or construction of 26 rail, BRT, and streetcar projects in 16 states, and includes funding recommendations to complete federal funding commitments for 10 transit projects funded in prior years and funding for eight brand new projects.

Quoted in an FTA news release, Deputy Federal Transit Administrator Therese McMillan said, "Transit ridership across the United States is at its highest level in five decades... We must continue investing, together, in our nation's public transportation infrastructure, so future generations have the mobility they will need to succeed" (FTA, 2014b).

Sources:

Federal Transit Administration (FTA). 2014a. Annual Report on Funding Recommendations. Available: http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FY15_Annual_Report_3.3.14_final.pdf.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA). 2014b. "U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx Recommends \$2.5 Billion to Expand Transit Options that Improve Access to Jobs and Opportunities." Available: http://www.fta.dot.gov/newsroom/news_releases/12286_15879.html.

