State Transit Budget Increases for 2008-2009

By Marianne Freed, ODOT

ODOT is happy to announce that the State Transit Budget has increased to $21.7 million in SFY 2008 and $22 million in SFY 2009. The new 2008 budget represents a 33 percent increase over the 2007 budget of $16.3 million. The increase in transit funding was first proposed by Governor Strickland and strongly supported by Director Beasley. “Ohio cannot simply build its way out of congestion,” said ODOT Director James Beasley. “If we are going to turn-around Ohio and open a gateway to international commerce, we must fully embrace a multi-modal integrated approach to transportation. By putting more people in buses, we ease traffic congestion and preserve our highway conditions.”

Euclid Corridor Takes Shape

Courtesy of GCRTA

The Euclid Corridor Transportation Project (ECTP) consists of the design and construction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System from Public Square in downtown Cleveland to the City of East Cleveland, Ohio. The project is approximately 9.4 miles in length and is comprised of two major elements—the Euclid Avenue BRT element and the downtown Transit Zone BRT element.

The ECTP BRT element is 7.1 miles with 36 stations on Euclid Avenue between Cleveland’s Public Square and East Cleveland’s Stokes-Windermere Rapid Transit Station. It connects the Cleveland Central Business District to Playhouse Square, Cleveland State University, Cleveland Clinic, University Circle, Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals, and the Stokes-Windermere Rapid Transit Station in the City of East Cleveland.

GCRTA expects to move more than 20,000 people a day along the corridor. Because of off-board fare collection, larger vehicles, fewer stops, dedicated lanes and signal preemption, trip times are expected to be reduced by an estimated 26 percent. The total cost of the ECTP is budgeted at $188.4 million which includes $82.8 million from FTA, $75 million from the ODOT’s Transportation Review Advisory Council, $17.6 million from GCRTA, $10 million from the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency, and $8 million from the City of Cleveland.

Cleveland’s high temperatures and low precipitation during the month of June allowed construction to continue to forge ahead.

continues on page 2

In This Newsletter

Metro Using Shoulder to Avoid Congestion ........ 3  HATS Improves Efficiency with New Software... 6
Improve Your Maintenance Skills.................... 4  ESPA National News and Resources............... 6
Transportation Class Kickoff at Kent State ........ 4  PARTA ...Going Green! .............................. 7
GDRTA Turns Bus Stops into Public Art............ 5  What’s Happening in Transit? ..................... 8
Here are some noteworthy achievements:

- GCRTA’s 60-day on-site testing program of the Rapid Transit Vehicle (RTV) began the week of June 11, 2007. This is the first time articulated buses will be used in Ohio.
- The northeast quadrant of Public Square was opened on June 12, 2007.
- Crews completed paving the curb and transit lanes between East 18th and East 22nd Streets and completed the sidewalk paving from East 22nd Street to the Innerbelt on June 12, 2007.
- The Midtown station is underway when first kneewall was set on June 20, 2007.
- Installation of planters, median brick, pavement, sidewalks and ramps between the Innerbelt and East 55th Streets was completed on June 22, 2007.
- The first station at Euclid Avenue and East 40th Street was completed on June 29, 2007.

The ECTP has been a catalyst for regional business growth and jobs for Northeast Ohioans. All but two major contracts were awarded to Northeast Ohio companies. $121 million of $131 million of construction dollars or 92% have been awarded to prime contractors from Northeast Ohio. Ninety-four (94) different companies are, or will be working, on the ECTP.

ODOT participates in regular project management oversight meetings focusing on construction progress and challenges, vehicle acquisition, quality control and quality assurance, schedule, procurement issues, public outreach, and overall project management. The anticipated completion date of the project is December 31, 2008.
Commuters in Greater Cincinnati are now zipping alongside slow traffic on one of the region’s major highways.

Metro, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, began operating buses on I-71’s left shoulder to avoid traffic congestion on July 23, 2007.

Metro’s one-year pilot project was modeled after successful programs in Minneapolis and most recently in Columbus, Ohio in November 2006. The Central Ohio Transit Authority is using buses on the right shoulder of Interstate 70 (east side) between Miller/Kelton Avenues and State Route 256. However, Metro is the first system nationally to use buses on the left shoulder.

At the end of the one-year pilot period, performance measures will be used to evaluate the impact on transit operations, freeway operations and safety.

The goals of the project are:
• To reduce traffic by encouraging the use of Metro as a faster alternative
• To fully utilize the capacity of the highway system

The 11.7-mile Bus-on-Shoulder corridor is on I-71 northbound and southbound northeast of downtown Cincinnati, which frequently experiences traffic delays during rush hours. The corridor is served by Metro’s Rt. 71X Kings Island Express and Rt. 72 Kings Island. These routes provide about 900 rides per weekday.

The 12-ft.-wide shoulder lane is used when traffic slows below 30 mph. Buses are not permitted to go more than 15 mph faster than the speed of the highway traffic and buses can not exceed 35 mph on the shoulder.

Only Metro buses and emergency vehicles are permitted to use the shoulder; buses must yield to emergency vehicles. Metro bus operators who drive I-71 routes are being trained to safely use the shoulders.

ARTIMIS, the local traffic management agency, provides a direct fiber-optic feed with real-time camera images to Metro’s radio control center to monitor traffic in the area. ARTIMIS will also use its electronic highway signs to alert motorists to the use of the shoulder by buses.

Metro and the project partners have been working for more than a year on the development of the Bus-on-Shoulder project, which required approval from both ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration.

“This is a true multi-modal strategy for reducing congestion and increasing safety on our highways,” said Hans Jindal, ODOT District 8 Deputy Director. “We cannot build our way out of congestion, we must find creative ways to utilize the full capacity of our highway system and work to incorporate multi-modal solutions into our highway projects.”

“No one wants to sit in traffic. By using the shoulder lane, Metro will be able to get commuters to work and home faster than driving,” said Mike Setzer, Metro’s CEO. “That’s a real-time advantage that we believe will attract more people to transit. We’re grateful to ODOT for its leadership in making this innovative project happen, and to all of our partners for their support.”

Metro is a non-profit public service of the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, providing about 22 million rides per year in Greater Cincinnati.
Improve Your Maintenance Skills

By Kim White, ODOT

The Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Public Transit Association are pleased to present a vehicle maintenance fair on September 6 & 7, 2007, at Deer Creek Conference Center in Mt. Sterling, Ohio. The opening session will be Thursday evening with a guest speaker. Friday will consist of breakout sessions on preventive maintenance, safety, lift maintenance, securement devices, and other topics.

The vehicle maintenance fair is aimed at rural and small urban transit systems and Specialized Transportation Program agency personnel responsible for vehicle maintenance, recordkeeping, and safety programs. More information will be available in August 2007.

If you have any questions on the vehicle maintenance fair, please contact Kim White at 614-644-0301 or kim.white@dot.state.oh.us.

Transportation Class Kickoff at Kent State

By Kim White, ODOT

A public transit and human services transportation class will be offered for the first time during the fall semester, 2007, at Kent State University (KSU), Stark Campus.

The class is available to public transit and human service agency professionals as well as KSU students. The class is worth three (3) credit hours and will be offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:55 p.m. to 8:10 p.m. from August 27 to December 14, 2007. The class is listed as Geography 40195: Special Topics, Public and Human Services Transportation and provides entry level knowledge of transportation concepts and analysis of transportation issues facing human service agencies and public transit systems. Students will also get an overview of public transportation, modes of transportation, regional networks, funding, legislation, customer service, planning, contracting, coordination, and technology.

We anticipate that a second public transit and human service transportation class will be offered during the spring semester. KSU is considering the creation of a Public Transit and Human Service Transportation Certificate Program which is similar to the program created by Wright State University in 2006. KSU’s Certificate Program could include an internship and additional coursework. For more information on the Certificate Program, please contact Kim White at (614) 644-0301 or kim.white@dot.state.oh.us.
GDRTA Turns Bus Stops into Public Art

By Sharon Balderson, GDRTA

What do bus stops and sculpture have in common? Not much, usually. But the city of Kettering doesn’t see it that way. Kettering is working with the Greater Dayton RTA and a Dayton architect to turn its bus stops into public art that accommodates bus riders.

The city installed three newly designed bus stops in April 2007 and plans to integrate the same sculptural design into more of its stops and shelters throughout Kettering, according to Connie Campbell, Cultural Arts Superintendent.

The venture is a partnership between Kettering’s Art in Public Places Committee, the city’s Capital Improvements Program and the RTA. Money for the design came from the city’s public art program. Fabrication and installation of the stops is funded by RTA’s community grants program.

“This is what our community grants program is all about,” said RTA Executive Director Mark Donaghy. He praised the project for combining a practical purpose with art.

Dayton artist and architect Mary Rogero, of Rogero Buckman Architecture, answered a call to Ohio artists in 2005 to submit designs. Rogero’s design of welded red steel constructed forms was selected as the final choice for Kettering’s signature bus stop design.

Feedback from the public has been “really positive,” according to Campbell who was not aware of any negative responses to the new designs.

Rogero believes her background in sculpture and her design concept suited the project. “The shelter had to adapt to a lot of conditions. So it had to be a design that worked for two people, or four, or six. And it had many criteria, so I decided to do the design in a series of component parts that could be added to or subtracted from, depending upon the site,” she said.

The components include overhead shelters, benches, and trash receptacles and each stop contains some or all of the components as needed. While the components may differ from site to site, the overall design with its ruby red color was meant to become a consistent identity throughout Kettering. Fabrication was completed by Budde Sheet Metal of Dayton under Rogero’s supervision.
HATS Improves Efficiency with New Software
By Kathryn Cox, HATS and Lucy Valerius, HHWP

Hancock Area Transportation Services (HATS), a rural transit program in Northwest Ohio, is doing things a little more efficiently these days, thanks to the implementation of RouteMatch software for scheduling and routing trips and collecting program data.

Thanks to a capital grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation and a year’s worth of leg work by HATS staff and volunteers from the Marathon Petroleum Company, the RouteMatch scheduling system was installed to “go live” on December 5, 2006.

Six months later, we are now using the software’s optimizing feature to create routes in the computer. According to RouteMatch, we are the first user in Ohio to have the optimizing feature. The optimizing feature allows us to create routes based on vehicle availability, drivers’ hours, and geographic information. We have also retooled our scheduling/dispatching department. Instead of the two scheduler/dispatchers doing the same job, we were able to divide their duties more efficiently by allowing one person to answer calls and book trips while the other person creates routes and prepares driver manifests.

HATS is operated by the Hancock Hardin Wyandot Putnam (HHWP) Community Action Commission and is the primary user of the software. The software also has mapping capabilities for Hancock and Putnam Counties and provides program updates via the internet. In a recent agency audit, the software allowed us to produce useful reports quickly.

We find that the use of this software has helped us move away from the “chicken scratch” method of counting and reporting trips, miles, and accident data. By the end of 2007, our goal is to provide more trips in fewer miles. We are working hard to accomplish our goal.

ESPA National News and Resources

Courtesy of Easter Seals Project Action

Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) operates a national toll-free information line that is answered between 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday-Friday. ESPA can answer questions about ADA rights and responsibilities as they pertain to transportation services, direct callers to additional resources, and help members of the disability and transportation communities address many kinds of accessibility issues. For 24-hour access to information, answers to frequently-asked questions, fact sheets, and links to other resources, visit the Web site at www.projectaction.org.

The following excerpts were taken from the National news and resources article in the June 2007 ESPA UPDATE.

Emergency evacuation planning guide published
A new Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities was released in March by the National Fire Protection Association. The document provides general information to assist in identifying the needs of people with disabilities related to emergency evacuation planning.

www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=824

Volunteer driver liability researched

The National Conference of State Legislatures has released a report funded by AARP that examines state laws and practices related to insurance and liability for volunteer drivers. According to AARP, volunteer drivers are a vital resource for many programs that provide transportation services to older adults and people with disabilities. However, liability issues associated with the use of volunteer drivers can present obstacles to the provision of these services.

www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/vol_driverliabl06.pdf
The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) in Kent, Ohio is committed to providing safe, affordable and friendly transportation services that facilitate mobility and opportunities in Portage County. PARTA provides a multimodal alternative transportation network that not only sustains the region’s economic vitality but preserves and enhances the region’s quality of life.

Everyday PARTA is making strides to pursue exceptional quality of service for the community and our environment. A little over a year ago, life took PARTA in a new direction, a green direction that we intend to cultivate. It was something Brian Trautman, Director of Maintenance/Operations, had been following for fifteen years. He was just waiting for the right moment and low and behold, in August 2005, the time was right. Bio-based products had become a viable option for PARTA.

PARTA teamed up with Renewable Lubricants Inc. and history was in the making. Today, PARTA uses numerous Bio-based products; two different types of Bio-Power Diesel fuel conditioners, Bio-Penetrating Lubricants and Bio-based greases. These products improve fuel economy, increase horsepower, reduce exhaust emissions, and extend equipment and machine life without heavy metals or other environmentally harmful additives. PARTA and other organizations that use soybean oil products not only support our local community farmers, but reduce the United States’ dependence on foreign oil. In addition, Brian Trautman states, “These environmentally friendly conservation practices uphold our company’s policy to maintain efficient and effective operations which promote environmental accountability from cradle to grave. Due to the quality and longevity of the bio-products, our oil changes are nearly cut in half compared to when we used petroleum products.” By using these products, PARTA has done its best to get the most out of an ancient fleet and has avoided the exorbitant cost of placing systems on engines to neutralize emissions. “We found a solution rather than a band-aid for the problem,” Brian proudly proclaimed, “and we look forward to the day when we can say that everything that goes into our buses is manufactured in Northeast Ohio.”

Needless to say, the “PARTA...Going Green” enthusiasm didn’t stop there; it sparked a wildfire of innovation in the organization. Bryan Smith, PARTA Business Development Manager, in association with Geauga County Transit, Kotting Consulting, and Trapeze Group had a dream to design a Coordinated Regional ITS system to improve transportation across county lines. In February 2007, this team of dedicated organizations received a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to make that dream happen. “Our purpose is to create a state of the art centralized call center that serves as a convenient access point for all consumers who require transportation; including trip planning, real-time traveler information and automatic trip reservations.” Bryan went on to say, “Coordinated transit is essential for the riders of today, and it stimulates and encourages cooperation and innovation within the organizations involved.” PARTA recognizes that this type of collaboration and resource sharing not only curbs rising transportation costs but allows each organization to deliver the best quality service possible.

Like energy in motion, the spark continued to grow and on March 13, 2007, PARTA received the “Success in Enhancing Ridership” award from the FTA. Soon after, PARTA added four new buses to the fleet. “We began with a small idea and watched it blossom into a holistic way of doing business,” states Frank Hairston, Marketing/EEO Director. PARTA has taken the notion “Wherever Life Takes You” to heart and is calling on all public transit systems to follow PARTA’s lead and become a blueprint for the nation. “We envision being the catalyst of change that ignites other transit systems to emulate the PARTA ...Going Green approach to public transportation.”
What’s Happening in Transit?

By Dave Seech, ODOT

• On June 21, 2007, the American Public Transportation Association and the Ohio Public Transit Association invited everyone to participate in the Second Annual National Dump The Pump Day. The day was dedicated to raising awareness that public transportation helps to improve the environment and conserve fuel. It also offers an opportunity to showcase public transportation as the best way to travel. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority participated in the event by sponsoring a Join the Ride event and a downtown rally. Celebrities from Northeast Ohio hosted the rally, and RTA’s staff advised commuters on routes schedules to make the switch from driving to riding. The Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority celebrated on Courthouse Square with local politicians, celebrities, organizations, and the general public. GDRTA set up information booths, served refreshments, and displayed their latest fuel efficient vehicles.

• On July 2, 2007, the Licking County Transit Board (LCTB) celebrated five (5) years of providing public transportation. In 2002, the LCTB provided 27,712 one-way passenger trips using seven (7) vehicles. In 2007, LCT anticipates providing 45,000 trips using 15 vehicles. The LCTB is also the lead agency in the coordination of transportation services for social service agency clients. The coordination effort includes over 35 agencies that work together to increase transportation options for all Licking County residents.

• On July 13, 2007, Senior Enrichment Services celebrated its 35th anniversary. Senior Enrichment Services operates Huron County Transit in Norwalk, Ohio.

• The City of Logan has designated Hocking Athens Perry Community Action the transit service provider for the City of Logan. Logan Public Transit began providing service July 9, 2007. Under the leadership of the Transit Director, Norm Gary, Logan Public Transit provides service with three transit vehicles and operates weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

• On May 16, 2007, the Ohio Public Transit Association elected new officers for one year terms. They are: President – Joseph Calabrese, General Manager, GCRTA; Vice President – Charles Odimgbe, Executive Director, SARTA; Secretary/Treasurer – Richard Schultze, Executive Director, Greene CATS; Vice President/Small – Kristina Fenselon, Director of Transportation Geauga County Transit; Vice President Associate – Charles Nelson, President, Nelson Development Ltd.

• On May 16, 2007, the Ohio Public Transit Association presented the Optimist Awards for: Best Marketing On A Shoestring, Stark Area RTA, #1 in America; Best Special Event, GCRTA, No Drive Day; Best Web Site, PARTA, www.partaonline.org; Best Web Site, SORTA, www.go-metro.com; Best Print Brochure, Bus Stop Café, Akron Metro; Leonard Ronis Excellence in Transit Award, Ted Bergh, SORTA/METRO. ©