

## \$8.4 million in federal money to boost Votran's green efforts

Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas, along with Volusia County Council members and representatives from Votran, recently announced an \$8.4 million investment for Votran from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Votran will use the funds to purchase new electric hybrid buses, increase accessibility for passengers, and convert facilities to green buildings. The funds cannot be used for operating expenses. Votran plans to use the ARRA funds to:

- Upgrade a planned bus replacement of five vehicles with hybrid-electric powered buses rather than standard diesel engines and purchase three vehicle replacements advanced from 2009-2010 (for a total of \$4,858,507);
- Purchase four buses (cost of upgrade to electric-hybrid) to provide transit connections to SunRail, a commuter rail system expected to be operational in 2011 (\$354,438);
- Upgrade a planned bus replacement of five paratransit vehicles to hybrid-electric powered buses rather than standard diesel engines (\$700,000);
- Make improvements to local area infrastructure that will increase passenger accessibility (\$500,000); and
- Reduce fuel consumption by conduct-

ing an assessment of facilities to identify progressive solutions to reduce consumption, save energy and lower expenses (\$2,007,180).

"We strive for a consistent planning approach, so Votran has targeted system improvements that are consistent with the most recent transit development plan," said Lois Bollenback, Votran general manager. "Goals pursuing green initiatives, passenger amenities, and fleet replacement are supported by the allocation of ARRA funds."

Votran also has targeted basic infrastructure enhancements that improve accessibility to public transit.

Wheelchair ridership on Votran fixed route buses is up 25 percent this quarter. "It would be in the best interest of Votran to continue its proactive efforts to improve pedestrian access, including repairing and installing sidewalks, curb cuts and landing pads adjacent to bus stops," said Volusia County Chair Frank Bruno. "These items are essential for our senior and disabled populations and create a better atmosphere for all riders."

"Now is the time to invest in infrastructure for the 21st century that will have the triple benefit of boosting the economy, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and decreasing carbon emissions," added Bruno.



## A message from the General Manager

Over the past several years, I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to serve as the Votran general manager. So it is with sadness that I share with you that I am stepping down as Votran's general manager near the end of May.

My experiences on the Votran team have been rewarding. I feel privileged to have worked with such an exceptional group of people. However, I have found it increasingly difficult to balance the needs of my family and the demands of leading an organization.

While my daughter is young and in her formative years, it's important to me that I spend more time on my top responsibility – being a mother. Nonetheless, this is a difficult decision for me because we have such a great organization at Votran. I appreciate the people we serve and I remain committed to the belief that public transit will play a key role in building a better and more sustainable future.

My tenure at Votran has been the most satisfying of my working career. I am extremely proud of the service we provide. We have a top-notch staff of drivers, mechanics, support and administrative personnel and they serve the community with dedication and professionalism. Certainly, I will miss working with them.

You'll be pleased to know that McDonald Transit Associates, the company that manages Votran for Volusia County, is



VOTRAN AWARDED \$8.4 MILLION ARRA GRANT

U.S. Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas, fourth from left, Volusia County Council members and Votran representatives made the announcement March 20

See Manager page 2

# Votran ridership up 2 percent with 3.4 million boardings

In a tougher economy, Volusia County citizens and visitors are recognizing the value of public transportation. In recent months, the number of people riding Votran has increased. The effect of higher gas prices became significant last spring and summer, and as gas prices decreased, broader economic issues appeared.

During the county's last fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, Votran recorded 3.4 million boardings.

"We're pleased to see how many people recognize that public transit offers an economical and environmentally sound alternative to driving," said Votran General Manager Lois Bollenback. "A variety of factors affect transit ridership, including fare prices, fuel prices and the overall economy."

Votran recorded three million fixed route boardings throughout Volusia County for the last fiscal year, a 2-percent increase over the previous year. The increase in ridership appears modest, in part due to service lost during Tropical Storm Fay.

The commuter van pool program operated at full capacity in 2007-2008 with 27 vans in service, saving participants 143,825 gallons of fuel over the course of the year.

The busiest route for Votran continues to be Route 1 A/B, which serves S.R. A1A and Granada Boulevard in the Ormond Beach area. Last fiscal year, there were 428,585 boardings on Route 1 A/B. On the county's southwest side, Routes 20, 21, 22 and 23 in the DeLand and Deltona area had 279,396 boardings and experienced a 4.8-percent increase over the year prior.

Votran's Gold Service paratransit vans



## VOTRAN RIDERSHIP UP WITH FUEL COSTS

Public transportation is gaining popularity among Volusia County riders

transported 272,458 people, down 16 percent from the previous year. Votran eliminated Medicaid trips in February 2008. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) trips were down nearly 5 percent.

During the last quarter of the fiscal year – from July to September – there were significant increases in ridership. Compared to the corresponding months of the previous year, eastside boardings increased 5.2 percent; westside boardings increased 8 percent. This compares to the national trend reported in December by American Public

Transportation Association. Nationally, from July through September, despite the plummeting price of gas, riders took more than 2.8 billion trips – an increase of 6.5 percent. This is the largest quarterly increase in public transportation ridership in 25 years, according to the Federal Highway Administration. In the same time frame, vehicle miles traveled on the nation's highways declined by 4.6 percent. This marks the eleventh consecutive month of decreased vehicle miles traveled.

## Manager (Jump from page 1)

bringing back a familiar face. Ken Fischer will serve as Votran's interim general manager for at least six months while the search for a permanent GM takes place. For Ken and our employees this will be a seamless transition.

It has been my great pleasure to work with the Volusia County Council, the county staff, our public transportation partners and our employees. I am grateful for the support, cooperation and assistance I have received and I look forward to working with all of you in the future. Public transportation is so vital to so many citizens. I am grateful to have played a small part in meeting the public's mobility needs.

Sincerely,

Lois Bollenback  
General Manager



# Hop on.

Save precious fuel, money and headaches with Votran, Volusia County's public transportation system.

**AROUND TOWN**  
Ride the bus all over Volusia County – day or night.  
Discounts for kids and seniors...bike racks for everybody!

**COMMUTERS**

- I-4 Express Bus – gets you to work and back painlessly.
- RideShare – We help you create your own car pool.
- VanPool – You could qualify for a van for your group

Go Green. Go Votran.  
866.610.RIDE  
votran.org



## Regional Transit System training center opens at Votran headquarters

Already a leader in public transit programs and safety, Votran now stands at the head of the class when it comes to training other drivers from near and far.

A regional training facility at Votran's headquarters in South Daytona is up and running. The Volusia County Council cut the ribbon Oct. 3 with its partners – the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The new facility will be the training site for public transit drivers and mechanics throughout the region.

"This is a prime example of partnership and stretching our budget dollars," said Frank Bruno, Volusia County Chair. "Votran has been able to provide the space for an outstanding training facility while the Florida Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration provided the funding for the specialized equipment and building renovations. It's a win-win."

Said Votran General Manager Lois Bollenback: "The Regional Training Center will offer advanced training opportunities to transit agencies while reducing the time commitments and travel costs associated with specialized training."

Drivers and mechanics from Florida's transit systems will come to Votran for state-of-the-art training. The project will serve transit agencies primarily in Central and Northeast Florida. The FDOT is creating a network of regional transit training centers, increasing convenience for transit systems in providing additional training for operations and maintenance personnel.

The multi-year development of FDOT's second regional training center



**VOTRAN HOSTS REGIONAL TRAINING FACILITY**  
*Drivers and mechanics from Florida's transit systems are coming to Votran for training*

included the modification of a Votran building for classrooms and training space. FDOT provided the training equipment, including an operations training simulator, and assisted with the development of the curriculum. Votran, in coordination with the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), will do a baseline evaluation of the safety and training programs and monitor benefits in the future. Maintenance training modules, including engine cradle and other on-board systems, also are included.

"The simulator will provide state-of-the-art training for our drivers and drivers from

other transit systems," added Bollenback. "Well-trained operators and mechanics are much safer, more efficient and more reliable, which leads to reduced operating costs."

The FDOT funded half of the center's \$1 million price tag. The Federal Transit Administration contributed \$400,000 for the renovation of the building and Votran is providing an in-kind match, including the value of the building and its refurbishment, staff time and coordination with CUTR.

## Local MPO honored for coordinated transportation efforts

The Volusia County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) recently was named the Outstanding Designated Planning Agency of the Year by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The agency was recognized for going beyond the scope of its work to implement coordinated transportation.

According to Jack Hayman, Volusia County Council member and MPO board chairman, the award is based on the success of an agency in staffing the local coordinating board, developing the service plan, preparing needs assessments, assisting in the evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator, and/or other areas.

The Volusia County MPO is the lead agency responsible for determining the overall policy affecting long-range and short-range transportation programs and plans for the Volusia County MPO area.



**MPO NAMED OUTSTANDING PLANNING AGENCY OF THE YEAR**

*From left to right: Carole M. Hinkley, Volusia County MPO, Karl D. Welzenbach, Volusia County MPO and Bobby Jernigan, Acting Executive Director for the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission accept the award.*

The MPO helps to fund bus system studies such as the elder mobility study, which was selected for presentation at the

Transportation Research Boards national conference in Washington, D.C. The Transit Development Design Guidelines were developed cooperatively between the MPO and Votran to provide local governments and developers options on how to incorporate transit into the site-design process.

The MPO also staffs the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board and works with its members to promote coordination between Votran and local governments in improving safe bus stop accessibility for the transit users within Volusia County.

To help provide mobility options for Volusia County, the MPO dedicates its annually allocated federal Extra Urban funds for the capital purchase of transit vehicles; construction of bicycle/pedestrian facilities for citizens to access transit and construction of traffic operations; ITS; and safety projects.

# ***I-4 Express fare increases but still a bargain for commuters***

For the first time in 10 years, fares for the I-4 Express increased, rising from \$2 to \$3.50 Jan. 12. A monthly pass of \$80 is being offered for the first time. The I-4 Express is a 61-mile round-trip weekday service operating between the park-and-ride lot in Orange City and downtown Orlando.

“The increased fare is still economical at a weekly roundtrip rate of \$35 which is a little more than \$32 cost of a single trip in a personal vehicle,” said Jodie Sonnenberg, Commuter Assistance Program manager. “Commuters who purchase the monthly pass enjoy even greater savings. The increase was well received by our riders who prefer to pay a slightly higher fee than lose the service altogether.”

Votran operates the I-4 Express in partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation and LYNX, the transit system that serves Central Florida.

The number of riders increased 61 percent during the second quarter of FY 2008 over the same period in the previous year. Boardings averaged 105 per day.



*RIDERSHIP INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY ON I-4  
It's the highest increase ever on Route 200*

## ***Votran's Mission***

Votran's mission is to identify and safely meet the mobility needs of Volusia County. This mission will be accomplished through a courteous, dependable and an environmentally sound team commitment to quality service.

***www.Votran.org***



950 Big Tree Rd., S. Daytona, Florida  
(386) 756-7496

**VOTRAN**



PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT # 549  
DAYTONA BCH FL