CAT moves towards emissions-free vehicle deployment

CAT recently took a significant step towards incorporating emissions-free vehicles into its fleet, an initiative that is expected to help CAT cut down on maintenance costs and reduce air and noise pollution.

Charging stations were recently installed at CAT Central, ahead of the pending arrival of CAT’s first GILLIG electric battery-powered buses. CAT also acquired a mobile charging station so the electric buses can be charged in remote locations, which will be useful during hurricane evacuations and other emergencies. CAT is one of the few agencies in the country with the mobile charging capability.

“This is a big step for Chatham Area Transit as we move forward in providing safe, reliable and more environmentally friendly transportation for residents,” said interim CEO Valerie Ragland.

The first electric bus is expected to arrive in April and five additional electric buses are expected to be delivered throughout 2021 and 2022. The buses will replace diesel buses that have reached the end of their useful life.

In 2017, the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) analyzed benefits of CAT purchasing battery electric buses in lieu of diesel buses. According to CTE, CAT will reduce the energy consumption, emission of harmful particulates and greenhouse gases, and reduce the lifetime vehicle costs by deploying battery electric buses in place of existing diesel vehicles.

Paratransit Corner: Go Blue for National Autism Month

April is National Autism Month (represented by the color blue) and CAT is joining the effort to raise awareness and acceptance of the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States. With one in 54 children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, according to the Autism Society of America, CAT supports the mission to boost compassion and understanding by promoting autism education and resources. It is our hope that these efforts can create a rippling effect that empowers others to help individuals with autism reach their full potential, and give the children and families the support and information they need.

Local facilities that offer support include:

- Savannah Education Consultants, 130 Tibet Avenue, Suite 103
- The Matthew Reardon Center for Autism, 11500 Middleground Road
- Chatham Academy – Royce Learning Center, 4 Oglethorpe Professional Boulevard
- Coastal Georgia Autism Network
- Savannah May Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder, 4 Mall Ct., Suite A

Read more about National Autism Awareness Month and find additional resources at www.autismawarenessmonth.org.

- ADA Eligibility Assistant/Travel Trainer Barbara Shigges
Let’s celebrate: CAT anniversaries

We would like to give a huge thanks and congratulations to bus operator Calvin Lawrence and Tech A Craig Owens who celebrated their 45th and 31st anniversaries with CAT on Friday. Thank you Mr. Calvin and Mr. Owens for your commitment to CAT, your passengers, and this community!

Safety Spotlight by Chief Safety Officer Charles Hall: Drug testing

Let’s have a “random” conversation about random drug and alcohol screenings. Operators, mechanics and dispatchers are all considered “safety sensitive” positions. According the Federal Transportation Administration guidelines, safety sensitive positions are subject to mandatory random drug screenings. These screenings are not designed to “catch” violators. Instead, they are designed to ensure that anyone directly involved with the movement of a commercial bus is operating the bus as safely as possible. In an effort to enhance the randomness of the process and to maintain the integrity of the program, CAT’s random drug screenings are provided by a third-party vendor. The process is also to remain highly confidential.

CAT’s drug and alcohol policy is in line with the FTA’s requirements. Did you know that these guidelines require 25% of all safety sensitive employees be screened for drugs annually, which represents roughly 37 – 40 people. That’s three to five people per month. That same policy stipulates that only 10% have to be screened for alcohol. Please keep in mind that CAT can screen beyond these numbers, but CAT cannot screen below these numbers.

Management does not have any discretion as to who will be selected. The random tests will be unannounced and spread throughout the year, the random period, all days of the week, and all hours when safety sensitive functions are performed. Random drug tests may occur at any time the employee is on duty. Random alcohol tests may only occur just before, during, or just after the employee performs safety-sensitive work. Employees are required to proceed immediately to the collection site upon notification of their random selection.

We really appreciate our super employees and their understanding toward the inconveniences that they encounter from time to time. Drug screenings can be inconvenient interruptions to our work day, but please understand that they are necessary and vital to our operation. While we always experience a high degree of compliance, a refusal can create problems. A refusal is viewed as a positive test and pursuant to CAT’s policy, a refusal to submit to a screening or a positive test will result in termination of employment.

Remember, outside of random drug screening, there are three additional times you may encounter a drug and/or alcohol screening – pre-employment, post-accident, return to duty, post-industrial accident/injury, or reasonable suspicion. So, let’s stay drug-free and ready to roll toward a safe year!