Electric buses continued from page one

useful during hurricane evacuations and other emergencies.

CAT is one of the few agencies in the country with the mobile charging capability. 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.

Resident feedback sought for Savannah 100% Clean Energy Resolution

The City of Savannah is seeking community input and participation to help create the city’s first clean energy plan.

In March 2020, the Savannah City Council passed Savannah’s 100 percent clean energy resolution, which says all electricity consumed in the City of Savannah will be generated from renewable energy by 2055, and all other energy needs will be generated from renewable energy by 2050.

Go to www.savannahga.gov/2931/100-Clean-Energy or scan the QR code below to take a quick survey about what you want the city to prioritize when making this plan and what’s most important to you when considering renewable energy options for your home or business.

If you’d like to get more involved, there are options to sign up to help with focus areas and working groups or become an ambassador for the program.

A draft of the plan is scheduled to be presented to the council this summer, with final approval in the fall.

100% Savannah

Send an email to marketing@catchacat.org to subscribe to our weekly electronic newsletter, the CAT Express

April 2021 edition

CAT moves towards emissions free vehicle deployment

Chatham Area Transit recently took some significant steps 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.

CAT received on March 31 the agency’s first emissions-free bus, which is the first of six Gillig electric battery-powered buses that are expected to arrive throughout 2021 and 2022. The buses will replace diesel buses that have reached the end of their useful life.

“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.

CAT will next conduct a series of performance tests and employee training sessions throughout the summer before phasing the electric bus into passenger service. It will probably be late July before the electric buses start serving customers.

Charging stations were also recently installed at CAT’s bus lot on East Gwinnett Street, ahead of the electric bus’s arrival. In addition, CAT acquired a mobile charging station so that the electric buses can be charged in remote locations, which will be

Continued on page 4

Mobile ticketing helps customers cut costs, text passes to friends

Chatham Area Transit’s new Token Transit mobile ticketing app has many benefits, one of which is the fare-capping feature that can help customers who are unable to pay upfront costs of a multi-trip ticket. The fare-capping feature ensures that the app’s user never pays more than what is in their best interest. For instance, if a customer takes two rides in one day, that customer won’t be charged any more that day because the customer already paid the equivalent of a day pass. The same feature would apply to weekly and monthly passes. (With one-way passes, customers still have to request a paper transfer ticket, if needed.)

The Token Transit service also includes an online feature that allows anyone on the internet to purchase and text a bus pass to anyone they want. This send-a-pass feature can be helpful to social services agencies, family members, friends and employees, allowing them to purchase and send passes without sharing payment information or mailing paper passes. To use the feature, go to transitcatchacat.com/agency/savannahcat/send.

Send an email to marketing@catchacat.org to subscribe to our weekly electronic newsletter, the CAT Express
CAT Board makes veterans discount permanent

Last month, the CAT Board approved staff’s recommendation to make a veterans discount program permanent. The veterans program provides a 50 percent discount on CAT services to former members of the military. The discount can be applied to most of CAT’s fixed-route fare options, including $1.50 one-way trips, $3 day passes and $50 monthly passes.

“We owe a great debt of gratitude to our veterans and active-duty service members, who take risks and make immense sacrifices to defend and protect our country,” said interim CEO Valerie Ragland. “Today’s vote by the Board to make this a permanent discount allows us to express our gratitude for their service and their sacrifice.”

Initially launched in November 2019 in conjunction with Veterans Day, a planned six-month assessment period to track participation rates was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and CAT’s suspension of fare collection. Following the resumption of fare collection in December, CAT also re-implemented the veterans discount pilot program. A total of 740 veteran discounts were issued during the six-month trial period, accounting for $555 total discounted.

According to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, there were about 28,000 veterans in Chatham County in 2017. Statewide, the number was almost 700,000.

To get the discount, veterans should present bus operators with either their veteran ID card, discharge documents or driver’s license with a veteran designation. Proof of membership in a veterans’ organization such as the VFW, American Legion and AMVETS also will be accepted.

Half-fare ID cards also can be obtained by presenting proof of service at the ticket window at the downtown Joe Murray River, Jr. Intermodal Transit Center. These ID can then be used in place of military service documentation.

Veterans can also call customer service at (912) 233-5767 to get set up and purchase the discounted passes using CAT’s Token Transit mobile ticketing app.

Veterans who need proof of service can also obtain a copy of their DD 214 form (Report of Separation) from the National Archives by going to the following web address:
https://themilitarywallet.com/replace-lost-military-service-records/

Paratransit Corner: Autism Awareness 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 Middle 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.autismsawarenessmonth.org.

• ADA Eligibility Assistant/Travel Trainer Barbara Shiggs

CAT Board approves hazard pay plan

The CAT Board on March 23 approved the use of general funds to issue $600 hazard payments to CAT’s union workers for their work during the pandemic.

“These payments are in recognition of that risk and the dedication those employees demonstrate on a daily basis,” said interim CEO Valerie Ragland. “That dedication is why we are able to continue providing vital transportation services to our community even in the face of the pandemic.”

The payments were initially approved by the Board in January, when they were expected to be funded using federal COVID-19 relief funding. Using general funds instead allows for the payments to be distributed earlier, since the almost $5.9 million in anticipated federal funding may not arrive until the summer.

CAT Board meeting calendar

All of the March meetings will be held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual meetings can be viewed live on CAT’s YouTube page at: YouTube.com/ChathamAreaTransit.

CAT Board Committee Meetings

Date: April 13
Strategic and Operational Planning: 10:30 a.m.
Performance Monitoring/Audit: 1 p.m.
External Stakeholder Relations: 2:30 p.m.

CAT Governance Committee

Date: April 20
Time: 11 a.m.

CAT Board Regular Meeting

Date: April 27
Time: 10 a.m.

Chatham, partners providing free transportation to vaccination site

Chatham County and community partners, including Chatham Area Transit, are now providing free transportation to the State of Georgia Mass Vaccination Site at the Gulfstream Aerospace campus near the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport.

Chatham County residents who have no means of transportation can call (912) 856-4563 to reserve a ride to the site. The call center is open Mon.-Fri. From 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Reservations must be made by 3 p.m. for next-day transportation. ADA accessible vans and buses are available, upon request, for residents who require additional assistance. Vaccination appointments are required to reserve a free ride and residents can book a vaccination appointment through www.myvaccinegeorgia.com prior to calling for transportation (scan QR code below to access).

In addition to CAT, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah State University, Isle of Hope United Methodist Church, Compassion Christian Church, White Bluff United Methodist Church, Convexion Church and the Salvation Army are providing transportation assets and staff/volunteers to assist in this endeavor.

Scan the QR code with your phone’s camera to book a vaccination appointment.