Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization OKs CAT grants

The Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO) recently approved more than $1.3 million in grant funding applications submitted by Chatham Area Transit for new buses and a bus stop improvement plan.

As a result of the CORE MPO’s vote on Oct. 27, the CAT funding will be added to the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan in December. The grant approval sets CAT on a course to receive the funding during the 2023 fiscal year. The approved funding application includes $396,000 for two new 35-foot diesel buses that will help CAT maintain a dependable fleet and lower long-term maintenance costs by replacing the oldest and least reliable buses. In addition, the CORE MPO approved CAT’s application for $400,000 to develop a bus stop improvement plan that will guide the placement of amenities such as shelters, benches and trashcans. The plan will also help CAT determine where accessibility improvements are needed in order to make all bus stops ADA compliant. Both grants will require that CAT provide a 20-percent local match.

The funds were approved as part of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, a federal program that provides funds to states and localities for transportation improvement projects. CORE MPO manages the STBG funds allocated to the Savannah area, which amounts to around $4 million each year.

Paratransit training continued from page 3

November.

Bynoe will be joining her mother, Sandy Early, who has worked at CAT as a fixed-route operator for 21 years.

Pleasantly surprised when she learned Bynoe was hired (Bynoe had not told her she applied), Early said that her daughter is a people person who will make a great paratransit operator.

“She is a sweetheart,” she said. “She’ll get along with anybody.”

Please be sure to say hello and thank Bynoe for helping to provide this vital service if you see her.

November 2021 (third edition)

Farm Truck 912, Healthy Savannah returning to transit center Monday

Chatham Area Transit customers seeking fresh produce and tips on how to stay healthy are in luck.

CAT is marking Diabetes Awareness Month on Monday by once again partnering with Healthy Savannah and Forsyth Farmers’ Market’s Farm Truck 912 program (FT912), following a successful collaboration last summer.

FT912 is a mobile farmers’ market that brings local seasonal fruits and vegetables to Savannah neighborhoods.

FT912 will be parked at the Joe Murray Rivers, Jr. Intermodal Transit Center, 610 W. Oglethorpe Avenue, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 15.

Credit, debit and cash is accepted as forms of payment. In addition, the farm truck accepts and doubles SNAP/EBT benefits.

Healthy Savannah will also have a booth set up during event to promote equitable opportunities for residents to engage in physical activity and consume a nutritious, balanced diet.

‘Farm Truck 912 accepts credit, debit and cash as forms of payment. In addition, the farm truck accepts doubles SNAP/EBT benefits.’

Both FT912 and Healthy Savannah are returning after being well received by customers and CAT employees during a visit to the transit center in June.

CAT hosting career fair at Oglethorpe Mall on Nov. 18

Chatham Area Transit is holding a career fair next week at the Oglethorpe Mall near the vacant Sears and food court.

The event will be held from 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 18.

CAT is hiring CDL bus operators, non-CDL paratransit operators, part-time and full-time water ferry captains, a Human Resources manager, supervisors, and maintenance staff.

CAT offers generous pay and benefits, including paid training, health/dental/vision coverage, a retirement plan, and paid time off.

Job seekers are encouraged to stop by and drop off their resume and chat with the leadership team.

Alondra Bynoe walks back to the vehicle during a CAT Mobility training session.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone’s camera to learn about CAT’s multiple career opportunities.

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Large events return with Veterans Day parade, Rock ‘n’ Roll marathon

We want to thank all the veterans for their service, including the many Chatham Area Transit employees who served and who continue to serve in the US military. Their sacrifice and bravery are appreciated. Thursday’s Veterans Day parade, along with the Rock ‘n’ Roll marathon marked the return of large events since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down such public gatherings. We want to thank our customers for their patience during those events, as services were re-routed and suspended to accommodate them. We also want to encourage those customers to remain vigilant as the pandemic continues. For those who have not, we encourage you to get vaccinated. Also, CAT continues to require that masks be used while using our services and at CAT facilities. Your cooperation is appreciated.

CAT discount available to veterans

It has been two years since Chatham Area Transit implemented a veterans discount program that 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.

Since the program was launched, CAT has issued about 1,500 veteran discounts. For those who have not done so, we encourage more veterans to take advantage of the discount when using CAT services.

Proof of membership in a veterans’ organization such as the VFW, American Legion and AMVETS also will be acceptable. Half-fare ID cards also can be obtained by presenting proof of service at the ticket window at the downtown Joe Murray Rivers, Jr. Intermodal Transit Center, 610 W. Oglethorpe Avenue.

These IDs can be 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 their service can learn how to get 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/ or scanning the QR code with their smartphone’s camera.

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CAT Mourns Maintenance Director Steve Boartight

“I’m still not sure what to say but first and foremost I hope everyone knows we lost a great man, a great employee to CAT but most of all a great friend,” Jimmy said. “Steve looked after me at work and always helped me out in any situation that I needed him! It’s almost hunting season and I am going to miss our conversations about hunting and miss all the pictures that we would share during this time of the year. My condolences to his family.”

Maintenance Support Specialist Cara Lehman said she was very fortunate to work with Steve for the past five and a half years, describing him as a great friend, mentor and boss.

“I loved watching his face and his excitement when the new buses and the generator for the electric buses came into the yard, it was like a kid on Christmas day,” Cara said.

Chatham Area Transit suffered a tragic loss with the recent passing of Maintenance Director Steve Boartight at the age of 55. Outside his work life, Steve was an avid UGA fan for outdoorsman who enjoyed fishing, hunting, mud-bogging, and exploring with his dogs. Most of all, he was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and son who loved spending time with his family.

Marine Operations Director Jimmy Gunby said that he was at a loss for words when he learned Steve had passed away.

Steve was ambitious and believed the best of everyone he met, while always jumping at the opportunity to help everyone, said Maintenance Manager Donna Dale.

“He always reached beyond his limits to make things work at CAT,” Donna said.

During the CAT Board’s Governance Committee meeting last month, Interim CEO Valerie Ragland took a moment along with the committee members to recognize Steve’s passing with a moment of silence. Steve has given so many contributions, so much commitment and dedication to CAT, Valerie said.

“He is truly going to be missed,” she said. “We already miss him.”

Chief of Staff/Board Liaison Beverly Du mas said that Steve was very hands on and would be hard to replace. She said that even on challenging workdays, Steve would never complain and would always remind you that “It’s a beautiful day.”

New paratransit operator prepares to join CAT in providing vital service

Safety & Training Manager Jeffery Swinton directs a paratransit operator during training session last month.

Alonda Bynoe weaved the Chatham Area Transit “cutaway” van backwards around orange cones in the parking lot of the Garden City Stadium as Safety and Training Manager Jeffery Swinton observed her maneuvering from a few yards back.

The key to going backwards in that type of vehicle is using the side view mirrors, Swinton said of the training exercise.

“There are no rearview mirrors,” he said.

The parking lot was where Bynoe learned how to drive when she was a teenager. Now an adult with a teenager of her own, she was training to become an operator for CAT Mobility, which provides transportation to individuals with disabilities who are unable to use CAT’s fixed-route bus service.

Having recently moved back to Savannah from Atlanta, Bynoe said that she applied for the position because she loves helping people.

“You never know what someone is going through,” Bynoe said. “And times like now, everyone is going through ... everybody is definitely in need.”

Bynoe is one of the latest residents to apply for the position as CAT experiences a shortage of paratransit and fixed-route operators similar to transit agencies throughout the country.

Bynoe passed her written exam and would soon be training on the public streets after finishing up on the closed course. She is expected to begin serving customers around the second week of

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