



AS THE WHEEL TURNS

Spring 2011

Ridership Grows as Fuel Prices Increase



By Paul Davis

As fuel prices skyrocket so does ridership on TTA's buses. Ridership for the months of January and February was up five and eight percent respectively. In real numbers, TTA had 62,873 boardings in January and this compared to 59,761 the year before or 3,112 new customers. As for February, 65,024 customers rode TTA versus 60,386 for the previous year. That equals an increase of 4,638. This is all great news RIGHT?

The real problem is the very reason we are seeing new riders. The problem is the price of gasoline and diesel fuel. We are now paying the highest price for fuel in the history of TTA..

Due to the high price of fuel, TTA is asking for your help. We are looking for ways to save fuel. As you have probably seen the memo from Jeff Heintz, we are requiring the buses to be turned off if you idle more than 10 minutes. We are no longer using a bus

to relieve downtown and looking into the possibility of using the smaller buses on some of the less productive routes. So if you have any ideas on saving fuel please let me know.

Building Rehab

Great news! TTA has been awarded a grant from the West Virginia Division of Public Transportation to remodel its administrative offices on Virginia Avenue. In fact, using the word remodel is a pretty big understatement.

Since I started working for TTA we have always had a problem with never having a place to train our drivers and mechanics. Training has been conducted in the garage area. As you know this does not make for a good learning environment.

In addition to a training classroom, the mechanics will finally have a lunch area that will be larger than a closet. The dispatchers will finally have an area that is appropriate. Dial-A-Ride will have a much larger work area too.

So how do we make all of this happen? Since property is so limited here at TTA, we have no choice but to add a second floor on our current administrative building.

Funding for this project is coming from the last of the **Senator Byrd** earmarks that were awarded to the State and the State's WV Division of Public Transportation. You heard me right, even as our beloved friend is now resting in peace, we are benefiting from his vision to have a strong public transportation system in the State of West Virginia. Since it is a matching grant, the remaining funding, is being funded by Division of Public Transportation.

Dial-A-Ride

TTA is certainly proud to announce



the arrival of two new babies in to our fleet of Dial-A-Ride vehicles. However, these little jewels are not your run of the mill vans. So what is so special about them? They have extra wide wheelchair lifts and are designed to handle up to 750 lbs. The extra heavy duty vehicle will give new mobility options to people that currently have issues getting around due to the weight and size of their wheelchair. Special thanks to Susan O'Connell for helping us find the funding to procure these much needed buses.

Milestones

YEARS OF SERVICE

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Deborah Bryan-Bator | 27 |
| Stella Fowler | 26 |
| John Bocook..... | 26 |
| Jim Forto | 25 |
| Larry Collins | 24 |
| Curtis Hodges..... | 24 |
| Roger Kipp..... | 24 |
| Mark Hunt..... | 24 |
| Jeff Heinl..... | 23 |
| Paul Davis | 22 |
| Ed Payne | 21 |
| Chuck Boggs..... | 20 |
| Robert Patrick | 20 |
| Fredrick Adkins..... | 19 |
| Danny Stanley | 17 |
| Jim Pine..... | 16 |
| Albert Thomas..... | 13 |
| Julian "Lee" Spires..... | 13 |
| Roger Camp | 12 |
| Renee Mullins | 11 |
| Greg Kipp..... | 11 |
| Scott Stultz | 11 |
| Dianna McCallister | 11 |
| Oral Moncer | 11 |
| John Smiley | 11 |
| James Howerton..... | 10 |
| Robert King..... | 10 |
| Thomas McRae | 9 |
| Shaun Upchurch..... | 8 |
| John Webb..... | 8 |
| Randy Rodriguez..... | 8 |
| Janie Fraback..... | 7 |
| Brian Frazier | 7 |
| Priscilla Lawson..... | 6 |
| Donnie Tiller..... | 6 |
| Edwin Ferguson | 6 |
| Carole Holbrook..... | 6 |
| Peggy Miller..... | 6 |
| David Mannon..... | 6 |
| Millard Stollings | 5 |
| Brian Wray..... | 5 |
| Norman Andrews | 4 |
| Ben Martin | 4 |
| James Edmonds..... | 4 |
| Aaron Higginbotham..... | 4 |
| Charles Evans II..... | 4 |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| John Mills | 4 |
| Jason Stowers | 3 |
| Jeffery Connor..... | 3 |
| Denny Wheeler..... | 3 |
| Keith Murdock..... | 3 |
| Ronald Thomas..... | 3 |
| Cathy J.Craighead..... | 3 |
| Du Vaughn Hale | 3 |
| Mary Marcum..... | 2 |
| David Budd..... | 2 |
| Jarrold Allison | 2 |
| Michael Dickerson..... | 2 |
| Mary Gold | 2 |
| Darrell Price | 2 |
| Donnie Adkins..... | 2 |
| Teresa Riffe | 2 |
| Randall Waller..... | 2 |
| David Banks | 1 |
| Samantha Tinkler..... | 1 |
| Steven Kunges..... | 1 |
| James Williamson..... | 1 |
| Lonnie Black | 1 |
| Mark Taylor..... | 1 |
| Tom Day | - |
| Jennifer Woodall | - |
| Brenda Wells | - |
| Jason Mullins..... | - |
| Scott Williams | - |
| Casey Steele | - |

March Birthdays Aren't They Great?



| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Renee Mullins | 03/01 |
| Cathy J. Craighead ... | 03/01 |
| Robert King | 03/13 |
| Jeffery Connor..... | 03/13 |
| Jennifer Woodall | 03/15 |
| Ronald Thomas..... | 03/18 |

April Birthdays! Aren't They Great?



| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Fred Adkins | 04/03 |
| Brenda Wells..... | 04/03 |
| Mark Hunt..... | 04/13 |
| David Budd..... | 04/17 |
| Jason Stowers..... | 04/18 |
| Curtis Hodges | 04/24 |

If you should see these folks on their special day, please wish them a Happy Birthday.

JOKES



Times have changed

Before my son could start going on job interviews, he needed to dress the part. That, he decided, required a \$500 suit.

"What!?" I answered, gagging at the price tag. "I've bought cars for \$500!"

"That's why I want the \$500 suit," he said. "So I don't have to drive \$500 cars."

Driver’s Name Plate

Bernard Lind was retired, but took odd jobs to make a little extra money. One of his jobs was a taxi driver.

The cab company had a sign posted in all their cars saying, "Your driver is: _____"

Bernie always got a kick out of watching his rider's reactions when they read, "Your driver is: B.LIND."

Class Report

Craig's two kids are in the same class at school, and the teacher had the class write reports about their pets. After the reports were all turned in, the teacher called one of the youngsters up to her desk and scolded him.

"This report on 'My Dog' is exactly, word for word, the same as your brother's. Did you copy from him?"

He replies, "No Ma'am. It's about the same dog."

From the Chief



By Scott Stultz

Once again, it's time for PEIA's annual Open

Enrollment. The Open Enrollment for the new plan year will run from 1 April 2011 to 30 April 2011. The coverage that you select during this period will be effective on 1 July 2011 and will continue until 30 June 2012.

Around the beginning of April, each of you will receive the annual *Shopper's Guide* from PEIA that provides a detailed discussion of your options. However, I wanted to briefly cover a few of the major points.

As part of the new federal healthcare law, PEIA has amended its dependent coverage provisions. Employees can now insure their dependent children up to the age of 26 in most instances. The residence, student status, and marital status requirements that were previously in place will be removed in the new plan year. If you have a child that meets the revised qualifications for coverage, then you will need to complete your open enrollment form to add him/her to your coverage.

Next, PEIA has eliminated the lifetime dollar limit for health coverage. A member who had previously reached the old \$1.5 million lifetime limit will be contacted by PEIA and

provided a special enrollment option.

In addition, there were changes to the Plan C coverage. No TTA employees are currently enrolled in Plan C, so I will not go into detail regarding this plan. However, the changes to the plan will be explained in the *Shopper's Guide* for open enrollment. If you are thinking of changing your coverage to Plan C, then you should review the *Shopper's Guide* before making your final decision.

Also, an HMO option will be added back to the insurance options for the upcoming year. The HMO is administered by The Health Plan. This coverage had previously only been available in the northern half of the state, but it is being extended to the central and southern portions of the state in the upcoming plan year. The information regarding the Health Plan will be included in the *Shopper's Guide*, so you can compare that coverage with the current PEIA PPB Plans.

PEIA has instituted two discount programs: (a) the Advanced Directive/Living Will program and (b) the Improve Your Score program. Participating in these programs will help to

reduce the amount that TTA pays for employee insurance, but it will not lower the weekly deduction of the employee. Any employee who wishes to participate in these programs should go to the PEIA website to obtain more information about the programs. Note that TTA will not have the forms needed to participate in these programs, so they must be obtained directly from PEIA. In addition, you need to let me know if you choose to participate in one of these programs because we will not receive a list of discount participants from PEIA.

Retirees will only be eligible to participate in the Advanced Directive/Living Will program. Any retiree wishing to participate in the program should contact PEIA to request the forms needed to claim the \$4 per month discount.

As usual, there are changes in most of the health and life insurance rates. For active employees, the current health insurance rates will increase by minimal amounts for the PEIA PPB Plans. However, there will be changes (some increases and some decreases) to most of the optional life insurance rates. A list of the rates for the upcoming year will be

posted in the dispatch office as soon as they are available from PEIA. Please consult these lists before making your final insurance enrollment decisions.

For retirees, most health and life insurance rates will increase. Retiree health rates will increase by an average of 4%. In addition, there will be increases in the monthly costs for basic, optional, and dependent life coverage for retirees effective 1 July 2011. I will send out individual letters to all retirees as soon as I get the revised rates from PEIA.

Finally, PEIA will continue to use the online open enrollment this year that it started using a couple of years ago. The website has been redesigned to be more user-friendly. When using it, make certain that you click on the Open Enrollment button to make changes during the Open Enrollment period. You will not receive an Open Enrollment Change Form in the mail unless you contact PEIA and request one. You will not be required to complete a Change Form UNLESS you are making a change to your current coverage or tobacco status.

PEIA will host benefit fairs throughout the state again this year to answer your insurance-related questions. A full listing of

the fairs' times and locations will be in your *Shopper's Guide*. The fair in Huntington will be at the Holiday Inn next to Pullman Square (and across the street from the Civic Center) on 4 April 2011 from 3:00PM to 6:00PM. Hopefully you attended the benefit fair if you had any questions about your insurance coverage.

**Let's all
get on the
same page**



By
Fred Adkins

It has come to my attention that some of you are not 100% sure of the rules. So I am going to try and cover a couple of them in this month's newsletter.

1) Deploying the wheel chair ramp. If you pull up to a stop and a customer asks you to deploy the ramp and they are not in a wheelchair, they do not have a cane or any apparent disability, you must deploy the ramp. If they have a small cart with them and they ask you to deploy the ramp, you may think that they want it down for the cart. It may not be

“Safety Is No Accident”

for the cart, but because the customer has a disability. If a customer requests that the ramp be deployed and they look like a linebacker for the Green Bay Packers, in perfect health, you must deploy the ramp. It is not your job to decide if that person needs the ramp or does not need the ramp. If they ask you to deploy the ramp -- **DEPLOY THE RAMP.**

2) The customer is not on the corner: While driving your route you see a customer that is not on the corner, but they are flagging you down, you **do not pass them up.** The proper way to deal with this is to stop at the next corner and wait for them. When they board, very politely inform them that the bus stop is on the corner and then very nicely show them exactly where the stop is and thank them for their cooperation. Some new riders may not be aware of the policies because no one has taken the time to explain it to them, or they were just unavoidably late leaving the house to get to the stop. Give them a break and be a good public relations

person. Show a little kindness and you will find it goes a long way.

Practicing kindness is not hard to do and it can literally change a person's day or even their life. Small things like the following;

- Let somebody into the better parking space.
- Hold the door open for someone.
- Give someone your seat.
- Smile at someone.
- Give your waitress a really good tip.
- Take time to visit someone in the hospital or sick at home.

I read a true story one time about a lady sitting on a park bench contemplating suicide, and another lady came along and sat down beside her with a bag of peanuts and asks her to help feed the squirrels. As they feed the squirrels and talked and laughed for a while it made the depressed lady rethink her life and she went on to live a long and fruitful life. She was saved by a complete stranger who did not even know that she was having a problem. Kindness is a very healing thing, it can change lives. In conclusion let me say that I

know how stressful your job can be because I used to do it. But I also know that if you show people kindness, kindness will return to you. If you give them grief, grief will return to you as well. So try to treat people the way you would like to be treated. And if you are not sure about a company policy please ask a supervisor to explain it to you. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

Shop Talk

By
Danny
Stanley



Fuel Pump Safety

How flammable is gasoline?
Gasoline is an extremely flammable liquid and should be stored at room temperature and always kept away from a potential heat source. Gasoline vapors are heavier than air and can travel along the surface of the floor for many feet, Therefore gasoline should be stored more than 50 feet from any igniting sources. The flashpoint of gasoline is minus 45 degrees. Flash point of a chemical is the lowest temperature where it will evaporate enough fluid to form a combustible concentration of gas.

Static Electricity and Refueling Your Car

Static electricity is an electric charge caused by an imbalance of electrons on the surface of a material. It is most commonly caused by the contact and separation of materials. The area of contact, the speed of separation, relative humidity, and other factors determine the amount of charge created. An example of this is a person scuffing their shoes across a carpeted floor. The amount of static electricity generated will increase proportionate to the size of the sole surface, lower humidity, and increased speed of movement. One of the many potential causes of static electricity build-up is exiting and re-entering a vehicle, particularly in cool, cold and/or dry conditions. This can cause a build-up of static electricity similar to shuffling your feet on the carpet.

When you exit and re-enter your vehicle while refueling, there is the potential for sufficient static electricity build-up that a spark can discharge between your body and the fuel nozzle. In rare circumstances, the spark can ignite gasoline vapors around the fill spout causing a brief flash fire. Once the vapors ignite, the fire will continue until the

fuel supply is shut off. Although, in most cases, damage and injuries have been minor, serious personal injury and major property damage have occurred when the fuel supply from the dispenser has not been stopped.

Safety Guidelines when Refueling

1. Always turn off your vehicle engine while refueling.
2. Stay near the vehicle fueling point during the process.
3. Never smoke, light matches or use lighters while refueling.
4. Cellular phones and other electronic devices may have the potential to give off electrical charges, and should therefore be left in the vehicle during fueling.
5. Do not get back into your vehicle during refueling - even when using the nozzle's automatic hold-open latch. If you must re-enter your vehicle, discharge static electricity buildup when you get out by touching the outside metal portion of your vehicle, away from the filling point, before attempting to remove the nozzle.
6. To avoid gasoline spills, do not overfill or top off your tank. The fuel

dispenser will shut off automatically when the tank is full.

7. Use only the hold-open latch provided on the gasoline nozzle. Never jam or force the hold-open latch open by using some other object, such as the gas cap.
8. When dispensing gasoline into a portable gasoline can, use only an approved container. Always place the container on the ground and keep the pump nozzle in contact with the container when refueling to avoid a static electricity ignition of fuel vapors. Containers should never be filled inside a vehicle, in the trunk, on the bed of a pickup or flatbed truck, or on the floor of a trailer. The bed of the truck and the bed liner act as insulators, as does the carpeting in a car or in its trunk, which may allow static electricity to build up in the can while it is being filled. That static electricity could create a spark between the container and the fuel nozzle.
9. In the event of a flash fire during refueling, you should leave the nozzle in the vehicle fill pipe and back away from the vehicle. If the facility is

unattended, use the emergency shutdown button to shut off the pumps.

Jeff's World



By Jeff Heinl

Busy, Busy, Busy

Mark-ups, schedule changes and springtime, nothing spells change like April at TTA. We survived another winter only to see the rivers rise with flooding. It may be a sign of getting older, but what is the deal with the weather? Two or three problem snowfalls a year was pretty much all we used to have to contend with. Nowadays it seems like we get a clipper coming through twice a week. Snow we can deal with but this was the year of ICE! It seemed to precede or end just about every round of precipitation. Snow and ice necessitates assisting the route supervisors as they check the roads. 3 A.M. wake ups and 11 P.M. bedtimes makes for a long work day. The area salt crews did a great job in their epic struggle against the elements but we still had to

contend with some very nasty conditions. To their credit, our drivers were more than equal to the challenge and we actually experienced very few ice/snow related incidents. The retreating snow and ice have however uncovered a bountiful crop of pot holes. The potholes were sometimes a little hard to spot due to the spring flooding. High water also necessitated minor detours for the Ohio service and at the Wal-Mart store near the Mall. Throughout this season of challenge it was our customers who triumphed as they continued to enjoy their customary seamless service.

The bus driver's spring mark-up had a new wrinkle added to it. The i.T. Service between Huntington and Charleston is now stopping at the Milton Park and Ride on both the inbound and outbound trips. Our customers will notice no time changes at their usual bus stops. The Milton stop is accomplished with very little time delay. Denny Wheeler, the regular route driver has noticed an increase in ridership on the route. On two separate occasions new faces have pushed his outbound totals to over 30 riders! Is it too late to put in for funding for an articulated bus?

Spring is also a very busy time for me personally. Spring means an increase in charter requests for summer and fall weddings. The initial phone call is just the tip of the iceberg for all the work that goes into the request.

Federal requirements mandate that I advertise the charter request on the internet so that private charter companies can bid on the work. Presently I must e-mail over 100 companies, some as far away as Maine and Louisiana, to see if they have any interest in the work. Invariably at least half a dozen of my e-mails come back as undeliverable and I am required to fax the request to each of these remaining companies. If anyone expresses interest in the charter, TTA must step aside. Since we receive federal assistance, TTA is not allowed to compete with the private sector for charter work. If no bids are received within two weeks, TTA can accept the assignment. The reality of the situation is that for every 10 requests for service, TTA ends up doing only one of them. This tends to be a little disheartening when you consider the fact that each request takes about 1-2 hours of my time.

So on a typical spring day as my brain

oozes out of my ear and begins running around on the floor Paul Davis will walk by my office and smile before saying “Cheer up Jeff, it is job security!”

Editor’s Corner



By Jennifer Woodall

Since our last newsletter, we have been very busy.

Two of my favorite things to do in this industry are Transit Day at the State



Capitol and making our Legislative visits in Washington, D.C. Both of which I experienced from the “urban perspective” this year. While I’ve been making these visits now for nearly a decade, this was the first time I was in the position to represent urban transit, rather than rural transit.

While it may seem like an insignificant difference, some folks might say “transit is transit”, but when you step back and look at the total picture, there really

are as many differences as there are similarities.

Regardless of whether it is urban or rural, I always enjoy having those “ahha” moments. You know that moment in time when you are exhausted or overwhelmed and you see or hear something that makes you say “Yeah, that’s why I’m here”.

Recently I’ve had a couple of those “ahha” moments. The first one was at a round table discussion with **Senator Joe Manchin** which was held at the New Alumni Building at Marshall University. This meeting included transportation professionals, which represented rail, highways, waterways, air transportation, and of course public transit. The discussion hinged on what needs to be done to expand on our current infrastructure and effectively manage our assets. While I was trying to wrap my head around the magnitude of the discussion, I was looking just over **Senator Manchin’s** shoulder, out the huge glass front of the building. That’s when I saw one of the Hybrid TTA buses stopping to de-board several passengers. That is when I wrote on my note pad “Let’s get our ASSETS on the bus”. Our customers

are our greatest asset and that’s why we are here.

The other one was more recently. It was when we were in Washington making our Legislative visits. While I thoroughly enjoy our visits to Washington, it is an exhausting trip. It was three days (one travel day and two of conference lectures). There were eight people squeezed around a small table in a small office talking with **J.T. Jezierski** who is the Legislative Director for **Rep. McKinley**. I am one of those people who take notice of the small details, so I was taking note of pictures on the walls when I noticed someone had stenciled phrases on the wall in a couple of places. One of those phrases said “What have you done for the citizens of WV today?” It took me about ten seconds to answer that question with a very simple sentence, “We are here”. That was my “ahha” moment. The moment when I totally remembered why I’m not at home for my fortieth birthday, why my kids and husband have to say good night to me via Skype (thank goodness for Skype), why I am so exhausted and why I love what I do, whether it is urban or rural transportation, I know it is helping the citizens of WV.