



## Last stop

### Transportation Funding

*Eric Wolf, General Manager*

In August 2011, the bi-partisan Transportation Funding Advisory Commission (TFAC) delivered to Governor Corbett a comprehensive solution that includes funding for roads, local government, public transit, ports, airports, and freight rail. The governor has indicated that he plans to address a comprehensive transportation funding solution in January.

The transportation funding gap has been well-established at \$3.5 billion per year. If we do nothing, the gap will double by 2020.

Adopting the commission's recommendations will be of great benefit to all citizens of Pennsylvania whether you drive state highways or local streets and roads, depend on public transit, ride a bike, or even if you never leave your home. The recom-

mendations are a responsible approach to solving this long-term problem without seriously impacting transportation users.

#### *What will it cost?*

The essential funding components of the TFAC plan simply adjust outdated fees for inflation or redirect money within existing funds where they can do the most good:

- Gradually shifts State Police funding back to the General Fund.
- Adjusts outdated license and registration fees for inflation.
- Calibrates the Oil Company Franchise Tax, which currently is based on 1980s oil prices, to today's prices.
- Shifts Act 44 monies to transit.

The most remarkable thing about this proposal is the cost to the average motorist. Adjusted for inflation, the

proposal would not increase the cost to the public compared with what they were paying 15 years ago, when the taxes and fees were last increased. The cost to the average motorist starts at 70 cents per week, eventually growing to \$2.50 per week.

#### *Benefits to all Pennsylvanians*

- Safer travel. Roadway conditions are a factor in more than 50% of fatal traffic accidents, and many of these problems can be solved with inexpensive fixes.
- Pennsylvania-specific economic benefits. Nearly all of the money spent on highways and transportation construction stays in Pennsylvania, creating jobs and boosting the state's economy.
- Jobs. Improvements to ports, rail, and roads will create tens of thousands of jobs, mostly in industries other than highway construction.

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Altoona, PA



## New diesel-electric hybrids show significant savings

AMTRAN is reporting significant fuel savings with the three new Gillig diesel-electric hybrids that went into service in November.

#### *Better than expected*

"We were expecting a 20-30% increase in fuel economy," said Gary Williams, AMTRAN Director of Maintenance. "But we are getting better than 50% improvement when compared to similar models in our fleet. This is going to have a very positive impact on our budget."

#### *Hybrid Technology*

The easiest explanation for hybrid technology on a bus is to think of it as a 35-foot Prius. A small displacement Cummins diesel engine charges the batteries,

and it is the batteries, not the engine, that power the transmission.

The improved fuel economy (as well as reduced emissions) come from having a smaller engine running at a constant rpm rather than a big engine revving up to pull away from a stop. The system also recaptures energy during braking through the Allison transmission. This proven technology is already in use in Pittsburgh, Scranton, Allentown, and Reading.

AMTRAN drivers and customers have also given positive feedback on the new buses.

#### *Made in the USA*

The new diesel-electric hybrid buses were built by the Gillig Corporation in Hayward, California.

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**saving money**

*In This Issue ...*

## Saving money by repowering buses



*Bus #701, the "Our Town" bus, is loaded on a flatbed to be transported to Michigan as part of AMTRAN's capital project to refurbish three 12-year old buses*

It's great to buy new buses when you can. But when money is tight, sometimes you have to think differently.

AMTRAN has three 2000-model Gillig low-floor buses that have each accumulated almost 350,000 miles. They have been great buses except for one important component. Over time, the original engines have proven to be a maintenance nightmare - problematic and unreliable.

### *State of Good Repair grant*

Normally, AMTRAN's maintenance staff would be replacing the engine and transmission in-house after 12 years. But it made no sense to replace a bad old

engine with a bad new engine.

So AMTRAN staff submitted a grant application to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) "State of Good Repair" program.

FTA approved the grant, and AMTRAN went through a competitive procurement to replace the old powertrain with a completely different and more reliable engine as well as a new transmission. The winning contractor was Midwest Bus from Michigan.

### *Savings*

For an investment of \$75,000 each to refurbish these three buses (as opposed to over \$350,000 for a new bus), AMTRAN will significantly extend their life.

## December loyalty reward winners

The following AMTRAN customers were Loyalty Reward Program winners in December.

Charles Wyatt won a \$50 Visa gift card in our "Just in Time for Christmas" drawing.

Denise Robinson won a \$20 Monthly Pass Gift Card. Nathan Loner won a Super Rider Pass. Carlos Jaso won a Special Rider Pass.

### *You can win too!*

Don't throw away your Special Rider or Super Rider card when it's used up. Just print your name and address on the back and drop it into the contest box at the front of any AMTRAN bus.

Monthly Pass holders get an entry form when they renew their monthly pass. All you have to do is fill it out and drop it in the contest box at the front of any AMTRAN bus.



*amtran is the smart choice.  
take the bus!*

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AMTRAN is working with Avail Technologies in State College as the *beta* site to develop a new fare collection system called myFare.

The new system will have three hardware components - a mechanical farebox for cash transactions, a smart card reader for electronic transactions, and a mobile data terminal for the driver interface. One of the advantages for AMTRAN customers will be that myFare card-holders will no longer have to worry about carrying exact change.

### *Slow roll-out*

Since the entire system is being developed from scratch, AMTRAN customers will see a slow roll-out of the new fare media over a number of months, so that each component can be tested thoroughly before releasing the next one.

### *Discounts and Incentives*

The first test component will be the AMTRAN monthly pass in April. We will contact each of our monthly pass holders by mail and offer a discount for them to come in and get their photo taken for a new smart card monthly pass. After the first month, customers will be able to renew their monthly passes right on the bus.

As the program progresses over the following months, AMTRAN will offer similar incentives to customers who use the Super Rider and Special Rider punch cards.