

## The Planning Corner by Krys Ochia, Transit Planning Manager

### Transit Planning Department Gathering Big Data for Annual Ridership Reports

The Planning department is engaged in the EEO 4-Year Update, Transit Ridership Restoration Plan, Work program for Transit Development Plan (TDP) and Fall 2024 Service Changes. FTA's Annual NTD Report is due January 31.

#### NTD Report

This is an annual report filed by all qualifying US Transit Agencies. It is the source of the national transit data base.

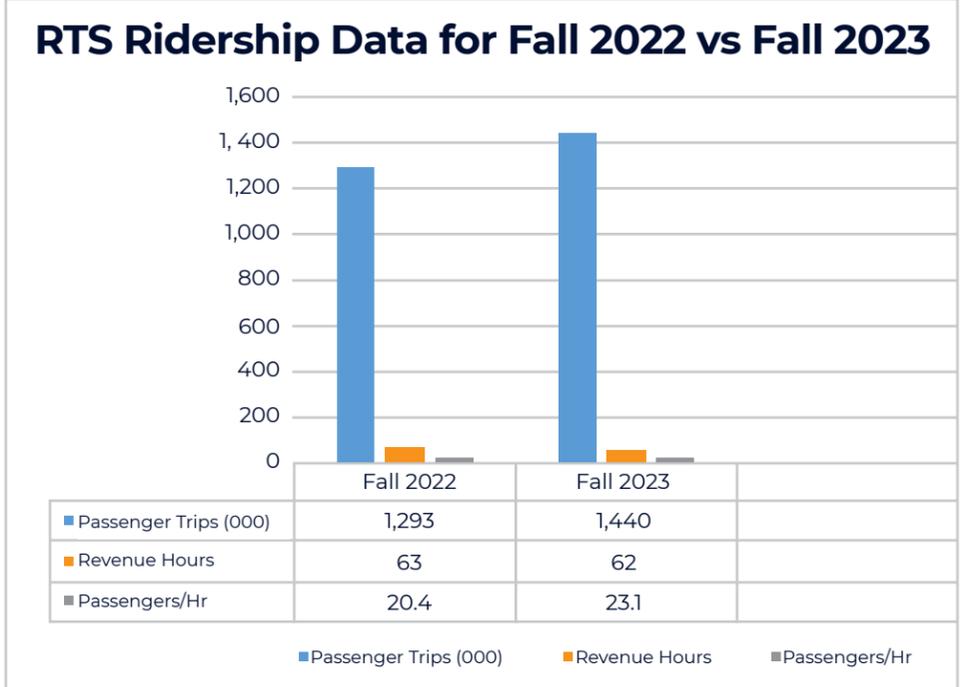
RTS is required to provide information on operational and financial activities for the preceding year. The information includes data on ridership, vehicles miles traveled, vehicle revenue hours, total number of operating transit vehicles (buses, vanpools and demand response), fleet and fleet age, hours of operation. There is also information on expenses for services and operation. In addition to service area population, the key data points used by the FTA for funding transit agencies are vehicle revenue miles traveled and the number of (unlinked) passenger trips. This is because it shows the FTA how many individuals and how many miles RTS prevented them from driving in their automobiles tearing up the roadway and polluting the environment. The transit agency is then rewarded (funded) for its contribution.

#### Equal Employment Opportunity Report

The FTA wants to ensure that transit agencies deliver transit services relying on employees that are free from discriminatory practices by the service provider. This relates to hiring and firing, discipline, training, and promotion, and fairness on gender and ethnicity issues.

Every four years (up until now three years) RTS files a report with data showing its hiring practices, the number of employees disciplined (including firing and demotion), promoted, and trained broken down by job group/class, sex and race. The FTA wants to know if there is underutilization of any race or gender, and any adverse impacts on employees because of RTS employment practices. An adverse impact occurs when a group receives a treatment that is higher than the average score for the entire workforce. Underutilization occurs when

**Graphic at right:** Recommendations for service modification are majorly based on ridership, as the agency is focusing on maximizing the ever-diminishing funding resources.



a group is underrepresented in the workforce vis-à-vis its make up in the entire (hiring area) population. RTS has to explain and provide plans for remedies. The report is due March 1. As an incentive, if RTS owes the FTA a report, such as the EEO Report, FTA will withhold all funding until the deficiency is addressed.

#### Transit Development Plan

Is an FDOT required planning document. This report, and the annual updates, are due September 1. It forms the basis for FDOT funding actions.

FDOT requires RTS to provide a service plan that reflects its goals, vision and outlay of funding and revenues for the next 10 Years, and discuss existing levels of service. The current work effort is the 5-Year Major Update to the Ten-Year Plan. Upon submittal, for every subsequent year, RTS provides an annual progress report of major accomplishments, and offer explanations for any failures. As part of the major update, FDOT is also interested in how RTS serves communities with limited use of the English language to ensure that the agency is not discriminatory in its service delivery activities. Similar to the Restoration Plan, the work is typified by extensive public involvement.

#### Transit Ridership Restoration Plan

Work is progressing on the transit restoration plan. The plan is aimed at developing a strategy for attracting customers back to the

system to preCOVID-19 ridership levels. The Consultant has submitted the first Technical Memorandum that summarizes work accomplishments. Potential members to the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) have been informed of their nominations. Subsequently, RTS and Consultants will invite members to planning meetings. The process also requires community outreach. Those public meetings are separate from CTAC Meetings (which the public is free to attend).

#### Spring Service Planning

Planning will be developing option plan for Fall 2024 service. Recommendations for service modification are majorly based on ridership, as the agency is focusing on maximizing the ever-diminishing funding resources.

The preference is to develop a plan, in consultation with key stakeholders, 45-90 days before the first day of service, all things being equal. A unique new service being considered are two limited stop express routes connecting east to west Gainesville and north to south Gainesville, (with the transfer node at UF Shands) otherwise known as the Compass Route Service. As a limited service, the bus will only service high ridership stops, meaning high intensity activity centers along the routes.

### NOTICES

#### 2024 "State of the City" Address

Tuesday, February 13, 2024  
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM  
Santa Fe College Blount Center  
530 W. University Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32601

#### RTS CAB Meeting

Wednesday, March 27 @ 5:30 PM  
RTS Administration Building  
34 SE 13th Road  
Gainesville, Florida 32601

#### Santa Fe College Spring Arts Festival

Saturday, April 13 & Sunday, April 14  
Santa Fe College  
Northwest Campus  
3000 NW 83rd Street  
Gainesville, FL 32606

*Congratulations  
On Your Retirement!*



**HAPPY RETIREMENT!**

Margery Allen,  
Transit Grants Program Specialist.

Margie, thank you for a lovely combined 36 years with RTS and the City of Gainesville.

Working with you was our pleasure.

We'll miss you!

## Grants Grove by Francis Donahue, Transit Grants Program Specialist

### State of Florida named Gainesville Regional Transit System a Designated Recipient of 5307, 5337, and 5339(a) Formula Grants

On October 19, 2023, the State of Florida named Gainesville Regional Transit System a Designated Recipient of 5307, 5337, and 5339(a) Formula Grants for the Gainesville, Florida urbanized area. This was the culmination of several years of preparation in anticipation of the U.S. Census finding that the population of the Gainesville urbanized area had exceeded 200,000 people. Being a Designated Recipient, rather than a Direct Recipient, means that at some point in the future if the Gainesville metropolitan region grows, that RTS could potentially pass transit funds to additional sub-recipients.

Indeed, the US Census Bureau found that in 2020, the population of the Gainesville urbanized area was 213,748. This information was released later than usual because of problems and delays in completing the 2020 Census which were brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The amount of money that the FTA awards public transit agencies every year by formula depends on these Census figures, and on the designation as a large or small urbanized area. Now that Gainesville is an urbanized area with a population of more than 200,000, many of the rules RTS must

follow pertaining to FTA grants will change. For example, RTS is now responsible for more administrative tasks and more reporting directly to FTA. FTA anticipated this and directed RTS to start preparing these documents and reports in 2021. For example, instead of reporting on FTA grant progress once a year, from now on, RTS will report to FTA four times a year. RTS has also developed a Transit Asset Management Plan, and a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan in order to comply with these enhanced requirements.

The change in size also changes the formula by which funds are apportioned. Unfortunately, it's likely that going from being the large fish in a medium sized pond to a small fish in the large pond, that RTS may see a slight decrease in formula funding compared to prior years. In the last few years, RTS also benefited from generous COVID-era financial support to pay for fuel and transit worker salaries. Those programs have now ended, which means that if RTS needs to find additional sources of funding, then they will have to be found in local funding, or in competitive grants.

## Operations Opinion

### RTS Rolls Out New Staff Uniforms

New uniforms were issued for RTS staff and everyone is looking sleek. The new look for 2024 consists of Charcoal black pants and Navy blue tops featuring the City logo on the chest and the RTS logo on the sleeve. For colder days, dark blue windbreakers can be worn.

New RTS City uniforms rolled out for 2024.



## East Side Transfer Station In the Works



Concept art of proposed Eastside transfer station.

RTS issued an RFQ for Architectural and Design (A&E) services for the new East Side Station. The site for the RTS Transit Station Facility and Park-and-Ride Lot is located between SE 6th Avenue and SE 8th Avenue, west of the GTEC building.

The RTS transit station will include a minimum of six (6) bus bays, micro-transit service area, building facility with public and transit employee restrooms, waiting area for passengers, training room, offices, and a transit information/reception area.

The park-and-ride facility will accommodate at least fifty (50) standard automobile parking spaces, five (5) motorcycle spaces, micro-mobility amenity area and provide enough spaces for bicycle parking.

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[RTSNews@gainesvillefl.gov](mailto:RTSNews@gainesvillefl.gov)

## Parking and Planning Vision Zero Highlights by Karla Rodrigues-Silva, Capital Projects Manager & Vision Zero Coord. Debbie Leistner, Planning Manager for Public Works

### Vision Zero Program "Open House"

As part of the City of Gainesville's Vision Zero Initiative, the Vision Zero "Open House" will showcase transportation safety efforts from various perspectives. Guest speakers from the City, County and State will present current findings and hold question and answer sessions for the public.

The focus of the event is to raise awareness of safety issues, trends, solutions, and provide an opportunity for public input.

The event is supported by City leadership with participation from several city departments and partner organizations linked to transportation, health, and emergency response.

**SAVE THE DATE**

# Vision Zero Open House

**February 20, 2024**  
**4:30 PM - 6:30 PM**  
 RTS Administration Building  
 34 SE 13 Road  
 Gainesville, FL 32601