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AT THE SHOW ISSUE

Looking to the Future with **AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE PARTNERSHIP**

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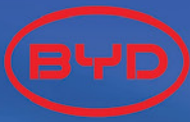
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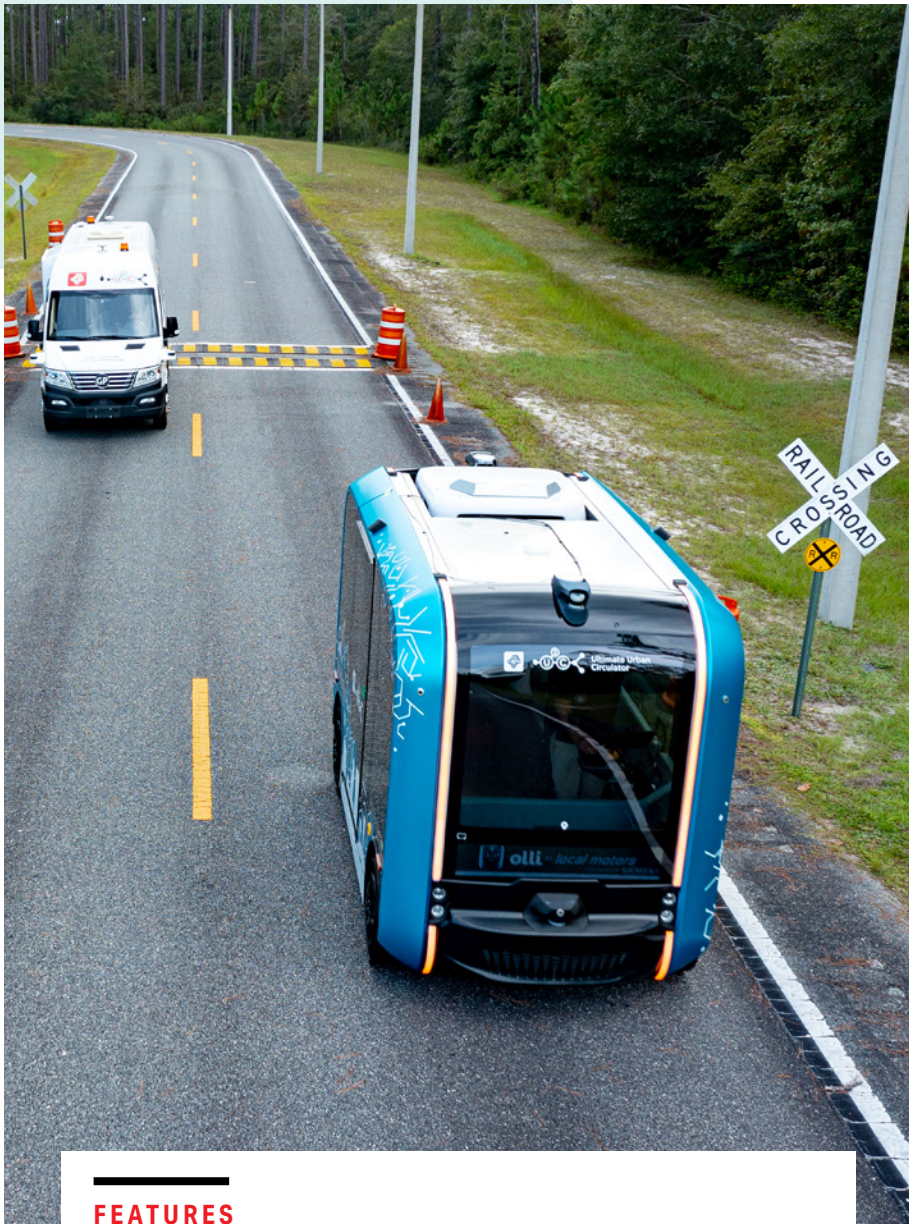


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Florida Provides Ideal Setting for APTA's Triennial Gathering

The state's transit providers have delivered innovation, enhanced service offerings and advanced safety initiatives that fit perfectly into the event theme of "Next Starts Here."

Welcome back to Orlando for the 2023 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) TRANSform Conference and EXPO. The last time the event was held in Orlando in 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act had passed (literal) hours before the opening ceremonies and there was renewed energy to the gathering. The 2021 theme of "What's Next" has transformed for 2023 into "Next Starts Here" and Florida is the ideal location for the industry to begin its next phase.

Florida transit professionals and agencies have been the subject of several positive news stories covered by *Mass Transit* during 2023. This includes the recent news that Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) was named APTA's 2023 Outstanding Public Transportation System in the more than 3 million but fewer than 15 million annual passenger trips category. PSTA debuted its bus rapid transit service, SunRunner, in October 2022 and the service has been embraced by riders. Additionally, PSTA, along with Hillsborough Transit Authority and Hernando County Transit, launched Flamingo Fares, which is a regional fare system designed to ease access to transit throughout the region using a single platform.

Another big, news making addition to south and central Florida is the opening of Brightline's Miami to Orlando rail service. I had a chance to take Brightline from Boca Raton to Fort Lauderdale early in 2023 and the experience, including the comfort, speed and convenience, was impressive.

Passenger rail is being enhanced elsewhere in the state including at South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, which was one of the grant award winners of the inaugural Rail Vehicle Replacement Program through the Federal Transit Administration, story on page 22.

On the innovation front, Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA) and Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) have plans to expand testing of autonomous vehicles on FSCJ's downtown campus this fall, story on page 18. The AV service will connect students, faculty and visitors to the college's downtown campus and will support JTA's efforts to deliver pioneering transportation options through its Ultimate Urban Circulator program.

Florida has hosted several AV projects including recent launches in Altamonte Springs with the Beep supported CraneRIDES and in Orlando where the city, Beep and Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority began a six-month pilot program known as SWAN Shuttle.

On the sustainability front, CALSTART's 2023 *Zeroing in on ZEBs* annual report showed Florida delivering strong gains in the number of full-size zero-emission buses put into service. In early summer, Miami-Dade County Transportation and Public Works ordered 100 battery electric 60-foot transit buses that will be used on the South Dade TransitWay BRT corridor, as well as on bus routes across Miami-Dade County.

Sticking with sustainability, Broward County Transit's Lauderhill Transit Center became the first project to achieve LEEDv4 Transit Station Gold certification. The certification means the facility met the highest standards of green building practices.

Enjoy the show and your time in Florida; there's a lot going on down here.

“

Florida is the ideal location for the industry to begin its next phase.

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Mischa Wanek-Libman

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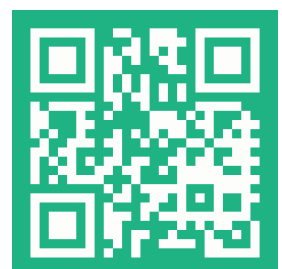
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Committing to Kindness in the Workplace and Every Day

Being kind may be considered a soft skill, but its impact within a workplace can be significant.

By Mike Bismeyer, contributor

▶ A commitment to kindness is contagious and it can start with simple basic kindness to others.

WHILE THERE are many ways we can make the public transit industry better for the communities we serve and people we work with, there is one simple concept that has the power to create transformative change: Kindness.

I experienced the power of kindness on a personal level after being consistently bullied in junior high school, when someone who saw what was happening let me know I was not alone and empowered me to ultimately overcome the situation. This random act of kindness from another person had a lasting impact on me and was a foundational event that inspired me to spread kindness as part of my life's mission, leading me to become an anti-bullying advocate, passionate volunteer and speaker on kindness at conferences and events throughout North America.

I have since learned the power of kindness beyond the individual level – kindness has power on an organizational level and even a systemic level, which we see every day in public transit. In the workplace, kindness has become identified as a key leadership trait and value that is now emphasized in organizations and culture studies. People are not only drawn to work in organizations that value kindness, but studies also show they leave workplaces with toxic cultures and a lack of kindness.

One way we can lead by example and show kindness in our workplaces—and in our industry as a whole—is through mentorship. Mentorship is kindness in action. Sharing lessons learned, tips and advice, listening to others and working through challenges together can have an instrumental impact on both mentors and mentees. Sometimes the best leaders and mentors have no idea they are actually mentoring those around them; they are just leading by example and inspiring others to follow suit.

Public transit is kind by nature, providing people with opportunity, hope and the ability to connect with others while also being kind to environment and creating cleaner air for every-



Mike Bismeyer shares the mantra that “kindness is cool;” he even has the message inked on his arm.

Photo: Mike Bismeyer

one. Our frontline operators are some of the most amazing stewards of kindness, as ambassadors of our cities, communities and culture. We often see simple acts of kindness all around us when we ride transit, such as folks helping others onto the bus, into seats, sharing information on stops and helping others not even on the bus.

A commitment to kindness is contagious and it can start with simple basic kindness to others. Try performing a random act of kindness next time you're out and about, like helping a stranger, paying for someone's coffee or dropping off some supplies at the local food bank. In the workplace, it's as easy as starting by showing your appreciation for those around you, saying thank you and recognizing others or you can go a step further and rally your team to support a cause you care about.

In the spirit of World Kindness Day on Monday, Nov. 13, let's make a point to keep kindness at the forefront. Even a small effort can make a big impact, and every day is an opportunity to change someone's tomorrow. **L**



About the author

Mike Bismeyer is director of sales and client solutions with BetterFleet, contributor to the "Transit Unplugged" podcast and an award-winning community kindness and anti-bullying advocate.

Miovision: Keeping Cities Moving

An interview with Miovision Co-Founder and CEO Kurtis McBride on how technology can provide municipalities with reliable transit, faster emergency response, congestion reduction and improved road safety.

Miovision is known for traffic data and management solutions. How does that impact transit?

According to the American Public Transit Association, buses consistently carry more passengers than any other form of public transit. Most routes use the same road network as the rest of vehicle traffic, so service speed and reliability are strongly influenced by how well a municipality manages its traffic network.

Balancing the needs of public transportation and other road users is an area of growing interest among our customers. That's why, back in 2021, we developed a partnership with Global Traffic Technologies (GTT), the makers of Opticom, a leading traffic signal priority solution that provides a prioritized green light for emergency and transit vehicles.

We learned through the partnership that traffic engineers worry about signal priority's impact on traffic and that the combination of signal priority and our smart signal platform can make traffic better for all stakeholders – whether that's someone riding a bus to work, a delivery driver or a parent taking a carload of kids to soccer practice.

To help cities fully optimize their transportation networks, we knew we needed to address the needs of transit agencies. To that end, we finalized the acquisition of GTT in April, bringing Opticom and the team behind it into Miovision.

With this acquisition, what can Miovision offer to cities, towns and agencies aiming to optimize public transit?

For most municipalities, public transit, emergency services and traffic engineering are all separate agencies that need to coordinate their efforts to meet the needs of all stakeholders. That's easier said than done. We offer a powerful set of solutions that can help agencies deliver reliable transit, faster emergency response, congestion reduction and improved road safety.

For public transit agencies, we can provide an effective solution for improving on-time performance for transit using the road network (typically buses). Transit signal priority (TSP) can always be on to ensure buses consistently arrive on time or agencies can use TSP only when buses are delayed, getting them back on schedule quickly. TSP can improve service reliability, on-time performance and help agencies reduce fuel consumption and brake wear.

How does the addition of transit optimization to your product portfolio drive your broader vision?

Miovision's vision is to materially improve the quality of life for communities through the optimization of transportation networks worldwide. A generation ago many traffic engineers would have viewed this vision as being synonymous

with moving as many vehicles as possible as quickly and safely as possible, but that approach has changed dramatically.

An urban transportation network impacts many aspects of urban life. It determines how easy your commute is, how quickly you can get help in an emergency and even how robust and dynamic the local economy is.

Balancing all these needs is vital and municipalities and agencies need solutions that are easy to deploy and use. That's why our platform is based on machine vision and artificial intelligence to provide the power and the flexibility to deliver a growing range of solutions, and we are making our solutions easier to access. In April, we launched Miovision One – our transformative software platform that addresses current and future global mobility challenges. We are migrating our existing solutions to Miovision One, providing a unified interface for a seamless user experience. This creates a foundation to deliver a wide variety of transportation solutions – a big step towards helping communities around the world to easily optimize their entire traffic networks.

Cities and towns are making big investments in transit. What opportunities do you think this presents for urban mobility?

I think the key to success will be improving transit performance across the network, not merely adding a shiny new project amongst existing operations.

Big, new infrastructure projects such as new subway lines may capture a lot of attention but to achieve public policy goals, the entire transit network needs to improve. TSP can help improve on-time performance, as well as reduce fuel consumption and provide vital connections to the rest of the system.

About the author



Kurtis McBride is chief executive officer with Miovision Technologies Incorporated.



Palm Tran Bus Operator Recognized for Act of Kindness

Palm Tran Bus Operator Marsha Solomon's actions exemplify how transit provides connections beyond geographic locations.

BY ANAND PERALA, CONTRIBUTOR

Marsha Solomon, a bus operator for Palm Tran, did not expect a recognition ceremony when she reached out to a local resident worried about her son. However, on June 6, 2023, dressed in her blue Palm Tran uniform, she was met with applause in a heart-touching moment in the seat of county government. "If Marsha Solomon is representative of the talent and the character in the community, then Palm Beach County is in a really good space," said Ladi March-Goldwire, a building contractor and mental health advocate.

Earlier in the year, March-Goldwire posted on Facebook worried about the whereabouts of her son, who lives with a mental illness. Solomon, a Palm Tran veteran bus operator of 27 years, saw the post and recognized March-Goldwire's son on her bus route. She gave him water, spoke to him and reached out to his mother to assure her that her son was safe.



Left to right: Assistant County Administrator Todd J. Bonlarron, County Commissioner Sara Baxter, Ladi March-Goldwire, County Commissioner Maria G. Marino, Palm Tran Bus Operator Marsha Solomon, ATU Local 1577 President Dwight Mattingly and Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes.

Photo: Palm Tran

March-Goldwire was so impressed by Solomon that she acknowledged her at a Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners meeting in March before making public comments on mental health. Prior to this, they did not know each other.

Hearing March-Goldwire's strong words of praise, Palm Beach County Commissioner Sara Baxter was moved to formally recognize Solomon. On June 6, 2023, Palm Tran leaders arrived at the Board of County Commissioners Chambers for Solomon's official recognition ceremony.

Commissioner Maria G. Marino introduced Solomon, inviting her to the podium to say a few words.

"Being a mom of two sons, I know what it's like to worry about them. I just did what I thought was right. I hope to spread the message that we can all make the world a better and brighter place if we looked out for one another," Solomon said. "I didn't expect to be recognized today, but I'm grateful to represent my co-workers and Palm Tran in a positive light. I know other operators and employees are doing the same and making a difference."

"Thank you for the water, thank you for being kind, thank you for not treating him like his illness," March-Goldwire said following Solomon.

As March-Goldwire paused to hold back her tears, Solomon gave her a hug as the room applauded in a heart-warming moment.

"Mental health is the one thing we can all do together. I just want to say thank you Palm Tran for choosing such amazing employees like Marsha," March-Goldwire continued.

"It really warms my heart to be here for moments like this. Solomon's act of kindness reminds us of our humanity," Palm Beach County Administrator Verdenia Baker remarked.

"Solomon is an exemplar of what we strive for in Palm Beach County. She makes us all proud," added Palm Beach Assistant County Administrator Todd J. Bonlarron.

Solomon was joined at the podium by Palm Beach Commissioners Maria G. Marino and Sara Baxter, Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes, Assistant County Administrator Bonlarron and Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1577 President Dwight Mattingly to recognize her for her act of kindness.

"It fills me with immense pride to recognize Marsha Solomon and bring honor to our entire team," said Forbes. "Her story inspires us to embrace these values and continue making a difference in our community." L

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In Public Transit, Innovation is for the End User

Innovation can be challenging and frustrating, but it is a necessary tool to ensure greater mobility for all.

By Gary Rosenfeld, contributor

▶ Innovation is not just about change, but more about making people's lives better.

ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE TOOLS any public service organization can use is research. It can serve as the basis for new ideas and innovation, as well confirming the needs for the same new ideas and innovation. In 2019, the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) decided to lean into innovation to maximize the efficiency of our services. However, before jumping in head first, the agency leadership wanted to learn more about the perceptions of the communities within our service area and how they felt about MATA, its services and what the mobility challenges were in those communities.

Would they be open to change after so many years of traditional services? Not only did those findings confirm that we were on the right track, but they also indicated that our riders would warmly welcome innovation with support where needed. As it turned out, it was not a bad thing.

Innovation is not just about change, but more about making people's lives better. Digitizing key processes without compromising customer service and the human touch allows us to maintain our values, but also track data around our vehicles, trips taken and overall rider experience. Innovation helps us to plan and bolster our services and effectiveness. In the end, the rider wins.

We took the feedback to heart and implemented several services, including the GO901 mobile app, which allows riders to purchase tickets and track rides from their devices. Recently, we added another innovative option for our riders, our GO901 Smart Card and Ticket Vending Machines.

For the first time, riders no longer must rely on cash to pay for rides onboard our vehicles. All they need is their GO901 Smart Card or GO901 Mobile App to scan our validators. They can also use the ticket vending machines in our transit centers to secure reusable cards and purchase ride passes as needed.

The GO901 Smart Card allows for a number of vital benefits, saves the rider time with the "tap and go" card feature or a quick scan of their app, eliminates any safety risks of having to carry cash and keeps their payments and transactions in one place via a personalized account and card. In just three weeks, more than 5,400 existing riders have secured



MATA's GO901 Smart Card and Ticket Vending Machines allow riders to secure reusable cards and purchase ride passes as needed.

Photo: MATA

GO901 Smart Cards and we are receiving positive feedback from riders about moving into the future with a smoother process. Using ticket purchases, trip destination data and other trends analysis, we will boost our intelligence to make better informed decisions regarding public transit and mobility in the mid-South.

The GO901 Smart Card and Ticket Vending Machine launch is only the first phase of strategy to achieve our goal to ensure public transit is not a last resort, but a necessary component to create a vibrant and forward-moving community.

Phase II of the rollout will encompass leaning on the corporate community to expand our latest offerings. Beginning in 2024, we will partner with



About the author

Gary Rosenfeld is chief executive officer of Memphis Area Transit Authority.



corporations to help bridge the gap of transportation needs of employers, social and community services providers. We are now imagining the impact we can make on the business community and the workforce when corporations can add bus passes to their compensation packages.

In public service work, access matters. Phase III will move the GO901 Smart Cards into a network of nearly 300 local retailers. When you consider the Memphis metro area is listed as a top 10 car-dependent city, this is an opportunity to attract and engage residents who may never visit transit centers, never use public transportation or those who have vehicles of their own, but view public transit as a viable option for commuting. Eliminating those barriers for both current and potential riders to use MATA is what will truly modernize public transit in Greater Memphis.

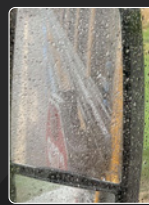
Innovation can be challenging and frustrating, but it is a necessary tool to achieve our result—greater mobility for all. We are proud we have a community and network of supporters, locally, statewide and nationally behind us to help move the needle. We are looking forward to the future. **L**



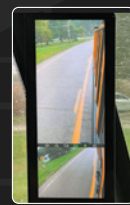
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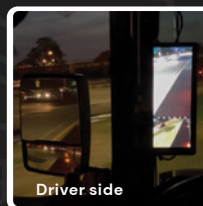


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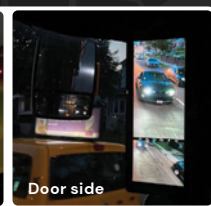


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Members of TriMet's Community Safety Team checking a train in downtown Portland, Ore., in April 2023.

Photo: Mass Transit/Mischa Wanek-Libman

UW Study Finds Minimal Drug Residue on Transit Vehicles, **Long-Term Impacts Unknown**

The five transit agencies in Washington state and Oregon that commissioned the first-of-its-kind study are putting mitigation recommendations into practice to keep riders and operators safe.

BY MISCHA WANEK-LIBMAN, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Drug use and transit are two elements that should not be mixed, but transit agencies are finding themselves on the frontlines of a drug crisis that is rapidly intensifying. Transit operators who have observed riders using drugs on their vehicles are concerned about the potential harm this exposure might have. However, there is a lack of information about secondary impacts exposure to smoke or residue from drugs, including fentanyl and methamphetamine, may have on and around transit property and vehicles.

In the U.S., provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found two thirds of the reported 107,081 drug overdose deaths in 2022 involved synthetic opioids. In the Pacific Northwest, the Oregon Health Authority reported the state saw a 330 percent increase in unintentional opioid overdose deaths between 2019 and 2022.

University of Washington (UW) analysis found fentanyl was involved in 90 percent of opioid overdoses in Washington state and 65 percent of all overdose deaths.

This mix of concern and limited data prompted five agencies in Washington state and Oregon, including Sound Transit, King County Metro, Community Transit, Everett Transit and TriMet, to fund a study performed by UW to assess levels of fentanyl and methamphetamine in the air and on surfaces in public transportation buses and trains.

The study, "Assessing fentanyl and methamphetamine in the air and on surfaces of transit vehicles," was released in early September and provided a nuanced answer to the big question surrounding secondhand drug exposure risk while working or riding in a transit system.

As *Mass Transit* previously reported, the study was "a limited-scope, first-of-its-kind assessment" with the research team finding trace amounts of methamphetamine and fentanyl on surface and air samples. The research team gathered air and surface samples from four agencies during 28 nights along transit lines operators had observed drug use occurring. The team collected 78 air samples and 102 surface samples near vehicle operators and in other areas of the vehicles.

Researchers detected methamphetamine in 98 percent of surface samples and 100 percent of air samples while fentanyl was detected in 46 percent of surface and 25 percent of air

samples. One air sample exceeded federal recommendations for airborne fentanyl exposure at work established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. No similar guidelines exist for airborne methamphetamine and no enforceable federal or state regulations exist for either fentanyl or methamphetamine exposures in a workplace.

Marissa Baker, a UW assistant professor of environmental and occupational health sciences who co-led the assessment, explained the research team's sensitive equipment was more likely to detect drug activity and the detection of substances "does not necessarily mean it poses a health risk to operators or the riding public."

Dr. Scott Phillips, executive/medical director of the Washington Poison Center, and Dr. Robert G. Hendrickson, program director, fellowship in medical toxicology and medical director for the Oregon Poison Center, issued a joint statement following the release of UW's assessment, recognizing the presence of drugs in a

“

Exposures to the quantities of drug demonstrated in this study are too small to produce physical effects from a short-term exposure that a rider would experience.”

**Dr. Scott Phillips
and Dr. Robert G.
Hendrickson**



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public space is understandably alarming, but providing a medical perspective to the results.

“The amount of drugs that were detected in this study are extremely small. Exposures to the quantities of drug demonstrated in this study are too small to produce physical effects from a short-term exposure that a rider would experience. Therefore, individuals who use public transportation for travel needs should continue to feel safe doing so,” Dr. Phillips and Dr. Hendrickson said. “The UW study highlights the crisis that communities across the Pacific Northwest and the country are facing - an epidemic of opioid and stimulant use. Our communities must work to address the drivers of substance use and to support and provide help to those with substance use disorders to reach long-term recovery. This study aimed to determine if drugs could be detected in public transit, and it can.”

UW researchers also recognized “further consideration should be given to dai-

ly secondhand exposure experienced by operators and its potential for long-term health effects, which have yet to be established by evidence-based research.”

“Operators are different from the riding public because operators are exposed for a much longer time period,” said Marc Beaudreau, a research industrial hygienist in the UW Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences and co-leader of this assessment. “The potential long-term health effects associated with daily exposure have not been adequately researched, so until these relationships are established, we’re suggesting protective measures that transit agencies could implement to keep operators safe.”

The UW team recommended measures, including enhanced surface cleanings, upgrading ventilation and filtration and operator training, such as how to respond to onboard smoking, real and perceived risks of drug exposure and how/when to use naloxone in overdose emergencies.

Mitigation Steps

For the five agencies that funded the UW study, actions and initiatives are being implemented to ensure their transit networks remain safe for riders and employees.

“Our riders, operators and other employees deserve to use our system without being exposed to drug use,” said TriMet General Manager Sam Desue, Jr. “More needs to be done to ensure that transit and other public spaces are safe and comfortable for everyone.”

TriMet has doubled the number of personnel on its security teams, revised its code of conduct to include non-criminal violations of laws as prohibited on TriMet, added a Safety Response Team to connect people in need with social services and the agency will continue cleaning touch points nightly. The agency reports filters were upgraded on its buses and trains during the pandemic with fixed-route buses using MERV-12 rated filters, FX articulated buses using MERV-13 filters and MAX trains using

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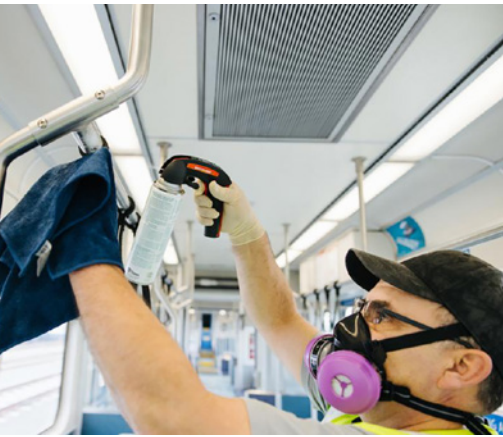
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The advertisement features a background of a transit station with blurred lights and tracks. In the foreground, two blue transit seats with bright green backrests and seat cushions are shown. The backrests have a circular logo with the text 'Enhance Your Brand' and three stars. A large, stylized graphic on the right side of the ad consists of a semi-circle at the top containing the text 'COLOR OPTIONS', three stars in the center, and a larger semi-circle at the bottom containing the text 'TRANSIT LOGOS'. The main headline 'See our Extensive Color Offering and Custom Transit Logo Options' is in white text on the left. The company name 'AMERICAN SEATING' and booth information 'Hall B, Booth 2530' are at the bottom right.

For more information, visit www.MassTransitmag.com/10065868



The UW study recommended enhanced cleaning protocols to remove drug residue from surfaces on transit vehicles.

Photo: Sound Transit

MERV-10 filters, which is the highest level of filter available.

Community Transit and Everett Transit have expanded and enhanced their security procedures. Community Transit

has expanded its Transit Security Officer Program, while Everett Transit has partnered with its local police department on a “See Something, Say Something” campaign. Both systems have upgraded their filters and Community Transit is in the process of procuring vendor support to implement a deep cleaning protocol to neutralize drug residue.

Like their regional peers, Sound Transit and King County Metro have also planned to increase security personnel on their systems and will continue work to upgrade filters on vehicles. King County Metro anticipates converting its remaining 448 buses from MERV-11 to MERV-13 filters in the short term. Sound Transit reports it has prioritized MERV-13 filters when possible but explains sometimes the higher-rated filter doesn’t fit while other vehicles are not engineered to handle the filter or may require hardware retrofits before they can be used.

Sound Transit relies on King County Metro for daily maintenance of its Link

light-rail vehicles and several of its ST Express buses. King County Metro piloted enhanced bus cleaning practices at two bases with plans to expand to all seven of its bases. The enhanced practices include vacuuming with a high-efficiency particulate air filter and implementing a detergent-based deep cleaning of buses every 10-14 days, as well as daily wipe-downs of high-touch areas and the driver’s area.

All five agencies have also implemented steps to ensure offenders observed smoking on vehicles or engaging in other prohibited conduct can be reported and addressed.

“The safety of our staff, our riders and our community is always our highest priority,” said Sound Transit CEO Julie Timm. “While this is the underlying motivation for Sound Transit’s commissioning of this study last year, it is also the reason why we did not wait to increase our security presence and to start pilot partnerships with support services on our system earlier this year.” L

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The organizations are testing autonomous vehicles that are set to launch in downtown Jacksonville in 2025 to bring more mobility to the region.

BY BRANDON LEWIS, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

JTA, FSCJ are looking to the future with AV partnership

JTA's AV at FSCJ Cecil Center.
Photo: JTA



As technology continues to evolve in the 21st century, Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) is looking to lead the way in what public transportation will look like in the future.

In 2020, the authority inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand JTA's autonomous vehicle (AV) Test & Learn program on Florida State College at Jacksonville's (FSCJ) Cecil Center Campus, home to the college's Aviation and Commercial Vehicle Driving facilities. The goal of the program is to test JTA's AV vehicles on the campus to eventually be used throughout downtown Jacksonville.

The AV vehicles run on an automated people mover called the Skyway System, a 2.5-mile track in downtown Jacksonville. JTA has had driverless vehicles operating in Jacksonville for approximately 25 years on the Skyway System. The authority plans on converting the skyway to a roadway at elevation, allowing the AVs to operate without drivers to expand mobility options throughout the city. The vehicles are electric and will be charged at FSCJ's Cecil Center Campus.

The project is one of many planned "Agile" programs pioneered by the JTA team to prepare the Jacksonville community for the future of transportation through the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U2C) program. Phase one of the U2C Bay Street Innovation Corridor is set to launch in 2025.

JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford Sr. says the decision to partner with FSCJ came down to both partners sharing a vision devel-

oping AV technology and JTA wanting the younger generation to embrace the new form of transportation.

"From the very beginning of this project, we recognized this new technology was going to be vastly different than what we've operated in the past, so we recognized that there was going to be a need for workforce development of the JTA workforce," Ford said. "We also recognized that we needed an opportunity to do more research and testing, and we had to really look at the workforce of the future and how do we use our local state college to help us with developing the curriculum to train our technicians of the future. FSCJ's primary responsibility was to develop the workforce of the future for the JTA and we needed a facility for additional research and testing. We wanted another testing facility with a faster and larger route and, in partnership with FSCJ, we developed a curriculum for their students."

Ford says there will be attendants on-board the AV's when phase one launches.

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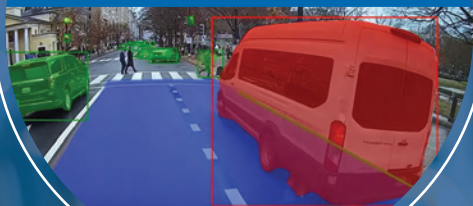


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Autonomous

“The plan is to have attendance on the vehicle, and that is going to be for probably the next 12 months after we launch. After that, we do want to transition into level four operation that is with no attendant on the actual vehicle,” Ford said.

Ford notes the agency will have a control center that will be able to monitor all the AV vehicles in JTA’s operation.

“There will be camera’s inside and outside the vehicles for the staff in the control center to monitor the operation and monitor vehicle performance,” Ford said. “Currently, we are testing out at this particular time, teleoperation, where an actual controller could take over the vehicle and remotely operate that vehicle past any obstruction or any particular issue the vehicles may run into within the three-mile system. As we develop this technology, we are developing the technology without a person on board, so we have to make sure all of the security capabilities, as well as customer service amenities are well in place, and we’re able to monitor those on a real time basis.”

“

We believe that that is where autonomous vehicle technology over the next 10 years has its greatest potential, that first mile, last mile mobility type hubs where we use fixed route bus service...”

Nathaniel P. Ford Sr., CEO, JTA

In 2020, FTA started using the AV vehicles to transport COVID-19 tests from Mayo Health Clinic in Jacksonville. The vehicles transported COVID-19 test samples from the drive-through testing facility to the testing laboratories a mile away from the drive-through testing site. JTA did so for nearly four months, moving approximately 30,000 test samples.

Ford noted the authority received worldwide feedback regarding the use of AVs during the height of the pandemic, including an ITS World Congress Award for the utilization of the AV technology to help support the community related to recovering from the pandemic.

“We received great feedback for that program at the international level, at the national level and at the local level,” Ford said. “I would argue at the local level, it actually garnered greater support for the development of the AV project.”

In terms of fare collection on the AV’s, JTA plans to collect fares through a tap fare reader and have customer service personnel verify a rider has paid their fare. The strategy for implementing fare collection is still in the developmental phase.

In mid-October, JTA is planning to launch an AV test system one-mile route on FSCJ’s campus. The test system will feature two AV vehicles, both purchased by FSCJ. The route will connect some of the college’s administrative offices, the cafeteria, some of the recreational areas and some of the academic buildings on campus.

There will be an attendant on board to assist with questions and to address any issues during the operation. The test is being done to familiarize the students and the faculty with the vehicles, as well as give campus guests the opportunity to be exposed to the new technology. JTA and FSCJ will use feedback from the test route that will be implemented into the final design of the Bay Street Innovation corridor.

The JTA has begun a series of webinars that it is hosting in partnership with public transportation agencies around the country who are working with AVs. Some of the agencies JTA has done webinars with include Contra Costa County Transit, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada and Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County.

In the next decade, JTA is hoping the AVs lead to better mobility in the Jacksonville area.

“We have a unique situation here in Jacksonville with the Skyway and the ability to the system to replace the aging skyway,” Ford said. “Right now, we have 16 ready ride zones that we operate that are smaller shuttles, door-to-door service. We believe that that is where autonomous vehicle technology over the next 10 years has its greatest potential, that first mile, last mile mobility type hubs where we use fixed route bus service, our BRT operation, to create mobility hubs in each of those major stops and stations that are then complimentary partnered with autonomous vehicle shuttles for first mile, last mile microtransit type of operation.”

Phases of the U2C Bay Street Innovation Corridor

- Currently at 60 percent design. It will reach 90 percent design and JTA plans to break ground and begin construction in December 2023. JTA has a 2.5-year timeline for phase one. By mid-2025, JTA plans for phase one to be in service.
- Currently in requests for procurement stage. During phase two, JTA will be evaluating proposals to convert the existing aerial monorail system from a 2.5-mile aerial structure that supports the monorail operation to a roadway at elevation. JTA expects phase two to be completed by 2030.
- The extension of the three-mile route into outer neighborhoods. Phase three will occur concurrently with phase two. During phase three, JTA will be looking at deploying similar outdoor door-to-door microtransit type operations in some of its less dense neighborhoods. Phase three will feature staff on the AVs.
- No JTA staff on board the AVs and the continued extension of door-to-door microtransit options to more neighborhoods in Jacksonville by 2035.



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SFRTA's Brighter Future Supported with a New Rail Fleet

SFRTA was among the first grant award winners of FTA's Rail Vehicle Replacement Program and, along with new locomotives and rail cars, the agency hopes the fleet will bring greater reliability and enhanced amenities.

BY EMAN ABU-KHALED, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Rail Vehicle Replacement Program, a grant program established under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, has shed light on the rail industry's need for an update in vehicles, technology and, in some cases, air conditioning. The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), the operator of Tri-Rail, was one of those cases.

SFRTA secured \$ 71.7 million in the inaugural round of funding awarded through the Rail Vehicle Replacement Program; one of six transit providers to be awarded a combined \$703 million. The grant will be used for the replacement of 24 locomotives and passenger cars that have exceeded or are near the end of their useful life. The agency is planning for six locomotives, 12 passenger coaches and six cab cars.

"It's been a minute," said David Dech, SFRTA's executive director, when asked when the agency had last replaced and updated

its vehicles and equipment. "We brought the last Brookville locomotives 10 years ago. We have a total, right now, of 21 locomotives, 29 coaches and 19 cab cars. Our locomotives age anywhere from 43 years old at the oldest to 10 years at the newest. Our cabs and coaches are 36 years old at the oldest and 11 years old at the newest."

SFRTA is not alone in its challenges with an aging rail fleet. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics shows the average age of a commuter rail passenger coach was 25.3 years in 2021, showing a 25 percent increase compared to 2016. The average age of heavy-rail passenger cars was 23.9 years, at a five percent increase

SFRTA secured \$ 71.7 million in the inaugural round of funding awarded through the Rail Vehicle Replacement Program; one of six transit providers to be awarded a combined \$703 million.

Photo: SFRTA

compared to 2016 and the average age of light-rail vehicles was 19.5 years, which is an eight percent increase compared to 2016.

When the initial group of funds for the Rail Vehicle Replacement Program opened for applications, FTA explained older railcars contribute to service delays and increased costs while lacking newer amenities, such as digital signage and audio tools, that improve the riding experience and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The grant program allows agencies, such as SFRTA, to begin the process of fleet renewal.

SFRTA wants to invest its grant money in fixing some of its vehicles' reliability issues. The agency explains maintenance on some aging vehicles is no longer enough to keep them running at the pace required by riders. For example, Tri-Rail service connects passengers with Miami International Airport, Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport and Palm Beach International Airport, all destinations where reliability of service is a priority.

Tri-Rail service connecting Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties has been affected by the aging rail equipment. The vehicles now require more frequent maintenance and repairs, which means more time in the shop and less time serving passengers.

While the issue hasn't had major effects on the agency's timetable or scheduling, it has hindered the agency's ability to swap out engines when they are out for maintenance.

New fleet brings technological advances

Almost all SFRTA's equipment lacks modern amenities like Wi-Fi and charging outlets. Dech said SFRTA's team has felt like they are "constantly trying to play catch up," to all of the other transit agencies in the area.

Victor Garcia, SFRTA's director of public affairs, explains the new rail fleet will provide an opportunity to meet customer expectations.

"We want to have all the things that customers expect to have these days. Our passengers will have a much-improved experience when we procure new equipment with state-of-the-art technology," said Garcia.

On critical component for rail cars in Florida is air conditioning, especially during the humid and arid months. SFRTA averages around 13,000 riders on weekdays and 6,000 on weekends. With high temperatures in southern Florida reaching above 90 degrees in

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some months, rider comfort is an important consideration.

Supply chain issues

Rail cars and locomotives have not been immune to the well-documented supply chain challenges experienced by the transit industry. Dech notes this as a major concern for the SFRTA.

“We all have a concern about supply chain issues. The good news is that people have money to spend and the bad news is people have money to spend and there’s a limited number of suppliers,” said Dech.

SFRTA is hoping to resolve this by considering all options. The agency will not only be looking for efficiency in procuring the vehicles, but also for the quality of these vehicles for its riders’ benefit.

“We’re in the infant stages of this procurement, we make sure that, you know, we buy something that is the best suited for South Florida’s climate and environment,” explained Dech.

This will be the first and largest order

Dech will handle in his position as executive director. He wants to cover all of the bases when commissioning and receiving the order for the agency.

“There are regulatory compliance standards we have to go through when commissioning a locomotive,” said Dech. “Once we get the locomotive on site, we’ll want to make sure that we follow the federal processes to make sure we commissioned everything properly.”

A group effort

While being one of the first grant recipients through the Rail Vehicle Replacement Program is a boon for SFRTA’s rail fleet renewal efforts, preparing a grant application for a new federal program was daunting. Despite the lack of precedent, the SFRTA team put in the hours to ensure a correct application was received by the program.

“It was a lot of hours at Christmas time,” Dech said when asked about the application process. “This was time when people could have just left and went on

vacation and did whatever they wanted, but they stayed here and put in the work to get this grant.

“People on our staff spent a lot of time around the holidays, making sure to do the proper research and answer the questions as accurately as possible, making sure we wrangle the supporters,” Dech explained, referring to the 20 percent local match requirement of the federal grant process to ensure the federal share does not exceed 80 percent of the net project cost.

A lot of major supporters at the state and local level including elected officials, the agency’s board, CSX Transportation, Brightline and Amtrak, helped SFRTA’s grant application.

Dech points out U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL-22) as a key player in the success of the grant application with her letter of support to the FTA.

“This wouldn’t have happened if we didn’t have a lot of people partnering with us in support of this project,” Dech stressed. **L**



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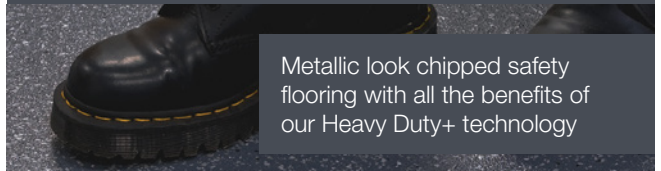
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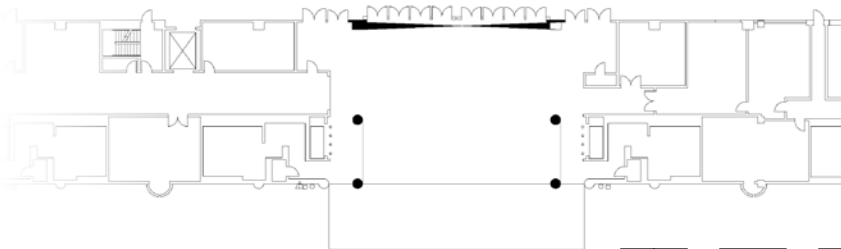
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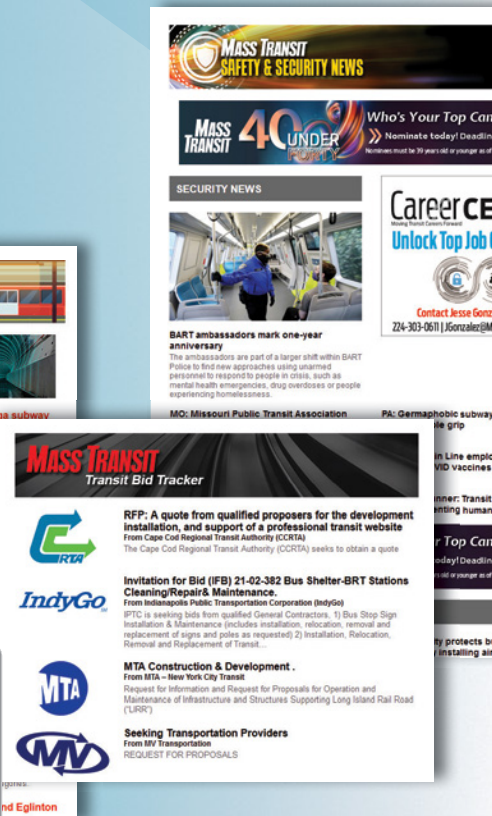
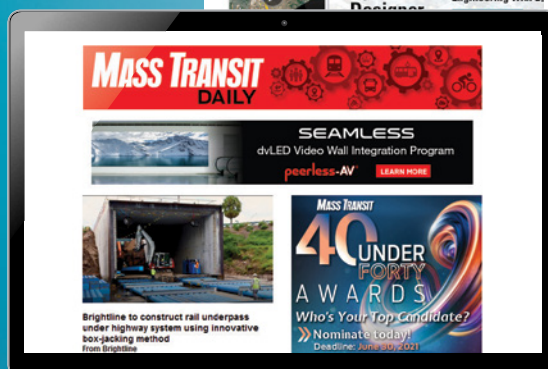


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TECHNOLOGY

Avail Technologies myAvail ETMS

Booth 1441

myAvail ETMS offers more than just CAD/AVL with features that support entire organizations' data needs. Avail Technologies' business intelligence dashboards report a company's metrics in real time to help improve efficiency, justify funding requests and demonstrate compliance getting users answers, not just data. Using a single shared database to flow data seamlessly throughout an organization helps to keep riders informed of changes and connects dispatchers to the locations of every bus and driver in the system, along with all incidents as they occur.

AVAIL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

<https://availtec.com>



BUS

NFI Zero-Emission Vehicles

Booth 3153

NFI's Xceliors CHARGE NG™ is New Flyer's next generation battery-electric, zero-emission bus. It is lighter and has longer range with better energy recovery and is smart city capable. NFI also offers Alexander Dennis' Enviro500 double-deck bus, which accommodates 80 sitting passengers for commuter or tourist routes. This bus features wide opening doors and a flat floor interior, which provides two wheelchair spaces. MCI's battery-electric D45 CRT LE CHARGE™ coach is another main product NFI featuring a battery-powered bus ultimately reducing bus emissions.



NFI GROUP

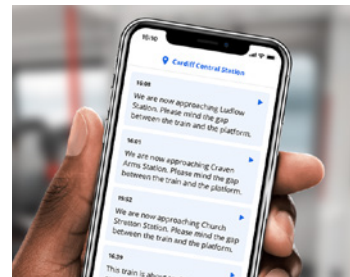
<https://www.nfigroup.com>

MOBILE APP

Icomera HEAR App

Booth 2372

The Hearing Enhanced Audio Relay (HEAR) application, an onboard digital service specifically designed for those passengers who are deaf or with hearing loss, is being offered by Icomera. HEAR helps to ensure transportation infrastructure and its technological advancements are designed with the needs of all individuals in mind with real-time, personalized journey announcements being sent directly to smart devices. Once a passenger is connected to onboard Wi-Fi, the HEAR App runs in the background and keeps them updated as the journey progresses. HEAR is WCAG 2.0 compliant and a low-cost alternative to expensive hearing loop systems, supporting multiple languages, voice-over, Android talkback and offline usage to users.



ICOMERA US INC

<https://www.icomera.com/solutions/real-time-journey-information>

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

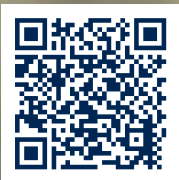
Luminator All-In-One App

Booth 3940

Luminator Suite provides a way to operate and maintain passenger information systems, allowing for information to be controlled through a single, web-based user interface. Other features include shortening the downtime of vehicles through easier configurations of destination messages, route numbers and public information that can be transferred directly to the vehicle via Wi-Fi or cellular.

LUMINATOR TECHNOLOGY GROUP

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PASSENGER INFORMATION

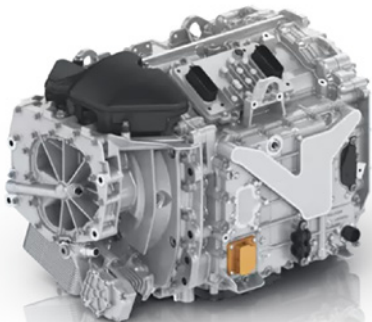
Connectpoint ePaper

Booth 1713

Connectpoint's ePaper digital signage is a digital signage solution most used in the U.S. The product is available in five sizes: 13 inches, 22 inches, 28 inches, 32 inches and 42 inches. Connectpoint also offers LED and LCD digital signage solutions. Clients have input and control over all signage from desktop or mobile devices.

CONNECTPOINT

<https://connectpoint.com>



BUS

CeTrax 2 dual electric drive

Booth 3189

CeTrax 2 dual packages within the space of the transmission of an ICE vehicle, enabling bus manufacturers to offer ICE and electric powertrains in a single vehicle platform. The system integrates modular and in-house developed components, which results in a one-box solution, enabling its compact size and light weight and allowing for flexible integration into solo and articulated bus and coach applications with either low- or high-floor design.

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RAIL

Hitachi Rail Mobility Management

Booth 2121

Hitachi Rail is coming out with a new digital portfolio for Smart Mobility services called Lumada Intelligent Mobility Management suite (LIMM). LIMM offers a set of solutions that allow passengers to enjoy both a seamless and sustainable travel experience – while benefits to operators offer a digital twin of transportation networks that allow scalability, analysis and optimization of services.

HITACHI RAIL

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FARE MANAGEMENT

Scheidt & Bachmann FareGo

Booth 4343

The fare collection technology company, Scheidt & Bachmann, offers fare box options like the FareGo FB|30 Farebox, which allows riders to pay with cash and coins expediting boarding and making transit more accessible. Scheidt & Bachmann also offers the FareGo PG|50 Faregate, which utilizes validation technology to initiate fast processing of contactless ticket and payment media preventing tailgating in lines. Another product that is offered is FareGo ST|71 Ticket Vending Machine.

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Products



BUS

Lucerix mirrors

Booth 3680

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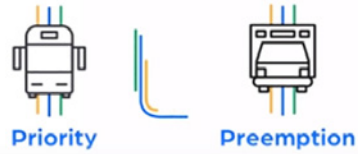
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TECHNOLOGY

Miovision Opticom™ Transit Signal Priority

Booth 3215

Miovision Opticom™ Transit Signal Priority (TSP) can help to reduce schedule delays, cut operating costs and increase ridership for transit systems. As agencies transition toward zero-emission fleet vehicles, TSP can help maintain more consistent speeds, thereby reducing the number of unnecessary stops, improving battery efficiency and lowering fuel costs.

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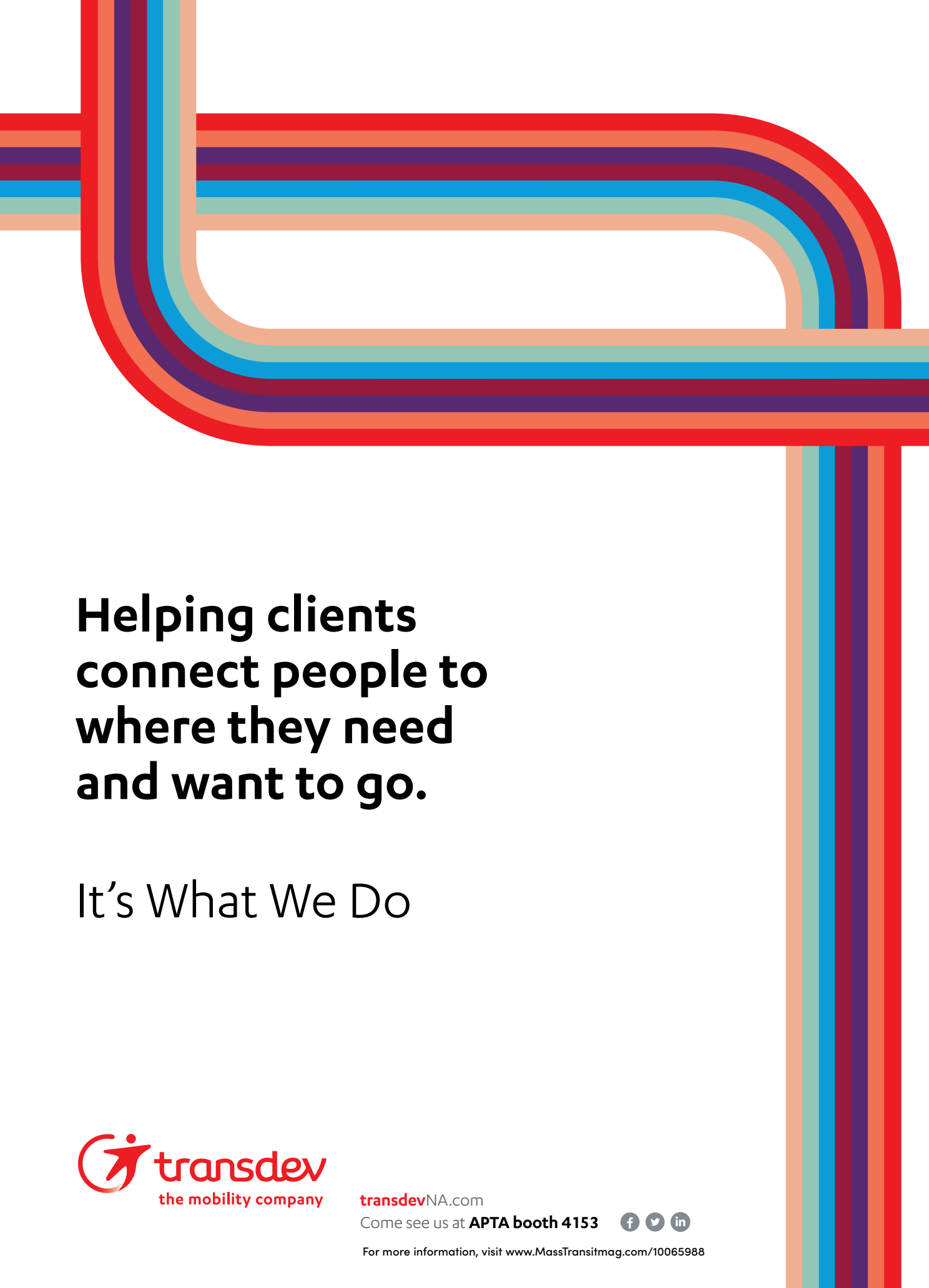
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People & Places



WSP USA will perform the environmental review of the Interborough Express project.
Photo: MTA

WSP USA, Inc. to perform environmental review of Light Rail Transit project for Interborough Express

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) selected WSP USA, Inc., to perform the environmental review of the proposed Interborough Express Light Rail Transit project. The project is set to connect communities in Brooklyn and Queens to 17 subway lines and the Long Island Rail Road and significantly reduce travel times within and between the two boroughs. The Interborough Express would use the existing right-of-way of the Bay Ridge Branch, which is a freight rail line that runs through Brooklyn and Queens, connecting ethnically and socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods such as Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Borough Park, Kensington, Midwood, Flatbush, Flatlands, New Lots, Brownsville, East New York, Bushwick, Ridgewood, Middle Village, Maspeth, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights.

[MassTransitmag.com/53068065](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53068065)

Skanska piloting zero-emissions electric excavator on L.A. Metro's Purple Extension Transit Project

► Skanska is piloting a zero-emissions electric excavator on Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Purple Extension Transit Project. The Volvo EC230 is the largest electric excavator of its kind and is designed to have the same capabilities as a diesel excavator. Because it is powered by batteries, not an engine, using the Volvo EC230 will lower emissions



Skanska is piloting a zero-emissions electric excavator on L.A. Metro's D Line Extension Transit Project.

Photo: Skanska

on the job site and reduce noise during construction. Skanska is replacing the current diesel-powered Komatsu PC228 excavator with the Volvo EC230 to load trucks of export material from a stockpile at the South Yard of the La Brea Station.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072393](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072393)

Cubic Transportation Systems launches Umo on Sault Ste. Marie Transit

► Cubic Transportation Systems has partnered with Sault Ste. Marie Transit to launch Umo in Ontario, Canada. Cubic's cloud-based Umo platform is designed to enhance the way riders experience and pay for public transportation, making it easier and more convenient. With Umo, riders will now have the option to use contactless payments by simply tapping their reloadable Umo smartcard or using the Umo Mobility app on mobile devices to pay for their fare swiftly and securely. Umo's easy-to-deploy contactless payment system will help reduce boarding times and address the diverse needs of transit riders. Umo's collaboration with Canadian manufacturer TAG Canada integrates mechanical fareboxes for a complete fare payment solution.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072146](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072146)



Photo: Lightning eMotors

St. Louis Lambert International Airport commissions Lightning eMotors for five Lightning ZEV4™ shuttle buses

► The St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL) purchased five Lightning ZEV4™ shuttle buses from Lightning eMotors. STL partner SP Plus Parking will operate the vehicles, transporting passengers between the airport's two terminals. The deal also includes five Level 2 chargers and one Level 3 DC fast charger, currently set for delivery later this year. STL received a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) 2023 Voluntary Airport Low Emissions Program grant to help fund the purchase of the vehicles and chargers. The grants are only available for the purchase of FAA Buy American compliant vehicles.

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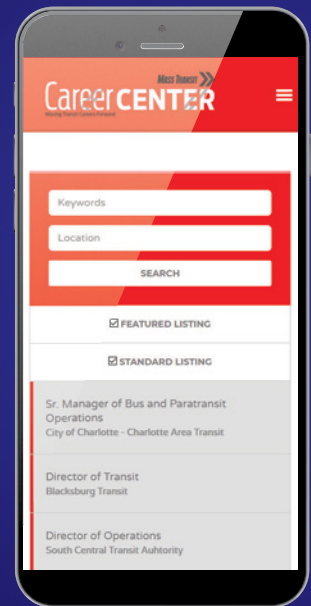
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Mass Transit Career Center:
Your guide to open positions
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

HDR



Matthew Tucker has joined HDR to lead the firm's global transit program. As global transit director, Tucker will focus on expanding advisory and technical services to best serve HDR's clients and their communities. He will be responsible for more than 600 global transit employees. Tucker has dedicated three decades to the public transportation industry and recently retired as executive director of the North County Transit District after 15 years.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072759](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072759)

Complete Coach Works (CCW)



Complete Coach Works (CCW) appointed Patrick Scully to the position of chief commercial officer Aug. 1, 2023. Scully will lead the sales and marketing side of the organization and will join Bradley Carson (COO) and Michael Dominici (CFO) as the senior leaders of the organization responsible for guiding the organization.

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CATS has added six electric BYD | RIDE buses to its fleet.
Photo: BYD

CATS adds six electric BYD | RIDE buses to its fleet

► Capital Area Transit System (CATS) in Baton Rouge, La., will soon be operating a total of 15 battery electric BYD | RIDE buses, strengthening its commitment to environmentally friendly public transportation with the addition of six BYD | RIDE zero-emission buses to its fleet. Ensuring compliance with ADA requirements, all CATS buses come equipped with wheelchair lifts and various features designed to accommodate passengers with disabilities. The newly acquired K7MER buses feature industry-leading battery technology and offer two ADA wheelchair-complaint positions. The 30-foot electric buses have a seating capacity of up to 20 passengers and a working range of up to 196 miles.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072303](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072303)

SNC-Lavalin Group rebrands as AtkinsRéalis

► SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. has rebranded. The services and project management company will now work under the name AtkinsRéalis. The change will bring SNC-Lavalin, Atkins, Faithful+Gould, DTS and Atkins Acuity, AtkinsRéalis together as an organization under one single brand and will represent a major milestone in the company's transformation journey. Headquartered in Montréal, Canada, AtkinsRéalis combines the expertise of its 36,000 employees across markets and regions to deliver end-to-end solutions in the built and natural environments. SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. will not change its legal name until the company obtains shareholder approval, as required by law, at its 2024 Annual Meeting of Shareholders.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072231](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072231)

GMV launches fundraiser in support of fire survivors in Maui

► GMV, a technology solutions partner of Maui Bus – is rallying its transit network in a fundraising endeavor towards recovery efforts for Maui as the nation marks one-month since the deadliest wildfire in America. Maui Bus aided in the evacuation of more than 42,000 people off Maui in the first few days after the wildfire outbreak – many of whom were visitors. Additionally, Maui Bus coordinated on-demand shuttle services for those at emergency shelters to get goods and services and move between temporary housing locations, distribution centers and service centers. Efforts continue in transporting emergency responders and volunteers throughout the region and the agency is designing new routes that will allow for connectivity between Central Maui and West Maui, where the fire outbreak occurred.

[MassTransitmag.com/53072136](https://www.masstransitmag.com/53072136)

BOOTH 3231

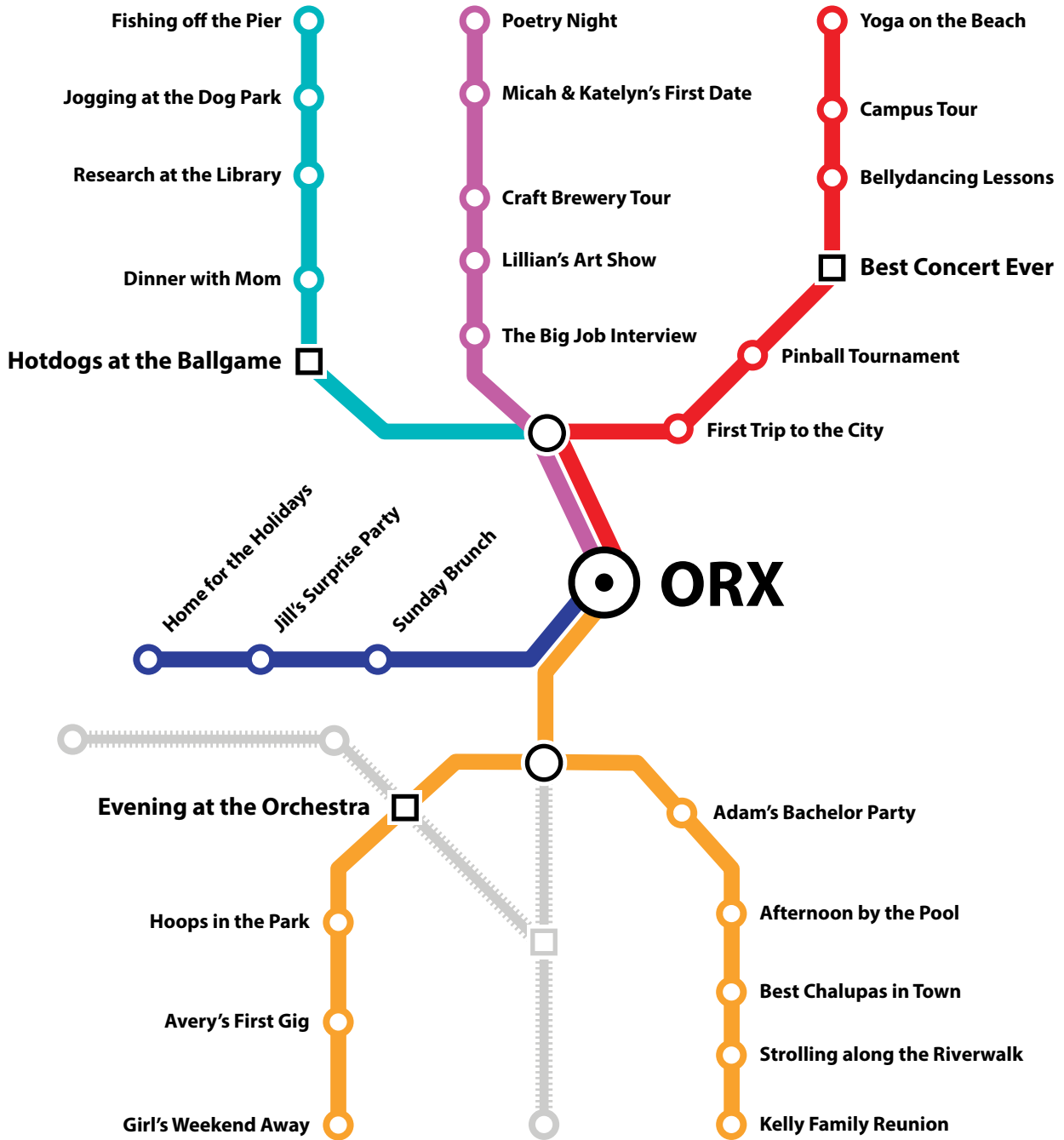
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