

## Save Green, Go Green with AMTRAN

### “Take the Bus to Work” August 18-23

Millions of Americans are leaving their cars at home and getting to work on public transportation. Many are concerned about skyrocketing fuel prices, while others are motivated by environmental concerns.

To promote AMTRAN as an alternative to driving to work, Altoona Mayor Wayne Hippo has designated August 18-23 as Take the Bus to Work Week with a theme of “Save Green, Go Green” in partnership with WTAJ TV-10.

AMTRAN will be featuring special services, a fare discount, gifts, prize drawings and information services to help you navigate the AMTRAN system and have fun while you're doing it.

Currently, about 30% of AMTRAN's ridership is people using the bus to get to work. We want to expand that percentage.

#### *“AMTRAN to Work” Bus*

In addition to its regular routes, AMTRAN currently runs an “AMTRAN to Work” bus each morning. In just one trip, this bus delivers employees to their jobs as far apart as Norfolk Southern in Juniata to North American Communications in Duncansville. It also gets people to work at retail and service establishments along Plank Road and Pleasant Valley Blvd.

AMTRAN wants to create more “AMTRAN to Work” routes to help people get to their jobs. So, now the

question is “Can AMTRAN help you?”

#### *Can AMTRAN help you?*

While many Altoona residents use AMTRAN on a regular basis, not everyone is familiar with our travel routes, schedules, and fares. If you are interested in skipping your weekly trip to the gas pumps, AMTRAN customer service representatives are ready to help you plan your work commute. Just call us at 944-4074 Monday through Saturday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and tell us where you are traveling from, your destination, and when you need to arrive at work.

For folks cruising the Internet, the AMTRAN web site is located at [www.amtran.org](http://www.amtran.org). Expanded and updated in March to provide more information and services to customers, the site includes AMTRAN schedules, maps, and service details in both viewable and downloadable formats.

#### *Just \$10 to ride all week*

A special \$10 weekly fare card for Take The Bus To Work Week will go on sale on August 4 and can be purchased from AMTRAN drivers and at the AMTRAN offices located at 3301 5th Avenue. The \$10 card will be good for unlimited travel on all AMTRAN fixed route vehicles from Monday, August 18 through Saturday, August 23.

***Save Green, Go Green with AMTRAN.***

## Has \$4 gas increased AMTRAN's ridership?

Eric Wolf, General Manager

From friends to elected officials to the media, everyone is constantly asking me, "With gas at \$4.00 a gallon, isn't AMTRAN's ridership up?" Well it is up, but only a little, and here's why.

The service isn't good enough. We don't have a long enough service day, currently starting around 7:00 a.m. and ending around 5:00 p.m. We don't have enough frequency with buses that only run once an hour. It's just not convenient enough for working people to use.

### *Getting people to work*

Blair County has a retail-based economy, and retail employees are bus riders across the nation. About 30% of our ridership are people using the bus to get to and from work. But we have a lot more people who would like to ride AMTRAN to work if they could. But with buses once an hour, they tell us "I can either get to work 45 minutes early or 15 minutes late." That just isn't convenient enough to be attractive. Their boss tries to be flexible, but the store has to open when it has to open, and it has to stay open until 9:00 p.m.

Altoona Mayor Wayne Hippo has initiated a "Ride the Bus to Work" promotion with AMTRAN and WTAJ TV-10 for August 18-23. We hope that the promotion will help us create some special "work routes" to add to our existing "AMTRAN to Work" bus, a once-daily trip that gets people to work every morning.

### *Transit as a genuine alternative*

However, if we want AMTRAN to be a real option for people to get out of their cars and take the bus to work, we need to have buses at least twice an hour, not once an hour, and we need to run them later in the evening to get people home when their retail, service, or health care shift is over. That is going to take investment by the federal, state, and local government.

### *The European Model*

When friends or elected officials come back from a trip to Europe, they invariably rave about the virtues of public transportation there - from buses to streetcars to intercity rail. They ask me why it's so much better over there. Well, it's better because they never stopped investing in it.

Over the past 50 years, the United States has built the best highway system anywhere in the world. Of course, we need to continue to maintain and improve our highways, but we are so far behind the rest of the world with our bus and train systems.

### *Highways vs. Buses and Trains*

Unfortunately, transportation funding is often viewed as an either/or proposition. We can either invest in highways or in public transportation. However, a number of countries including Germany have managed to do both. Germany's autobahns were President Eisenhower's inspiration for the Interstate Highway System, and they are still the envy of the world today. Meanwhile, Germany's I.C.E. high-speed rail system connects German cities to France, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, and Belgium with speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour.

### *What are our priorities?*

Until the American people decide that they want a complete transportation system like Germany, not just a partial one like the U.S., until they send a clear message to their elected officials that they want to see investment in our train and bus systems, we will be stuck where we are today. (See article about H.R. 6052.) Paying \$4.00 a gallon for gas seems to be changing how people think. We will see if it's the tipping point for how we invest in public transportation.

## AMTRAN revisits Altoona to State College commuter service

At the suggestion of Vice Mayor Bruce Kelley, Altoona City Council recently adopted a resolution encouraging AMTRAN to re-examine the potential for commuter service between Altoona and State College.

According to Kelley, "There is a great number of individuals who commute daily between Altoona and State College. With gasoline at \$4/gallon, a commuter service offers an attractive alternative."

Kelley adds, "The median home price in Centre County is \$194,000. The median home price here in Blair County is \$69,000. This is an opportunity to promote Altoona's significantly lower cost of living as an alternative to people who work in Centre County."

### *Success in other locales*

"York County has had a lot of success with commuter service to Harrisburg," according to Eric Wolf, AMTRAN General Manager. "In addition, both Beaver and Westmoreland Counties have had similar success with service to Pittsburgh."

AMTRAN has had discussions in the past with Fullington, a private motorcoach company, regarding commuter service, but the idea did not come to fruition at that time. The change factor is gasoline prices at double that of a year ago.

### *More than \$300 per month in gas*

For a 45-mile commute to State College with a car that gets 25 mpg and gas at \$4/gallon, the monthly cost is over \$300 just for fuel alone.

### *Online survey*

AMTRAN has created an online survey to gauge interest in the service. Wolf encourages commuters to visit [www.amtran.org](http://www.amtran.org) to fill out a short survey so that he can begin to design a potential schedule.

## Saving Energy through Public Transportation

H.R. 6052 passes 322-98



*Congressman Bill Shuster*

On June 26, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the "Saving Energy through Public Transportation Act of 2008" by a vote of 322-98.

The legislation proposed an additional \$850 million each year for 2008 and 2009 to support public transportation ridership as a means to reduce domestic fuel consumption.

Congressman Bill Shuster voted for the measure stating, "Working people are looking for alternatives to paying over \$4 for a gallon of gas just to get to and from work. Public transportation continues to be a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way for people to get where they need to go. Public transit providers need to expand their services to offer a convenient and reliable alternative for these potential customers."

In spite of the fact that H.R. 6052 passed in the House by a significant margin, the Senate currently has no plans to consider the measure. Nonetheless, officials consider House passage of the bill to be an important first step in addressing increasing demand for transit services.

## Ray Kennedy, Transportation Superstar

Ray Kennedy is AMTRAN's 2008 Superstar of Transportation.

Ray's current position is Transportation Supervisor although he has served in many roles in his 31 years at AMTRAN. He began his career as a bus operator at AMTRAN on November 14, 1977. He can remember the days of no radios, manual headsigns and fare-boxes, and frequent bus break-downs. Ask him about flashing his bus's headlights on 12th Avenue to signal that he had a transfer or about phoning dispatch from the same house when his bus broke down every day at the same spot. Before joining the management team, Ray served as Union Vice President. He was also a Driver/Trainer and was instrumental in

making significant upgrades to AMTRAN's training program, all while a member of the union. Today, one of his many management responsibilities is to supervise our Driver Training Team and all aspects of new hire training. Ray joined the management team as Transportation Supervisor in February 2005. He quickly became indispensable to Director of Transportation Maureen Gilbert. Ray is a man of steadfast faith, calm demeanor, quick wit, and a strong moral center. He possesses honor, loyalty, and empathy. These traits have earned him the respect of his customers and colleagues. Three years after he moved into management, our customers still comment on how they miss seeing



*Ray Kennedy  
2008 Superstar of Transportation*

him every day on the bus.

Ray Kennedy's thirty-one years of dedication to AMTRAN, to the operators that he supervises, and to the community that we serve more than warrants naming him AMTRAN's 2008 Superstar of Transportation.

Prsrt. Std.  
US Postage Paid  
Permit #380  
Altoona PA

**Take the bus to work  
August 18-23**



[www.amtran.org](http://www.amtran.org)  
814-944-4074  
3301 Fifth Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16602

In This Issue ...