



Last stop

Performance Review

Eric Wolf, General Manager

Pennsylvania's Act 44 of 2007 requires that all transit providers in the Commonwealth undergo an independent performance review every five years.

PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation personnel working with industry consultants recently completed an Act 44 Performance Review for AMTRAN.

Seven and One

The in-depth review covers a wide range of financial and operational measures comparing AMTRAN to in-state and out-of-state peers.

However, the most important are the measures that are specified in Act 44. Of those eight measures, AMTRAN is in compliance with seven and out of compliance with just one - the 2010 Operating Cost

per Revenue Hour.

There are specific five-year targets for each of the eight measures, and AMTRAN is in the process of developing an Action Plan.

Accountability

Taxpayers are rightfully demanding more transparency and more accountability in how their tax dollars are being spent. The Act 44 Performance Review is an excellent example of putting those concepts into practice.

As General Manager, I was very pleased to see AMTRAN get seven out of eight of the Act 44 performance standards in compliance.

Frankly, if we got eight out of eight, people might conclude that the standards were not tough enough.

This gives us something specific to work toward as we move forward. Our next step is to drill down and identify those expenses we can impact to lower our cost per revenue hour in both the short and long term.

Best Practices

The Performance Review also cited AMTRAN for seven industry "best practices."

One was our use of technology to improve customer service which has been well-documented. The review mentioned technology in the context of "AMTRAN's larger long-term focus on customer service and its willingness to invest in the tools to improve the overall customer experience."

Another "best practice" included "tying employee performance assessment to agency goals" for all personnel.



THE TRIP SHEET

Altoona, PA

New Diesel-Electric Hybrids



From left: Dick Moran, AMTRAN board; Chancellor Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry, Penn State Altoona; Scott Cessna, AMTRAN Chair; Congressman Bill Shuster; Eric Wolf, AMTRAN General Manager; Jerry Lippert, AMTRAN board member; Cindy Updyke, Rep. Rick Geist's office; Mike Robinson, AMTRAN board; Joe Hurd, Executive Director, Blair County Chamber of Commerce

On October 11, AMTRAN hosted a ribbon-cutting event for three new buses.

Congressman Bill Shuster

"I'm proud to join AMTRAN today in putting three new American-made, diesel-electric hybrid buses into service," said Congressman Bill Shuster. "These hybrids will replace significantly outdated buses reducing fuel usage and emissions by 20 to 30 percent."

The new diesel-electric hybrid buses are built by the Gillig Corporation in Hayward, California and will be replacing three 1993 buses, each with over 400,000 miles on them.

Increased Fuel Economy & Lower Emissions

"These three buses are a great addition to our fleet. We will save money on fuel as well as reducing emissions without sacrificing power," said Scott Cessna, Chairman of AMTRAN's Board of Directors. "We are very grateful to Congressman Bill Shuster for his ongoing support of AMTRAN."

The new hybrids show a 20 to 30 percent increase in fuel economy over diesel or natural gas buses.

Funding Partners

The upgrade from regular diesel buses to hybrids was funded by a special grant through PennDOT.

Eric Wolf, AMTRAN General Manager, recognized funding partners including the Federal Transit Administration, PennDOT's Bureau of Public Transportation, the City of Altoona, Penn State Altoona, Logan Township, Hollidaysburg Borough, Hollidaysburg Veterans Home, and Allegheny Township.

"These buses would not be here today without the ongoing support of our partners," said Wolf.

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In This Issue ... New Hybrid Buses

More on New Hybrid Buses



One of the three new buses is painted Blue & White with a Nittany Lion pawprint to recognize AMTRAN's long time partnership with Penn State Altoona.

Dr. Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry

Penn State Altoona Chancellor Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry was also in attendance at the ribbon-cutting on October 11.

“Penn State Altoona is proud to be a long-time partner with AMTRAN,” said Chancellor Lori. “We would not be able to serve our students and our two campuses without the bus service.”

Hybrid Technology

The easiest explanation for hybrid technology on a bus is to think of it as a 35-foot Prius.

A small diesel engine charges the batteries, and it is the batteries, not the engine, that power the transmission. The improved fuel economy and 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 from Gillig is already in use in Pittsburgh, Scranton, Allentown, and Reading.

Smart Bus Technology

The buses have all of AMTRAN's Smart Bus technology including GPS which helps the bus driver stay on time and also reports real-time bus stop information to customers through the internet, by phone, and through QR (Quick Response) codes at every bus stop.

The buses also have automated ADA stop announcements inside the bus via audio for people with vision disabilities and LED signs for people with hearing disabilities. Finally, automatic passenger counters track ridership right down to individual bus stops.

This technology was developed by Avail Technologies of State College. The Smart Bus Project, made possible by an Intelligent Transportation System grant through Congressman Bill Shuster, earned AMTRAN a 2010 Technology Award from the Blair County Chamber of Commerce.

The final phase of the Smart Bus project is a new fare collection system called myFare from Avail Technologies that will be in place early next year.

Amtran videos on Altoona's public access channel

Over the past three years, AMTRAN created a number of videos that demonstrate how customers can use our technology to make it easier to ride the bus. The videos will be broadcast over the next few months on cable channel 14, Altoona's public access channel.

Also on YouTube

The AMTRAN videos are also available online on YouTube by searching for the “AmtranAltoona” channel or by clicking on the YouTube button on our home page at www.amtran.org.

The videos reflect the quirky sense of humor of their creator, Sam Wagner, webmaster at Mount Aloysius College and an alum of Penn State Altoona. The videos' onscreen talent is Rich Volpe, local mail carrier and theatre buff. Other videos by Sam Wagner are available on YouTube by searching “sjw5032”.

Technology that is easy to use



Bus Stop #206

If you scan the above QR (Quick Response) Code with your smartphone, you will receive real time bus departure information for the Hawthorn Shelter at Penn State Altoona.

The myStop QR codes are the latest Smart Bus innovation from Avail Technologies of State College.

In AMTRAN's continuing effort to utilize technology to improve customer service, there are now three ways to use myStop to find out when your bus will be at your stop in real time.

- (1) You can find it on AMTRAN's website at www.amtran.org. Just click on “myStop.”
- (2) You can dial 944-1200 and punch in your bus stop number.
- (3) You can scan the QR code located at every AMTRAN bus stop with your smartphone.

The QR codes were rolled out systemwide last summer to very positive customer feedback.



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

Board of Directors

Scott Cessna, Chair

Jerry Lippert

Dick Moran

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