

CTA well on the road to recovery

Ridership increased 42 percent, to pre-Katrina levels, in 2007, a year that saw the unveiling of the Biloxi Transit Center and the Casino Hopper



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CTA experienced a 42 percent increase in overall ridership in 2007. Total passenger count for the year was 586,000, which exceeds pre-Katrina levels of ridership.

The new Casino Hopper route began service in place of Route 21 in April. The service began operating with three new buses with special Casino Hopper frog graphics. The legendary Frogman Henry helped CTA introduce this new service, which became an instant success carrying an average of 13,250 passengers a month.

Route 34 Pass Road, which serves Biloxi and Gulfport had a 21 percent increase in ridership, which is the second year in a row with a double-digit increase.

The new Coast Commuter vanpool program began the year with four vanpools providing 1,100 work trips a month and ended the year with 12 vanpools providing 4,000 work trips a month.

In 2007, we opened the new Biloxi Transit Center.

We completed the Transit Development Plan, which will guide growth of the system to the year 2030, a copy of which is on the CTA website.

In addition to the new Casino Hopper and Coast Commuter services, CTA fully restored all other types of services. CTA currently offers fixed route, ADA Paratransit, work commute, hurricane registration and evacuation, senior citizen transportation, and contract services for persons with disabilities.

Various services are provided in all three coastal counties, and all types of service are provided in the City of Biloxi. We offer a low-cost service to meet most every need.

With great assistance from our Washington congressional delegation, CTA has secured FEMA and Federal Transit Administration recovery grants sufficient to fully recovery all damaged assets. Our goal is to complete all recovery activities by the end of 2008.

A total fleet replacement project began with a christening ceremony for nine new demand response buses at the Biloxi Transit Center on Feb. 8.



A Casino Hopper pulls into the Biloxi Transit Center, with the Beau Rivage in the background.

We are bringing back the popular streetcar replica trolley buses, and upgrading the fixed route buses on some routes to use 30-foot, low-floor, heavy duty buses, which are a smaller version of the type of vehicle that you typically see in larger cities.

The main operating facility on DeBuys Road will be repaired, modernized and renovated. When completed, the facility will support the system well into the 21st century.

New bus stop shelters will be purchased and installed beginning with Route 34 Pass Road as part of our program to improve the system of passenger waiting facilities.

The combination of new buses and improved

waiting facilities will improve the overall comfort, convenience and safety of the system and sustain consistent increases in ridership. In summary, our plans for 2008 are to fully rebuild the system so we can look to expansion of the system in 2009 into such areas as the Popp's Ferry Road area of Biloxi, the City of D'Iberville and the St. Martin community.

Hurricane season starts soon. We recommend you update your evacuation plan now. You can register for hurricane evacuation transportation any time and obtain information on all the services that CTA offers by calling the CTA information number at 896-8080 or by visiting the website at www.coasttransit.com.

New plan for Visitors Center resembles look of the past

The proposed new Visitors Center planned for a site north of the Biloxi Lighthouse is taking on the look of the Dantzer House, an historic city-owned beachfront structure that was demolished by Hurricane Katrina.

The Visitors Center, in fact, will be situated near the former location of the Dantzer House, but will be elevated to 22 feet above sea level and be built atop concealed piers. Its exterior walls will be concrete masonry with a painted brick veneer. Its construction also will feature steel columns and beams.

The two-story structure will offer nearly 25,000 square feet.

The first floor plans include a reception, information and exhibit space along with offices. A grand staircase will take visitors to the second floor, where they will find conference rooms, space for exhibits or receptions, and a theater that can also be used for lectures or educational seminars.

The center of the building is a double height space with a balcony that is open to the information area below. "The goal," according to architect Leigh Grimes Johnson, AIA, of the firm Dale and Associates, "was to have an unobstructed view of the lighthouse with green space in front of the building, which would be nice for photos."

Expansive porches, much like those on the Dantzer House, will line the front of the first and second floors of the center.

Rendering courtesy of Dale & Associates

The final rendering of the new Visitors Center bears a striking resemblance to the Dantzer House. The new Visitors Center – cost undetermined at this writing – would be funded by federal recovery money. Construction would begin once the city completes acquisition of property northeast of the Biloxi Lighthouse.

