



Hundreds of Biloxians gathered on Strangi Street in east Biloxi on June 1 for a "Welcome Home to East Biloxi" celebration where 11 east Biloxi families became the first of nearly two dozen families to be officially welcomed into homes that were restored by hundreds of volunteers from Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia. The Arlington-based Habitat group and Lord of Life Lutheran Church led a relief team to Biloxi on Sept. 8, days after Katrina devastated the city. In their first month, the volunteers operated a free clinic and distribution point at Bethel Lutheran Church on Pass Road. Volunteers soon began concentrating efforts in east Biloxi, where more than a hundred workers "mucked out" nearly two dozen homes by day and slept in temporary quarters at Bethel Lutheran by night. Mayor A.J. Holloway and Councilmembers George Lawrence and Bill Stallworth all thanked the volunteers for helping Biloxi with one of its most difficult issues – providing affordable housing.

Seven of nine casino resorts in operation by one-year mark

One of the aspects of the Biloxi recovery that has captured nationwide attention is the status of the city's gaming industry. "And with good reason," Mayor A.J. Holloway said, noting that the Biloxi industry employed 15,000 workers before the storm, and the tax on gross gaming revenues alone provided as much as a half-million dollars a day in revenue to the state and about \$50,000 a day to the city. Gaming revenue, in fact, accounts for more than a third of the city's annual operating revenue.

Three casino resorts – the IP, Isle of Capri and Palace – re-opened in December, four months after the storm, and Boomtown and a scaled-back Treasure Bay opened in June.

Gaming figures released in May show that the three operators were generating 78 percent of the pre-Katrina revenue of nine resorts, and in June that figure had risen to 83 percent.

The big news, however, is this month: Grand Casino will re-open Aug. 17 and the Beau Rivage is scheduled to re-open Aug. 29.

In all, seven of the city's nine pre-Katrina casino resorts will be back in operation by the first anniversary of the storm. Hard Rock, which had been scheduled to open the week of Katrina, is aiming for a July 2007 opening; Harrah's purchased Casino Magic on Casino Row; and the President Casino, which had planned to re-locate before the storm, may see another operator in its west Biloxi location.

Said Holloway: "This industry is important to our city for a number of reasons. First, the jobs, which we expect to be at least 10,000 by the end of the year; the tax revenue, which will also help revive our sales tax revenue here in Biloxi; and the overall impact the resorts have on other businesses in Biloxi."

Another indication of the importance of the casino resort industry is the link between hotel and airport traffic, which is indicated in a chart on Page 10 of this report.

CTA on the move in post-storm recovery

Coast Transit Authority experienced \$14.5 million in damage to facilities, fleet and equipment from Hurricane Katrina, but nonetheless has met the public transportation recovery needs of Biloxi and other coast communities.

After Katrina, CTA had busses running quickly to help people who lost cars in the storm. For months, CTA offered free rides to Disaster Recovery Centers and other relief locations. Federal grants funded the free rides. Government grants and private donations came in to help CTA provide vital services after the hurricane.

CTA has restored Paratransit services for the disabled, Senior Citizen programs in Harrison and Hancock counties and all pre-Katrina Fixed Route services except the Beachcomber route which operated on Highway 90. CTA has expanded daily hours on all routes and increased the number of routes offered on Sunday.

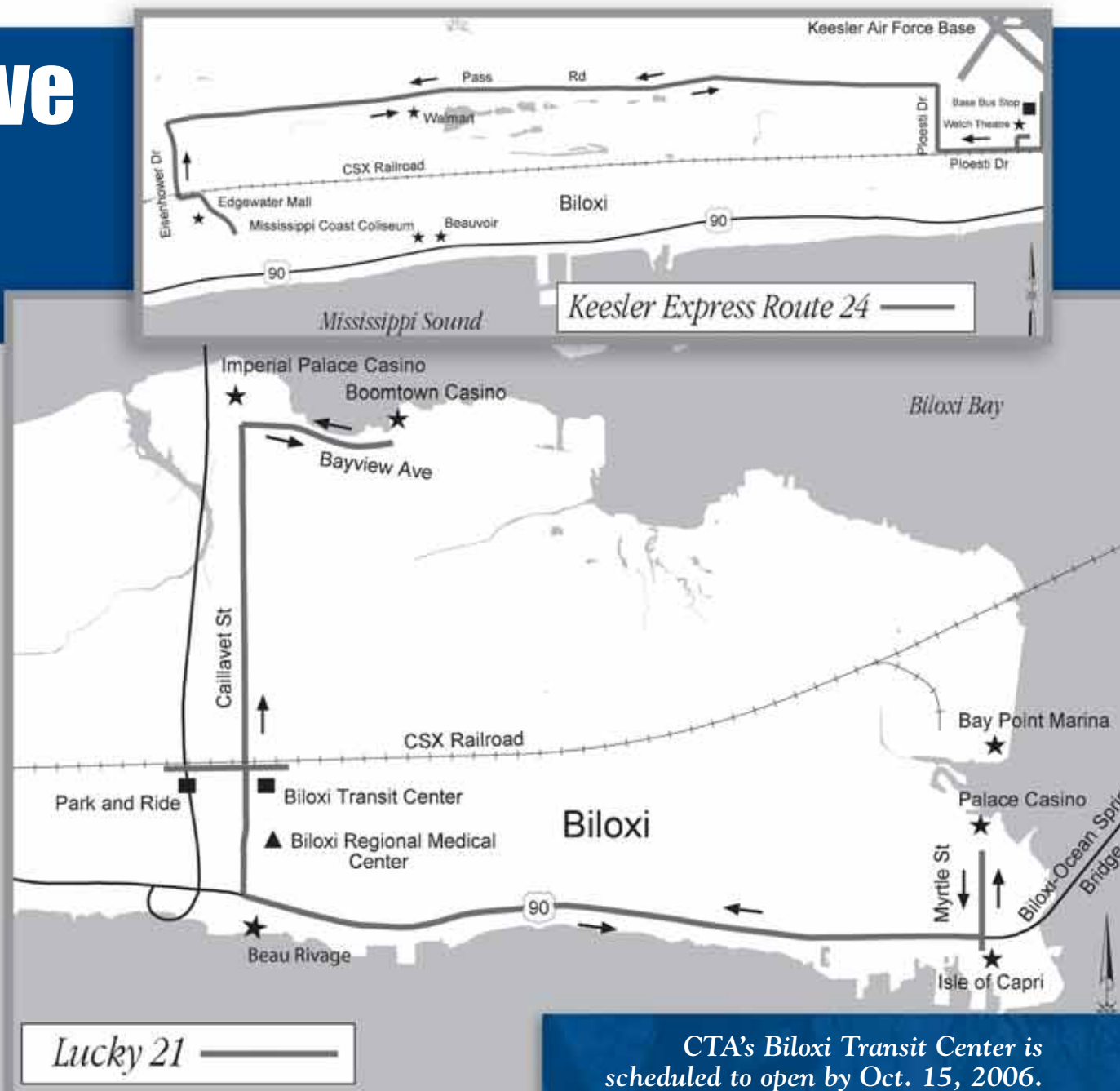
CTA's Biloxi routes include the Keesler Express Route, the Lucky 21 Route serving east Biloxi casino areas, the Back Bay Route and the Pass Road Route.

"As we are rebuilding all that was lost or damaged, we are also planning for a future that includes a CTA that is more responsive to the needs of the communities we service," said CTA Director Kevin Coggin.

CTA's Biloxi Transit Center on Martin Luther King Boulevard is scheduled to be completed by Oct. 15, 2006.

Like everyone in Biloxi, Coggin said, CTA is adapting to meet the needs of citizens in the post-Katrina world.

CTA has implemented a new evacuation transportation program for the Harrison County Emergency Management Agency. CTA along with local school districts will provide transportation for those who do not have their own transportation. Transportation will be provided to a centralized staging area where MEMA using state Department of Education school buses will transport Harrison County residents to a shelter in Hinds County. MEMA will provide safe shelter in Hinds County for the duration of the event. Pick up points will be established in each City and in the County where residents will be picked up by the school buses and transported to the staging area.



CTA's Biloxi Transit Center is scheduled to open by Oct. 15, 2006.

CTA will provide door to door service for persons unable to travel to the community pick up locations. CTA will also provide transportation to a local shelter of last resort, however all residents are strongly encouraged to evacuate the County when the Harrison County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) issues an evacuation order.

You can register by calling the CTA offices at 896-8080. Said Coggin: "We will gladly answer any questions you may have during the registration process."

In June, CTA was honored the Community Transportation Association of America System of the Year award for 2006. The annual award recognizes excellence by transit systems in serving the needs of people in their communities.

Coggin praised CTA employees with selfless dedication to providing critical transportation services in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina.

