

CARTA Implementing Smartbus System

Buses To Have Wi-Fi, New Fare System

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CARTA is moving to implement its long-planned Smartbus program that includes automatic vehicle locating via a global positioning system and an automatic vehicle management system, Executive Director Tom Dugan said.

A contract has been awarded to Clever Devices as the prime contractor for the project.

Mr. Dugan said the automatic vehicle locating will allow CARTA management and riders to have real-time information on bus location and on time performance.

The automatic vehicle monitoring system will track the performance of key bus components such as engines and transmissions and inform CARTA maintenance immediately if there is a problem with such a component.

The system also includes automatic passenger counting, audio and electronic displays of next bus stops to aid visually and hearing impaired riders, real-time passenger boarding information for CARTA service planners, email and blackberry-style information services for riders, computerized trip planning for riders and real-time bus information at key stops, Mr. Dugan said.

ISN, a Chattanooga company, will support Clever Devices. The new services will be added to the CARTA vehicles over the next 15 months with completion expected by January, 2009.

Also, CARTA is moving to become the first regional transit authority in the country to provide wi-fi (wireless internet) on all its vehicles, Mr. Dugan said.

He said installation is now going on with completion of CARTA vehicles expected in October. The wi-fi system is a byproduct of CARTA's new Smartbus System. A contract with Sprint/Nextel to provide data transmission from CARTA vehicles to the CARTA headquarters includes the WiFi as a no-cost addition.

CARTA users will be able to connect on the Internet whether riding CARTA buses, CARTA shuttle buses, CARTA Care-a-van vehicles or even the Incline Railway.

Communications and Electronics, a Chattanooga firm, will provide installation and support for the system.



CARTA has also awarded a new contract to GFI Genfare for a new fare collection system. The new system will permit CARTA users to use credit cards and new smartcard technology, one which uses contactless proximity cards to pay bus fares. The new fare system will be operational in Spring, 2008.

Mr. Dugan said, "CARTA is making this investment to attract new riders, improve accuracy and timeliness of information, improve convenience and reliability of the service, to reduce costs through less mechanical breakdowns and improved design and service, and to bring CARTA in line with the realities of new technologies in communication, information, and financial transactions.

"These projects are made possible through financial support from the Federal Transit Administration, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and the city of Chattanooga. Congressman Zach Wamp has been supportive of the project which began in 2003."