

CAT customers must continue to wear masks through March



Chatham Area Transit will continue requiring passengers on CAT vehicles wear masks through mid-March to help prevent the spread of Covid-19, as required

by the Transportation Security Administration.

On Dec. 2, the TSA announced that the federal face mask requirement for all transportation networks, including public transportation, will be extended through March 18. The mask requirement had been scheduled to expire on Jan. 18.

TSA Administrator David Pekoske has said frequently the combination of vaccinations and face masks work and are highly effective in terms of slowing the spread of the virus in the transportation system, and they make travel safer for everyone.

CAT customers without a mask can request one from an operator.

Interim CEO speaks out on Human Trafficking Awareness Day



Editor's note: Interim CEO Valerie Ragland issued this statement on Jan. 11 in observance of Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Human trafficking is one of the greatest atrocities of the 21st century. With as many as 24.9 million men, women and children sold into prostitution, domestic servitude or other forced labor in dark corners around the globe, it may seem like a problem beyond our borders. But the truth is, it's happening right here in our communities across America, including Georgia.

Those committing this awful crime are using America's roadways, railways, waterways and skies to traffic victims. We cannot allow our transportation system to be an enabler in such awful acts.

Chatham Area Transit is joining with our partners across the transportation industry to stop the flow of human trafficking. CAT is committed not only to preparing our own employees to recognize and report suspected instances, but also to raising awareness among the public. Our message is that human

trafficking will not be tolerated.

We invite you to join us in the fight to end modern slavery. Learn the basic indicators of human trafficking and be alert when you travel. Your simple act of calling in a tip could save lives and help us move closer to a world without slavery.

Valerie Ragland, interim CEO

Learn more about Human Trafficking and what you can do to help by scanning the QR code to the right with your smartphone's camera.



CAT installs new stop to serve city complex

Chatham Area Transit has installed a new bus stop along the 29 W. Gwinnett/ Cloverdale bus route.

The bus stop is located on Interchange Drive near West Gwinnett Street, which will add a short extension to the bus route. The additional stop became operational in January.

The stop was added to serve the city of Savannah's new Floyd Adams, Jr. City Services Complex. The \$43 million complex spans 38 acres, has 11 buildings and houses 17 city departments.



Join Our Team!

Open positions for **bus operators, paratransit drivers, & ferry captains**

Starting salaries from \$12.45 - \$26



February 2022

CAT Board announces new CEO



Faye DiMassimo

The Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Board of Directors on Jan. 25 unanimously selected Faye DiMassimo as the agency's new executive director.

DiMassimo brings more than 40 years of experience with federal, regional, and local public entities as well as the private sector in the development, management, and delivery of multimodal transportation programs. She is currently the Senior Advisor for Transportation and Infrastructure to Metro Nashville Mayor John Cooper and has served as the Interim Director of the Metro Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure (NDOT).

"We are extremely excited to have Ms. DiMassimo join the CAT

Team," said CAT Board Chairman Deidrick Cody. "She will bring a wealth of leadership and transportation experience to our already strong staff."

Prior to Metro Nashville, DiMassimo served with Deloitte Consulting and as the City of Atlanta Renew Atlanta/TSPLOST General Manager and the Director of the Cobb County Department of Transportation.

Notably, she has been involved in public transportation for much of her career. For example, in Nashville, she oversaw the development of a multi-modal transportation plan. In Atlanta, she worked with MARTA and other public and private partners to create the city's first Smart Corridor. In Cobb County, among other things, she oversaw Cobb LINC (formerly Cobb County Community Transit).

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CAT Board approves \$1,000 recruitment/retention bonuses

The Chatham Area Transit Board on Jan. 25 approved \$1,000 bonuses for new and existing employees as part of a retention and recruitment program designed to make CAT more competitive in today's labor market.

New employees will receive the bonus in four payments of \$250 at the completion of 60-day, 90-day, 180-day and 365-day intervals. Existing employees will be paid the \$250 amount on a quarterly basis.

The plan is being implemented in response to the staffing shortage CAT has been experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and an aging and retiring workforce. The hope is that the bonus will help attract new workers, retain existing employees and alleviate some of the service disruptions the vacancies have caused. CAT is seeking to recruit fixed-route bus operators, CAT Mobility paratransit operators, Savannah Belles Ferry captains, maintenance workers and administrative staff.

"It is our intent that these bonuses will help restore our workforce to a level needed to ensure we can provide the dependa-

ble service our customers deserve," said interim CEO Valerie Ragland. "Filling the vacancies will also help provide relief to those employees who have been stepping up and working overtime to keep CAT running during these challenging times."

Half of the bonus payments for new and existing employees is expected to cost CAT \$177,000 this fiscal year, which runs through June. The other half of the incentive would be paid for during the 2023 fiscal year. Salary savings derived from vacant positions is being used to cover the cost of the program.

The bonus payment is generally available to active full-time, part-time, salaried and hourly employees, including CDL and non-CDL, water ferry, maintenance, administrative, and executive employees.

The bonus is currently being offered on a temporary basis, but could possibly be extended based on the agency's needs and funding availability.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to learn about CAT career opportunities.



CAT partnering with CRC for supplemental paratransit services



The Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia (CRC) recently began providing supplemental paratransit services for Chatham Area Transit, following the CAT Board's recent approval of the service agreement.

The supplemental services began Jan. 3 for CAT Mobility customers with disabilities who are unable to use CAT's fixed-route buses.

Similar to transit agencies throughout the country, CAT's ability to meet the needs of its CAT Mobility paratransit

customers has been hampered by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and a driver shortage. The challenges presented by the driver shortage are made worse by COVID-19 safety measures such as reduced capacity, which decreases the number of customers CAT can pick up on trips.

The supplemental services agreement with CRC is expected to help CAT meet the needs of its paratransit customers as these challenges persist, said CAT interim CEO Valerie Ragland.

"We are grateful to the Coastal Regional Commission for agreeing to help CAT provide such a vital service to the community," Ragland said. "The agreement will provide more operators to assist with our program and allow us to better



The CRC is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-counties and 35 cities along the coast of Georgia.

serve our customers."

CAT Mobility customers will need to continue scheduling their rides through CAT's customer service lines and online reservation service.

The agency will use its own vehicles and employees in order to meet the terms of the contract.

CAT is continuing to seek drivers for its paratransit service, which does not require a commercial driver's license. More information about career opportunities can be found online at catchacat.org.

New Downtown Dot shuttle route in place



Chatham Area Transit's Downtown Dot shuttle recently started running on a revised route. As a result of the change, new stops are located at:

- Price and E. Liberty streets
- East Broad and East Saint Julian streets

The shuttle service is funded by the city of Savannah and is comprised of two loops, Forsyth and Downtown, which connect Savannah's visitor centers, parking facilities, attractions, shops, restaurants and hotels.

The revised Downtown Dot loop incorporates sections of Lincoln Street, East Lib-

erty Street, East Oglethorpe Avenue and East Broad Street and no longer travels down the east end of Bryan and Congress Streets. The loop will continue to serve the new parking garage at the Eastern Wharf development east of the downtown Historic District.

No stops have been eliminated and the Dot's Forsyth loop has not changed, with shuttles continuing to travel north along Drayton Street and south along Whitaker Street between Congress Street and Park Avenue.

The shuttles arrive every ten minutes at 20 stops throughout the downtown Historic District and the service is available seven days a week. The shuttles are operating at half capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dot passengers are required to wear masks, as mandated by the Transportation Security Administration. Passengers without a mask can request one from an operator.

Never overpay for riding the bus!



For more information about the Dot and to see the map, scan the QR code with your smartphone.



CAT People: Jean Midi works with his hands, mind and heart



Jean Midi has been working as a cleaner for Chatham Area Transit since 2014. A native of Haiti, Jean moved to the United States in 2010 with his wife and lived in New York for a couple years before relocating to the lowcountry where the weather was more accommodating for him.

New York was too cold, Jean said, and

the job he had at a mall was not helping him achieve his goal of becoming fluent in English since many of his co-workers spoke foreign languages as well.

"When you move to another country, for me the country is like a house; you need a key to get in," he said. "The key is the language the people speak."

Jean now speaks fluent English after moving to Savannah in 2013. His cousin, who already lived in the city, helped him settle in and he worked at a couple of other jobs before being hired by CAT a few months after arriving. Ensuring CAT's downtown transit center is clean

and well maintained has its challenges – which have increased due to the pandemic – but he considers the job a blessing that he takes pride in doing well.

"I use three things to do my job: my hand, my mind and my heart," he said. "I think work tells more of you than your words."

Jean has ambitions beyond his current position. He said he would like to become a bus operator one day and hopes to get his commercial driver's license in the future in order to achieve that goal.

Outside of work, Jean spends his time reading the latest news and his Bible. He also serves as a pastor at the local Haitian church he helped found.

If you see Jean next time you're at the transit center, feel free to say hello and thank him his part in helping CAT provide a vital service to the community.

home, to Savannah, to be with her husband and the two dogs – and to use her great expertise there. I know she will be just as much of a powerhouse in her next endeavor, back home."

New CEO (Continued from page 1)

"Beyond her extensive knowledge of transit, one of the things that really attracted us to Ms. DiMassimo was her contacts in Georgia and in Washington, DC," said CAT Board Vice Chairman Helen Stone. "She already knows and has a working relationship with many of the key players."

"I am thrilled to be selected as CAT's executive director and to return to where my husband and I have our home," DiMassimo said. "We all recognize the potential for CAT in our community and the needs it serves in getting people to the places they need and want to go. It will be my honor lead this team to our bright future."

Board member Clinton Edminster added, "I am excited to have Ms. DiMassimo on board and to be a part of our agency. I

am really looking forward to working with her and the rest of the board to capitalize on her knowledge and experience to make CAT a leader in the industry!"

"It will be my honor lead this team to our bright future."

Chairman Cody added, "I know I speak for the board in saying we want to recognize the service Valerie Ragland rendered as the interim executive director. She did a wonderful job in some very challenging circumstances."

Nashville's Mayor John Cooper said, "Faye answered the call when Nashville needed a transportation strategy to serve us all. She brought a deep talent to our city and she poured her heart into her work. Now, she's moving back

DiMassimo has a bachelor's degree in public administration, and master's degrees in community planning and public administration from Auburn University. Additionally, she is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP) and has participated in numerous leadership programs and community organizations over the years. Among her many awards and recognitions are being selected as WTS' Atlanta Woman of the Year in 2012 and as one of the Nashville Business Journal's "10 People to Watch." She presently serves on the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Board of Trustees here in Savannah.