

CAT career opportunities await



JOIN THE CAT TEAM!

OPEN POSITIONS FOR BUS OPERATORS, PARATRANSIT DRIVERS, & FERRY CAPTAINS

STARTING SALARIES FROM \$14.25 - \$26

\$1,000 BONUS FOR NEW EMPLOYEES!

Keeping up with CAT



CAT's April 2022 meeting calendar

All of the meetings will be held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual meetings can be viewed live on CAT's YouTube page at: <https://www.youtube.com/chathamareatransit>.

CAT Board Committee Meetings

Date: April 12
 System Development Planning: 10:30 a.m.
 Service Delivery Operation: 1 p.m.
 Financial Services Audit/Compliance: 2:30 p.m.

Executive Governance Committee

Date: April 19
 Time: 11 a.m.

CAT Board Regular Meeting

Date: April 26
 Time: 10 a.m.

Go to CAT's YouTube channel to watch board meetings and other CAT videos by scanning the QR code to the right.



CAT Outbound

CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT Community Newsletter

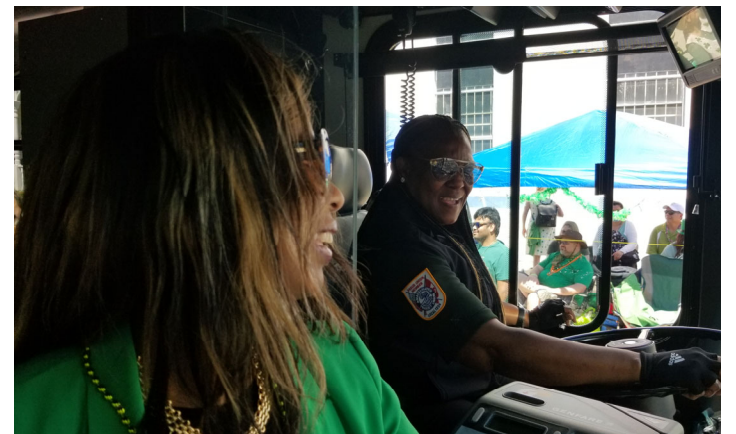
April 2022

CAT debuts electric bus during St. Patrick's Day parade



With long-time operator LaVerne Haynes behind the wheel and "Electric Boogie" blasting from speakers on the roof, Chatham Area Transit debuted one of its new electric buses to an enthusiastic crowd during the St. Patrick's Day parade on March 17.

The bus is one of six GILLIG battery-powered buses CAT recently acquired to replace diesel buses that have reached the end of their useful life. CAT anticipates the electric buses' first day of pilot service will be on Earth Day, April 22. By deploying battery electric buses in place of existing diesel vehicles, CAT expects to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, while also reducing lifetime vehicle costs.



CAT continues recruitment campaign

CAT is hiring CDL bus operators, non-CDL paratransit operators, water ferry captains and more. The agency offers generous pay and benefits, including paid training, health/dental/vision coverage, a retirement plan, and paid time off. The CAT Board also recently approved a \$1,000 bonus for new and existing employees as part of a retention and recruitment program. In addition, the starting pay for paratransit operators was recently increased from \$12.45 to \$14.25 per hour.

Go to <https://www.catchacat.org/about-cat/cat-careers/> or scan the QR code on the right with your smartphone to learn about CAT career opportunities.



CATCH a

CAREER

CAT offers competitive compensation, health/dental/vision insurance, retirement plans, paid training, and paid time off.

Service modifications now in place



SERVICE ALERT



To better match service to current staffing levels, Chatham Area Transit reduced the frequency and modified operating hours of some fixed-route bus routes on March 14.

The changes were implemented in response to a continuing operator shortage and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We want to provide a reliable schedule for our customers as we continue to address staffing challenges,” said CEO Faye Di-Massimo. “Unfortunately, that means some temporary service reductions are required at this time.”

The recently implemented modified schedules can be found online at <https://www.catchacat.org/current-schedules/> or by scanning the QR code to the right with your smart phone's camera.



CAT is making moves to address the issue and increase service levels as soon as possible. Recent actions include the CAT Board's recent adoption of a \$1,000 recruitment-retention bonus, however, new operators need to go through a training period before they can serve customers.

CAT also restored full-seating capacity on March 14 so more customers can board the buses.

The temporary schedule adjustments will be updated as conditions improve. No adjustments are being made to CAT Mobility paratransit service or Savannah Belles Ferry service.

East Broad and Liberty bus stop removal

Due to construction in the area, the bus stop at East Broad and Liberty streets is not serviceable. Routes affected include 10 East Savannah, 27 Waters, 28 Waters and 31 Skidaway/Sandfly.

The nearest alternative stop to catch 28 Waters or 31 Skidaway/Sandfly is East Broad and Jones Street.

The nearest alternative stop to catch 10 East Savannah or 27 Waters is at Liberty and Randolph Street.

This project is expected to continue until March 2024.

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CAT People: Captain Al Hirsch



Al Hirsch has been transporting passengers from River Street to Hutchinson Island for 18 years, as the first captain of Chatham Area Transit's Savannah Belles Ferry service.

After receiving his pilot's license as a teen and flying for the Navy, health issues sidelined him from a life as a pilot. He then pursued his second love, the open water, as a boat captain.

Hired before the ferry service began, Hirsch arrived for the job in 2004 about a week before CAT received its first boat. By then he had plenty of years of experience navigating the seas, having gained his captain license and launched his own chartering business, Captain Al's Charters, in the 1970s.

On a recent Tuesday morning, Hirsch carefully navigated the ferry towards the east end of the Savannah Riverwalk – one of the three docks where passengers board and disembark. The early-morning fog had cleared by that time, around 8:30 a.m., and the Talmadge Bridge could be easily seen in the distance.

He has been a restaurant owner, but the business, which he too often took home with him, took a toll.

“My heart was still on the water and I couldn't wait to get back on the boats,” he said.

Hirsch typically get up at about 4 a.m. to give himself enough time to enjoy the quiet, catch up on the news and arrive at the Hutchinson Island dock before the first ferry takes off at 6:50 a.m.

At 82 years old, Hirsch had cut back on his hours and typically only works weekends these days. That Tuesday, he agreed to come in and work as CAT continues to try to fill vacant captain and deckhand positions.

Hirsch is currently going through the process of renewing his Coast Guard license, as required every five years in order to cap-

tain the ferries. He can't really see the point of retiring. Piloting the ferry, seeing the sunrise over the water each morning (weather permitting) meeting new people and getting residents to where they need to go - it's something he lives for.

“I love boats and I love being on the river and I love getting up early and seeing the sunrise,” he said. “To me, that's one of the most fantastic things anybody can ever do. I can't imagine doing anything else now.”

Hirsch has piloted boats across international waters, where no land is in sight. He has been caught in storms where he feared for his life. Still, cruising back and forth across the river all day is not boring. Sitting on the couch is boring.

“My first love was aviation, my second love was the ocean, my third love is the river,” he said. “That's where it ends.”

The passengers, wearing nametags for the convention they were attending, boarded the boat. Hirsch shifted the throttle forward and the ferry slipped away from the dock towards the next destination.

A job well done: Blake retires



We want to extend a congratulations to Christopher Blake, who recently retired from Chatham Area Transit after working as a fixed-route operator for almost 49 years.

When asked about the changes during his almost five-decade career, Blake said the buses themselves have come a long way since their “raggedy” condition when

he first started on the job.

“There was no heat, no air-conditioning, but we made it through it,” he said.

Blake intends to enjoy a relaxing retirement pursuing some hobbies such as model ship building and the occasional trip to visit family. No major traveling is planned though, especially with gas prices as high as they are, Blake said.

“I've seen everything I wanted to see,” he said. “I was in the Navy.”