

Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan

Minor Update 2024



Prepared For
County of Volusia Transit Services Division d/b/a (Votran)

Prepared By
River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (R2CTPO)

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Introduction

Volusia County Government serves as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) program within Volusia County. The county created a Transit Services Division to manage the contractor providing public transportation services. As the public transit agency serving under the auspices of Volusia County Government, Votran carries out the functions of the CTC on an ongoing basis. As part of its obligation as the CTC, Votran is required to develop a Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP). The TDSP is an annually updated tactical plan comprised of several sections including the Development Plan, Service Plan, Quality Assurance, and Cost/Revenue Allocation and Rate Structure Justification components.

The current TDSP was developed by Tindale-Oliver & Associates, Inc. (now Alfred Benesch & Company) congruent with the development of the Transit Development Plan (TDP). It was reviewed and approved by the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) on July 14, 2021. The information presented in this document provides an update to the TDSP and has been developed in accordance with the established requirements. This update covers the current status of each of the Goals and Objectives as well as the recommended actions listed in the Implementation Plan.

Goals and Objectives

The goals identified in the TDSP for Votran can be grouped into five Key Focus Areas, including:

- System Administration and Education
- Service Delivery
- Policy
- Technology
- Funding

The following provides a listing of the specific Goals and Objectives identified in the TDSP:

Goal 1: Provide an efficient, effective, and fully coordinated transportation system to meet the demand and mobility needs of the transportation disadvantaged in Volusia County.

Objective 1.1: Maximize coordination with public and private agencies and other transportation operators in the Volusia County area.

Strategy 1.1.1: Maintain existing coordination contracts and execute new ones, where feasible, needed, and cost-effective.

Strategy 1.1.2: Encourage Section 5310 grant recipients to participate in the coordination of the transportation disadvantaged services and maximize the use of their vehicle.

Strategy 1.1.3: Continue to monitor cost per trip and work to operate as efficiently as possible.

Strategy 1.1.4: Collect and compile the data necessary for the evaluation of transportation disadvantaged service. This data will be reported in the Annual Operating Report (AOR), National Transit Database (NTD), and the annual CTC evaluation.

Strategy 1.1.5: Partner with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Via Transportation, Uber and Lyft, to provide additional on-demand transportation options.

Objective 1.2: Provide connectivity throughout the County with a focus on major attractors and other modal options.

Strategy 1.2.1: Periodically review ADA and TD trips to determine the major system attractors and the availability of multi-modal options within those areas.

Strategy 1.2.2: Continue to explore multi-loading opportunities such as group trips to major attractors.

Strategy 1.2.3: Distribute the Transit Development Design Guidelines to developers contacting Voltran for assistance and make the guidelines available at various locations around the county.

Objective 1.3: Ensure both the fixed-route transit and paratransit systems continue to remain responsive to the needs of the transportation disadvantaged population and the community.

Strategy 1.3.1: Maintain adequate, experienced, and trained staffing needed to operate, maintain, and administer all coordinated system functions.

Strategy 1.3.2: Acquire new and upgraded paratransit vehicles and equipment, as funding permits.

Strategy 1.3.3: Complete an analysis of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and TD bus pass programs to determine the efficiency of the programs in reducing paratransit trip demand and applicability in Volusia County.

Strategy 1.3.4: Ensure paratransit clients are subject to apply for recertification every three years. Review to determine whether or not customers are still eligible for services under the appropriate funding sources.

Goal 2: Deliver a safe and high-quality transit experience to the customer.

Objective 2.1: Monitor service quality and maintain minimum standards.

Strategy 2.1.1: Meet or exceed 90 percent on time performance goal for both paratransit and fixed-route service (Voltran and paratransit service contractors).

Strategy 2.1.2: Implement Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology to allow automated calling and assist with customer communication of trip reminders and cancellations.

Strategy 2.1.3: Conduct oral and visual presentations to Voltran operator trainees regarding interactions with riders who have disabilities.

Strategy 2.1.4: Continue to staff weekly customer service meetings to fully review each complaint turned in to the Customer Service Department. Report findings to affected parties and take corrective action where and when it is appropriate.

Objective 2.2: Maximize customer comfort and safety.

Strategy 2.2.1: Regularly inspect vendor vehicles, monitor drivers and adhere to the drug and alcohol program for all safety sensitive positions.

Strategy 2.2.2: Monitor safety related complaints and seek ways to minimize complaints and operate services in a safe and secure manner in accordance with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) standards and recommendations.

Strategy 2.2.3: Continue to utilize compliance officer, road supervisor, “mystery riders”, cameras, and technology at Votran’s disposal to ensure accountability of staff to riders and passenger compliance with policies and procedures.

Strategy 2.2.4: Analyze accident records and document future actions deemed necessary to improve the overall safety record.

Strategy 2.2.5: Maintain the quality of the vehicles by replacing older, high-mileage vehicles and operating a fleet with vehicles that do not exceed their useful life.

Strategy 2.2.6: Install technology, including Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on all contractor vehicles with the goal of achieving consistent operating levels with Votran vehicles and better coordinated services.

Strategy 2.2.7: Implement Votran’s *2019 Package/Personal Belongings Policy*.

Objective 2.3: Increase avenues for customers to access information on the coordinated transportation system.

Strategy 2.3.1: Continue facilitating transit education program to educate special interest groups, clubs, and community associations on the benefits of public transportation and conduct presentations to these groups as requested.

Strategy 2.3.2: Promote new and existing transportation services in Volusia County.

Strategy 2.3.3: Disseminate information electronically through the use of the Votran website, emails, the VO-to-Go text message system and MyStop real-time bus tracking app, and update the various “How-to-Ride” guide formats, as necessary to educate and inform system users and the community.

Strategy 2.3.4: Ensure all websites and other electronic media are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998.

Strategy 2.3.5: Continue to serve on the River to Sea Transportation Planning Organization (R2CTPO) Committees, such as the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), the Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB).

Strategy 2.3.6: Conduct travel training workshops and training to organizations serving the disabled.

Goal 3: Encourage land use patterns that support transit services and the clustering of mixed uses for the provision of a more cost-effective and efficient transportation system.

Objective 3.1: Improve local knowledge of the benefits of transit-friendly land uses.

Strategy 3.1.1: Continue to work with the R2CTPO for any subsequent updates to the adopted Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) guidelines to include the consideration of impacts on the multi-modal transportation system and infrastructure.

Strategy 3.1.2: Complete updates to the Transit Development Design Guidelines (TDDG), as necessary.

Objective 3.2: Improve connections of public transportation to other modes of transportation.

Strategy 3.2.1: Establish a phased-implementation plan for transit-supportive infrastructure improvements along major public transportation corridors, as identified in the TDDG.

Strategy 3.2.2: Evaluate the connectivity of service and infrastructure with SunRail as it relates to ridership trends, customer service requests, and SunRail service modifications.

Strategy 3.2.3: Ensure new bus stops are accessible to persons with disabilities and meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) compliance requirements.

Strategy 3.2.4: Implement Votran/SunRail joint ticketing program.

Goal 4: Ensure program accountability with the State and Federal requirements for TD planning.

Objective 4.1: Continue to coordinate with the R2CTPO to staff and support the Volusia County TDLCB.

Strategy 4.1.1: Provide an AOR to the CTD on all TD operations coordinated by Votran in Volusia County.

Strategy 4.1.2: Complete CTD reporting requirements by submitting an annual TDSP update, AOR, quarterly planning grant progress report, and Actual Expenditure Report (AER).

Strategy 4.1.3: Monitor Coordination Agreements with contractors.

Strategy 4.1.4: Continue to provide and review performance reports at the TDLCB meetings tracking monthly progress against the adopted standards and performance measures.

Goal 5: Integrate paratransit service with fixed-route service to provide more travel options for the ADA and TD populations.

Objective 5.1: Provide opportunities for ADA and TD passengers to safely access multi-modal transportation options.

Strategy 5.1.1: Review the number of individuals who transferred to other mass transit modes as a result of the use of functional assessments, travel training, and other efforts to make fixed-route accessible to more people.

Strategy 5.1.2: Provide fixed-route travel training courses for transportation disadvantaged patrons wanting to make use of fixed-route services.

Strategy 5.1.3: Support Accessible Pedestrian Signal Access Plan.

Strategy 5.1.4: Develop a phased-implementation plan to improve accessibility at bus stop locations.

Goal 6: Secure additional funding to meet the transportation disadvantaged demand and mobility needs in Volusia County.

Objective 6.1: Investigate and pursue all available funding opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels and from private sources for programs or projects serving the transportation disadvantaged.

Strategy 6.1.1: Coordinate with the R2CTPO in the utilization of its transit planning funds to support/improve the Community Transportation Coordinator's (CTC) planning efforts.

Strategy 6.1.2: Identify and accommodate opportunities for private sector participation and public/private partnerships in funding the public transportation system.

Strategy 6.1.3: Work with CTD, the Florida Legislature, FDOT, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive sufficient funding to meet the service demands of the Transportation Disadvantaged community.

Strategy 6.1.4: Work with local agencies to continue to receive sufficient funding to provide agency trips (e.g., Volusia Council on Aging, the Florida Department of Children and Families, etc.).

Strategy 6.1.5: Evaluate fares every three years to ensure customers contribute to maintaining the system within reasonable means.

Objective 6.2: Coordinate with County officials and the public to secure a dedicated funding source for transit services in Volusia County.

Strategy 6.2.1: Educate the general public and local decision makers on the importance of public transportation and the need for local financial support.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan has been developed during the most recent TDSP major update. It is derived from the goals, objectives and strategies. This section is meant to provide tools to assist with achieving the long-range goals. With the exception of the strategies included in Goal 4 “Ensure program accountability with the State and Federal requirements for TD planning,” recurrent strategies that are considered routine operational planning efforts for the coordinated system have been included in the goals and objectives section of the TDSP, but have been omitted from the implementation plan. The implementation plan focuses on highlighting the ongoing and potential new strategies that would need to be deployed to meet some of the transportation and coordination needs identified through the TDSP planning process.

Past Year’s Accomplishments Based on Established Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1: Provide an efficient, effective, and fully coordinated transportation system to meet the demand and mobility needs of the transportation disadvantaged in Volusia County.

Objective 1.1: Maximize coordination with public and private agencies and other transportation operators in the Volusia County area.

Strategy 1.1.1: Maintain existing coordination contracts and execute new ones, where feasible, needed, and cost-effective.

The Transit Services Division signed a coordination agreement with WORC in support of their successful grant awarded by FDOT for Section 5310 vehicles.

Strategy 1.1.2: Encourage Section 5310 grant recipients to participate in the coordination of the transportation disadvantaged services and maximize the use of their vehicle.

The Transit Services Division encourages organizations providing transportation for elderly persons and persons with disabilities to apply for FDOT 5310 funds which provide capital funding/equipment. Transit Services Division staff monitors their recipient agencies status since they must keep their CTC agreements current and in force at all times when in possession of a vehicle purchased through the Section 5310 Program. Annually the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) reviews Transit Services Division’s coordination agreements. The TDLCB’s latest review was conducted in January 2024.

Strategy 1.1.3: Continue to monitor cost per trip and work to operate as efficiently as possible.

Transit Services Division's Administration, Finance and Paratransit Operations work together to monitor costs per trip and to maintain efficiency in the provision of trips. The Transit Services Division continues to monitor costs per trip and to apply such strategies as multi-loading, strategic scheduling of trips and group trips wherever feasible. To further increase efficiency, the Transit Services Division schedulers run daily Trapeze Optimize reports and dispatchers run slack time reports to re-schedule trips or add new trips in slack time on schedule. The cost per trip analysis is performed each time the rates are established for the CTD Trip and Equipment grant.

Strategy 1.1.4: Collect and compile the data necessary for the evaluation of transportation disadvantaged service. This data will be reported in the AOR, National Transit Database (NTD), and the annual CTC evaluation.

The Transit Services Division collects, compiles and maintains various data for use in the National Transit Database (NTD) and the Annual Operating Report (AOR), which are submitted in a timely manner. Votran's CTC re-designation was approved by the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) in October 2021. The Annual Operating Report was approved by the TDLCB in October 2023.

Strategy 1.1.5: Partner with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Via Transportation, Uber and Lyft, to provide additional on-demand transportation options.

Objective 1.2: Provide connectivity throughout the County with a focus on major attractors and other modal options.

Strategy 1.2.1: Periodically review ADA and TD trips to determine the major system attractors and the availability of multi-modal options within those areas.

As funding remains a challenge to implement expansion of service, the Transit Services Division continues to track key destinations and priorities for service beyond the existing fixed route corridors and the complimentary service. Key destinations include but are not limited to: Victoria Park Medical Offices, DeLand Amtrak/SunRail Station, and Daytona State College in DeLand.

Strategy 1.2.2: Continue to explore multi-loading opportunities such as group trips to major attractors.

The Transit Services Division's Administration, Finance and Paratransit Operations work together to monitor costs per trip and to maintain efficiency in the provision of trips. The Transit Services Division continues to monitor costs per trip and to apply such strategies as multi-loading, strategic scheduling of trips and group trips wherever feasible. To further increase efficiency, the Transit Services Division schedulers run daily Trapeze optimize reports and dispatchers run slack time reports to re-schedule trips or add new trips in slack time on

schedule.

Strategy 1.2.3: Distribute the Transit Development Design Guidelines to developers contacting Votran for assistance and make the guidelines available at various locations around the county.

The updated Transit Development Design Guidelines (TDDG) were adopted in June 2016 and published on www.Votran.org. The Transit Services Division continues to promote the use of the TDDG in new development in Volusia County. In a study regarding bus stop improvements, the TDDG was used as a guiding document for bus stops in unincorporated Volusia County. All new bus stops are installed using these guidelines that are consistent with the FDOT standards and FTA ADA requirements.

Objective 1.3: Ensure both the fixed-route transit and paratransit systems continue to remain responsive to the needs of the transportation disadvantaged population and the community.

Strategy 1.3.1: Maintain adequate, experienced, and trained staffing needed to operate, maintain, and administer all coordinated system functions.

The Transit Services Division executive team works with the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), and FDOT on training opportunities for staff in the areas of operation, maintenance, planning and human resources in order to ensure staff training opportunities keep pace with industry standards. The Transit Services Division also provides technical training to management staff to grow their knowledge and skills in effective transit planning using the newest software, such as Remix. One of the achievements in the past few years has been the diversity recruitment efforts. In 2017, there were 50% more women managers than in 2012. By 2023, 10 of the 31 management team members were women, and among them, 1 is a minority woman. Overall 31% of the management team are women or minorities.

Strategy 1.3.2: Acquire new and upgraded paratransit vehicles and equipment, as funding permits.

The Transit Services Division continues to be diligent in acquiring new, fuel efficient vehicles and equipment and staff members continue to explore alternative fuel options whenever feasible. The 2022-2031 Votran Transit Development Plan recommended Votran consider acquiring all-electric buses as replacements, when possible.

Strategy 1.3.3: Complete an analysis of ADA and TD bus pass programs to determine the efficiency of the programs in reducing paratransit trip demand and applicability in Volusia County.

Strategy 1.3.4: Ensure paratransit clients are subject to apply for recertification every three years. Review to determine whether or not customers are still eligible for services under the appropriate funding sources.

The Transit Services Division realizes efforts towards making fixed-route accessible to more riders would free up capacity on the paratransit system, provide greater independence for the TD users, and reduce costs for both the transit system and the TD Program. The Transit Services Division takes a responsible approach to managing its paratransit service. The Transit Services Division conducts strict eligibility and certification processes as well as providing travel training to those who qualify for transition to the fixed route system.

Functional assessments take into consideration any part of the system in the designated service area which cannot be used or navigated by the individual due to a disability. Eligibility is therefore, determined by a combination of functions and a medical model as it applies to the individual needs for trips. Re-certifications are conducted every three years.

Goal 2: Deliver a safe and high-quality transit experience to the customer.

Objective 2.1: Monitor service quality and maintain minimum standards.

Strategy 2.1.1: Meet or exceed 90 percent on time performance goal for both paratransit and fixed-route service.

On time performance (also known as schedule adherence) is used to indicate the quality of service provided to customers. Votran's pick-up window is 1 hour. This policy is clearly communicated to drivers as well as to passengers. A standard of 90% on-time performance has been established for all completed trips. This standard applies to Votran and all contractors providing paratransit services to Volusia County. Through persistent effort and various strategies including the addition of Global Positioning System devices in paratransit vehicles, Votran has been able to consistently meet or exceed the 90% on-time standard and continues to do so. The record in FY 2024 continues to show on-time performance above the standard for the fixed routes and paratransit service.

Strategy 2.1.2: Implement IVR technology to allow automated calling and assist with customer communication of trip reminders and cancellations.

The Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) was implemented in the last week of February 2018. This phone system is called VoCall and allows inbound callers to find out what trips they have scheduled. The customer will receive a call approximately 15 minutes in advance of their pickup. This is based on real time vehicle location information. This gives the customer some time to

prepare for their pickup without needing to call to find out how soon to expect their vehicle. An outbound call to customers is placed the evening before a reserved trip to remind customers about their reservation and provides the option for the trip to be cancelled in advance. Customers may opt to receive text messages instead of voice messages. All new Votran Gold eligible customers have been receiving information about VoCall service. The Transit Services Division is working on a promotional campaign for our customers to remind them about this opportunity.

Strategy 2.1.3: Conduct oral and visual presentations to Votran operator trainees regarding interactions with riders who have disabilities.

Votran drivers receive intense training over a six-week period that includes: simulator training, defensive driving, driver safety, passenger sensitivity, wheelchair securement, and T.S.I. (Transportation Safety Institute) Certified training which involves operator's responsibility, customer service training as well as emergency management. Training is broken down into two phases. Phase one consists of class room instruction by training supervisors and presentations of specific subjects by staff personnel. Phase two is on-the-job training with primary line instructors who fine-tune their driving skills and learn the various routes in Votran's system. The training is done annually for each person on or about their respective employment anniversary and the topic related to paratransit operation includes ADA Reasonable Accommodations and Disability Etiquette.

Strategy 2.1.4: Continue to staff monthly customer service meetings to fully review each complaint turned in to the Customer Service Department. Report findings to affected parties and take corrective action where and when it is appropriate.

Votran has, in place, a Customer Service Committee which meets monthly. Attendees usually include: two bus operators, a supervisor, a member of Planning, and a representative from the River to Sea TPO. The review is run by the Customer Service Manager. The Customer Service Committee continues to meet and review service complaints including paratransit. Thanks to Votran's technology, determinations can be made using on-board videos and GPS data. All passenger vehicles, including paratransit vehicles, are equipped with on-board security cameras. Commendations received concerning service are also shared with the attendees. Findings from this Customer Service Committee result in corrective actions that are taken where and when necessary. On occasion, policies have been revised or developed pursuant to these meetings.

Objective 2.2: Maximize customer comfort and safety.

Strategy 2.2.1: Regularly inspect vendor vehicles, monitor drivers and adhere to the drug and alcohol program for all safety sensitive positions.

Votran's Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) complies with State minimum equipment and operational safety standards established pursuant to subsection 341.061, Florida Statutes. Minimum State standards are contained in Rule 14-90, Florida Administrative Code. Votran inspects all equipment operated in accordance with established standards at least annually. The Transit Services Division has in place monetary penalties when service providers fail to provide adequate service. Disincentives may range from non-payment for a trip that was not performed in accordance with the standards set forth in the contract, such as: Vehicle serviceability problems, failure to turn in Daily Performance Logs, inability to perform trips or trip refusals, non-compliance with established policies, and lack of response to customer complaints. A new contract for paratransit service providers was established in June 2023 with four operators: All Volusia Transport, Community Connections Transportations, Kings Transportation Group, and Med-One Shuttle. A new contract for accessible taxicab services was established in April 2022 with two operators: Community Connections Transportations and Kings Transportation Group.

Strategy 2.2.2: Monitor safety related complaints and seek ways to minimize complaints and operate services in a safe and secure manner in accordance with the CTD and FDOT standards and recommendations.

Votran has a complaint policy and handles each complaint either by phone or in writing. The Customer Service Department tracks all paratransit and fixed route complaints. Additionally, Votran's Operations Department has a Director of Safety and Training on board who further explores those complaints related to safety. Re-training, counseling and disciplinary actions are used for enforcement.

Strategy 2.2.3: Continue to utilize compliance officer, road supervisor, "mystery riders", cameras, and technology at Votran's disposal to ensure accountability of staff to riders and passenger compliance with policies and procedures.

Votran uses various means to ensure accountability of staff to riders such as: compliance officers, road supervisors, and video cameras on the vehicles. Votran's contract compliance officer monitors contractor performance and identifies training deficiencies or service quality concerns that may arise among contractors. Road supervisor observations, complaints, customer service reports and cameras also contribute to ensuring accountability of staff to riders. Investigation of customer service reports make use of many technology data sources available to the Customer Service Manager.

Strategy 2.2.4: Analyze accident records and document future actions deemed necessary to improve the overall safety record.

For all accidents, whether they are traffic, passenger, or on-the-job injury, a supervisor is

dispatched to the accident location. Appropriate law enforcement agencies are also contacted. The supervisor dispatched to the scene, will complete a Supervisor's Investigation Form, and the driver will complete an accident form. Following the completion of the above forms, they are forwarded to the Safety/Security Training Officer for investigation and classification. The accident reporting system at Votran involves the following reports: Accident Report, Accident Review Committee, Operator Accident, History, System Performance and Employee Injury Reports. In October 2022 Votran received awards at the 2022 FPTA & CTD Annual Conference in the following categories:

- Florida Public Transportation Association Bus Safety Gold Award.
- Operator of the Year (3rd Place) Award - Davidson
- Marketing Award for Interior/Exterior Signage

Strategy 2.2.5: Maintain the quality of the vehicles by replacing older, high-mileage vehicles and operating a fleet with vehicles that do not exceed their useful life.

The Transit Services Division keeps track of its need to replace/purchase equipment/vehicles via the vehicle replacement program and coordination with the maintenance department. Concerning paratransit vehicles, the Transit Services Division maintains a vehicle replacement schedule that extends over a decade. The organization also outlines a five-year replacement plan as part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Concerning equipment, the Transit Services Division's planning staff coordinates the development of the CIP with the maintenance department to ensure the need for shop tools and equipment are identified and adequate funding is secured. A schedule of needs is developed and incorporated into the CIP. The average age of the paratransit fleet is 6.3 years.

Strategy 2.2.6: Install technology, including Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on all contractor vehicles with the goal of achieving consistent operating levels with Votran vehicles and better coordinated services.

The Transit Services Division orders their new paratransit vehicles with GPS units and AVL systems. Contractors are encouraged to use the prior mentioned technologies, and their contracts include an incentive for the use of technology which aids in the reduction of the cost of providing services. Votran completed the tablet installations with AVL and MDT technology on contractor vehicles in November 2017. This contractor installation supports the IVR advance calling that was implemented as VoCall in February 2018.

Objective 2.3: Increase avenues for customers to access information on the coordinated transportation system.

Strategy 2.3.1: Continue facilitating transit education program to educate special interest groups, clubs, and community associations on the benefits of public transportation and conduct

presentations to these groups as requested.

The Transit Services Division undertakes “transit education” programs oriented towards educating special interest groups on the benefit of public transportation. A better understanding of transit and its benefits may produce positive results such as improved ridership and improved overall system utilization. The Transit Services Division staff has worked closely with a variety of groups to provide transit education such as: the Volusia Council on Aging and local AARP offices to educate seniors on how to use fixed route service among others. Transit education efforts included:

Participation in the New Smyrna Beach Flea Market to educate the public on all transit services provided by Votran.

Multiple visits to the Methodist Children's Home to teach their members how to use the transit system and get them familiarized with our latest technology.

Votran participated in the Volusia County Health and Benefits Fair to inform participants on how they can use our services.

The Transit Services Division realizes marketing is an ongoing communications exchange with customers in a way that educates, informs and builds a relationship over time. In turn, these relationships have produced advocates and repeat customers. Votran has made presentations and conducted outreach which include: Senior resident community meetings (various), Vehicle days at public schools throughout the County, Children’s Methodist Society, City community events in New Smyrna Beach, HUD Family Self Sufficiency, Daytona Beach Housing Authority Subcommittee, Halifax Area Advertising Authority Board, Division of Blind Services, Coastal Volusia Home School Group, Seabreeze High School ESE students, New Smyrna Beach High School ESE students, Daytona Beach Zone 5 Neighborhood Watch, National Housing Corporation AHEPA 410 Apartments, Volusia County Health and Wellness Fair, Daytona Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, Florida Public Transportation Conference Displays, Volusia County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board and the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Annual Conference and a display table at the Shriners National Conference.

Strategy 2.3.2: Promote new and existing transportation service in Volusia County.

Promoting and marketing go hand in hand when it comes to familiarizing the transit system riders with all that Votran has to offer and plans to offer. The Transit Services Division understands the introduction or launching of a new service involves both focusing within Votran (employees) and outside of Votran (general public). The Transit Services Division works with Volusia County

Community Information to develop media opportunities. These include radio ads and regular interviews with the Transit Services Division’s staff on radio and TV. With the assistance of the FDOT service development grant for marketing, the Transit Services Division has updated the radio ad to focus on the Rider Technology Tools. Marketing included:

- Public Meetings to inform the public about new service and service changes.
- Route schedules, flyers, and brochures were handed out at numerous locations and events.
- Presentations and outreach to: Volusia Memorial Funeral Home, DeLand High School, La Costa Village, Welcoming Hearts, Campbell Middle School, Volusia County Veteran’s Center, Woodland Towers, Tomoka Correctional Center, Lyonia Wildlife Festival, Heritage Middle School, Black Home Schoolers Community Expo, NSB Senior Summit & Health Fair, Spring Hill Community Resource, PACE Transportation Safety Fair, NSB High School, and Port Orange Library

In 2023, Volusia County launched a new Mobility-on-Demand service named VoRide, as a transportation option to residents and visitors to the west side of the county and replacing low performing fixed routes in that area.

Strategy 2.3.3: Disseminate information electronically through the use of the Votran website, emails, the VO-to-Go text message system and MyStop real-time bus tracking app, and update the various “How-to-Ride” guide formats, as necessary to educate and inform system users and the community.

Votran’s website provides trip planning, tracking and customer service information to passengers, and Votran also developed “My Stop” live bus tracking app on smart phones. The downloadable Votran Gold Users (Rider’s) Guide and the GOLD eligibility application are available in both English and Spanish on the website. Copies of the guide as a streaming audio and an MP3 download (18.7mb) are also available for download. Votran includes marketing videos to educate the riders how to ride the Votran system. Other detailed information of use to the paratransit (or potential paratransit) rider can be found at this location on the site as well. Policy reminders are also provided in the form of “Take Ones”. The website has a sign language video of the Votran Gold User Guide for the deaf and hearing impaired. In addition, the Vo-to- go text message system provides fixed-route riders real-time information to track bus via text messages. The web site features a “translate site” option which allows users to select a preferred language they want to view the displayed text.

Strategy 2.3.4: Ensure all websites and other electronic media are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998. The Transit Services Division staff is working to ensure the new website and other electronic media are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998. Ongoing reviews and updates to these media ensure continued compliance exists.

Strategy 2.3.5: Continue to serve on the R2CTPO Committees, such as the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB).

The Transit Services Division continues to participate as a member of the R2CTPO's BPAC, the CAC, and the TCC. The Transit Services Division staff, as stakeholders or participants, also attends the R2CTPO's special study meetings, such as Bus Stop Improvement Plan (Phase I) and ITS Master Plan meeting, as well as the R2CTPO Board meetings whose membership consists of elected officials representing all of the local governments, including municipal and county entities. The Transit Services Division (CTC) attends all TDLCB meetings as a non-voting participant.

Strategy 2.3.6: Conduct travel training workshops and training to organizations serving the disabled.

The Transit Services Division realizes efforts towards making fixed-route accessible to more riders would free up capacity on the paratransit system, provide greater independence for the TD users, and reduce cost for both the transit system and the TD Program. The Transit Services Division takes a responsible approach to managing its paratransit service and conducts strict eligibility and certification processes as well as provides travel training to those who qualify for transition to the fixed route system. Travel training can also be provided upon request by organizations serving the disabled. The Votran Customer Service staff visited with staff members at a dialysis center and a nursing home to train them on travel needs of patients in their care. Votran participates in community awareness events such as Volusia/Flagler Disability Coalition.

Goal 3: Encourage land use patterns that support transit services and the clustering of mixed uses for the provision of a more cost-effective and efficient transportation system.

Objective 3.1: Improve local knowledge of the benefits of transit-friendly land uses.

Strategy 3.1.1: Continue to work with the R2CTPO for any subsequent updates to the adopted TIA guidelines to include the consideration of impacts on the multi-modal transportation system and infrastructure.

The Transit Services Division continues to be involved as a reviewer of local comprehensive plans, plan amendments, development proposals, and re-zonings in its current and future planned service areas. Votran has met with several local municipalities to discuss possible improvements concerning accessibility for transit riders including the transportation disadvantaged. The Transit Services Division, in joint effort with the TPO, will continue to promote the Transit Development

Design Guideline (TDDG) to provide up-to- date transit design principle for local development. This document will be referred to as a local transit design standard in the TPO’s Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) which will be a required document for local development.

Strategy 3.1.2: Complete updates to the Transit Development Design Guidelines (TDDG), as necessary.

The Transit Services Division continues to utilize the TDDG as design guidelines for transit infrastructure development and improvements in Volusia County. No update to the TDDG is necessary at this time.

Objective 3.2: Improve connections of public transportation to other modes of transportation.

Strategy 3.2.1: Establish a phased-implementation plan for transit-supportive infrastructure improvements along major public transportation corridors, as identified in the TDDG.

The Transit Services Division participates in the TPO committees to support corridor development as improvement projects arise.

Strategy 3.2.2: Evaluate the connectivity of service and infrastructure with SunRail as it relates to ridership trends, customer service requests, and SunRail service modifications.

SunRail feeder bus service is currently operating using funding from FDOT. Route concepts were designed based on available funding, existing customer demand, input from FDOT, SunRail consultants, input from Orange City and Deltona and input received at West Volusia Summit meetings. Volusia County’s Director of Transit Services participates in the SunRail Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting and a member of the Transit Services Division participates in the SunRail Customer Advisory Committee.

Strategy 3.2.3: Ensure new bus stops are accessible to persons with disabilities and meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) compliance requirements.

New bus stops are installed on each new route by the start date of each service according to FDOT and FTA guidelines.

Goal 4: Ensure program accountability with the State and Federal requirements for TD planning.

Objective 4.1: Continue to coordinate with the River to Sea TPO to staff and support the Volusia

County TDLCB.

Strategy 4.1.1: Provide an AOR to the CTD on all TD operations coordinated by Votran in Volusia County.

The Transit Services Division collects, compiles and maintains various data that is used in the National Transit Database (NTD) and the Annual Operating Report (AOR) and which are submitted in a timely manner. The annual CTC evaluation is also undertaken, which includes an evaluation of the standards and performance measures adopted by the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB). Votran's CTC re-designation was approved by the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TDLCB) in October 2021. The Annual Operating Report was approved by the TDLCB in October 2023.

Strategy 4.1.2: Complete CTD reporting requirements by submitting an annual TDSP update, AOR, quarterly planning grant progress report, and AER.

The last major TDSP update, covering the period 2022-2026, was completed by the CTC and R2CTPO and reviewed and approved via roll call by the TDLCB in July 2021. This is the third annual update. Quarterly progress reports were submitted in a timely manner, and the AER was submitted concurrently with the AOR for review by the CTD in September or October of each year.

Strategy 4.1.3: Monitor Coordination Agreements with contractors.

The Transit Services Division continues to work diligently to strengthen the coordination of transportation in the County. The Transit Services Division maintains existing coordination contracts and executes new ones, where feasible, needed and cost effective. Since FDOT is the designated recipient responsible for the competitive process regarding the awarding of grants for Section 5310 vehicles, the Transit Services Division's efforts to strengthen the coordination of transportation are furthered by obtaining Coordination Agreements with the non-profit agency prior to the award of Section 5310 funds from FDOT.

Strategy 4.1.4: Continue to provide and review performance reports at the TDLCB meetings, tracking monthly progress against the adopted standards and performance measures.

Votran's Operations Staff monitors paratransit subcontractor performance at regular intervals throughout the year. Positive trends are documented and negative trends are immediately addressed. Performance reports are provided to the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board at their regularly scheduled meetings. These reports include performance as they relate to the transportation disadvantaged and paratransit as well as fixed route service. The latest reports were provided to the TDLCB in July 2024.

Goal 5: Integrate paratransit service with fixed-route service to provide more travel options for the ADA and TD populations.

Objective 5.1: Provide opportunities for ADA and TD passengers to safely access multi-modal transportation options.

Strategy 5.1.1: Review the number of individuals who transferred to other mass transit modes as a result of the use of functional assessments, travel training, and other efforts to make fixed-route accessible to more people. The Transit Services Division realizes efforts towards making fixed-route accessible to more riders would free up capacity on the paratransit system, provide greater independence for the TD users, and reduce cost for both the transit system and the TD Program. The Transit Services Division takes a responsible approach to managing its paratransit service. The Transit Services Division conducts strict eligibility and certification processes as well as providing travel training. Functional assessments take into consideration any part of the system in the designated service area which cannot be used or navigated by the individual due to a disability. Recertifications are conducted every three years.

Strategy 5.1.2: Provide fixed-route travel training courses for transportation disadvantaged patrons wanting to make use of fixed-route services.

The Transit Services Division takes a responsible approach to managing its paratransit service. The Transit Services Division conducts strict eligibility and certification processes as well as providing travel training as requested by customers or potential customers.

Strategy 5.1.3: Support Accessible Pedestrian Signal Action Plan.

An Accessible Pedestrian Signal Action Plan was completed and approved by the River to Sea TPO in March 2017. The Plan examined potential opportunities for installation of new pedestrian signals with accessible features at critical intersections and recommended to incorporate signal updates in local road projects. The audible features of these signals are beneficial to the sight impaired. This plan is in the implementation phase and ongoing.

Strategy 5.1.4: Develop a phased-implementation plan to improve accessibility at bus stop locations.

The Transit Services Division continues to work with developers, cities and FDOT to assess projects that impact bus stops in the right of way. Where the development requires a change in

bus stop position, Voltran staff work to ensure that the newly installed bus stop meets all design standards for FDOT and FTA guidelines.

Goal 6: Secure additional funding to meet the transportation disadvantaged demand and mobility needs in Volusia County.

Objective 6.1: Investigate and pursue all available funding opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels and from private sources for programs or projects that serve the transportation disadvantaged.

Strategy 6.1.1: Coordinate with the River to Sea TPO in the utilization of its transit planning funds to support/improve the Community Transportation Coordinator's (CTC) planning efforts.

The River to Sea TPO is committed to public transportation as an essential alternative form of mobility for those who do not have access to private transportation. In addition, public transportation provides an efficient alternative to the private automobile, helping to relieve pressure in congested corridors. The TPO has ascertained the importance of ensuring transit, which inherently receives a small amount of Federal Funding relative to highway funding, is part of the diversification of highways and other modes of transportation. As Volusia County faces increasing travel demands on the transportation infrastructure, the TPO and the Transit Services Division have become major partners in the refinement of the intermodal transportation planning process. The TPO's commitment is backed by its decision to set aside 30% of its Surface Transportation Program (STP) Extra Urban (SU) funding to support transit. Furthermore, the TPO's transit planner acts as a liaison between the inner workings of both the TPO and the Transit Services Division. This includes such activities as attending meetings, coordinating review of the work program, reviewing documents and providing information that assists both the TPO and the Transit Services Division in their decision making. Voltran established a coordinating agreement with WORC allowing for their FDOT grant to be awarded for their transportation program. In 2023, the Transit Services Division did not replace any paratransit vehicles, but thirteen vehicles are on order.

Strategy 6.1.2: Identify and accommodate opportunities for private sector participation and public/private partnerships in funding the public transportation system.

The Transit Services Division uses the assistance of small businesses in the provision of paratransit services allowing the Transit Services Division to develop its core services and use vendors for some of the outlying trips. Voltran makes every effort to do its best to accommodate paratransit demand through the use of its own paratransit fleet as this facilitates increased multi-loading, thus, reducing overall operating costs for the paratransit program. Through this vigilance, Voltran continues to have no unmet trip requests.

On August 6, 2015, the county council approved the contract with vRide, for commuter vanpool program services. Enterprise Leasing Company of Orlando merged with vRide and has since operated the county's contract for commuter vanpool services under the name Commute with Enterprise. In 2023, thirty-one (31) users participated in the Commute with Enterprise Program.

Strategy 6.1.3: Work with CTD, the Florida Legislature, FDOT, and FTA to receive sufficient funding to meet the service demands of the Transportation Disadvantaged community.

The Transit Services Division receives its county funding support from the General Revenue Fund. State and federal transit funding are expected to remain limited during the upcoming years. The Transit Services Division will continue to work toward identifying possible sources of funding for future Votran improvements.

Strategy 6.1.4: Work with local agencies to continue to receive sufficient funding to provide agency trips (i.e., Volusia Council on Aging, the Florida Department of Children and Families, etc.).

The Transit Services Division works with local agencies in order promote a better understanding of transit and its benefits. It is the hope that this will produce positive results such as increasing the support for additional transit funding, improved ridership and improved overall system utilization. Votran has worked with community-based organizations, the TPO and the Florida Department of Transportation's commuter options marketing agency, ReThink Your Commute.

Strategy 6.1.5: Evaluate fares every three years to ensure customers contribute to maintaining the system within reasonable means.

Some paratransit riders were under the impression that paying for their ride was optional. Votran re-introduced their past policy for non-pays and is included in the Votran Gold User Guide. Part of the information in the guide lets the rider know fares will depend upon their sponsorship or funding source and the reservationist will tell them the cost of the trip when the reservation is made.

Objective 6.2: Coordinate with County officials and the public to secure a dedicated funding source for transit services in Volusia County.

Strategy 6.2.1: Educate the general public and local decision makers on the importance of public transportation and the need for local financial support.

The Transit Services Division undertakes "transit education" in order to promote a better

understanding of transit and its benefits both with the general public and local decision makers. It is the hope that this will produce positive results such as increasing the support for additional transit funding, improved ridership and improved overall system utilization. Votran has provided presentations in numerous city community events as well as Daytona State College, Halifax Council of the Blind, Port Orange YMCA, New Smyrna Beach, and public schools throughout the County among others. Votran staff members are available to speak to groups about the benefits of public transit and can assist groups with information and “how to ride” presentations. In addition, Votran had a presence in FDOT’s virtual conference center during the 2023 Mobility Week Event.

Actions to be initiated within Five Years

The Transit Services Division is a dynamic organization characterized by continuous adjustments to change, vigorous activity, high effectiveness and energy. This Community Transportation Coordinator is constantly going through a process of adjustment and growth to meet ever increasing customer needs. To further enhance its ongoing activities the Transit Services Division has incorporated additional actions to be initiated within the next two to five years. The Implementation Schedule in Appendix “A” provides details of activities that have been planned to be carried out in the next five years from the most recent TDSP update. Appendix B provides the updated Volusia County Rate Model for FY 2024-2025.

New Challenges

In order to meet the updated goals and objectives, the strategies provide guide to the Transit Services Division annual accomplishment. However, challenges still exist in the current and future services. Specifically, these challenges are reflected in areas of fluctuation in service demand, traffic congestion and uncertainty in funding allocation.

Within the existing service area, it is difficult to meet demand for Sunday service and extended hours service due to competing priorities for operating Volusia County community services.

Meanwhile, paratransit driver recruitment continues to be a challenge due to the competitive wage level, and the robust job market within the commuting area of Volusia County.

Increasing demand created by new developments outside of current service area: many new development/destinations have been created in the past years throughout Volusia County. As commercial and residential development continues beyond the current Votran service area, a process for approving and funding new bus service should be adopted as a Volusia County transportation policy. With the current status quo approach to long term transit planning, new service to accommodate individuals residing more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away from a fixed route would

not be considered. Without fixed route service, these people would be eligible for transportation on Votran's Gold service under Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) grant funding. This increase in utilization of TD funding will quickly overreach the availability of funding.

Conclusion

The Transit Services Division has prepared the third annual update from the recent Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) 2022-2026 major update. Votran has been making consistent efforts to implement service improvements supporting the adopted goals and objectives in the TDSP. As described in this report, Volusia County budgeting for the past two years have provided funds that support the current year implementations that were listed in the TDSP major update. The Transit Services Division will continue to seek funding opportunities to maintain current level of paratransit service in Volusia County.

Appendix A

Implementation Schedule

Volusia County’s Implementation Plan is derived from the goals, objectives, and strategies and has been developed to assist with achieving the long-range goals. In the following tables from the TDSP major update (2021), the strategies, party(ies), responsible for accomplishment, anticipated implementation timeframe, and any known associated costs.

Strategies	Goal/Objective	Responsible Party(ies)	Implementation Timeframe	Potential Cost
System Administration & Education				
Continue to provide and review performance reports at TDLCB meetings tracking monthly progress against adopted standards and performance measures.	Objective 4.1	Transit Services Division	Monthly	N/A
Review trip patterns to major attractors to ensure that multi-loading occurring as effectively as possible.	Objective 1.2	Transit Services Division	Annually	N/A
Conduct annual travel training workshop, with training for organizations that serve persons with disabilities.	Objective 2.3	Transit Services Division	Annually	N/A
Annually evaluate connectivity of service and infrastructure with SunRail as it relates to ridership trends, customer service requests, and SunRail service modifications.	Objective 3.2	Transit Services Division /FDOT	Annually	N/A
Provide AOR to CTD on all TD operations coordinated by Votran in Volusia County.	Objective 4.1	Transit Services Division	Annually	N/A
Complete CTD reporting requirements by submitting an annual TDSP update, AOR,	Objective 4.1	Transit Services Division /R2CTPO	Annually	N/A

Strategies	Goal/Objective	Responsible Party(ies)	Implementation Timeframe	Potential Cost
quarterly planning grant progress report, and AER.				
Complete analysis of TD bus pass programs to determine efficiency of programs in reducing paratransit trip demand.	Objective 1.3	Transit Services Division	2025	\$30,000
Develop formal transit education program that could be conducted by any staff member to educate special interest groups, clubs, and community associations on benefits of public transportation.	Objective 2.3	Transit Services Division	ongoing	N/A
Service Delivery				
Develop phased implementation plan to improve accessibility at bus stop locations.	Objective 5.1	Transit Services Division	ongoing	\$30,000-\$125,000
Develop a driver recruitment program and training initiative to attract new paratransit operators.	Objective 1.3	Transit Services Division	ongoing	N/A
Implement pilot bus pass program for Gold users to provide additional mobility and allow use of fixed-route by paratransit customers when feasible, which will also increase system efficiency. Opportunities for Gold Service users to use fixed-route service for free may provide comfort with this mode and reduce reliance on Gold Service by individuals who choose to participate.	Objective 1.3	Transit Services Division	2025	\$50,000
Establish phased-implementation plan for transit-supportive infrastructure improvements along major public transportation corridors, as identified in TDDG.	Objective 3.1	Transit Services Division	2025	N/A
Policy				
Monitor Coordination Agreements with contractors.	Objective 4.1	Transit Services Division	Annually	N/A
Conduct "mystery rider" program to ensure accountability of staff to riders.	Objective 2.2	Transit Services Division	ongoing	\$20,000
Evaluate fares every two years to ensure that customers contribute to maintaining system within reasonable means.	Objective 6.1	Transit Services Division /TDLCB	2024	N/A
Technology				
Ensure that technology, including Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) are installed on all contractor vehicles with goal of achieving consistent operating levels with Votran vehicles and better coordinated services.	Objective 2.2	Transit Services Division / Contractors	2025	Varies

Appendix B

Volusia County TD Rate Model FY 2024-25