



Manatee County Government

News Release

1112 Manatee Ave. W., Bradenton, FL 941.748.4501 www.mymanatee.org

MCAT to launch new customer service technology in April

MANATEE COUNTY, FL (March 31, 2017) – The Manatee County Transit Division will roll out a new interactive communication system that gives Handy Bus passengers the option to receive updates and reminders regarding their scheduled trips via phone, email or text.

The new technology, known as the Interactive Voice Response or IVR System, provides electronic notifications to Handy Bus clients regarding their scheduled trips and real-time alerts for bus arrival times. Just as important, clients can customize their alerts. For instance, clients will be able to verify scheduled trips and pick up times, cancel trips when necessary, receive alerts on pending bus arrivals, as well as receiving periodic updates on pre-paid fare account balances.

The IVR system begins April 15. Handy Bus and Long Boat Key Shuttle passengers interested in receiving communications through the new system should contact the Transit Division office to update their contact information.

Transit Division Manager William Steele said the new system will free up the Customer Service Center staff to focus more on client information calls, and next-day service and trip scheduling. Call ahead trip reminders and client notification regarding estimated bus arrivals ensure that Handy Bus clients are aware of their bus arrival time and are already prepared for travel when the bus arrives; and this improves the efficiency of service delivery. Passengers will receive prompt notification of cancelled trips, affording dispatch staff the flexibility to adjust client trips “on the fly” during daily service delivery.

"Real-time service modifications combined with the IVR System's bus arrival information, and customers waiting for their rides will most certainly benefit all end users," Steele said, adding that the new system will also help alert passengers when severe weather approaches. The new IVR can notify clients electronically with critical information regarding suspension of regular service and the potential evacuation of clients to shelter locations.

"This very beneficial technology improvement also better serves clients in the aftermath of these events, as the IVR System provides the ability to communicate quickly and effectively with respect to the resumption of regular Handy Bus services," Steele said.

The advent of the [Long Boat Key Shuttle](#) with the IVR System launch means that the *Shuttle* passengers will receive real-time service notification for pending bus arrivals, pre-paid fare balances, etc. *Shuttle* passengers can also use their personal electronic device to receive information about pre-scheduled trips and cancel trips when necessary.

"The provision of IVR System technology combined with the recent introduction of fixed route schedule information in accessible format on the Manatee County website are examples of Manatee County's ongoing commitment to improved service delivery," Steele said. "Combine these advancements with the addition of approximately 400 passenger boarding pads and accessibility improvements at bus stops, new passenger amenities at bus stops, improved service frequency on "core network" routes such as the Manatee Avenue corridor, and it is clear that Manatee County is committed to continually improving service delivery and providing an array of customer-focused services, which benefit the community at large, as well as those with special needs and disabilities."

For more information about the new Handy Bus and *Long Boat Key Shuttle* IVR system or to update your contact information, visit the MCAT website at www.mymanatee.org/mcat or contact MCAT at 941-748-2317.

For more information on Manatee County Government, visit online at www.mymanatee.org or call (941) 748-4501. You can also follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/manatee.county.fl and on Twitter, @ManateeGov.

###

Nicholas Azzara
Information Outreach Manager
Office: (941) 745-3771
Cell: (941) 224-9393
nicholas.azzara@mymanatee.org
