

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
KEVIN COGGIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
COAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI**

**ON BEHALF OF:
COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

**BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE'S
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

APRIL 30, 2024

Coast Transit Authority (CTA) is a mid-sized 5307 urban public transit agency providing various types of transportation services in the Gulf Coast region of Mississippi. CTA serves the Gulfport Urbanized Zone Area (UZA) that has a population of 215,000+ and encompasses three counties and seven cities. CTA also serves the Pascagoula UZA with a population of 50,000+. CTA is the direct recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307, 5310, and 5339a funding for the Gulfport Urbanized Zone Area. CTA is the designated recipient FTA 5307 and 5339a funding for the Pascagoula UZA. The CTA service area does not have serious air quality issues and is not in a non-attainment area.

Mr. Kevin Coggin, the current Executive Director, has been managing fleet acquisition, maintenance, and operations since his employment at CTA began in September 1989. He was named Executive Director of CTA in 2003 and helped steer the agency through Hurricane Katrina's devastating impact in 2005, while supporting the areas evacuation and relief efforts. CTA's approach to fleet acquisition is to acquire vehicles that will meet the operational service needs and implement alternative fuel technologies to gradually reduce emissions over time. During this time span CTA has closely watched the advancement of engine and alternative fuel technologies and assessed what technologies are appropriate for CTA. The initial acquisition

cost; and life cycle operating costs of vehicles are key. The cost of building and operating on-site fuel facilities is also a major consideration.

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is a national nonprofit association of more than 1,200 organizations and individuals who believe that mobility is a basic human right. Mobility directly impacts the quality of life of people in communities across the nation by providing access to work and education to life-sustaining health care and human services programs to shopping and visiting with family and friends. CTAA members are in the business of moving people efficiently and cost-effectively. CTAA staff, board and state/tribal delegates are dedicated to ensuring that all Americans, regardless of age, ability, geography or income, have access to safe, affordable and reliable transportation.

Fixed-Route Bus Services

CTA currently operates a fixed-route bus service system along eight routes using 15 buses that operate seven days a week serving the St. Martin community in Jackson County, the cities of Ocean Springs, D'Iberville, Biloxi, and Gulfport. The fixed-route bus service is projected to provide 665,000 trips in FY 2024. CTA fixed-route ridership is 55 percent daily riders, 25 percent work-related, 23 percent shopping. Eighty percent of our passengers do not own a car, and 71 percent earn less than \$25,000 a year. CTA has a diverse ridership base consisting of workers, retirees, seniors, and tourists. The majority of CTA fixed-route local citizen ridership are the working poor that do not own a car.

Demand-Response Services

CTA provides a variety of transportation services in the demand-response category. Eighteen vehicles of various sizes and types are used to provide these services. Within this demand-response service, CTA provides senior citizen transportation for the Harrison County and Hancock County seniors programs. Transportation is provided for daily trips to Senior Citizen Centers, medical appointments, and grocery shopping. This service is projected to provide

31,500 trips in FY2024. These services allow our senior citizens to maintain independence and wellbeing.

CTA provides fixed-route related complimentary ADA paratransit service. Riders living within three-quarters of a mile of an existing fixed route who have a disability that prevents them from using fixed-route service are eligible to use this curb-to-curb service. This service is projected to provide 6,100 trips in FY2024.

CTA provides an ADA Plus service. In addition to the complimentary ADA service, CTA provides service for people with disabilities who live in the rural areas of Jackson and Harrison counties. This service is projected to provide 4,800 trips in FY2024.

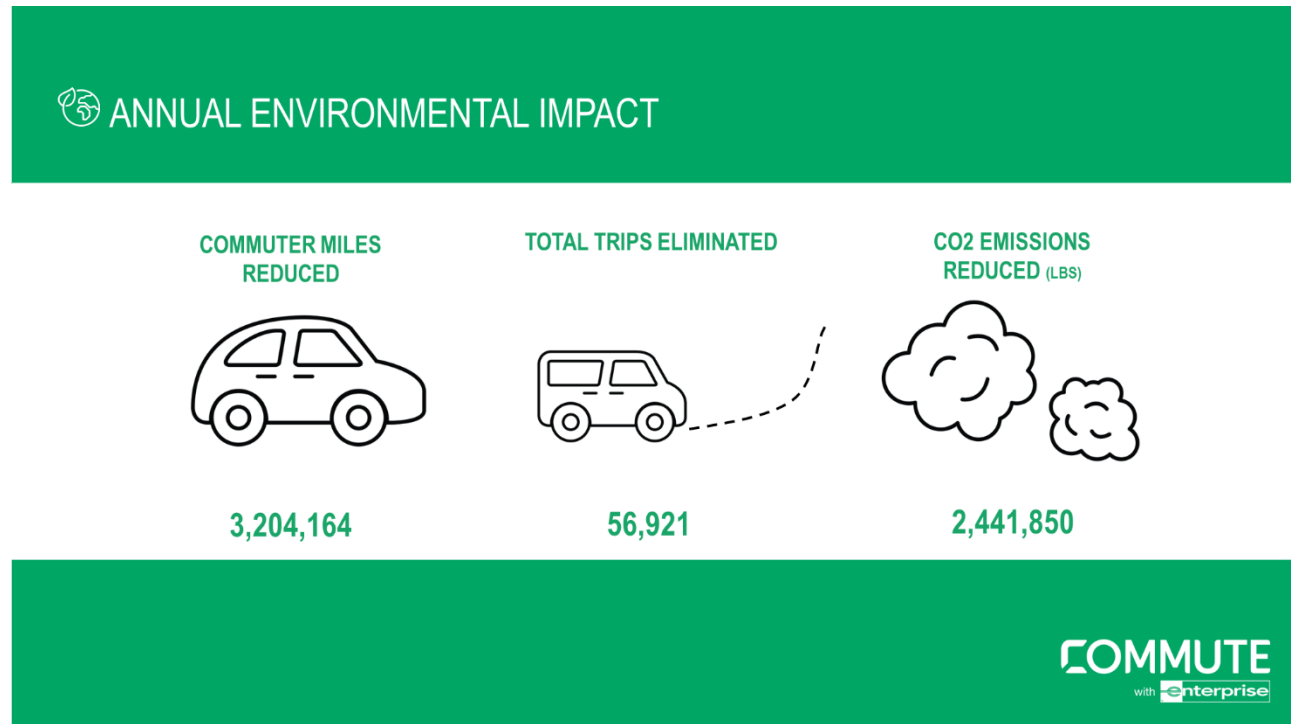
CTA provides contract services for access to health care. CTA contracts with local mental and physical health care providers to transport their patients to and from health care facilities. This service is projected to provide 22,500 trips in FY2024.

CTA provides hurricane evacuation services. CTA is a member of the Harrison County Emergency Management Agency and is the designated ESF-1 manager in the Emergency Operations Center. Emergency Support Function 1 (ESF-1) plays a crucial role in coordinating transportation-related activities during emergencies and disasters. CTA is responsible for providing evacuation transportation for all residents of Harrison County in the event of a hurricane or tropical storm.

Work Commute Services

The CTA Coast Commuter work commute service is a transportation service provided by private contractor Enterprise Commute. It is a turnkey service with Enterprise providing all management, operations, and vehicles. Coast Commuter provides work commute service along the I-10 corridor bringing workers into Mississippi and reverse commute out of Mississippi in the areas of the panhandle of Florida and the lower areas of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Thirty-three vehicles are currently in operation consisting of a combination of SUVs,

minivans, and 15-passenger vans. Coast Commuter is projected to provide 75,000 work related trips in FY2024. In addition to providing work commuters with a low-cost, safe, dependable work transportation option, it has a positive impact on reducing vehicle pollution.



CTA's Vehicle Fleet

To meet all of its operational demands CTA operates a fleet of 46 revenue vehicles and 8 support vehicles. The fleet includes various vehicle sizes and types of fuel. The revenue fleet consists of vans, small cut-a-way (body-on-chassis) buses, medium-sized trolley buses, and 30', 35', 40' heavy-duty buses. The current fuels used are gasoline, diesel, propane hybrid electric, diesel hybrid electric, and battery electric bus. Today, 20 percent of the fleet is gas engine, 52 percent are diesel engine, 27 percent are propane fuel engine, and 1 percent is battery electric. Twelve new propane buses are currently on order to replace diesel buses. The reason for this diversity of vehicle types and fuels is due to budgetary constraints, historical phase-in of alternative fuel technologies, and, more recently, lack of availability of vehicles due to supply chain issues.

The Future CTA Fleet

CTA's long-range plan is to phase out all diesel-engine and gasoline-engine revenue vehicles. They will be replaced with either low-emission or zero-emission vehicles. Small cut-a-way (body-on-chassis) buses and trolley buses will be propane-fueled and large heavy-duty buses will be either hybrid electric or battery-electric zero emission.

CTA chose propane for support and small medium sized revenue vehicles for the following reasons.

- The initial cost is less than battery electric vehicles (BEB). BEB vehicles cost significantly more than low-emission buses; they require expensive chargers; and improved (and costly) main electric supply feeds to chargers.
- There are no range issues like those associated with battery electric.
- There is no cost to CTA for the on-site fueling infrastructure.
- Life cycle operating costs of fuel and maintenance are significantly less than diesel engine vehicles.
- It allows CTA to fully meet its goal of reducing tail pipe emissions by 50 percent by 2030 in a cost-efficient manner.

Considerations for the Subcommittee

As the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Highways and Transit Subcommittee begins to look at reauthorizing the nation's surface transportation policies, Mr. Coggin and the Community Transportation Association of America ask that the following policy recommendations be considered.

Public Transit has Always Been a Leader in Emissions Reduction — Increased investment in all forms of public transit is the best way to lower emissions. Every day, Coast Transit Authority reduces the number of personal vehicles on the roads throughout its service area. CTA’s ability to lower local tailpipe emissions is best demonstrated by filling up the seats on our vehicles.

No Federal Mandates — Please continue to allow for local decision making by public transit systems whose leadership and Boards best understand their communities and their passengers. There are a variety of ways that transit agencies of all sizes can (and do) lower emissions. One-size-fits-all approaches that mandate any single type of zero or low-emission technology disregards system budgets, local emergency management requirements, local energy availability, rolling stock availability and many additional factors.

Continue Investing in Both Low- and Zero-Emission Buses — Small and mid-sized transit agencies around the nation like CTA need viable vehicle options. Operationally, many transit agencies operating outside dense, urban areas routinely provide trips that exceed the current range of battery-electric vehicles; smaller city, rural and tribal areas do not yet have adequate charging infrastructure; and, cost-effective battery electric smaller buses are not widely available today. Please continue to set aside a minimum of 25 percent of Section 5339c grant funds for propane, CNG and hybrid vehicles that allow smaller transit operators the ability to reduce emissions in cost-effective, operationally-sound ways. CTAA is concerned that the availability of low-emission vehicles, which many of its members effectively operate around the country, is threatened by the dramatic reduction in transit vehicle manufacturers. Additionally, it is vital to not only continue — but to grow — dedicated federal investment in bus purchases. In the past two funding cycles, the Federal Transit Administration has received a total of more than \$16 billion in bus funding requests for \$3.3 billion in available funding.

Help with Local Match — Smaller city, rural and tribal transit operators are struggling to find the required local share to match the federal investment to properly maintain a state of good repair within their vehicle fleets. The extraordinary price increases the industry has seen, particularly for zero-emission buses, places even greater strain on already strained local funding sources.

