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Press Release **For Immediate Release**

Dec. 14, 2009

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Simple. Rechargeable. Sustainable.

On Sunday, January 17, 2010, TCAT will switch over to its new, next-generation fare collection system featuring the all new *Tcard* and other discounted passes.

The *Tcard*, similar to a plastic debit/ credit card, goes on sale starting January 1 at TCAT's headquarters, 737 Willow Ave., and at the some 20 retail outlets where passes are sold. Passengers can use *Tcards* as soon as they buy them. *Tcard* is eliminating the old white paper passes, which will no longer be accepted on the bus after Jan. 16.

As always, cash fares will still be accepted.

Given the many technological complexities that come with such a big change, TCAT estimates that the transition period from our old-to-new fare collection system will last from January 17 to March 1. TCAT is asking for patience as it rolls out what will be a simpler, more efficient way to ride the bus.

The benefits of the new system are twofold: convenience for passengers and a better tracking system for TCAT to determine passenger demand and adjust schedules accordingly to improve service and increase ridership.

“The ultimate goal is to increase ridership by making public transit simple, convenient and more appealing,” said TCAT General Manager Joe Turcotte. “Upgrading to the new fare collection system is just another way we at TCAT can track customer demand and get our passengers to where they need to go with as few complications as possible.”

About two years ago, TCAT started working with Ithaca-based Black Box Computer Consulting to design and implement this state-of-the-art system.

“It is so much easier to work and to communicate with a company that is located in your own backyard,” said Nicole Tedesco, TCAT’s Service and Operations Analyst, who worked closely with Black Box Computer Consulting. “Black Box Computer Consulting is not only highly reputable and on top of the latest technology, but has been and will be responsive and on-site whenever necessary.”

TCAT started using the current U.K.-based Wayfarer paper pass system in 2000. At the time, the fare collections systems marketplace was very limited for bus systems the size of TCAT. Unfortunately, the best and affordable technology was only geared to the large public transit

companies, a trend that has since changed as the market became more saturated. TCAT managers found Wayfarer to be the best choice out of what was available at the time.

Eventually, it became harder for TCAT to obtain the necessary parts and expertise to maintain the Wayfarer system. Tedesco researched numerous other bus systems of all sizes across the country to identify industry best practices and found that thriving public transit depends more and more on 21st-century fare collections to keep in pace, and ahead, of passengers' needs and wants.

Starting January 1, passengers can buy their new *Tcard*, which will be pre-loaded for passengers who wish to buy one-ride, 15-ride, one-day, weekly, monthly or annual passes. The *Tcard* itself is free. Passengers will also be able to buy: proximity-chip-embedded fobs (\$4), which can hang on a lanyard or keychain or sticker tags (\$3), which can be attached to a cell phone or any flat surface.

From January 1- March 1, you can check your pass balance online at www.tcatbus.com or by calling TCAT at 277-RIDE. However, during this period, you will not be able to recharge your *Tcard*, nor will you be able to check your pass balance on the bus. Please drop expired or expended *Tcards* in the farebox and we will recycle them into the system.

By March 1, you will be able to reload your *Tcard*, fob or sticker tag online at www.tcatbus.com. By March 1, you will no longer need to drop your expired or expended *Tcard* in the farebox. Instead, recharge your *Tcard* with additional rides or days of bus riding. In addition, by March 1, you will also be able to check your balance every time you ride the bus. By March 1, a passenger-facing screen on the bus will display the balance of trips loaded on the card or the expiration of the passes on the card. In the future, balances may also be checked at a bus stop kiosk at Green Street and other key locations.

Tcards, prox-chip fobs and sticker tags are rechargeable and recyclable. If you no longer need your fare medium, please drop your *Tcard* into our bus farebox and we will recycle it for you. We are sorry for the inconvenience during this transition process. Bear with us.

If you have current TCAT white paper passes with leftover unused rides, you can trade them in for a *Tcard* **at times yet to be announced** at the Green Street Station next to Tompkins County Public Library. You may also stop in to TCAT headquarters, 737 Willow Ave., Ithaca, N.Y., 14850. TCAT will provide a *Tcard* with your unused ride or day balance within a few minutes. Alternatively, you may mail your old, unused or partially unused passes to us with your return address. TCAT will mail you a *Tcard* within seven business days.

In addition, TCAT is excited to introduce new fare discounts for certain fare purchases. Riders who purchase and load onto a *Tcard*, sticker tag, or fob at least 15 rides at once will pay around \$1.33 per ride or 15 rides for \$20. TCAT is so certain that riders will like our new fare system, our new simplified, more efficient routes -- also effective Jan. 17 -- and the flagship Green Street Station, that it is offering a limited time only promotional discount off the annual pass.

Originally priced at \$495, annual passes purchased between Jan. 17 and March 17 cost \$395, a savings of \$100. After that, annual passes will cost \$450, or only \$1.25 per day. This is a permanent \$50 reduction in the price of the annual pass.

Finally, to introduce more young people to the benefits of public transit, TCAT is permanently discounting all ride-based youth fares to 50 percent off the regular adult fare.

TCAT continues to work with local institutions of higher learning on university affiliate pass programs. Cornell University affiliates will continue to use their Cornell ID cards on the bus. TCAT is proud to announce that Ithaca College and TC3 affiliates will have the option to load bus passes right onto their college ID cards for use on the bus. Ithaca College and TC3 *student* bus passes must be purchased online and loaded onto a valid student ID card. TCAT is working with TC3 to create a bus pass program for *students*, similar to the pass programs at Cornell and Ithaca College.

Riders now have greater power to customize and manage their bus passes. Between January 1 and March 1, TCAT will sell *Tcards* preloaded with the most common quantities of rides (15-ride passes) and days (single-day, seven-day and 365-day passes.) By March 1, riders may customize their *Tcards*, sticker tags and fobs with any combination of any number of rides and/or days. Furthermore, fare media registered online can be deactivated, and a new *Tcard* issued preserving existing balances, in case of loss or theft.

FAQ

Paying Your Fare on the Bus

Q. After January 17, what can I use to pay my fare on the bus?

A. TCAT will continue to accept cash fares and issue paper transfers.

With this new system, TCAT offers three types of special fare media. A *Tcard* is a hard plastic card similar to a debit or credit card with a magnetic stripe on the back. Swipe the stripe to read the card on the bus.

A sticker tag is a piece of thin plastic with a sticky backing. It can be attached to any flat surface, such as the back of your cell phone. A fob is a small piece of plastic that you can attach to your keychain, use as a cell phone charm, or hang off a lanyard. Both sticker tags and fobs have embedded proximity chips; tap your sticker tag or fob on the reader to read the card on the bus. *Tcards do not* have embedded proximity chips.

All new fare media – *Tcards*, sticker tags and fobs – will be available no later than January 1, everywhere TCAT currently sells passes.

TCAT's new fare collections system will also accept Cornell University ID cards, Ithaca College ID cards, and TC3 ID cards. **Please see below for details.**

Q. What do I do with my old white paper pass? Can I use it after Jan. 16?

A. TCAT is removing the old paper card readers from TCAT buses on the evening of January 16, 2010, so the old white paper passes will no longer be accepted on the bus for fare payment. *You will be able to trade in your old bus pass card for a new Tcard at no cost. Riders may purchase a sticker tag for \$3 or a fob for \$4.*

Beginning now and continuing indefinitely, you may mail or bring your old paper pass to TCAT Headquarters at 737 Willow Ave, Ithaca, N.Y., 14850y. We will transfer your rides and days onto a new Tcard for you. If you mail your old pass, please include your return mailing address so we can send you a new Tcard.

In January, with times and schedules to be announced, TCAT will staff the new Green Street Station, right next to the Tompkins County Public Library and the Commons, where riders may quickly and conveniently transfer their old bus passes to a new Tcard or get information about the new routes and schedules. (TCAT is subleasing space to gimme! coffee, which is selling its fine selection of coffee, other beverages and baked goods. Both the station and gimme! is open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.)

Q. So, I can still use cash to pay my fare?

A. Certainly. TCAT's cash fares are \$1.50 for adults and \$0.75 for senior citizens, youth under 17, and qualifying individuals with disabilities.

Q. How do I use the new Tcards and other new fare media?

If you have a Tcard: look for the swipe reader. Pass your card through the reader, similar to swiping a credit card. Please make sure your card is dry before passing it through the reader. Remember, Tcards do not have embedded proximity chips.

If you have a sticker tag or fob: look for the proximity-chip reader. Bring your sticker tag or fob close to the reader, as if to tap the reader with it.

When you hear a single "beep," your fare media has been read and accepted as a valid fare. Have a seat and enjoy your ride.

Q. What if my Tcard, sticker, or fob doesn't work when I board the bus?

A. In order to keep our buses running, TCAT needs to collect fares. You must pay a fare to board the bus. If your Tcard, sticker, or fob doesn't work due to TCAT technical error, please contact TCAT at 277-RIDE. We promise to investigate the situation and issue a refund of any fare you may have paid in error.

Purchasing, Recharging, & Managing Your Fare Media

Q. Where can I purchase a Tcard, fob or sticker?

A. Starting Jan. 1, you can purchase Tcards preloaded with passes online, at TCAT headquarters, over the phone, at all of our existing outlet locations. See **here** for a complete list of our pass outlets.

You don't have to pay for the Tcard itself—they are free for all of our riders. After March 1, when the bus hardware upgrade is complete, consider recharging your Tcard rather than purchasing a new card, to limit the amount of waste produced from the fare program. If you no longer need your Tcard, drop it in any farebox and we'll recycle it for you.

Again, when they become available before March 1, if you would like to load passes onto a sticker tag or fob, there is a small additional cost for the sticker tag (\$3) or fob (\$4) itself.

Q. I've got my Tcard (fob or sticker) What are my pass options?

A. TCAT sells passes "by the ride" and "by the day."

By-the-Ride: You can load an unlimited number of rides onto a *Tcard*. Rides have no expiration date. If you purchase at one time:

- 1-14 rides: pay \$1.50 per ride
- 15+ rides: pay \$1.33 per ride

By-the-Day: You can load an unlimited number of days onto a *Tcard* (fob or sticker). The more consecutive days of riding you purchase at one time, the more you save on your per-day cost. If you purchase:

- **1-6 consecutive days: pay \$3.00 per day**
- **7-30 consecutive days: pay \$2.50 per day**
- **31-364 consecutive days: pay \$1.50 per day**
- **365+ consecutive days: pay \$1.25 per day**

Popular By-the-Day Passes:

Day pass: \$3

Week pass: \$17.50 (7 consecutive days)

Month pass: \$45 (31 consecutive days)

Annual pass: \$395* (365 consecutive days)

Please note that you must purchase *consecutive* days to receive the discount. For example, purchasing 30 single-day passes are not the same as a one 30-day pass.

- 30 single-day passes would permit you to ride an unlimited number of times on 30 non-consecutive days. In the old system, this would be the equivalent to purchasing 30 single-day passes, all on separate cards.
- One 30-day pass would permit you to ride an unlimited number of times on 30 consecutive days. In the old system, this would be the equivalent to purchasing a monthly pass on one card.

*TCAT is running a special promotional discount on our annual pass. Originally priced at \$495, annual passes purchased between Jan. 17 and March 17, cost \$395.

Q. I am a senior citizen older than 60, a person certified as being eligible for SSI, SSD or Veterans Benefits, or I'm a young person under 17. Do I get a discount?

A. You sure do. All of our ride-based passes are 50 percent off the regular retail price. You may be asked to show proof of your eligibility. Thanks for your understanding.

Q. All the Tcards (fob, sticker) look the same. How can I know my Tcard (fob, sticker) balance?

A. To maximize the flexibility of the system, all the new fare media look the same to allow any combination of rides and days can be loaded onto any Tcard, fob or sticker. There are many ways to track your Tcard, fob, sticker balance:

On the bus: When you use your Tcard, fob, sticker on the bus, a passenger-facing display will show the type of pass you used and your ride balance or the date your pass will expire. This is a handy reminder of your Tcard balance every time you ride the bus.

Online: You can log on to www.tcatbus.com to look up your current ride balance.

At a kiosk: TCAT will install kiosks in late winter-early spring, initially at the new Green Street Station, on which you can check your balance or add more rides/ days to your card.

Over the phone: Give us a call at 277-RIDE with your card in hand. With the number printed on your card, we can look up your balance for you.

NOTE: Looking up a ride balance requires an internet connection. For this reason, outlets may not be able to look up your ride balance.

Q. How do I recharge my Tcard (fob or sticker)?

A. No later than March 1, you can recharge your Tcard (fob or sticker) online at tcatbus.com, at a kiosk as they become available), or at the TCAT Headquarters at 737 Willow Ave in Ithaca.

Q. What if I lose my Tcard?

A. If you can register your Tcard (fob or sticker) online, TCAT can look you up in the system, authenticate your identity, deactivate your lost Tcard, and transfer your existing ride/ day balance to a new Tcard. If you don't wish to register your card online, please write down the number of your Tcard and keep it in a safe place. We'll need that number to issue a new card.

Q. I'm concerned about my privacy. How does TCAT use my information, and how does TCAT protect my privacy?

A. TCAT takes privacy issues seriously. You can read our privacy policy [here](#).

Special Information for Cornell University, Ithaca College, and TC3

Q. I'm a member of the Cornell University community. How will my transit program change?

A. The transit programs for students, faculty, and staff will not change at all. You will continue to use your CU ID card with the same-purchased or university-provided bus pass. If you have questions or problems, please contact Cornell Transportation Services at 255-4600.

Q. I'm a member of the Ithaca College community. How will my transit program change?

A. If you are faculty or staff member, Ithaca College will continue to pay for your transit use. Simply swipe your Ithaca College ID card on the bus to pay your fare.

If you are a student, you may purchase a specially discounted pass. A student semester pass costs \$110, a student 15-ride pass costs \$15, and a student monthly pass costs \$30. All IC student passes are discounted by 33 percent off the retail price. Starting Jan. 18, students can purchase their semester pass through the TCAT website at www.tcatbus.com. Simply swipe your ID card on the bus to pay your fare.

Please note that there may be a delay of up to 3 business days before your semester pass on your ID card posts to your account. TCAT asks that you carry a cash fare with you for the first few days after you buy a semester pass. Beginning the fall semester of 2010, there will be little to no delay between the purchase of a semester pass and when it posts to your account. Also, beginning the fall semester of 2010, you will be able to load monthly passes and 15-ride cards on to your ID card.

Q. I'm a member of the TC3 community. How will my transit program change?

A. TCAT is pleased to be working with TC3 to introduce a new pass program for TC3 students for the spring semester. We'll be releasing information soon.

Special Information About Our January Transition

TCAT runs 34 routes with its 50-plus buses, operating 360 days per year and 22 hours per day. The process of rolling out new routes and a new fare collection system can't happen overnight. We have designed a transition plan to minimize confusion and interruptions. Here's what to expect:

Important Date: Jan. 1: Tcards are available to the general public in outlets, in-person or mail-in exchange for old white paper bus pass cards begins. If you miss our Rider Services booth at the

Green Street Station, you may still mail your old bus pass to us and we will send you a replacement *Tcard* at no cost.

Note: January 17 to March 1: You will see the old swipe readers slowly replaced on the buses with new readers equipped with integrated passenger-facing screens. From mid-January to March 1, the passenger-facing screens will remain blank until all of the buses have upgraded hardware.

As soon as you have your new *Tcard*, you can begin using it on the bus. Look for the swipe reader (it's the same swipe reader that Cornell University affiliates use with their ID cards). Ask the bus driver if you can't find it.

Your new *Tcard* will come pre-loaded with passes, whether a monthly pass, a 15-ride special, or a day pass. A sticker on the *Tcard* will indicate the preloaded passes. When you've used up your passes, simply drop the *Tcard* in the farebox. TCAT will recycle it for you.

Important Date: January 17

- TCAT will no longer accept the old white paper bus pass cards for fare on the buses.

If you miss our Rider Services booth at the Green Street Station, you may still mail your old bus pass to us, and we will send you a replacement *Tcard* at no cost.

Note: January 17 to March 1

You will see the old swipe readers slowly replaced on the buses with new readers with integrated passenger-facing screens. From mid-January to March 1, the passenger-facing screens will remain blank, until all of the buses have upgraded hardware.

Important Date: March 1

- Register your *Tcard* online at www.tcatbus.com
- Recharge your *Tcard* with more passes online at www.tcatbus.com
- Enjoy the on-bus passenger-facing screen that displays your pass type and pass balance every time you use your *Tcard*.

Our new *Tcard* portal will be available online at www.tcatbus.com. No later than March 1, you will be able to register your pass, so TCAT can deactivate it and reissue a new one in the case of loss or theft. You will also be able to add more passes onto your *Tcard*. If you purchased passes on a *Tcard* during our transition period that came with a sticker indicating which passes were preloaded onto the card, feel free to peel off the sticker and reload the *Tcard* with a pass of your choosing.

TCAT, Inc (Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.) is a not-for-profit corporation that provides public transportation for Tompkins County and portions of Tioga and Schuyler counties. TCAT transports over 3 million passengers every year covering a distance of more than 1.6 million miles. The fleet of approximately 50 buses currently includes 6 hybrid electric-diesel buses. TCAT also offers complementary ADA Paratransit services called Gadabout. For more information about TCAT, please visit www.tcatbus.com or call (607) 277-RIDE.

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