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Paratransit Services Reporter

Paratransit Services is a private, nonprofit company headquartered in Bremerton, Washington.

We have been providing high quality, accessible public transportation services since 1980.

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GOLD COUNTRY LIFT

Paratransit Services began a new contract last summer to provide accessible transportation in Western Nevada County, California

NEVADA County is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Northeastern California. It is a scenic area in which to work and live, and since last summer, Paratransit Services has had the privilege of providing communities on the western side of the county with ADA door-to-door and specialized transit services.

As we began our new contract with Nevada County, we were presented with an opportunity to rebrand the accessible system. Working with the Transit Services Division of the Department of Public Works, we settled on "Gold Country LIFT" as a name that would strengthen the association with "Gold Country Stage," the fixed route service operated

by the County. The new name made for an engaging and intensive transition process as we all rolled-up our sleeves to get the word out.

It was also a very warm start-up at times, with temperatures over 105° on some days! Concerned that some of our ADA riders may not have planned well for the heat, we put ice chests filled with bottled water in the buses and handed out the water for free.

The new Gold Country LIFT is being managed with an eye toward the future, in a service area that is steeped in history. This is California Gold Rush country. Not too far from our facility in Grass Valley, the Empire Mine State Historic Park preserves the heritage of one of the largest and richest gold mines of the period.

We are very excited to be providing accessible transportation in Western Nevada County!

Public Transit as a Social Service

Paratransit Services was formed in northwestern Washington 34 years ago in response to a need for accessible transportation services, ten years before the Americans with Disabilities act was signed into law.

We are a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) transportation company headquartered in the Puget Sound city of Bremerton. Since 1980, we have been providing transportation services in partnership with transit agencies, social services organizations, municipalities, counties, our state government, and other transportation providers to deliver a broad catalogue of transit services—fixed route, Dial-A-Ride, vanpools, employee shuttles, deviated fixed route service, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), special event transportation, and various combinations of these services.

Paratransit Services sees public transit as a vital social service. In many cases, we have been instrumental in getting local transit programs started. In all cases, we provide transportation marked by quality, safety, and sensitivity. A strong commitment to act in the public interest underpins our management philosophy, and that is why we are organized as a non-profit company.

David Baker, President/CEO
Paratransit Services

Meet Our Western Nevada County GM!



Michelle Johnson is our General Manager for Gold Country LIFT.

smoothly. On the Fourth of July we participated in the parade through Grass Valley alongside Gold Country Stage, the fixed route service. The past several months has been a great learning and educational experience as we get to know the community and build our relationship with the County."

Michelle brings over 20 years of experience to our new public transit location in Northern California, and she is excited about moving to her new home in Western Nevada County. "This is a wonderful place to live," she says, "I have enjoyed the congeniality of the area—the 'small town' feel. Our service is so needed, and is greatly appreciated by the community!"

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Sunrise over Grass Valley. Three of our Gold Country LIFT buses wait for their morning coffee and toast before hitting the road in Nevada County.

Photo: Christie Scheffer, 5 AM

"BIKE THE BIZZ" AND "RIDE THE RIVER" !

Paratransit Services provides recreational special event transportation in Susanville and Bend.

Paratransit Services' General Managers are people who develop strong ties to the communities they serve. In addition to providing year-round public transit services, they also look for ways to provide transportation for special events in partnership with local groups and businesses. In some locations, the summer sun brings opportunities for public transit to participate in recreational events. Two great examples of this are *Bike the Bizz* in Susanville, California; and *Ride the River* in Bend, Oregon.

Bike the Bizz!

Lassen County is the eighth largest county in California. Fixed route bus service and ADA Dial-A-Ride transportation within the city of Susanville, and commuter routes that extend to rural areas of Lassen County, are provided by Lassen Rural Bus. Paratransit Services has operated Lassen Rural Bus since July 2011 from a facility in Susanville.

A popular summer program in the area is *Bike the Bizz*, where our Susanville staff coordinates with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Lassen Land and Trails Trust, and the Susanville Area Bicycle Association to operate a shuttle service taking bicyclists (and their bicycles!) to one of three trailheads of the Bizz Johnson Trail.

Created by BLM as part of a "Rails-to-Trails" project after the Southern Pacific Railroad abandoned some of its track in Lassen County, the Bizz Johnson Trail winds for nearly 30 miles from Westwood eastward to Susanville. The bicyclists may take the

bus to the trailhead of their choice, then ride back to Susanville via the scenic trail, the last seven miles of which is (happily for some of us!) downhill.

Ride the River

Paratransit Services has operated public transit in Bend, Oregon, since December 2003. While running the Dial-A-Ride service, we also worked with the City of Bend to add a fixed route service. This new system became "Bend Area Transit." Then in 2010, as our contract was transferred to the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC), Bend Area Transit became "Cascades East Transit-Bend."

In addition to the fixed route system, another new service that Paratransit Services helped to establish, with the support of the City and several local businesses, is *Ride the River*. It's great summertime fun to float down the Deschutes River through downtown Bend on an inner tube, then to have a Cascades East Transit bus waiting to take you—and your inner tube in a trailer hitched to the rear—back upriver to your car, or to start another ride down the Deschutes!

We Aim to Please!

Paratransit Services staff enjoys providing these public recreational transit services. The enthusiasm of our local teams for community participation was rewarded last year as our transit contracts in Lassen County and Bend were both extended.



Washington NEMT Website

To facilitate access to our Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) call center in Washington State, Paratransit Services' Information Technology Department has spun-off, from our corporate website, a separate website for NEMT clients wishing to schedule rides to their medical appointments:

www.WANEMT.com

The new website continues to offer our NEMT clients the ability to request rides via the "Trip Booking Wizard" as well as receive updates on rides already booked using the "Where's my Ride" feature. Additional features include pages for Medical and Transportation Providers.

Recognizing that many NEMT clients use smart phones, our technical team has also added a new functionality to the NEMT website enabling both Apple iOS and Android smart phone users to access both the "Trip Booking Wizard" and "Where's my Ride" applications.

Removing Barriers through Travel Training

Paratransit Services was founded in 1980 to provide accessible transportation for people who have special mobility needs. Our vision then, as it is today, was to do our part to make transportation barrier-free.

As we grew to become an operator of public transit systems that provide a mix of Dial-A-Ride and fixed route services, we found that in addition to physical disability, there may be informational "barriers" that prevent people from riding the bus. They may be aware that there is a public transit system, but unsure about how to use the service for their personal transportation needs.

One way that Paratransit Services helps and encourages people to overcome barriers to riding public transit is by providing Travel Training,

which may be given in a group setting or provided as one-on-one instruction.

For group instruction, which may be given at schools or local senior centers, our Travel Trainers provide helpful information such as how to read a bus schedule or how the group pass program works. The instruction may also include a "practice route" outing in a transit vehicle.

One-on-one instruction may be a better approach for people who have physical disabilities to overcome. An example (from experience) would be walking with a woman who is blind, and her guide dog, from her bus stop to her destination so she can learn the way.

Not a Small Bus!



If you happen to be driving down Interstate 5 from Redding to Sacramento in Northern California, a nice area to stop for a break would be the town of Willows, nestled in rich farmland just west of the Sacramento River. You can park your car and explore the area by bus, as "Glenn Ride," operated by Paratransit Services, features daily runs linking Willows to the communities of Artois, Hamilton City, and Orland, plus Chico in neighboring Butte County.

Last year our team in Willows welcomed two new additions to the fleet: 40-foot Gilligs. Even with the new capacity, we occasionally still have standees on some of our runs. It's a good sign when so many people are riding public transit!

We began providing public transportation for Glenn Transit Service eight years ago. We love the area and the people who live there and ride the bus. Our contract in Willows has recently been renewed.

GOVERNOR SUPPORTS NEMT BROKERS

Washington Governor Jay Inslee signs bill to limit liability of nonprofit NEMT brokers for L&I insurance premiums owed by ride providers

As Paratransit Services' Brokerage General Manager Ann Kennedy and others looked on, Washington Governor Jay Inslee signed Substitute House Bill 2318 into law on April 2. The Bill, which amends Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 51.12.070, provides much needed financial protection for non-profit companies who contract with the State to broker Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT).

Paratransit Services, a nonprofit NEMT broker based in Bremerton, Washington, initiated the legislative request leading to SHB 2318 after one of its subcontracted ride providers went out of business while still owing the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) a substantial amount in underpaid insurance premiums. As the ride provider

was no longer an active company, Paratransit Services was held liable for the premiums. A review of existing legislation indicated that even when NEMT brokers take reasonable steps to ensure that subcontracted ride providers are compliant with L&I insurance requirements, the brokers still face exposure to this type of existential financial risk.

With the assistance of State Represent-

tatives Larry Seaquist and Sherry Appleton, and support from State Senator Jan Angel, Paratransit Services presented its case to the state legislature. Brokerage General Manager Ann Kennedy provided testimony to the House in support of the Bill, which will amend existing legislation (RCW 51.12.070) by exempting nonprofit NEMT brokers from L&I responsibility for their subcontracted ride providers on the condition that the ride providers maintain a separate set of books, and the NEMT broker checks annually with the Department of Labor and Industries to verify that the ride providers have industrial insurance accounts that are in "good standing."

Present for the signing at the Governor's conference room in Olympia were Dylan Doty and Rick Jensen, governmental consultants; Governor Jay Inslee; Amanda Web, Public Information Officer for Sen. Jan Angel; and Ann Kennedy, Paratransit Services Brokerage General Manager.



From left to right: Dylan Doty and Rick Jensen, governmental consultants; Governor Jay Inslee (seated); Amanda Web, Public Information Officer for Sen. Jan Angel; and Ann Kennedy, Paratransit Services Brokerage General Manager.