

CNRMA looks to give service members, federal employees a TIP for new tolls

By MC1 (AW) Tim Comerford

The Flagship Staff

Norfolk – In support of military service members and federal employees throughout the Hampton Roads area, Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) is starting to use debit cards to replace the usual vouchers that they use for the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) as well as beginning a pilot program of bus service from Portsmouth and the Peninsula to Norfolk.

HRT TIP may be the answer if service members and federal employees are looking to enjoy their ride into work.

“It will cut down on the number of vehicles on the road, save them a huge amount of gasoline trying to get to work and will make the ride to work more comfortable,” said Herbert Pittman, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Coordinator for TIP. “You can read a book or take a nap and not have to worry about the stress of trying to deal with all the traffic.”

The debit card program is convenient and cost saving for the government, service members and federal employees.

“The debit card program is brand new to the area. It is so new that a lot of the facilities are not accepting the debit cards yet. It’s new only to our area; it has been in effect up in northern Virginia for years. It is an awesome program the Department of Transportation started that will allow people to ride the HRT and save the Navy more money in the process,” said Pittman. “The difference is that when you pick your debit card up the debit card is good for 30 days of ridership. You only use tickets on the days you work. So say you are off on a particular day you are not wasting money on the HRT ticket. All unused funds on that debit card are returned to the Navy.”

It will also save people a little bit of time.

“You don’t have to worry about going over to Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) again every three months to pick up vouchers,” Pittman said.

Pittman sees the changes to the program as a vast improvement over the old system and a way to help service members and federal employees that may be caught in a money crunch.

“It’s a lot better program and we are looking at bringing a lot more people on board. With gas prices on the increase we are looking at starting buses from the peninsula -- picking up at Patrick Henry Mall and the Hampton Roads Coliseum,” Pitmman explained.

And due to the tolls that are said to be instated in September of this year for the midtown and downtown tunnels Pittman is trying to get a bus route from Portsmouth to Norfolk for people.

“To alleviate some of the problem of getting to work for junior personnel we are going to have buses coming from Portsmouth as well,” Pittman explained.

Service members and federal employees wishing to take advantage of the bus routes have to tell him soon.

““We need to have the information to HRT by the first week of April. If you live in Portsmouth or the on the Peninsula, let me know and we are going to give HRT the numbers of how many people live in these affected areas. It will let them know that, yes, we do want to start these routes back up again,” Pittman said. “That way they can tell us how soon they can start it up. As far as the scheduling of the pickup times -- they are yet to be determined.”

In order for the bus routes to become a more permanent fixture HRT needs all military service members interested in taking advantage of the bus line to fill out the associated paperwork. For application form or more information you can email Pittman at Herbert.pittman@navy.mil.

Once done forward the completed application to Pittman at Herbert.pittman@navy.mil , nativity.mathis@navy.mil or demitria.hezekiah@navy.mil.

“We will make sure your application is complete and is forwarded on,” Pittman said. “Within three to four weeks you will receive your debit card.”