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Oklahoma Transit Association Debuts Rolling Oklahoma Classroom *Mobile classroom takes hands-on transit safety training into Oklahoma communities*

OKLAHOMA CITY – Officials with the Oklahoma Transit Association, Oklahoma Department of Transportation and EMBARK today announced the debut of the Rolling Oklahoma Classroom, a unique project designed to enhance public safety and crime prevention training access for transit employees across the state, as well as raise awareness of public transit options in everyday life.

The Rolling Oklahoma Classroom is designed to enhance awareness of public transit options in rural, tribal and urban communities. It will also provide hands-on safety and security training for transit workers and address human trafficking awareness and prevention across the state.

EMBARK donated a bus for the project. Officials publicly unveiled the bus during a ceremony at an EMBARK-owned parking lot at 700 S. Robinson Ave. EMBARK has committed to servicing the vehicle throughout the first 30 months of the program. Several other stakeholders, including the Grand Gateway Economic Development Association, the Chickasaw Nation, Oklahoma Transit Association, and several private companies, have made significant in-kind and monetary donations for the project.

The Rolling Oklahoma Classroom will be available to every community, tribal nation, and public event in Oklahoma by request and at no cost. The bus also will be available to all 37 transit agencies across the state to provide the hands-on transit worker training. Organizations interested in requesting a ROC Bus visit should contact the OTA at oktransit@oktransit.org.

The project is made possible through public and private partnerships that include a \$350,475 grant from the Federal Transit Administration, as well as matching funds from state organizations and private business. EMBARK has committed to servicing the vehicle throughout the first 30 months of the program and several other stakeholders, including Tulsa Transit, Grand Gateway EDA, the Chickasaw Nation, Oklahoma Transit Association and several private companies, have made significant in-kind and monetary donations for the project.

“Public transit employees often find themselves in situations where they can make a difference in the life of a passenger,” OTA board president Ryan Landers said. “The Rolling Oklahoma Classroom takes high-quality training opportunities, like ADA Wheelchair Securement practices and human trafficking prevention, directly to service



providers all throughout the state who may not otherwise receive hands-on training or have to travel great distances to receive those.”

According to the Polaris Project, 42% of survivors of human trafficking said buses were used in facilitation of their exploitation and 26% of survivors said public transit played a role in at least one exit attempt. A primary goal of the ROC Bus is to provide statewide educational programming that’s specifically targeted toward public and transit employees to help increase awareness of human trafficking, including the red flags and responses when those situations arise in transit.

Jesse Rush, EMBARK’s assistant director of operations and OTA immediate past president, noted a recent incident that involved EMBARK employees thwarting a trafficking attempt.

“The data, whether it’s the need for access to public transit or its prevalence in human trafficking, demonstrates the importance of the ROC for all Oklahomans, regardless of their geographic location,” Rush said. “We celebrate, today, the strong partnerships among federal and state organizations, municipalities and private businesses that make the ROC possible. EMBARK is proud to support this statewide initiative through the care and maintenance of the vehicle as it travels around Oklahoma.”

The classroom environment on the bus will focus on two subjects. One area will use Busing on the Lookout materials and local representatives from non-governmental organizations and local law-enforcement resources will teach about crime prevention and human trafficking awareness. The bus will be available by request for any public event, festivals, schools, and libraries.

The second focus will be to teach about public safety and employee development. It will include a dedicated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) wheelchair securement area and dedicated seated employee and public training area. It will use video and live training on a variety of enhanced safety and communication topics including driver assault; dealing with passengers suffering from mental illness, drug addiction and/or homelessness; railroad crossing safety; emergency vehicle evacuation; and emergency communication in a rural environment.

The ROC Bus also will be used to expand knowledge of proper safety measures to practice while using public transportation. The Oklahoma Transit Authority will provide a designated a training coordinator who will also act as a driver. The training coordinator will be provided with thorough training on wheelchair securement by Q-Straint, use of Busing on the Lookout materials, operator safety and customer service resources and public safety messaging, all by subject matter experts.



Each local transit agency will take responsibility for the ROC Bus while it is in the agency's service area, scheduling hands-on training for employees as well as at least one public safety event. For some agencies with a large service area and staff, the bus may be in the service area several weeks. For others it will be several days.

"You've got an education and training component, combined with the opportunity to take this to the public and provide the ability for us to increase the understanding of what transit means to our future," Oklahoma Secretary of Transportation Tim Gatz said. "It's becoming increasingly important. It has to be a part of our 'all of the above' approach to how we solve our transportation problems for the future.

"On top of that, one of the most challenging aspects in transportation today is human trafficking. Bringing that element into this discussion and having that opportunity here with this type of facility, to take that message across the state, is exceptional. What you have on display here is the Oklahoma Standard. It's working together to make something possible."

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About Oklahoma Transit Association

Founded in 1983, the Oklahoma Transit Association (OTA) is the state's voice for public transit. OTA's membership is comprised of the 37 urban, small urban, suburban, rural and tribal transit agencies in the state who share the common priority of providing and improving mobility and access for all Oklahomans. OTA's mission is to support public transit through advocacy, education, communication and partnerships. The organization's vision is to be distinguished as a leader in the public transit industry by facilitating the enhancement of mobility and transit access for the 99% of Oklahomans who live within one mile of a transit route.

About EMBARK

EMBARK is the business unit of the Central Oklahoma Transportation & Parking Authority (COTPA) – a public trust administered by the [City of Oklahoma City](#).

EMBARK's vision is to be world-class transportation that is accessible to all, and all want to access it. EMBARK's mission is to be a self-sustaining transportation network that removes



barriers of location and socioeconomic status, while elevating the status and use of public transportation so all of central Oklahoma can safely and quickly reach their destination.