

LOCAL NEWS

**Bus by satellite, coming soon to RRTA**

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Wondering if you missed your bus?

Within 18 months, RRTA bus riders will be able to use the Internet or their telephone to find the bus they are waiting for.

The Red Rose Transit Authority on Wednesday unveiled its new satellite tracking system that will allow Internet users to locate a particular bus at that moment.

The information will also be available at RRTA's Erick Road Headquarters where employees will be able to give the status of a bus to anyone who calls.

"It used to be that someone would call and ask where a bus was' we'd radio the driver, and in the time that took the bus had passed their stop," said Jim Lutz, the RRTA's executive director. "Now we can tell them right away."

About eight months ago, RRTA began installing Global Positioning System receivers and transmitters in its vehicles. Lutz said final testing of the Automatic Vehicle Locating System is almost done.

The system is based on the 24 satellites the U.S. government put into orbit for military navigation, to locate downed pilots and strike targets with pinpoint precision. RRTA will use them to provide "real time" information about the location of a bus in bad weather or heavy traffic.

The system was purchased from Radio Satellite Integrators of Torrance, Calif. Some 43 buses were fitted with the tracking system for \$179,000, which includes software and training.

Federal government funds paid for half of the initial cost, and state and local funds covered the other half.

Lutz said he hopes interactive maps will be available on the RRTA website in 12 to 18 months. When that happens, customers will be able to type in a bus route number and view the precise location, block by block, of the buses on any particular route or a bus's distance from a particular address.

Customers can zoom in on a particular bus and zoom out to a county map see where all RRTA buses are in their routes. The information will be updated every 10 seconds.

This will also help police, ambulance and fire personnel find a bus if there is an emergency.