Work on new CAT facility reaches halfway point

West Lane building set for March opening

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Construction of Clemson Area Transit's new home on West Lane is 50 percent complete. Executive Director Al Babinicz said Thursday that the 27,000-square foot facility remains "on schedule and on budget."

"This facility will provide a new headquarters and operations center for the 65 employees of CAT and protect the fleet of 26 fixed-route CAT buses serving areas of Oconee, Pickens and Anderson counties," Babinicz said.

During a tour of the new $2.5 million facility, paid for by federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Babinicz said walls were installed Wednesday. He added that curbing for the parking area is scheduled for completion next week and framing for the solar roof will be finished in about two weeks.

Babinicz said the new facility, which will officially open in March, will house CAT administrative and operations offices and 31 on-site bus bays. It will be environmentally friendly: with preferred parking spaces for hybrid electric vehicles with courtesy plug-ins for visitors; powered by solar energy, advanced energy sensors and controls; heat retaining and reflecting windows and energy efficient heating and cooling.

Even the bus washing area will be environmentally friendly with "storm water reclamation." There will be pervious surface parking and landscaping with native plants.

"The CAT facility is a great example of a modern, sustainable transportation facility that not only improves productivity, but also opens

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Clemson Area Transit Executive Director Al Babinicz demonstrates the spaciousness of the new transit facility under construction on West Lane during a tour Thursday.

CAT: Offers tour

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up new opportunities for economic development in the Upstate," Babinicz said. "CAT's new facility will be a showcase facility for South Carolina and a model for the transit facility."

During a walk through the lobby area, Babinicz said kiosks for Greyhound and Amtrak will be featured. The kiosks will provide information on CAT's regular fixed route service, Amtrak passenger train service and Greyhound bus service all connected by CAT. However, no tickets for Amtrak or Greyhound will be sold.

Babinicz said the bus operation area in the back of the new facility will feature a locker area for drivers as well as a flat screen TV containing emergency messages, departure times and more.

"It will be very high tech," he said, adding that a corkboard is used at the existing CAT facility behind the former Clemson Police Department.

The area is spacious enough to hold anywhere from the 35-foot buses now in use to 40-foot and, possibly, 62-foot articulated buses should the city ultimately purchase those.

Not only has the new facility provided a boon to the West Lane area, Babinicz said it has also provided opportunities for economic development in the Upstate and 20 to 30 jobs through stimulus funds. He credits Clemson city officials and all Upstate CAT stakeholders for playing a critical role in getting the project started.

"With this project, we are putting people to work in Clemson while rebuilding our transportation infrastructure and helping the environment," Babinicz said.

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