



South Carolina Public Transit Agency Taps State of California’s Purchasing Agreements to Buy Competitively Priced Open-Loop Fare Payment System

Coast RTA leverages California’s approved vendors for a modern fare system that accepts riders’ mobile wallets and bank cards—including the free Cash App Card, a Visa debit card for all riders that provides unbanked riders with a financial account

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 14, 2022, Sacramento, CA — With its rollout of contactless payment acceptance devices aboard its bus fleet, South Carolina’s Coast RTA is the first public transit agency from another state to use the State of California’s competitively priced contracts to purchase and install the hardware and software services needed for accepting customers’ debit and credit cards and mobile wallets for fare payments.

Cal-ITP—Caltrans’ California Integrated Travel Project—supported Coast RTA through the process of purchasing open-loop payment acceptance devices and fare calculation software from the State of California’s competitively awarded [Master Service Agreements](#) (MSAs), contracts that allow U.S. transit agencies to purchase hardware and software services directly from vendors without further competitive bidding.

“California’s MSAs make it easier and more affordable for public transportation providers anywhere in the U.S. to acquire the tools that allow riders to buy a bus ride the same way that they buy their groceries or a cup of coffee: with the credit or debit card or mobile device that’s already in their pocket or on their wrist,” says Gillian Gillett, Caltrans’ California Integrated Mobility Program Manager. Gillett leads [Cal-ITP](#), a

California-based initiative to make riding by bus and rail simpler and more cost-effective—for public transportation providers and riders—by standardizing trip-planning information and modernizing fare collection systems.

“California’s contracts enabled us to purchase contactless open-loop payment acceptance devices and fare calculation software—without having to conduct an RFP of our own or work through a lengthy procurement process,” says Brian Piascik, General Manager and CEO of Coast RTA, which serves the Myrtle Beach resort town and nearby communities. “From reaching out to Cal-ITP about using its state contracts to completing contracting and installation took just six months.”

In switching to contactless fares, Coast RTA launched a Tap to Cap program: Customers are charged \$1 per bus ride, and fare payments by bank card or mobile wallet are “capped” at \$3.50 per day—riders tap to pay until they reach that daily maximum, then ride for free the rest of the day when tapping with the same contactless payment method.

“Within days of launching our new fare payment system,” Piascik adds, “we could see that 15% of riders had already switched to contactless to take advantage of Tap to Cap, which lets them pay as they go instead of locking up their money in a prepaid farecard.”

Because a large percentage of Coast RTA’s rider base was paying in cash before the transition to a contactless system, Cal-ITP worked with the transit agency and Visa to ensure that anyone, including riders who may be unbanked (no bank account) or underbanked (not regularly using checks or debit/credit cards for purchases), can order the [Cash App Card](#), a free contactless-enabled Visa debit card provided by Cash App.

“Visa previously partnered with Cal-ITP to expand financial inclusion when contactless fare payments were launched in California on Monterey-Salinas Transit and Sacramento Regional Transit District light rail,” says Julie Scharff, VP of U.S. Card Present & Strategic Initiatives at Visa. “We’re pleased to also help riders in South Carolina gain access to a payment option that works both on and off the bus—making paying for transit as easy as paying for other everyday essentials.”

The Cash App Card is a free, customizable debit card that is connected to your Cash App balance. It can be used anywhere Visa is accepted. The Cash App Card can be used

immediately, both online or in stores using a mobile wallet, before the physical card arrives by mail. Cash App users have multiple ways to load funds to their Cash App balance, including by [depositing paper money](#) at various national and regional retailers, such as Walmart, Walgreens, 7-Eleven, Rite Aid, and more.

Coast RTA purchased payment acceptance devices manufactured by Kuba Inc., one of the hardware vendors awarded an MSA by the California Department of General Services (DGS), contracts that are available via Cal-ITP's [California Mobility Marketplace](#). Kuba, a global leader in fare payment systems, installed and implemented Coast RTA's new system within 90 days of contract signing.

"This is a testament to the partnership with Cal-ITP's Mobility Marketplace," says Kuba GM Brian Frank. "The successful and timely collaboration between Coast RTA and our partners is a great example to other agencies of how easy implementing a modern fare system can be, no matter the size of the agency."

For transit processor services—the fare calculation software that enables pay-as-you-go fare capping like Coast RTA's Tap to Cap daily max fare—the transit agency contracted with Littlepay.

"Our platform is already pre-integrated with validators and acquirers available via Cal-ITP's Mobility Marketplace, so we can plug-and-play a system within two months," says Paul Griffin, Global Head of Commercial at Littlepay. "Agencies that choose Littlepay do so safe in the knowledge that everything works already. There are no surprises, delays or costs to integrate acquirers or devices."

And for payment processing—the secure back-end service that transmits fares from riders' tapped bank cards and smart devices to transit providers' bank accounts—Coast RTA contracted with Elavon, a company with which the State of California has an MSA for Electronic Payment Acceptance Services (EPAY) for California-based government agencies; Elavon matched California's EPAY rates for Coast RTA.

"Our Mass Transit Payments product removes the need for specific transit agency–supported contactless cards by accepting any contactless-enabled card or mobile device," says Pari Sawant, Global Chief Product Officer of Elavon. "This helps to lower the cost of

payments acceptance and management for transit agencies and brings the ‘any card, anywhere’ approach to enable contactless payments.”

Cybersource, a Visa solution, serves as both the gateway and payment management platform for Mass Transit Payments.

For more information about this project, Cal-ITP’s technical support, or California’s contactless payment MSAs, please email hello@calitp.org.

About this project’s stakeholders

Cal-ITP

The California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) was established by the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to both improve and encourage the use of multimodal travel throughout California—by enabling contactless open-loop payments, standardizing information for easy multimodal trip planning, and automating customer discounts ([Cal-ITP Benefits](#)). Over the past year, Cal-ITP successfully led contactless open-loop contactless payment implementations in California on Monterey-Salinas and Santa Barbara buses; Sacramento light rail; on-demand van ride service in San Diego; and LAX’s FlyAway bus, which connects airport passengers to commuter rail.

Learn more at calitp.org and on [@California_ITP](https://twitter.com/California_ITP) on Twitter, or by subscribing to the [Caltrans Mobility Newsletter](#). And visit Cal-ITP’s CAMobilityMarketplace.org for a catalog of code-compliant products and services for public mobility providers, including contactless payment acceptance hardware and software. Agencies that would like to tap Cal-ITP’s technical assistance can indicate interest via this [Cal-ITP Support Request Form](#) or by reaching out to hello@calitp.org.

Coast RTA

Coast RTA provides public transportation to residents and visitors of Horry and Georgetown Counties in South Carolina. It operates 40-passenger vehicles that service

10 fixed routes, all of which now accept fare payments from riders' contactless debit and credit cards and mobile wallets. [coastrta.com](https://www.coastrta.com)

Elavon

Elavon is a wholly owned subsidiary of U.S. Bank, the fifth-largest bank in the United States and one of the largest payments processors globally. It provides end-to-end payment processing solutions and services to more than 1.3 million customers in the United States, Europe, and Canada. Elavon's payment solutions are designed to solve pain points for businesses from small to the largest global enterprises. [elavon.com](https://www.elavon.com)

Kuba

By combining a contactless ticketing platform with more than 30 years of transit know-how, Kuba drives transit journeys in more than 500 cities and regions across the world. Kuba's approach minimizes ticketing machine, ticketing agent, and kiosk costs and cuts dwell times by speeding up boarding with tap to pay. [kubapay.com](https://www.kubapay.com)

Littlepay

Littlepay launched in 2017 to provide contactless payment acceptance on public transit. The U.K.- and Australia-based company works with more than 250 transportation and mobility providers around the world—powering payments on local buses, city networks, and national public transportation systems. By creating a universal experience of tap-to-ride around the globe, Littlepay supports more people in choosing public transportation for their journeys instead of cars. [littlepay.com](https://www.littlepay.com)

Cash App

Cash App is the easy way to send, spend, bank, and invest money. Sending and receiving money is free and fast, and most payments can be deposited directly to a bank account in just a few seconds with low to no fees. With Cash App, customers can also invest in their favorite companies with as little as \$1, buy and sell bitcoin instantly,

get a paycheck deposited right to the app, create a unique \$cashtag to share with anyone to get paid fast, and use the Cash App Card to spend the money anywhere they'd like. Download Cash App for free at cash.app/download.

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