The 2019 FPTA/CTD Annual Conference took place from October 14-17 at the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort in Daytona Beach, Florida. On the final evening of this three-day event, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged presented the 2019 CTD Awards to the following:

Dispatcher/Scheduler of the Year: Tommie Robinson, VOTRAN

Driver of the Year: Maggie Allen, Hillsborough County Sunshine Line

Designated Office Planning Agency of the Year: Hillsborough County MPO

Urban CTC of the Year: Bay County Board of County Commissioners - Bay Area Transportation, Bay County CTC

Operator of the Year: Big Bend Transit, Leon County

Local Elected Official of the Year: The Honorable Don Elwell

Outstanding Coordinating Board of the Year: Gulf County LCB

Rural CTC of the Year: JTRANS, Jackson County CTC

Becki Wade Forsell "Breaking Barriers" Advocacy Award: Gloria Mills, Hillsborough County Coordinating Board Representative

Innovation Award of the Year: TOPS Riders Choice Pilot Program, Broward County CTC

Safety Award of the Year: VOTRAN, Volusia County CTC

Volunteer of the Year: Stanley Voice

Sheila Winitzer Shining Star Award: Diane Slaybaugh

William G. and Budd Bell Lifetime Achievement Award: Donna Fiala

Congratulations to all 2019 CTD Award Winners!
The Florida Department of Transportation’s Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), administered by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) presented the Florida Small and Rural Transit Agency Bus Operator Training Course in a train-the-trainer format at two locations. The first course was held October 15, 2019 at St. Johns County COA in St. Augustine, Florida. Another offering was delivered on November 12, 2019 at FDOT District 1 Office in Bartow, Florida. Instructors for the course were Bill Mayer and Roberta Yegidis, with over 50 transit professionals in attendance, including participants from FDOT Districts 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7.

The provision of transit services in a safe, secure, and customer-oriented manner demands bus and van operators are well-trained and knowledgeable about the equipment they operate, the conditions under which they drive, and the passengers they serve. The training programs provide trainers with the materials and tools needed to train both new and veteran operators. This program is customizable to agency specific documents and can be modified based on an agency’s needs and size. All participants are provided copies of National RTAP instructor and participant manuals, Florida’s Rule Chapter 14-90, and an all-inclusive jump drive.

Specific areas of discussion, brought up by attendees, addressed service animals and the associated challenges when owners are not in control of their animals, how to handle pets during evacuations, the importance of consistently conducting the pre and post-trip inspection in the same order each time, how to handle emergencies and who to contact, primarily when away from their home base. There was an extended conversation on how to assist clients with disabilities, specifically, cognitive and language challenges, noting that often clients may be distracting when speaking with the driver. The topics of acceptable Medical Exam Certifications, and what to do in the event a caregiver is not available when returning riders to their home base were addressed.

The instructors also emphasized the importance of knowing an agency’s Office of Emergency Management before an event occurs, understanding what an agency’s role may be during an emergency, and ways to prepare both for the agency and their employees.

At the Bartow session, Paul Simmons, FDOT District 1 Modal Development Administrator, welcomed CUTR and the course participants. Michelle Peronto, FDOT District 1 Transit Programs Administrator, attended the course and specifically requested that the instructors emphasize the importance of conducting complete pre- and post-trip inspections and the consequences of what happens when the inspections are not properly completed.

For information on the Florida RTAP program and the professional development opportunities available for Florida rural transit agencies, contact Florida RTAP Project Manager Stephanie Lewis at zavacki@cutr.usf.edu.
SPOTLIGHT—Michelle S. Peronto, Transit Programs Administrator, FDOT District 7

Each SPOTLIGHT highlights one of our many energetic Florida RTAP transit professionals and allows these individuals to introduce themselves in their own words. In this issue, the SPOTLIGHT is on Michelle S. Peronto, Transit Programs Administrator at Florida Department of Transportation, District 7.

Name: Michelle S. Peronto
Title: Transit Programs Administrator, Florida Department of Transportation, District 7
Birthplace: Tampa, Florida
Education: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the University of South Florida
Professional History: FDOT: 10 years as a LAP Coordinator; 8 years in transit; and 2 years as Office Manager with a hazardous abatement firm

Years Working with Current Agency: 18 years
Years Working in Transit Industry: 8 years

Biggest Surprise in Paratransit/Rural Transit: How much I love it. Understanding how much it is needed.

Biggest Challenge Working in Rural Transit: The rules and the money. We need policy change that will be backed by funding.

Personal Benefit Working in Paratransit/Rural Transit: The reward of knowing how many people are helped every day, even though the funds are short and hours are long.

Community Involvement: Volunteer at the local school for the past 7 years. Volunteering with the Alzheimer’s organization.

Personal Background: My favorite thing to do, my most precious pastime and my hobby, is to spend time with my family. I have 4 siblings, 4 nephews, 2 nieces, and wonderful parents. There is never enough time, so we make the most of the time that we do have. We are fortunate enough to have family vacation every year and most everyone is able to join. When I am not with my family, you can find me spending time with my friends. I currently do not have any pets, but I do love dogs and cats. I am often called to dog sit for my brother.

Childhood Ambition: I wanted to be a secondary math teacher, but Calculus II beat me. So, I switched it up to Business.

Inspiration: My family – my siblings and parents all helped in making me who I am today. Each one of them has certain characteristics that I try to achieve everyday – patience, forgiveness, joy, understanding, funny, smart, artistic, passionate, integrity – oh the list could go on!

Favorite Book: The Shack
Favorite Color: Purple (support Alzheimer’s)
Favorite Candy: All of it. For those that know me, know that I love all candy.

My Motto: I have two – 1) Do it right the first time! 2) It will be fine.
"Gold Star" Moment

Each quarterly bulletin we will share your agency news, best practices, and success stories with the RTAP community. Every transit agency has numerous successes, which may be beneficial to others throughout the state! These "Gold Star" moments highlight where an employee went above and beyond, exceeded customer service expectations, training successes, or any other story that highlight the great work being done by Florida’s rural transit community.

MCAT Recognizes Paratransit Superintendent for 25 Years of Service

Benita L. Zarr oversees Paratransit Operations for Manatee County where she’s shown a passion and has devoted over 25 years of experience for her work. She consistently applies her knowledge of appropriate traffic laws and regulations to ensure the safety of passengers and works to establish procedures and guidelines as they apply to compliance of local, state and federal guidelines for Public Transportation.

Benita reviews, generates and compiles data for the agency Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP), Transit Development Plan (TDP), Local Coordinating Board (LCB), Annual Operating Report (AOR), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and National Transit Database (NTD). She maintains software systems and associated software modules to ensure efficiency of Dispatch, Scheduling, Reservations and Reporting.

She is also the primary Emergency Support Function (ESF) for Transportation during emergency response, and severe weather events; coordinating service delivery for evacuations and shelter for Transportation Disadvantaged, Special Needs persons and the general population.

Benita’s primary objective is to continue providing efficient, effective service delivery with ongoing developmental growth. Emphasize creativity, team work and strong customer service.

Congratulations, Benita!

Have something to share? Submit your “Gold Star” Moments to be featured in the next issue of the RTAP Newsletter! Fill out the form available online. [www.floridartap.org/a-gold-star-moment-to-share/](http://www.floridartap.org/a-gold-star-moment-to-share/)

Lively Paratransit Instructional Program (LPIP)

Lively Paratransit Instructional Program (LPIP) is a cooperative venture between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Lively Technical College (LTC), Tallahassee, providing comprehensive preventive maintenance instruction and establishing a formal training program for Florida’s paratransit technicians.

LPIP will ensure that paratransit technicians are provided the opportunity to obtain state of the art training and instruction through both lab and classroom settings. LPIP will provide in depth related instruction which can result in industry recognized certifications. Content to be addressed includes, but is not limited to, preventive maintenance policies and procedures, outsourcing service agreements and on campus training in HVAC systems, electrical systems, steering and suspension systems, wheelchair lifts and others.

LPIP will offer three types of training. First, preventive maintenance policies and procedures and oversight of the preventive maintenance process. This session should extend no longer than one-day and can be made available at LTC or in various locations around the state. The second opportunity is a hands-on session focusing on wheelchair lifts, air conditioning and electrical related topics among others. This session
A quarterly feature of the RTAP bulletin will highlight the FDOT Triennial Compliance Review. The three main parts are bus system safety, preventative maintenance, and drug and alcohol. Each program has provided a brief introduction to their specific section and requirements. Supplemental issues will provide additional details about the review process.

**Bus System Safety**
In accordance with Chapter 14-90.004 Florida Administrative Code, or the State Management Plan (SMP) Bus transit systems shall establish criteria and procedures for the training of all drivers. The criteria shall include training and testing to demonstrate and ensure adequate skills and capabilities to safely operate each type of bus or bus combination before driving on a street or highway unsupervised. As a minimum requirement, drivers shall be given explicit instructional and procedural training and testing in the following areas:

**5307 and 5311 Agencies**
1. Bus transit system safety and operational policies and procedures
2. Operational bus and equipment inspections
3. Bus equipment familiarization
4. Basic operations and maneuvering
5. Boarding and alighting passengers
6. Operation of wheelchair lifts and other special equipment
7. Defensive driving
8. Passenger assistance and securement
9. Handling of emergencies and security threats
10. Security and threat awareness
11. Driving conditions

**5310-only Agencies**
1. Vehicle equipment and familiarization
2. Vehicle, equipment, and inspections
3. Basic vehicle operations and maneuvering
4. Boarding and alighting passengers
5. Operation of wheelchair lifts and other special equipment
6. Passenger assistance and securements
7. Defensive driving
8. Distracted driving
9. Handling of emergencies

Additionally, as part of the driver-training program, specific procedures, and training shall be implemented to instruct the driver on how to safely approach and depart from a transit bus stop to avoid contact with pedestrians and other hazards.

The FDOT bus system safety review team will review transit agencies for compliance of this regulation through the employee training folder.

A best practice found during a review is the location of where the agency maintains a checklist and documentation of the training specifically required by FAC 14-90 or the SMP in a separate area of the training folder. This separates the required training from agency specific training.

**Drug and Alcohol Testing Program Compliance Reviews**
As we discussed in the Summer Edition of the RTAP Bulletin, the FDOT Bus System Safety Triennial Review includes compliance with federal (FTA and USDOT) drug and alcohol testing regulations. In this and future editions, we’ll be highlighting common areas of concern noted during the triennial review process to assist agencies in preparing for a review and to avoid some of the common pitfalls within their drug and alcohol testing program. In this edition, we’ll take a look at random testing:

At the beginning of this year (2019) FTA announced that the minimum annual random drug testing rate increased from 25% to 50%. The increase back to the default of 50% is FTA’s response to the national annual drug test positive rate which has been rising steadily over the last several years.

![FTA - Annual Drug Positive Rate (2013 - 2017)](image)

continued on p.6
The increase in required testing means that random drug testing will likely be the most frequent type of testing that agencies will perform in a given year. Random testing is intended to be a deterrent against a safety-sensitive employee's use of prohibited drugs and/or misuse of alcohol. In order for random testing to be truly effective, an agency must develop a culture in which safety-sensitive employees feel as though they are subject to random testing throughout all hours of the day and all days of the week in which safety-sensitive functions are being performed. In order to promote this type of culture, Drug and Alcohol Program Managers (DAPMs) must ensure that testing is performed in a manner that includes some early morning, late evening and weekend testing (if applicable). Logistically speaking, the majority of random tests will need to be performed during normal business hours, however arranging for a percentage of testing that occurs outside of the normal business hours will not only ensure compliance but will strengthen an agency's overall safety culture.

Many rural transportation providers find it difficult to conduct testing outside of normal business hours where local resources are limited. Unfortunately, there are no exceptions to the requirement to spread random testing reasonably throughout all hours of the day and days of the week, regardless of the lack of resources. To assist agencies, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has developed a rigorous scope of service for the state's contracted Third-Party Administrator (TPA) for drug and alcohol testing services. One of the key components of the contract is the requirement for the TPA to assign each transit agency two collection sites and two alcohol testing facilities within twenty miles of the agency's primary location; as well as mobile testing services that are available twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. When a DAPM is coordinating “off-hours” testing, it is best to contact the collector well in advance of the desired testing date. The collector may be able to offer an on-site collection at the transit agency, in coordination with other nearby on-site collections the collector is performing for another employer, such as a local school board's transportation department. Agencies must make every effort to remove any predictable pattern of testing and any potential for an employee to be afforded advance notice of their selection for testing. If you need assistance with locating resources for testing, please contact Diana Byrnes at (813) 426-6980.

### Scheduling Preventative Maintenance Activities

Once you have established target intervals for conducting PM inspections and other scheduled maintenance activities in your maintenance plan/TOP and SSPP, your vehicle mileages must be closely tracked and monitored to make sure these activities get conducted on time. Tracking and monitoring vehicle mileages should be a routine practice at your agency. Vehicle mileages should be gathered on either a daily or weekly basis depending on the average amount of miles the vehicles travel.

There are several different ways to track vehicle mileage. Agencies with low average mileage and a small fleet may track this information manually on a whiteboard or handwritten chart, while agencies with higher mileage and a larger fleet may track the information electronically using an Excel spreadsheet or software program. There is no right or wrong way to track the information as long as mileages are being gathered on a routine basis and closely monitored.

The purpose of tracking and monitoring vehicle mileages is to be able to schedule the upcoming maintenance activity on time according to its target mileage. When vehicle mileages are within a minimum of 500 miles of the target mileage interval your agency has listed in their maintenance plan/TOP and SSPP to conduct PM inspections and other maintenance services, the vehicle should start to be scheduled for its upcoming maintenance activity. This gives your agency the time it needs to plan the vehicle downtime that will be necessary for the scheduled maintenance activity to be completed.

There are many benefits to scheduling your maintenance activities. The primary benefit is meeting your goal of having a preventative maintenance program, which seeks to identify and repair vehicle defects before they result in failures. Another benefit to scheduling maintenance activities is to avoid unplanned vehicle downtime and repairs that disrupt routine passenger service. A third benefit to scheduling maintenance activities is saving money for your agency since it is cheaper to identify and repair defects before they lead to larger failures that impact multiple vehicle components.

For more information on scheduling maintenance activities and to access a free maintenance activity tracking Excel spreadsheet, please visit [www.prmpt.org](http://www.prmpt.org).
### 2020 Upcoming Events

The classes and conferences listed below are sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation and the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida in Tampa. If you would like to attend any of the courses, you will find a course announcement and registration form for each course at www.floridartap.org in the Training Calendar section. Click on the course name to download or view training class details. If you have an idea for a training course or would like to host a course, please contact Stephanie Lewis at zavacki@cutr.usf.edu.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13, 2020</td>
<td>Crisis Communication for Transit Employees</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 13, 2020</td>
<td>Harassment Prevention for Transit Supervisors</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 15-16, 2020</td>
<td>How to Perform a Bus Collision Investigation – A Short Course</td>
<td>Vero Beach, FL</td>
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<td>January 27-31, 2020</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation (FT00435)</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 3-7, 2020</td>
<td>Transit Supervisor Certification Course (FT00545)</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 11-13, 2020</td>
<td>Substance Abuse Management and Compliance (FT00465)</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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<td>February 14, 2020</td>
<td>Reasonable Suspicion and Post-Accident Testing Determination Seminar (FT00566)</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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<td>February 24-25, 2020</td>
<td>Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (FT00531)</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save the Date: April 3-4, 2020</td>
<td>2020 Florida Triple Crown Bus Roadeo – Orlando, FL</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save the Date: June 8-10, 2020</td>
<td>FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop &amp; Transit Safety and Operations Summit – Tampa, FL</td>
<td>Tampa, FL</td>
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**LPIP—cont’d from pg 4**

will extend from one to five days depending on the volume of content being addressed. This training can be done at LTC or at appropriately equipped shops around the state. The third option is the Paratransit Technology course. This course will be taught on the LTC campus and can result in the participant becoming a certified paratransit technician. ASE certifications will be encouraged and a 1 – 2-year commitment is required to complete the Paratransit Technology course.

LPIP training will be provided free to the agency and eligible participant expenses will be reimbursed. Participants must be servicing FDOT vehicles and meet entrance requirements determined by Lively Technical College.

For information about the Lively Paratransit Instructional Program, contact Randy Free at randy@redroseconsulting.biz or Todd O’Neal at onealt@leonschools.net. Visit the program website www.LivelyPIP.com.