

# RTAP BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SPRING—VOL. 19, NO. 1

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## National RTAP: Transit Manager Toolkit

The updated National RTAP Transit Manager's Toolkit is now available! This online toolkit was developed to give new transit managers the information they will need on day one to ensure their rural transit organizations are operating smoothly and are in compliance with the federal regulations associated with receiving Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 funding.

While this toolkit covers a number of topics regarding compliance, it is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and transit managers should not rely on this toolkit alone to ensure they are meeting all federal requirements. Currently, the toolkit focuses on the federal regulations in place as of November 2020, with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 being the most recent authorization of the transportation programs of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The toolkit contains the following section categories: Administration, Operations and Planning, and Compliance. Federal circulars are referenced throughout the toolkit, and to learn more about what a circular is, access a list of circulars that are relevant to rural transit managers in the Federal Regulations and Circulars section. The toolkit will be updated periodically when additional guidance is issued, and new topics arise.

A [full-text version of the toolkit](#) is available for download on the National RTAP website or navigate to specific sections of the toolkit using the navigation menu on the side of the website. Two

members of the National RTAP Review Board, Laura Corff and Shauna Miller, and Cara Marcus, National RTAP, provided an overview of the updated toolkit's sections, features, and functionality during a [recent webinar](#).

What's new in this revision:

### Mission and Leadership

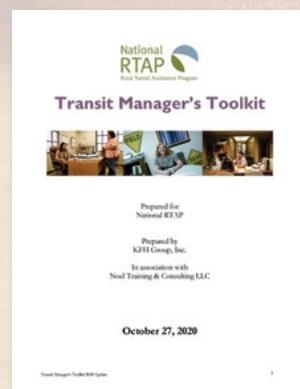
- Leading During a Crisis

### Human Resources

- Teleworking
- Succession Planning
- Ideas for Improving Employee Satisfaction and Morale
- Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Treating Others with Dignity and Respect

### Safety, Security and Emergency Management

- Handling Conflict and Driver De-Escalation Skills - Preventing Driver Assaults
- Drugs on the Bus
- Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic



# Lively Paratransit Instructional Program – Tire Pressure Maintenance

**R**egardless of fleet size, oversight of maintenance costs is a must for all agencies. An area that can be difficult to monitor and often overlooked is the wear and tear on tires. As expensive as tires are to purchase, amazingly, the cost to maintain them is virtually free. Since 2007, all passenger cars have been equipped with a tire pressure dash warning light that indicates to the driver that tire pressure is low and most drivers are familiar with this in their personal vehicles. However, not all transit buses are equipped with this feature. For these buses, tire pressure must be checked manually. This misunderstanding may result in tire air pressure being overlooked by an agency.



A tire is considered flat if the tire pressure is 20% low. Normal tire pressure is expected to be 60 psi. Then at 48 psi, the same tire would be considered “run-flat.” A tire running on low air pressure is subject to overheating which can cause damage and belt separation. This makes the tire subject to a blowout even after being properly inflated.

## Florida Association of Paratransit Technicians Listserv

**T**he Florida Association of Paratransit Technicians (FAPT) has been established to provide support to in-house and outsourced paratransit vehicle technicians throughout the state of Florida. FAPT’s purpose also is to provide maintenance related support to smaller transit agencies and 5310-only agencies. In an effort to foster more effective communication, a listserv has been established.

General information about the mailing list. <http://listserv.floridaparatransit.com/listinfo.cgi/fapt-floridaparatransit.com>

To post to this list, send your message to: [fapt@listserv.floridaparatransit.com](mailto:fapt@listserv.floridaparatransit.com)



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Please direct all questions or comments to:

### RTAP BULLETIN

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### OUR MISSION

The Florida RTAP provides training, continuing education, and technical assistance to those who provide or assist in the provision of public transportation services in rural and small urban communities in order to promote the coordinated delivery of safe, efficient, and effective transit services.

Editor: Roberta Yegidis | Designer: Stephanie Lewis

An agency can help keep tires safe and control cost by:

- On dual wheel rear axle vehicles, purchase and use a quality air pressure gauge with a straight foot dual head. This allows the inside rear wheel to be easily checked.
- Use only a tire psi gauge. Hitting or bumping tires will not allow the operator to know if tire pressure is low.
- Use the manufacturers recommended air pressure indicated on the decal inside the driver door opening.
- Check tire pressure at least weekly.
- Have tires with low pressure thoroughly inspected for damage, nails and screws.

FDOT requires that all tires be equipped with a valve stem cap. A flow through type is preferred and does not need to be removed when checking tire pressure. If the agency needs assistance, reach out to a local commercial tire dealer. Many will do on-site tire inspections at no cost. A tire pressure program will assist in reducing vehicle overall life cost and can improve unit uptime. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Todd O’Neal at [Onealt@leonschools.net](mailto:Onealt@leonschools.net).



**Collaborating and Communicating  
across Florida’s Paratransit Industry**

[www.flparatech.com](http://www.flparatech.com)

# SPOTLIGHT—Stephanie Leonard, Dr. Piper Center for Social Services, Inc.

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 Stephanie Leonard, Dr. Piper Center for Social Services, Inc.



**Name:** Stephanie Leonard

**Title:** Transportation Specialist

**Birthplace:** Dayton, OH. Moved to Ft. Lauderdale when I was 2.

**Education:** BA in Political Science from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL

**Professional History:** Series 7 & 63 – Financial Services/Stockbroker for 17 years in Boca Raton, FL. Semi-retired to Ft. Myers in 2004.

**Years Working with Current Agency:** 4 years

**Years Working in Transit Industry:** Four, but have used public transit for 20 years.

**Biggest Surprise in Paratransit/Rural Transit:** The importance of where someone lives if they are disabled or aging.

## New Substance Abuse Management Resource for “5310-Only Agencies”

The term “5310-only agency” refers to a non-profit or for-profit agency receiving only FTA Section 5310 funding from the Florida Department of Transportation. Section 5310 funding provides resources for the procurement of vehicles and/or equipment to enhance the mobility of elderly and disabled individuals throughout the state of Florida. In order to reduce barriers and increase access to transportation, FTA exempts recipients of Section 5310 funding from the FTA drug and alcohol testing rule, which applies to agencies receiving other FTA funding sources, such as Section 5311.

Although the FTA exempts a 5310 agency from the drug and alcohol testing requirements, there is one critical caveat to the exemption: When a 5310 agency operates vehicles which require the driver to hold a Commercial Driver’s License, the drivers of the Commercial Motor Vehicles are subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) drug and alcohol testing regulation, 49 CFR Part 382.

**Biggest Challenge in Paratransit/Rural Transit:** Expanding our volunteer and public base to serve the needs of our communities.

**Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit/Rural Transit:** Joy of helping others and having fun with my co-workers.

**Personal Background:** Two children: David and Katheryn. Three granddaughters: Nel, Grace, and Ava Elena. I enjoy reading, gardening, and beginning to take up biking. Used to play tennis, but that ship has sailed.

**Childhood Ambition:** To be an Archeologist.

**Inspiration:** God, my co-workers, and the professionals I have met in the social services field.

**Favorite Book:** The Bible

**Favorite Color:** Turquoise

**Favorite Candy:** Mounds Bar (without the nut)

**My Motto:** “Rejoice for this is the Day the Lord has Made”

To aid agencies in understanding the applicability of the federal regulations and the requirements at both the state and federal level, FDOT has added a webpage to the FDOT Substance Abuse Management website that is specifically geared toward 5310 agencies. The webpage includes links to the federal regulations, an applicability chart, policy templates, pre-recorded webinars and a brand new (March 2021) training video: <https://sam.cutr.usf.edu/5310-only/> Agencies may also request free technical assistance on this topic through the FDOT Substance Abuse Management and Technical Assistance contract with the Center for Urban Transportation Research. Please contact Diana Byrnes for further information: (813) 426-6980, [byrnes@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:byrnes@cutr.usf.edu).



## Gold Star Moment—Palm Tran Connection

**E**ach 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 stories that highlight the great work being done by Florida's paratransit and rural transit communities.



### Palm Tran Connection Donated Retired Vehicle to SouthTech Schools

Palm Tran Connection donated three retired paratransit vehicles to SouthTech Schools. Two vehicles were sent to SouthTech Academy High School, and the other went to SouthTech Preparatory Middle School. The busses are used to shuttle students between the two schools.

Additionally, buses transport high school students to the nearest PalmTran bus stop, 1.5 miles from campus, so the students can participate in after-school activities after the last school bus departs at 2:00pm.

The contribution enhances the school's mission—to prepare career and college-ready students to meet the needs of the community. Thank you, Palm Tran for your donation and supporting your community!

**Have something to share?** Submit your "Gold Star" Moments to Stephanie Lewis, [zavacki@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:zavacki@cutr.usf.edu).



## Florida RTAP Moderates National RTAP Twitter Chat

**O**n January 19, 2020, National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) hosted the #RuralTranistTraining Twitter chat moderated by Florida RTAP and Grant County Transportation District (People-Mover). The one-hour online discussion focused on numerous training topics, strategies, and techniques from RTAP managers and trainers across the nation. The Twitter chat also addressed issues ranging from the importance of training; how to determine what to train, when to train, and how to train; how training can lead to effective succession planning; methods for training documentation; how agencies can develop regional training events; and how COVID-19 has affected training programs.

Agencies without training departments rely heavily on programs provided by external organizations, such as National RTAP, Community Transportation Association of America, and the Florida RTAP. National RTAP's Training Adult Learner technical brief states, "training programs are successful when learners are able to apply new knowledge to everyday workplace responsibilities." Additionally, training assists in developing a safe atmosphere for both operators and riders, improves quality of service, and provides a positive experience for passengers. Transit is an ever-evolving industry, faced with constant changes in technology, numer-

ous vehicle types and generational learning styles, all requiring unique solutions.

Getting participants excited and eager to learn can be the first challenge, "it's always great when a trainer starts off a session making a personal connection with the audience and inviting others to share more." It's about fostering a community in the training room—making learning fun and interactive. Tweets addressed the need for pre- and post-course knowledge assessments, the significance of subject knowledge and preparedness, and the need to document training, using different teaching techniques as everyone learns differently. Investing in employees results in improved morale, safety, customer service and overall positive agency image and performance.

When a training session is complete it is important to determine the effectiveness of training. It was suggested that instructors create visual assessments of an employee's skill set and performance before and after a training moment. These performance checks can be done immediately following or several months after the training to make sure the participants are applying the new skills they have learned.

The Twitter chat offered a wide variety of successes and innovative training tools and techniques. The entire summary can be viewed on the [National RTAP website](#).

# Beyond the Driver's Seat Month — April 2021

The Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Safe Mobility for Life Coalition is helping Floridians achieve lifelong mobility independence during Beyond the Driver's Seat Month. The goal of Beyond the Driver's Seat Month is to educate aging drivers on how to find all the transportation options available in their communities and empower them to practice and take advantage of these opportunities.

## How can you or your agency participate?

To help older adults achieve mobility independence, the coalition developed transit-related resources geared toward this age group. You can easily support the coalition's Beyond the Driver's Seat Month efforts by sharing these resources on your website, in your newsletters, by email, and through social media. Resources include:

**Public Transit:** Tips on How to Use Transportation Options in Florida: Tackling transit is easier than many aging drivers realize, and it comes with many benefits. This booklet walks users through the many benefits of riding transit and how to safely do so.

**Transit Ready Kit:** What do you need when you ride transit and why do you need it? This print-ready [Transit Kit](#) helps older adults better prepare for their transit trips by recommending items to bring, from face coverings and hand sanitizer to navigation tools and entertainment.

**How to Use Find a Ride Florida:** This tip card helps older adults navigate [FindaRideFlorida.org](http://FindaRideFlorida.org), an online listing of transportation service providers in Florida, including public transit, community transportation coordinators, mobility managers, travel trainers, and other transportation providers.

**Florida's Guide to Safe Mobility for Life:** This workbook was developed to help Floridians understand the impacts of aging on driving, drive safely as they age, and achieve mobility independence beyond the driver's seat.

To download or order print copies of the tip cards and booklets, visit the coalition's [Resource Center](#). These materials can be distributed through travel training programs and other local events.

Please also follow along on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) at [@SafeMobilityFL](#), where we will be sharing resources that you can like, share, and retweet on your agencies' accounts.

For questions or additional support, please email [Contact@SafeMobilityFL.com](mailto:Contact@SafeMobilityFL.com).



The Safe Mobility for Life Coalition consists of 29 member organizations working together to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries of Florida's aging road users while maintaining their safe mobility and connection to the community.

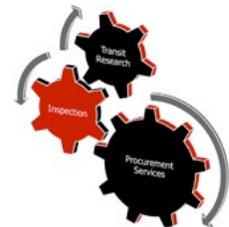
## Registration is Open Virtual Legislative Day



**Monday, March 29, 2021  
1:30 – 3:00pm**

<https://floridatransit.org/legislative-awareness-day>

## New TRIPS Contract Available



The FDOT and TRIPS completed a contract on behalf of the Florida agencies to purchase air purification systems, driver barriers, and other virus mitigation components.

Learn more about the equipment available:  
[www.tripsflorida.org/virus.html](http://www.tripsflorida.org/virus.html)

## 2021 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](http://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](mailto:zavacki@cutr.usf.edu).

March 27, 2021 (1:30-3:00PM)

[Virtual Legislative Day](#)

May 3-7, 2021

[Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation \(FT00435\)](#)—Tampa, FL

Save the Date: June 2-4, 2021

Safety, Security, and Emergency Management Considerations for FTA Capital Projects (FT00551)

Save the Date: Early-Summer

FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop—Online

Save the Date: August 30-September 3, 2021

Advanced Problems in Bus Collision Investigation (FT00556)<sup>1</sup>

Save the Date: September 13-17, 2021

Transit Industrial Safety Management (FT00457)

Save the Date: October 24-27, 2021

FPTA/CTD Annual Conference & EXPO—Daytona, FL

<sup>1</sup> Course Prerequisite: Fundamentals of Bus Collision Investigation (FT00435).

## Understanding Passengers Who Have Experienced Trauma

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), in cooperation with Kary Hughes of the South West Transit Association, the Oklahoma Transit Association, and Embark of Oklahoma City, will offer this free self-paced online certification program for transit operators that teaches empathy, de-escalation tactics and useful skills that all drivers need to succeed. “Understanding Passengers Who Have Experienced Trauma” was created for public transportation, non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), specialized transportation, and other drivers who interact with the general public on a daily basis. Its purpose is to educate drivers on the impacts that past traumatic events can have on individuals and how those impacts may play out in a transportation setting.

The course introduces these key concepts:

- “Trauma-informed service” or providing transportation services in a way that does not add to the trauma a rider may have previously experienced,

and engaging in de-escalation strategies that may emerge with a trauma-impacted rider

- “Triggers” or things that a trauma-impacted rider may experience using transportation that may lead to unexpected reactions by the rider
- “Felt safety” or the set of circumstances that can help a trauma-impacted rider feel safe

The training was developed with funds through the Arnall Family Foundation.

For more [information](#) or to [register](#).

