

# RTAP

## BULLETIN

FLORIDA RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SPRING—VOL. 13, No. 1

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## JTran's Sharon Peeler Appointed to National RTAP Review Board

Florida RTAP offers its congratulations to Sharon Peeler from JTran on her recent selection to a three year term on the National RTAP Review Board. Sharon starts her term in April 2015 when she travels to Washington, DC to attend her first board meeting.

Sharon has over 26 years of experience in the Florida coordinated transportation system, joining Jackson County ARC and Jackson County Senior Program in 1988. She assumed her current duties as the JTran Executive Director in 2003. Sharon was the recipient of the 2014 Sheila Winitzer Shining Star Award from the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Commission.

Much of the work of National RTAP is overseen by the National RTAP Review Board, whose expertise in the field of rural transit helps guide and inform the development of our products and services. Composed

of rural and tribal operators and state department of transportation representatives, the Review Board provides in-depth expertise and local perspectives to ensure that products and services are of the highest quality, easily accessible, and usable by local transit operators.

Review Board members serve for a term of three years, and calls for nominations are announced periodically. New members are selected from among nominees by a committee composed of National RTAP staff and partner organizations.

Congratulations Sharon!



## 2015 Florida Triple Crown Bus Rodeo

In early April, Florida's best bus drivers and technicians will gather in St. Petersburg to participate in the 2015 Annual Florida Triple Crown Bus Rodeo. The Florida Triple Crown Bus Rodeo combines the FPTA and RTAP rodeos into a single, colossal weekend honoring all of Florida's bus maintenance technicians, paratransit and fixed route operators.



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The year's event is a joint effort of the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA), the Florida Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Florida Association of Coordinated Transit Systems (FACTS), and hosted by the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA).

There will be training opportunities for the participants. The bus operator participant's skills will be tested with a written test and the on-course competition. The maintenance technicians will face similar challenges with a written test and a series of diagnostic tests.

As always, the event will conclude with the Awards Banquet that crowns and recognizes the 2015 champions in the

paratransit van and cutaway divisions, the fixed route bus division, and the maintenance technician's team competition.

The first place finishers in both the Cutaway and Mini-Van divisions will represent Florida at the May Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) National Roadeo in Tampa, Florida.

The results of the 2015 Annual Florida Triple Crown Bus Roadeo will be reported in the next issue of the Florida RTAP Bulletin.

## Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Awareness Day— March 3, 2015

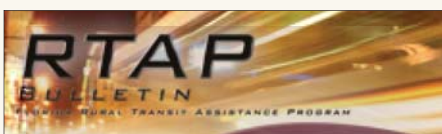
This year's Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Awareness Day was held on Tuesday, March 3rd, on the first day of legislative session! For being so early in March, the event was blessed with beautiful weather! Loads of sunshine and temps in the 70's! There were a record number of registered attendees and exhibitors this year! Advocates from Palm Beach, Duval and Volusia attended as were others from around the state. Mr. Robert Craig of Big Bend Transit kicked off the event with his moving a cappella version of the Star Spangled Banner. Those in attendance enjoyed performances by the Gretchen Everhart School, Pyramid Studios, and the wonderful Wakulla Senior Band "Pickin'- n'- Grinnin'." BBQ sandwiches, chips, cookies and cold sodas were served up to the hungry crowd.

CTD Chairman, David Darm and CTD Executive Director, Steven Holmes welcomed attendees and discussed the importance of transportation for those who have no other means of transportation. Richard Biter, FDOT Assistant Secretary for Intermodal Systems Development, and Honorable Jerry Moore, Wakulla County Commissioner and

Local Coordinating Board Chairman, also addressed the group.

Overall the event was a success! The primary goal of this event is to create awareness and support for Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

The Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (F.A.C.T.S.) hosts the event each year, solely through donations and sponsorships. This was the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual TD Day at the Capitol and we look forward to many more.



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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: Jay Goodwill Designer: Stephanie Lewis

# SPOTLIGHT— Kenneth Harley, Public Transportation Director, Lake County Public Transportation Division

Each SPOTLIGHT edition 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 Kenneth Harley, Public Transportation Director, Lake County Public Transportation Division



**Name:** Kenneth Harley

**Title:** Public Transportation Director

**Birthplace:** Eustis, Florida

**Education:** BA University of Central Florida

**Professional History:** Public Transportation Director, Lake County; Assistant Community Traffic Safety Team Manager, Florida Department of Transportation; Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Eatonville; Community Development Director, City of Casselberry; and Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director City of Mount Dora, as well as Acting City Manager.

**Years Working with Current Agency:** 14 years

**Years Working in Transit Industry:** 20 years

**Biggest Surprise in Paratransit:** How many agencies provide transit for their clients on the federal level but they don't coordinate it with the locals, as well as the growing need for this service.

**Biggest Challenge in Paratransit:** There are many challenges that we have faced: The implications of Medicaid Reform and seeing the challenges that it caused in the lives of the clients that was very stressful and challenging. It is also extremely painful to have to cut back on services when there are funding shortages. We had to cut back on educational and employment trips several years ago and that was extremely challenging going through that process, and seeing how it adversely impacted the lives of our clients. Last year we were able to restore those trips and that brought a great deal of joy to the clients as well as me. As our populations age and the need for paratransit grows, it's important to have a dedicated funding source with revenues to adequately fund the paratransit programs.

**Personal Benefit of Working in Paratransit:** Being able to provide a vital and critical service to people who really

need it and see the joy on their face when you are able to help them. Also taking rides with the clients and talking to them and getting to know them on a personal level. I have attended the funerals of several of our clients and have gone to the hospital to visit with them.

**Community Involvement:** Pastor, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, volunteer Chaplain at Bert Fish Hospital, member of the Lake County Community Traffic Safety Team with emphasis on the Mock Crash Program; Past President of the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems (FACTS); current Secretary of Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA).

**Personal Background:** I am a lifelong resident of Florida; I grew up in Mount Dora. My wife is Joyce, and I have two daughters, Asia and Keisha. We have a family dog. My favorite hobby is watching and attending FSU Football. I am an avid Seminole Fan. I like to travel and visit historic areas and communities with traditional downtowns.

**Childhood Ambition:** To be an FBI agent.

**Inspiration:** To serve and to help others. Making a positive difference in the life of people that I encounter.

**Favorite Book:** The Bible

**Favorite Color:** Blue

**Favorite Candy:** Mr. Goodbar and Snickers

**My Motto:** "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" Matthew 7:12.

## Save the Date:

2015 FPTA/FDOT/CUTR  
Professional Development  
Workshop and Transit  
Safety Summit

June 1-3, 2015

## TRIPS Overview

The Transit Research Inspection Procurement Services (TRIPS) program has been in existence since 1995, providing agencies with the means of procuring quality vehicles at the lowest possible price.

TRIPS was developed through the insight, innovation and funding from the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Office of Freight, Logistics and Passenger Operations. TRIPS is administered and managed by the University of South Florida's (USF) Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR).

The mission of TRIPS is to provide public transportation agencies access to procure high quality vehicles at competitive prices, provide technical assistance and guidance to public transit agencies for vehicle procurement, research and develop transit bus specifications that improve product quality and extend the life of the vehicles procured, and conduct crash testing and bus safety analysis to increase passenger safety and comfort.

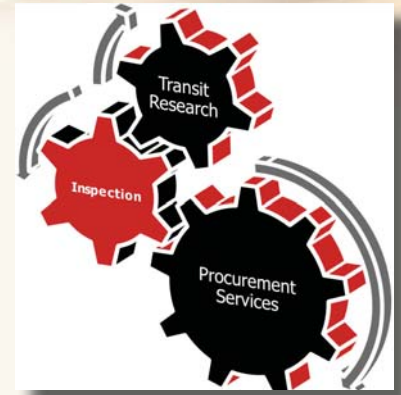
The TRIPS program is accomplishing this mission by:

- Establishing statewide contracts for procurement of certain transit vehicles.
- Developing vehicle technical specifications for all various public transit vehicles required by Florida's public

transportation systems.

- Providing technical assistance and guidelines to public transit agencies during the procurement process and coordination with the contracted dealer.
- Providing technical assistance to individual transit agency Maintenance Managers experiencing unidentified fleet and warranty issues.
- Investigating, conducting research, testing and developing component and design performance standards for the manufacture of vehicle and related components as part of vehicle technical specifications.

To learn more about the TRIPS program and how to utilize their services, please visit their site at [www.tripsflorida.org](http://www.tripsflorida.org)



## Karen Somerset Retirement Dinner

In anticipation of Karen Somerset's May retirement, colleagues and friends joined Karen at a recognition dinner event at Georgio's restaurant in Tallahassee on March 3, 2015 following the Transportation Disadvantaged Legislative Day festivities. Karen, the longtime Assistant Director Program Administration for the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, has been a mainstay in Florida's transportation disadvantaged program. Karen will be missed by all in the CTD family.



*Top: Karen Somerset with Lisa Bacot, the Executive Director of the Florida Public Transportation Association*



*Left: Karen Somerset with her colleagues John Irvine and Sheri Powers*

## 2015 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 Lisa Staes at [staes@cutr.usf.edu](mailto:staes@cutr.usf.edu).

**April 10-11, 2015**

Triple Crown Roadeo—St. Petersburg, FL

**April 22-23, 2015**

NTI's Using the Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM Lite)—Tampa, FL

**May 11-15, 2015**

Transit Bus System Safety (FT00533)—Tampa, FL

**May 30-June 5, 2014**

Community Transportation EXPO—Tampa, FL

**June 1-3, 2015**

FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop and Transit Safety Summit—Tampa, FL

**October 25-28, 2015**

FPTA/CTD Annual Conference and EXPO—Daytona Beach, FL

**June 24-25, 2015**

Risk Assessment for Transit Capital Projects—Tampa, FL

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## 2015 Roadeo, Workshops and Conferences Scheduled

**T**he Florida RTAP community and transportation professionals will have ample opportunity to participate in a variety of major training opportunities, workshops and conferences in 2015.

Here is a recap of the major events that you will want to pencil in on your 2015 calendars:

**Triple Crown Bus Roadeo** – the combined Mega Bus, Paratransit and Maintenance competition will be hosted by the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) in St. Petersburg on April 10-11, 2015. Once again the Florida RTAP Paratransit Roadeo will be held in conjunction with the fixed route roadeo. For registration information go to: <https://www.regon-line.com/2015floridatriplecrown>

**FPTA/FDOT/CUTR Professional Development Workshop and Transit Safety Summit** will be held at the USF Embassy Suites in Tampa on June 1-3, 2015.

This annual training opportunity focuses on managers and supervisors and is a must attend experience. Registration will open in early April.

**Community Transportation EXPO 2015**, the Community Transportation Association of America will hold its annual conference and EXPO at the Tampa Marriott Waterside and Tampa Conference Center in Tampa from May 30 to June 5, 2015. A unique opportunity for the Florida paratransit community. For registration information go to: <http://web1.ctaa.org/web-modules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=3948&z=5>

**Joint FPTA/CTD Annual Conference and EXPO** will be hosted by Votran at the Daytona Beach Hilton and Ocean Center on October 25-28, 2015. For the first time, this 2015 event will combine the Florida Public Transportation Association and Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged annual conferences into a single event.