



January/February 2009

The bi-monthly information source for the Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials

NATIONAL NEWS

COMTO and President-Elect Barack Obama's DOT Agency Working Group

At the invitation of President-Elect **Barack Obama's** Transition Team, COMTO National Chair **Shirley A. DeLibero** and COMTO Board Member **Robert Prince, Jr.** met on November 25, 2008, with the Agency Working Group assigned to the Department of Transportation (DOT). Discussion topics ranged from economic stimulus and the role of public transit, to regulatory issues, the need for greater collaboration with the transit industry, and the need to simplify the current federal grant process.

During the meeting, the COMTO representatives had the opportunity to present the organization's position on three main initiatives: Workforce Diversity in Transportation, Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) and Emergency Preparedness for Vulnerable Populations.

"I found the Working Group very receptive to the COMTO initiatives," said Prince. "They were extremely interested in our database, which is a cornerstone for hiring minority employees in this industry. In my 33 years in this business, I've never



Shirley A. DeLibero, National Chair, and Robert Prince, Jr., At-Large Board Member, leaving the DOT

experienced this kind of exposure for our cause. They were really listening to what we had to say about moving this industry forward."

DeLibero wasn't surprised by the experience. "Based on what I saw during the campaign, I was expecting a professional, well-oiled machine to be driving this transition. That's precisely what we got with the Working Group. Everyone was candid, everything was transparent. It was so refreshing. And, as far as COMTO's stature, the fact that we were asked to participate speaks volumes. Our members should be

proud."

By now, many COMTO members are aware that **Julie A. Cunningham**, COMTO President and CEO, was on a leave of absence from the organization. She was named to President-Elect Obama's Transition Team/ Agency Working Group assigned to the DOT, and worked with 15 other team members to perform a thorough agency review in order to facilitate a smooth assumption of control by the new administration. The Team was led by **Mort Downey**, consultant with Parsons Brinckerhoff and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

National Chair DeLibero said, "All of us at COMTO are excited about Julie's opportunity to have served President-Elect Obama at the very early stage. To have our President/CEO appointed to the Transition Team is certainly indicative of the work that we have done and are doing nationally to level the playing field for minorities in the transportation industry. We know that Julie served our country well in this capacity." ■

COMTO's Problem Statement on Vulnerable Populations Funded by TOPS for \$350,000

One of COMTO's priority national initiatives is that of Emergency Preparedness for Vulnerable Populations. Recently, the organization submitted a Problem Statement on Vulnerable Populations to the TCRP

Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) meeting. After reviewing all of the statements presented, TOPS chose the COMTO statement as one that will receive support in the amount of \$350,000. ■

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An Event to Remember: Hampton Roads HUB Conference Soars

By Sheila Johnson

Hampton Roads Chapter Secretary & Marketing Committee Member

Recently, the Hampton Roads Chapter hosted a Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Conference in Hampton Roads, Virginia. With forthcoming multi-billion-dollar major transportation projects across the Commonwealth of Virginia, it was an opportunity for COMTO Hampton Roads to support not only these initiatives but to become a vehicle for fostering partnerships among large and small businesses based both in and outside of Virginia. With the theme, “Building Capacity from the Outside In,” and led by Chapter President **Prescott Sherrod** and Program Committee Chair **Delceno Miles**, this two-day event accomplished this objective.



Pierce Homer, Secretary of Virginia DOT; Louisa Strayhorn, Consultant; Shirley A. DeLibero, National Chair; Grinley Johnson, Director Office of Civil Rights, VDOT; Julie A. Cunningham, President & CEO; Prescott Sherrod, HR Chapter President

A welcome reception sponsored by the Virginia Beach Convention Center & Visitors Bureau, provided a great opportunity to network and socialize with leaders and decision makers both locally

and nationally. The evening included live jazz, an array of delicacies, and a multitude of special guests and dignitaries.

Some of those in attendance were **Shirley DeLibero**, National Chair, COMTO Board

of Directors; **Julie Cunningham**, COMTO national President & CEO; **Al Brunson**, Chair, COMTO National HUB Advisory Council; Senator **Yvonne B. Miller**, Chair, Virginia Senate Transportation Committee; Florida State Senator **Kenneth Hill**; Virginia Beach City Councilman **Ron Villanueva**; Suffolk City Councilman **Charles Brown**; Norfolk City Councilman **Randy Wright**; **Jim Ricketts**, Director of Virginia Beach Conventions Bureau; **William Jones**, Director of Finance, Norfolk International Airport; and **Eldridge Coles**, GRTC Chief Operating Officer.

The second day’s agenda included a series of workshops and a power luncheon designed to assist more than 120 attendees representing a diverse mode of transporta-

HUB Conference continued on 3

Hampton Roads Chapter Goes Multi-Modal

It’s common — and even understandable — that COMTO chapters concentrate their recruiting efforts and their program agendas around urban commuter systems. But, in this changing economic climate, chapters need to broaden their focus. That’s what the Hampton Roads Chapter has done, and they aren’t looking back.

“Maritime, aviation, highway, rail — we’re looking to include everyone in our chapter,” says Chapter President **Prescott Sherrod**. “It’s a sensible

way to stimulate wider engagement within our chapter and our community.”

Sherrod believes industrial diversification is critical to the success of the chapter and COMTO as a whole. In fact, he took his lead in going multi-modal from the national organization, which lists multi-modal transportation diversification as one of its top strategic strategies.

Of course, going multi-modal presents some problems, but they are challenges that can be overcome. “One challenge,” notes Sherrod, “is managing diverse industry personalities. But, through solid com-

munication initiatives within the chapter, we’re making real headway. At the center of that communication initiative is our ‘WIIFM’ promise. We make sure each chapter member understands What’s In IT For Me! whenever we introduce a program or service.”

Hampton Roads encourages every COMTO chapter to consider diversification. The incoming Obama Administration has made it clear that its focus on the national infrastructure will impact every mode of transportation. COMTO chapters need to stay ahead of the curve. ■

COMTO to Host Its First Transportation Summit

COMTO will be hosting a Transportation Summit in March. The Summit will provide an arena to rejuvenate the mission and to celebrate the recent rebranding — showcasing one voice, one message, one look, one feel. The Summit will take place in Washington, DC. More information will follow, so watch your mailboxes and inboxes for announcements. ■

TransTech Academy & Industry Partners Opening Doors

Recently, the TransTech Academy announced the official formation of the Cardozo High School TransTech Academy Industry Partners Consortium (TAIPC). To celebrate the development of the consortium, a networking event and ribbon cutting ceremony was held.

More than 75 people attended, including past Cardozo High School graduates and representatives from across the industry. **Julie A. Cunningham**, COMTO President & CEO, offered brief remarks. **Ramonica D.M. Moore**, COMTO Marketing and Communications, served as mistress of ceremonies.

TAIPC's Executive Committee consists of: **Freddie C. Fuller, II**, DDOT - Chair; **Gregory Murrill**, FHWA - Vice Chair and Public Sector Representative; **Evelina Félicité-Maurice**, NASA/ AbNet - Secretary and Chair, Industry Education Committee; **Bill Carr**, DDOT - Treasurer and Chair, Resources and Scholarship

Committee; **Oakley Brooks**, Bombardier/Aero Club - Private Sector Representative; **Sarah Brown**, NASA/AbNet - Chair, Public Relations Committee; **Lauren Scott**, WMATA - Chair, Curriculum Development Committee; and **Ramonica D.M. Moore**, COMTO National - Post Secondary Academic Representative.

TransTech Academy was established in 1991 as the first transportation studies academy in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Since that time, TransTech has graduated more than 400 students. Over 85% have been admitted to post-secondary institutions and matriculated at two- and four-year colleges.

In 2005, the Academy was expanded to include an Electro-Mechanical Technology Training Program in collaboration with the District



TransTech Academy students study and train for successful transportation careers.

Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to meet the growing demand for entry-level technical professionals. Students receive technical skills training for

Metrorail, Metrobus and elevator/escalator maintenance jobs while attending school. To date, 21 students have completed the program and there are currently 28 students enrolled. ■

National Office Contact Information

Marketing and
Communications -
(202) 530-0551 ext. 309

National Meeting
& Training Conference -
(202) 530-0551 ext. 303

Membership -
(202) 530-0551 ext. 305

Accounting &
Chapter Financials -
(202) 530-0551 ext. 304

National Calendar
(202) 530-0551 ext. 306

HUB Conference, from p. 2

tion industries from Philadelphia, St. Louis, Washington D.C., Maryland, Boston, Florida, Denver, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Illinois in obtaining access to opportunities, as well as gaining those skills necessary to be more competitive in the contract arena. The intimate setting not only created an environment for in-depth panel discussions, it was the catalyst for a healthy exchange of information and ideas needed to move HUBs forward.

In Virginia opportunities for HUBs are extensive, and COMTO is quickly positioning itself to serve as a conduit to connect those opportunities to qualified HUBs.

"Fostering HUB connections through events like our

HUB Conference will help identify transportation-related and interested agencies, organizations, and large and small businesses that are very serious about engaging HUBs," notes Chapter President Sherrod. "They are out there! This will broaden the chapter's reach throughout the transportation industry and thereby expose HUBs to greater contract opportunities."

Virginia Secretary of Transportation **Pierce Homer's** keynote presentation was another highlight of the conference. The presentation included a valuable question and answer period. The session evoked surprisingly candid responses regarding the agency's reputation in different regions of the state, as well as the importance of global thinking, especially for small businesses.

This HUB conference

provided access and forward thinking information that flushed out growth strategies and opportunities now and for the future for HUB firms in what promises to be a tough but dynamic environment. The added value of this conference was the level of the presenters and the local, regional and national mix of multi-modal transportation participants.

Conference Chair Miles has already suggested upgrades that might make future conferences even more valuable. "I'd consider adding at least another day to the program to allow more networking, and I would like to see more testimonials from successful HUBs as part of the agenda. And, I'd definitely include an actual bid board where attendees could review real contract opportunities." ■

Saving Money by Hiring Drivers?

By Allison Hewitt, Interim Vice-Chair, HART

It seems that at every recent transit industry gathering, a major topic of conversation revolves around the question of how to meet rapidly rising demand with shrinking revenues.



Allison Hewitt

The good news of increased ridership comes directly with the difficult news of the impact of such demand on existing capacity. And the bottom line in all of this is, literally, our bottom line — many of us are looking for ways to cut costs.

Given that context, it might seem like an odd time to ask: “Is your agency fully staffed with drivers?” Before I elaborate, let me provide some background. In Florida, an initiative passed last year dictated rollbacks in the basic property tax rate and a doubling of the homestead exemption.

For an agency that has historically received two-thirds of its operating budget from the property tax, this presented a serious problem. Meanwhile, ridership — growing at seven percent a year for the past four years — turned upward even more sharply in the past six months. Something had to give.

Under the leadership of CEO **David Armijo**, the board of the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) took an aggressive cost-cutting approach rather than cutting needed service. Since the largest slice of our budget is

operator wages and benefits, we looked for ways to lower those costs without cutting either. One such opportunity, and one that might have implications for other transit operators around the country, was to reduce overtime.

HART began by examining the reasons for, and costs of, employee overtime. We were looking for how to manage costs while maintaining as much service as possible. One such factor was high turnover, which had caused the average number of operators to fall below optimum levels.

That resulted in higher levels of scheduled — often mandatory — overtime, which next led to increased absenteeism, which in turn resulted in greater use of “extra board” operators — which again increased overtime payments. Being understaffed was leading HART into a vicious cycle in which trying to save money had just the opposite result.

HART determined that staffing at the full 100 percent level might actually save money, a conclusion that would seem to fly in the face of conventional wisdom. So what did we do to fix it? And did we actually save money by hiring more people?

Two years ago, we held our first on-site job fair, a big change for HART. We received a significant number of applicants, screened them all on the spot, and offered them jobs if they qualified. That was Step One.

David Armijo then instituted Step Two, which was simply the commitment that HART would hire a sufficient number of operators to cover

all shifts, vacations, anticipated illnesses, and scheduling variations.

Full staffing has allowed us to reduce split shifts, virtually eliminate forced overtime, and reduce the number of chargeable incidents. Further, because our bus operators are less stressed, we have received fewer customer complaints.

Did we save money? Yes. Even taking into account additional salaries and benefits, HART projects a savings of approximately \$750,000 in the first year.

As a transit agency board member, what did I learn from this? If you interact with the rank and file of your agency (and I encourage you to do so), you may find that the folks behind the wheel of the bus can often identify problems quite clearly.

Several of our operators had come to me concerned about being forced to work overtime. It was making them unhappy and affecting how they performed their jobs.

Because unhappy employees begat unhappy customers, my role as a board member was to work with agency management and come up with a solution to the problem.

An engaged board of directors, working with a solutions-oriented agency leader, can arrive at innovative approaches to fixing some of the agencies’ problems. Even if it means doing things that may seem contrary — like hiring people to save money. ■

COMTO Chapters Selected to Host Interns for CITY Internship Program

COMTO National along with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is pleased to announce that chapters have been selected to host the 2009 *Careers In Transportation for Youth* (CITY) internship program.

The chapters were selected by a panel of industry representatives from APTA, COMTO, FTA and TransTech Academy of Cardozo High School in Washington, DC.

This year, ten (10) COMTO chapters submitted outstanding bids. All chapter bids displayed team dedication to ensuring that the selected interns would have a professional experience, as well as meaningful exposure to the dynamics of the transportation industry. However, COMTO only receives funding to support three (3) chapters.

The selected chapters will host interns for ten (10) weeks (June 1, 2009 to August 7, 2009). During this time, interns will also travel to Dallas, TX for the 39th National Meeting and Training Conference. The following chapters will host the 2009 lot of CITY interns: **Chicago, Jacksonville and Philadelphia!** ■

COMTO National Meeting Presentation Spawns Partnership Between Cleveland RTA and Maryland MTA

COMTO's 37th National Meeting in Indianapolis featured a presentation by the Cleveland RTA about their TransitStat program, which uses data as



Ralign T. Wells

a means to improve customer satisfaction and to achieve operational excellence. The conference presentation shared, through a case study format, Cleveland's experience in developing TransitStat, the program's successes and some real-world implementation tips.

Cleveland presenters

Floun'say R. Caver, PhD, Loretta Kirk and Richard Newell explained how TransitStat saved the RTA more than \$2.3-million in 2008 and ushered in a renewed culture of excellence within the transit system. The culmination of the presentation was a commitment to share their performance management techniques with other professionals.

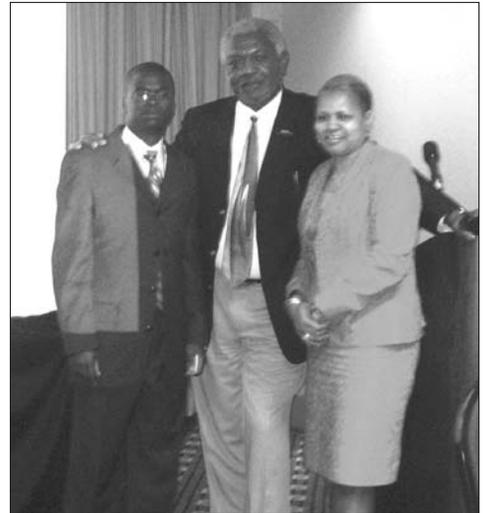
That's where **Ralign T. Wells**, Deputy Administrator of the Transit Operations Division for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) entered the picture.

"I was enthralled by the Cleveland presentation," Wells said. "Interestingly enough, the demographics in

Cleveland are very similar to those of the MTA, and I figured many of the initiatives that Cleveland had introduced could also be successful in Baltimore."

A site visit was set up and Wells led an MTA team to Cleveland to see TransitStat in action. MTA was duly impressed and plans to move quickly on a similar program in Baltimore.

"We intend to develop a similar operations statistics program to aid us in performance improve-



TransitStat Presenters: Dr. Floun'say Caver, Richard Newell, Loretta Kirk

ments within the operations department," Wells noted. "Another initiative we're considering is a revision of our organizational model, similar to that in Cleveland. This model would put our supervision and quality control functions for all of our modes of transportation under one umbrella. This will mean greater efficiency and improved overall service to our customers. It was wonderful to see a successful working model in Cleveland."

Wells is quick to recognize Cleveland RTA and COMTO for their contributions to the MTA plan. "This partnership developed because of COMTO and has clearly put two agencies on track to better serve riders. The ability of both agencies to share failures and successes will only lead to better service for all of our patrons." ■

Tampa Bay Area Transportation Officials Meet to Form New COMTO Chapter; Armijo Coordinates Effort

David J. Armijo, COMTO Board Member and CEO of HART (Hillsborough Area Regional Transit), which serves the greater Tampa area, has spearheaded the formation of COMTO's newest addition — the COMTO Tampa Bay Chapter. More than 40 people attended the recent chapter formation luncheon, sponsored by **Butch Sibley** of the Gillig Corporation.

HART board member **Allison Hewitt** and **Melissa Rolle-Scott**,

COMTO Miami Chapter, also contributed to the program.

During her presentation, Hewitt said there was an incredible opportunity for growth in transit in the Tampa area and that many citizens were discovering the benefits, especially in today's economy. She also said there was considerable opportunity for minority businesses to profit as the need for transit service continues to grow.

Rolle-Scott mentioned the importance of bringing along the next generation of transportation leaders, of transitioning leadership in the industry and of teaching

everyone the value of transportation.

Every local government agency was represented, along with representatives from Congresswoman Kaster's office. The luncheon reached its goal of generating the minimum 10 commitments required to form a local COMTO chapter. A local chapter formation committee was formed and will meet to formalize the local chapter, subject to approval and acceptance by the national COMTO organization. ■

MY STORY

For Rashidi Barnes, Getting into the Transportation Industry Was Like Putting on a Custom-Tailored Suit

As Western Regional Manager for Transit Marketing Group (TransMark), **Rashidi Barnes** makes his living selling products and services to transit systems. But spend a few minutes with this twenty-something former professional athlete and you'll



Rashidi Barnes

find he's a very convincing salesman for something else, too: the transportation industry.

"The transportation industry has allowed me to grow tremendously. Because of my sports background, I understand the importance of hard work and being a team player. And I've dedicated plenty of effort to relationship building since I took this position in 2003. But the people in this industry have been particularly gracious in helping me reach a level of

success that's surprising after just five years on the job."

TransMark, headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, sells and services everything from destination signs and seating to fire detection/suppression systems and video surveillance equipment. In his position with the company, Barnes has traveled extensively and met hundreds of transportation industry professionals.

He's impressed with the willingness of seasoned

industry veterans to help mentor younger colleagues. "So many veterans in this business are progressive thinkers, and they understand the benefit of teaching those of us coming up the ladder. **Dr. Beverly Scott (MARTA), Marilyn Shazor (SORTA), Larry Jackson (LBT), Gil Holmes (IndyGo) and Will Scott (Veolia)** are just a few of those mentors who come to mind. I don't think this kind of support is as openly available in other

Barnes continued on 7



Openings Filled Here

The COMTO Career Center is your online resource for making career connections in the transportation industry. *Employers:* Post jobs and search resumes from an industry-focused talent pool you will not find anywhere else. *Job seekers:* Automate your job search and target employers looking for professionals with your specific qualifications.

Post your opening or resume on the
COMTO CAREER CENTER
<http://careers.comto.org>



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Barnes, from p. 6

industries. Each of these mentors has provided me with tools to help me succeed — and I imagine some of them don't even know what kind of influence they have had on me."

The transportation industry's attention to environmental issues is also impressive to Barnes. "This industry is ahead of the curve when it comes to the environment. If I were to say I had one professional goal, that goal would be to become an integral part of the effort to create a fundamentally sound relationship between transportation and the environment. This industry can be part of the vanguard — we can help introduce "Going Green" into every facet of American life."

Another goal is to encourage more young minorities to become part of this business. "While the looming mass retirement of Baby Boomers across the country will present a challenge for every industry, it will also present a wonderful opportunity to young people — especially young minorities. The transportation industry offers an incredible array of career opportunities, and our recent history with respect to hiring and promoting minorities and women is an enviable one. My only caution is for young people to be careful about limiting themselves. They need to position themselves, through education and hard work, so that they will become absolutely necessary employees. The sky's the limit, that's the way I see it." ■

COMTO USA

Jacksonville Chapter

The Jacksonville Chapter (**James Warren**, President) held its 8th Annual Kids' Toy Drive in December. Several Toy Box Drop Off Locations around the city were set up to collect toys and cash donations. On Friday, December 19, Santa arrived at the Brentwood Lake Apartments to deliver gifts and spread some holiday cheer.

Recently, the chapter also held its 1st Annual Holiday Food Drive to benefit Hubbard House. Ready-made meals, canned food items, cereals and fruit juices were collected for donation. Chapter members reported better-than-expected results from the drive.

New Jersey Chapter

COMTO's New Jersey Chapter (**Lawrence Hamm**, President) held an all-volunteer, nonpartisan voter registration drive before the November elections. The drive was a huge success, with 44 volunteers registering voters during lunch breaks, after work hours and on Saturdays. Through their efforts, 972 people were reg-

istered in just a few weeks.

"This drive was not associated with any political [party or candidate]," said **Ophelia Adderley**, the chapter's Second Vice President. "We registered anyone who was eligible to vote, regardless of their political affiliation."

Chapter President Hamm noted, "We held this drive to give people an opportunity to register so that they could participate in the presidential election and future elections as well."

New York Chapter

Recently, the New York Chapter (**Dwayne Sampson**, President) held its Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet at the Terrace in the Park in Flushing Meadows Park. The event began with a Welcoming Reception honoring the recent appointments of **Joseph J. Smith** as President of MTA Bus and Long Island Bus; **Christopher O. Ward** as Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; and **Tasha Norman** as President of NAWBO-NYC.

Keynote addresses at the Dinner were given by **Reverend A.R. Bernard**, Founder and Pastor of Christian Cultural Center, with a membership of 30,000; and **Thomas P. DiNapoli**, New York State Comptroller.

Northern California Chapter

In December, COMTO's Northern California Chapter (**Lee Davis**, President) awarded \$30,000 in scholarship money to 23 undergraduate college students from a variety of traditionally underrepresented backgrounds at its 5th Annual Holiday Dinner and Dance. The chapter saw a 70% increase in scholarship applications in 2008. Awards are based on a combination of academic achievement, financial need and perseverance.

The gala, held at the Oakland Marriott, also served as a backdrop for honoring **Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr.**, Executive Director of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, with a Special Recognition Award for his outstanding career service, his achievements and his commitment to COMTO.

Washington, DC Chapter

The Washington, DC, COMTO chapter (**Carl Brown**, President) recently held a Chapter Meeting featuring an address by **Gerald Francis**, WMATA COO. Francis discussed the state of the DC Metro system and the transit industry at large. In December, the chapter joined with the Maryland Chapter (**Gregory Brown**, President) to host the 2008 Holiday Dinner Dance at the BWI Marriott Hotel in Linthicum, Maryland. The gala began with cocktails and dinner and concluded with dancing until midnight. ■

New Jersey Chapter volunteers register voters for the presidential election in November.



An Easy Conversation with TCRP Ambassador Antoinette Poinsette

Antoinette Poinsette, Director of Contract Review & Special Projects, NYCT, is a people person. You know the type, always at ease in conversations with anyone they meet. You feel as though they know you the very first time they speak with you. It's a gift that makes her uniquely qualified to serve as a TCRP Ambassador.



Antoinette Poinsette

"My approach in every

industry conversation, no matter how long we speak, is to establish a comfortable give-and-take dialogue. I never fail to learn something important about the other person's agency or area of expertise, and I never fail to mention my involvement with TCRP and what the program means to our industry," she says.

But why would you listen to what Antoinette Poinsette has to say about TCRP... what makes her an expert? "First of all," she explains, "I've had lots of previous experience with TCRP publications. Long before I became an Ambassador, I was aware of

the availability and the benefits of the information TCRP generates. I applied for the program because I was already sold on the power of TCRP and I wanted to share my experiences with colleagues in public transportation who may not be aware of this incredible resource."

"Yes, I actually use the reports," she continues. "The information is practical and the solutions provided can be easily implemented. I enjoy speaking directly with transportation professionals from other agencies and across various disciplines who are amazed to learn that solutions to many of their problems are

readily available through TCRP."

Antoinette is quick to note that the industry has barely tapped into the full potential of TCRP. "This industry is so dynamic. We're faced with new and complex challenges every day, and there's never been a greater need to maintain a continuous flow of information addressing those challenges. In the months and years to come, TCRP can be our salvation... I'm convinced of that. I will continue to spread the word about TCRP, even after my ambassadorship is completed. The program is that good and that important." ■

TCRP Ambassador Program

*Volunteer, Travel, Network...
Spread the News*



We're Looking for Ambassadors!

The TCRP Ambassador Program is a joint effort between the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Transit Research Board (TRB), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), and the Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO). The program's purpose is to develop a cadre of talented industry professionals who will serve as "Ambassadors" to enhance the understanding, acceptance and utilization of TCRP sponsored research products.



What is An Ambassador?

TCRP Ambassadors are selected for their ability to successfully implement research that improves transit operations and service, and motivate and instruct others on how to use the research results or products.

What Does an Ambassador Do?

Ambassadors disseminate important TCRP research with the transit community. Examples include visits to transit properties; presentations; seminars and workshops conducted at transit industry conferences; participation in TCRP events; and interviews with transit-related media.

How Can I Become an Ambassador?

To learn more about the program and to download an application visit:

<http://www.comto.org/news-tcrp.php>

Submit your application or nomination to:

Conference Of Minority Transportation Officials
Attn: TCRP Ambassador Program
818 18th Street NW – Suite 850
Washington, DC 20006

fax (202) 530-0617





Welcome New Members

Arizona

Mr. Patrick F. Leonardi

Atlanta

Mr. Albert Edwards
Ms. Loretta Washington

Boston

Mr. Michael Mulhern

Chicago

Mr. Edward Bryant
Mr. Dorval Carter

Cleveland

Miss Bobbie Barnett
Ms. Anita Lopes

Colorado State

Mr. Ken Szeliga

Dallas

Ms. Brenda Boatwright
Mr. Herbert Miller, Jr.
Ms. Evalynn Williams
Mr. Lucious Williams

Detroit

Mr. Kirk A. Branson, Sr.
Mr. Byron Burbank
Ms. Alicia Hatcher
Ms. Sharon Madison-Polk
Mr. Robert Polk
Mr. Horacio Williams
Ms. Lovevett Williams

Fort Worth

Mrs. Dezzie Dickson
Mr. Ken Hunt
Mr. Inmon Wiley

Hampton Roads

Mr. Jerry W. Clark, Sr.
Ms. Sheila Johnson
Mr. Stanford A. Moore

Houston

Ms. Devin Floyd
Ms. Gold Ozuzu
Paralee Shivers
Mr. Samson Shivers
Mr. Jarrell Simpson
Mr. Damon Tinsley
Mr. Garlin Wynn

Maryland

Mr. Brandon Allen Buckner
Ms. Sandra Clifford
Mr. Ferguise Mayronne
Ms. Richelle Thomas

Miami

Ms. Ruth A. Ellis Myers

New York

Mr. Ephraim Alexander
Ms. Alexis Caceres
Ms. Courtney Grey
Ms. Makeda Marshall

Ms. Shanti McGhee
Ms. Elizabeth Paul
Ms. Cristal Perez
Mr. Dickson Polanco
Ms. Ranelle Roberts
Ms. Jamelle Smith

Northern California

Mr. John Burns

Philadelphia

Ms. Jerica Gerena
Ms. Amber Rowell

Utah

Mr. Steve Goodrich
Mr. Tony Taylor

Washington, DC

Ms. Frances Hooper
Mrs. Linda Washington

Historically Underutilized Business Members

Grant Capital Management, Inc.
Mr. J.P. Grant
President & CEO
Columbia, MD

Hands On LLC
Mr. Patrick Washington
CEO/President
Montgomery Village, MD ■

Did You Know?

- The Underground Railroad was at its height between 1810 and 1850, with over 30,000 people escaping enslavement (mainly to Canada) via the network, though US Census figures only account for 6,000
 - Escaped slaves were referred to as “passengers” or “cargo”
 - Slaves would obtain a “ticket”
 - Financial benefactors of the Railroad were known as “stockholders”
- “Conductors” and “Passengers”/“Cargo” generally of the Underground Railroad typically traveled between 10 and 20 miles to the next “station”
- The most well-known “conductor”, **Harriet Tubman**, made 19 trips into the South and escorted over 300 slaves to freedom
- Many people associated with the Underground Railroad only knew their part of the operation and not of the whole scheme
- Although the escapees sometimes traveled on real railways, the primary means of transportation were on foot or by wagon. ■
- Members of The Underground Railroad often used specific jargon, based on the metaphor of the railway. For example:
 - People who helped slaves find the railroad were “agents” (or “shepherds”)
 - Guides were known as “conductors”
 - Hiding places were “stations”
 - Abolitionists would fix the “tracks”
 - “Stationmasters” hid slaves in their homes

Worth Repeating

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi

38th National Meeting & Training Conference

Conference Host:

- COMTO Dallas Chapter
- Dallas Area Rapid Transit

See you there!



July 10–15, 2009 • Sheraton Dallas • Dallas, TX

COMTO 2009 Calendar of Events

January 2009

Monday, January 19, 2009
National Office Closed
Martin Luther King Day

February 2009

Wednesday, February 4, 2009
Downstate Technical Conference
NY State Department of Transportation; Empire State Development; The Port Authority of NY/NJ
New York, NY
Jacob Javits Convention Center

Monday, February 10, 2009

Small Business Forum
Boston Dept. of Transportation
Boston, MA

Monday, February 10, 2009

Historically Underutilized Business Conference
Raleigh, NC

Monday, February 16, 2009

National Office Closed
Presidents' Day

March 2009

Wednesday, March 4 – Friday, March 6, 2009
COMTO Leadership Team Meetings & Transportation Summit

Wednesday, March 12, 2009

Salute to Women in Transportation Luncheon
DC Chapter Event
JW Marriott
Washington, DC

May 2009

Monday, May 25, 2009
National Office Closed
Memorial Day

July 2009

Friday, July 10 – Wednesday, July 15, 2009
38th National Meeting & Training Conference
Dallas, TX

September 2009

Monday, September 7, 2009
National Office Closed
Labor Day



Marketing Challenge Leads to Best Practice – and Awards

In challenging economic times, marketing and promotions are often the first things to go from a business budget. However, history has proven time and again that when times are tough, you should step up your marketing efforts.

Laketrans, like many other government agencies, is faced with the dilemma about allocating dollars for advertising, marketing, outreach and public relations. In today's fast-paced, customer-focused world, even government agencies have a responsibility to promote their services so that when you need it, you have some information about how the service works.

In 2000 and in 2005, the American Public Transportation Association recognized Laketrans as the Best Small Transit System in America – and for good reason. Laketrans's buses are clean, safe and on-time. Drivers and Customer Service Representatives are friendly and professional. The Board of Trustees is diverse and dedicated to the citizens of Lake County. The administration is very small and each member is exceptional within their field of expertise.

In 2008, Laketrans Board President **Terrell Dillard** proposed a workgroup model that would bring together trustees and senior staff members in their respective areas to develop initiatives that would keep Laketrans on the forefront of being the best in transit service. Workgroups have dealt with debt financing, health and human service policies and communications. Through the workgroup set up, trustees gain an increased understanding of the role the department plays in the success of the system and provide

input on concepts and programs. Senior staff is then given the latitude and autonomy to prioritize and execute the programs.

Does this approach work? Recently, Laketrans was recognized at the annual APEX Awards sponsored by Lake Communicators. The agency's "Go Green. Get on Board." campaign won Best in Show, in addition to gold awards for mixed media and print campaigns. The campaign was an outcome of the communications workgroup to target younger riders and brand

Laketrans with a more contemporary image.

Laketrans's "Go Green. Get on Board." Campaign includes window sign on buses, interior bus signs, print ads, GreenPerks (transit benefits) brochures, a high school new rider promotion and a new resident direct-mail program. The campaign is expected to continue through 2009 with a focus on engaging teenagers, employers and local businesses to promote using public transit for personal, environmental and economic benefits. Marketing initia-



tives include an updated website, community research, training programs for all ages, classroom programs, business presentations and social media usage. ■

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Members On The Move

Luther Diggs, one of our Philadelphia Chapter members, was recently appointed to the position of Assistant



Luther Diggs

General Manager of Operations for SEPTA. SEPTA is the sixth largest transit authority in the United States. Diggs' 26 years of experience in operations, along with his knowledge of the Authority, have ensured a seamless transition.

Long-term COMTO New York Chapter member **Thalia Panton** has



Thalia Panton

been promoted to Assistant Vice President of Workforce Development for the MTA. In this capacity she will continue her focus on the development of our future leaders,

our children. Thalia has worked tirelessly in leading the Student Development Institute to ensure students are provided with mentoring, training, summer internships and guidance so they can one day become the transportation leaders of New York. She also is chairing the committee to design the first COMTO charter school in New York. The school will be designed to train high school students in all facets of transportation.

Paralee Roberson Shivers, M.A., has just published a new business book, *How to Be an Extra-*



Paralee Roberson Shivers

Ordinary Entrepreneur! Shivers says it's the book everyone needs for extraordinary success in the marketplace and includes four key nuggets to increase the

bottom line, tips to help businesses become more competitive and strategies to win more contracts. The book is available at www.pas-communications.com. Shivers plans to donate a portion of the proceeds to the COMTO National Scholarship Fund.

Gardner Tabon recently began new duties as the Safety and Security Manager at the Valley



Gardner Tabon

Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority in Phoenix. Tabon has extensive experience in the field of transportation including 14 years of commuter rail and freight experience with the nation's highest volume commuter carrier, Long Island Rail Road. Most recently, he was with the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority as a System Safety Officer for rail operations. ■



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COMTO Vision Statement

To see the diverse faces of America equally reflected in all levels of the transportation industry – (Resolution adopted May 8, 2007)

COMTO Mission Statement

To ensure a level playing field and maximum participation in the transportation industry for minority individuals, businesses, and communities of color through advocacy, information sharing, training, educational and professional development.

COMTO Core Values

COMTO's core values are embodied in how we conduct business and how we interact with our stakeholders, including our members, customers, partners and supporters. We affirm and are committed to the following core values: Advocacy, Diversity, Excellence, Inclusion, Innovation, Integrity, and Service.



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**Remember These
Other Occasions ...**

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Valentine's Day
President's Day