Greetings! Please allow me to express how humbled I am to serve in the capacity as Chair of one of the greatest state mobility associations in the country. In many occasions the term “greatest” is used very loosely. However, since returning to LYNX more than two years ago I come in contact with many transit officials and vendors from around the country who are envious of the program we have here in the state of Florida.

This referendum can be pinpointed to two people: Brad Miller, our immediate past chairman, and Lisa Bacot, our Executive Director. Much credit has to be shown to our outgoing chair, Mr. Brad Miller. His excellent leadership over the past three years will be very tough to follow. The many accomplishments that were made during his tenure cannot be listed in the short space provided. However, to just mention a few, he guided FPTA through the creation of the Strategic Plan, spearheaded the first planning efforts to hold a Transit Day at the Capitol, and initiated a Transit Leadership Needs Assessment Survey, which has led to the annual Transit Leadership Program that has been developed. His unwavering dedication to increasing the value of mobility nationally and throughout the state of Florida is a trait we should all stand in awe. But, the one task he took on without any hesitation included remaining as Chair an additional year as we adjusted to transitions in

It is with great pleasure to announce that Steve Myers of LeeTran has received the 2018 Florida Public Transportation Association Hall of Fame Award. He is closing out 43 years in the public transit business, the last 18 of which have spent at LeeTran, in Fort Myers, Florida.

Steve Myers is a native of Indiana, raised in a rural area north of Indianapolis. He is a graduate of Indiana University Kelley School of Business with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Finance.

Steve began his public transit career right after college, first as the Controller of a small transit authority in Indiana, where he was later appointed as the General Manager. He was hired by ATE Management & Service Co (currently First Group America), a private transit management company, where he worked for 17 years, taking various assignments in finance, administration, & general management.

Steve moved to Fort Myers, Florida in September 2000 to accept his current position of Transit Director for Lee County Transit. Lee Tran operates 49 peak hour...
Hall of Fame Award (cont. from page 1)

vehicles on 24 fixed routes, ADA paratransit service, and a van pool program. During his 18 years at Lee Tran, Steve focused on infrastructure improvements, including upgraded passenger amenities, replacement of an aging bus fleet, and completion of a new Headquarters facility for Lee Tran.

Steve maintains active participation in the American Public Transportation Association, Small Operations, Bus & Paratransit CEO’s, and Legislative Committees; serves on the Board of the Florida Public Transportation Association, which he chaired in 2008, and is a Board Member for the Florida Transit Association Finance Corporation, which he chaired in 2014/15.

Steve says about his career: “Much has changed in this industry over that time, and the challenges continue to evolve. My colleagues always half-jokingly said that once you got into transit, you couldn’t get out, but the truth is there were always new challenges, and that environment has held my interest.”

Steve plans to stay in the Fort Myers area after his retirement this month, and says he is looking forward to the opportunity to spend more time with his children and grandchildren, as well as his brother and sister, all of whom live out of state.

It is with honor that we present the 2018 Florida Public Transportation Association Hall of Fame to Steve Myers.

From the Chair (cont. from page 1)

our leadership over a year ago. Brad, thank you for your leadership over the past three years and we look forward to your continued dedication.

Also, I want to shine a light on our Executive Director, Ms. Lisa Bacot, who keeps us engaged and puts us in the national spotlight with the amazing conferences we have every year. We all should be thankful for her being well organized, keeps our organization financially solvent and helps to focus our purpose in such a way we do not get misdirected. Lisa, again, thank you to you and your team for all you do each and every day.

Many of you may not be aware, but the Executive Director of the North Carolina Transit Association attended our most recent conference in Daytona. That’s the kind of leadership we have in Ms. Bacot. Other organizations want to see how it’s done in Florida!

Over the next couple of years, we have an opportunity, nay, a mandate to transition our respective agencies from simply being a transit provider into agencies of mobility management. The definition of mobility management is going to be different to many of us, because our community and organizational purposes are different. However, the business model we have followed over the past thirty to forty years will phase out in the very near future. It’s either we change with it, or we become irrelevant. One of our very own, Mr. Nathaniel Ford of Jacksonville Transit Authority, has set the pathway by which we can follow to meet this new paradigm.

Nat’s agenda as the most immediate-past president of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) has already begun laying out a strategic plan that gives us a view of what needs to be done here in Florida. However, the national effort being proposed by APTA cannot be the beginning and the ending of the plan. We have to establish our own strategic plan to address the needs for this new paradigm here locally as well. As we discussed in our last board of directors’ meeting we need to work diligently on enhancing legislation that affects the flexibility of meeting the changing needs of our riding customers. Also, we need to focus on the development of new software solutions that make our operations more nimble and interoperative to allow for efficient and effective use of our service. Lastly, we have to take a fresh look at the vehicle technology we will need going forward. This includes electric and autonomous vehicles. With that being said, I have formed a special committee of leaders within the FPTA from both transit agencies and vendors who can assist us in developing our plan to move into this new paradigm of mobility management.

Of course, there are many other strategic initiatives we will need to work on over the next couple of years. The executive board will be meeting soon to review the strategies so we can bring back to the full board for thought and adoption. So, I will hold fast on pontificating about those at this time.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Holidays. I pray as this year comes to a close that each of your families are filled with cheer and the love that binds us all together shall not be strained but brings us closer together.

Edward L. Johnson
Seniors Resource Association Operating Indian River Transit
Wins 2018 Outstanding Urban System of the Year

Earlier this year Senior Resource Association (SRA) was named the 2018 Outstanding Urban System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America as the best urban system among thousands of other systems across the nation. Karen Deigl, SRA President/CEO and Chris Stephenson, Transportation Mobility Management Director accepted the award on behalf of the organization during the Community Transportation EXPO luncheon in Pittsburgh, PA.

“SRA has provided services and programs to promote an active, healthy and independent lifestyle for older adults in Indian River County since 1974. Providing transportation for everyone, including the transportation-disadvantaged, was an original goal of the organization. To win national recognition for meeting the community’s transportation needs is a tremendous honor for our dedicated staff,” Karen Deigl, SRA President and CEO said.

The organization purchased its first 15-passenger van in 1975. In 1990, SRA was designated the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) by the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) services. The program, now named Community Coach, serves eligible riders with no other means of transportation. Today, they have a fleet of 60 vehicles providing public transportation and TD services throughout Indian River County.

By 1994, SRA again expanded its services by establishing the first and only fixed-route public transportation system in Indian River County. It continues to be one of only a few fixed-route public transit systems in Florida that offers complementary transportation to all riders. In order to differentiate the fixed-route service from their demand-response service and minimize the perception that their transportation services were only for the elderly, Senior Resource Association began operating its fixed-route system under the name of GoLine in 2007.

Last year, Senior Resource Association provided over 1.2 million passenger trips on GoLine and 44,000 passenger trips on Community Coach, delivering residents, tourists, and adults with no other means of transportation to key destinations throughout Indian River County.

Votran Driver ‘Doc’ Wilson Earns National Safety Award

Congratulations to Votran driver Evett “Doc” Wilson, who has been selected as one of the National Safety Council’s Safe Driver Award of Honor recipients for the South Atlantic Region. Wilson has been driving for Votran for 41 years and has remained the model of an exemplary employee who always puts safety first. He has driven more than 3 million miles without a preventable accident, has taken part in several difficult emergency evacuations, and has handled multiple medical emergencies on his bus. Wilson is a former Votran Operator of the Year and placed second in the 2015 Florida Public Transportation Association’s Bus Operator of the Year competition. He chalks up his safe driving record to “a little luck, a little blessing and skill”.

ON THE GO – ‘Doc’ Wilson’s riders consistently rave about his positive attitude.

Advertising Rates and Information

Our next newsletter will be out in June 2019. The newsletter is printed in full color, and past copies may be seen on our website at FloridaTransit.org.

To ensure inclusion we must have final copy no later than May 12th.

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Employees from Broward County Transit (BCT) sprang into action this past summer by collecting donations to provide hundreds of backpacks and school supplies to students in need one week before schools opened in early August.

The employees, known as The BCT Angels, headed by Carla Wells, a maintenance technician and Tinita Brown, a bus operator, organized a half-day event at the Roosevelt Gardens Neighborhood Park in Fort Lauderdale, that featured multiple tables filled with school supplies and backpacks for different ages, food, music and activities for children.

The pair started giving back to their community in 2016 by organizing fundraisers and using their own money to buy supplies. Supporting the community through these types of initiatives, the BCT Angels have been able to provide clothing, food and personal care items to the homeless and families in need.

“We saw a need within our community and we knew we had to do something to help. I remember growing up and my mother not always being able to afford school supplies because we needed the money to put food on our table,” says Wells. “Tinita and I didn’t want kids to have to go without like we did when we were growing up. With the help of other volunteers from BCT, we will continue to do all that we can to help people.”

Broward County Transportation Director Chris Walton applauded the compassion shown by Wells, Brown and the other volunteers, affectionately known as the BCT Angels. “I am so proud of them and the work they do in our community to help others,” says Walton.
The Jacksonville Transportation Authority’s Marcus Dixon Receives Autonomous Vehicle Operator Certification

As part of the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U²C) Program, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) will become the first public transit organization to deploy an autonomous vehicle (AV) on a modified monorail track with future extensions to the ground level. JTA is currently testing a variety of autonomous transit shuttles on the Test and Learn Track located adjacent to Metropolitan Park and parallel to Bay Street.

Recently, JTA’s Marcus Dixon, the Lead Control Center Operator in the Skyway department, became a certified AV Operator. He is the only operator in the U.S. not employed by EasyMile or Transdev that is certified as an AV Operator within the public transportation industry.

Dixon works side by side with a Transdev employee assigned to operate the vehicle. This allows Dixon to learn on another level, which will ultimately prepare JTA to operate a fleet of AVs as part of the U²C Program. This means that JTA will not have to go through the process of hiring someone else for this position.

Before receiving his certification, Dixon went through three days of intensive training. It consisted of learning the different components of the vehicle, operating the Radio Control Unit (RCU) for manual operations, understanding the GPS tracking system and how it works, and manual operations of the AV. All of the instruction prepared Dixon for the oral and practical exams required to receive his certification.

BCT Makes New Route Promotion a ‘Breeze’

Broward County Transit’s (BCT) Operations, Scheduling and Marketing teams are gearing up for the introduction of a new limited-stop express bus service, set to launch in January 2019, that will operate during the rush-hour commute along Broward Boulevard, between Sawgrass Mills Mall and downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The new route, dubbed the Broward Breeze, is the fourth Breeze route that BCT has implemented since 2007. The Breeze routes are meant to maximize service performance by keeping regular bus routes on time, and to help relieve bus routes that are usually overcrowded with customers during peak hours.

Earlier this summer, BCT’s marketing team got a head start on promoting the new Broward Breeze to customers by developing a series of community outreach events, producing branded signage that included A-frame signs, bus placards, digital messages, mounted tabletops, and printed brochures in three languages: English, Spanish and Creole. The new route will officially launch in January 2019. The marketing team engaged hundreds of customers with staged transit information tables at several of the routes major bus stops and transit facilities, such as the Tri-Rail Fort Lauderdale Station, the Broward County Judicial Courthouse, Sawgrass Mills Mall, and the downtown educational centers of Florida Atlantic University and Broward College.

BCT’s Breeze bus routes are some of the best performing bus routes. Customers appreciate Breeze routes because the buses only stop at major intersections, allowing riders to connect to other routes as necessary.

BCT’s marketing outreach team speak with customers about the new Breeze route.
Palm Tran celebrated the launch of its revamped bus system in a unique ribbon-cutting ceremony held September 29, 2018, at the West Palm Beach Intermodal Center. Known as the Route Performance Maximization (RPM) project, the system redesign is the first of its kind for Palm Tran in more than two decades. With the RPM, Palm Tran “revved” up its bus network with more direct and efficient service. To honor the momentous occasion, a bus, instead of scissors, cut through a banner held by Palm Tran staff, riders and local county officials. In attendance were: Vice Mayor Mack Bernard, Commissioner Paulette Burdick, Commissioner Steven L. Abrams, Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes and Palm Beach County Assistant County Administrator Todd Bonlarron.

“The launch of the RPM project is a huge milestone for Palm Tran, and signifies the beginning of the future,” said Palm Tran Executive Director Clinton B. Forbes. “Through identifying inefficiencies in our network, we were able to vastly enhance our system, which will continue to serve the booming population of Palm Beach County!”

The bus system redesign results in improved travel times, more direct service, extended hours for select routes and the buses were equipped with free onboard Wi-Fi. Palm Tran collected more than 1,400 surveys through various outreach events prior to implementing any changes. The Board of County Commissioners approved the final proposal in August 2018, and final preparations by Palm Tran staff were made to ensure the most seamless transition for riders, including more than 70 outreach events.

Palm Tran’s bus service was free from September 30th to October 3rd allowing current riders an opportunity to acclimate to their new routes without cost concerns. During this period, more than 80 staff members set out to bus stops throughout Palm Beach County to help guide riders in the right direction. The ridership during the launch of the RPM project soared with a 21 percent ridership increase on the Sunday of the launch compared to the prior Sunday. Furthermore, the average On-Time Performance (OTP) for the new bus network for the first five days of service sustained an unprecedented 82 percent.

Vice Mayor Mack Bernard congratulated Palm Tran for its ability to revamp its system within the existing budget. “One of the best aspects of Palm Tran’s RPM project is that it required no additional funding. Simply by finding inefficiencies, $5 million was identified to be invested into the Palm Tran system,” Bernard said. “These funds will now be used to provide extended hours for select routes and improve the efficiency of bus routes.”

County Commissioner Paulette Burdick spoke at the ceremony regarding the benefits of riding public transit. She noted the cost savings and environmental benefits. “Palm Beach County residents can save $10,000 by giving up their car and riding public transit. Imagine the home ownership of our residents by putting that money in the bank,” Burdick noted.

“Transit makes sense economically. Riding Palm Tran reduces traffic congestion, takes the headache out of finding a place to park and creates a cleaner environment,” she added. Commissioner Steven L. Abrams also commended Palm Tran on the launch, highlighting the improvements implemented on Route 94 and Route 91. “Route 94 always zigged and zagged and went hither and yon. Now it’s going to be a direct shot to Downtown Boca Raton connecting Florida Atlantic University and the Tri-Rail station!” said Abrams. “Route 91 will have more direct trips to the regional hospital and extended weekend service. It is exciting for us in South County! I’m just so pleased.”

Palm Beach County Assistant County Administrator Todd Bonlarron gave a special shout out to the Palm Tran bus operators who would be behind the wheel at the forefront of the RPM launch. “These are the men and women of Palm Tran who we are going to be relying on to make sure the buses run on-time and are properly run,” Bonlarron said.

In 2017, Palm Tran reported more than nine million rides a year. With these new enhancements, the goal is for Palm Tran’s ridership will skyrocket to more than 10 million. For more information on Palm Tran’s redesigned bus system, visit: www.palmtran.org
MCAT Introduces New Summer ConneXion Bus Pass

On May 22nd, 2018, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners approved the new Summer ConneXion bus pass program. The Summer ConneXion bus pass provides unlimited travel on local bus routes for area youth that are 19 years old or younger. Area youth can utilize the new Summer ConneXion bus pass on all Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT) buses during the months of June, July, and August for $25, and this bus pass is also valid on Route 99 regional buses connecting Manatee and Sarasota County.

The new summer youth bus pass program is designed to improve access to training and summer employment opportunities for area youth, during the summer break months. The Summer ConneXion bus pass program benefits local organizations that assist youth in vocational training and job placement programs. In fact, using the ConneXion Manatee mobile ticketing software application, local agencies or family members can “send a pass” to youth clients, and serve as a transportation sponsor to facilitate work skills training and employment.

Using the mobile ticketing option on a Smartphone, the Summer ConneXion mobile ticket provides a countdown to expiration, and the mobile device displays a unique picture and color that will change daily, and includes the current time. Bus operators are aware of these unique “pictures and colors of the day,” and visually validate mobile tickets when passengers board the bus. In effect, the passenger’s Smartphone is their ticket to ride. There is no added cost when using the Summer ConneXion mobile ticketing option. Sponsoring agencies can also purchase Summer ConneXion card stock bus passes, which are “swiped” at the farebox, rather than paying cash fare.

The Summer ConneXion bus passes provide unlimited bus travel for area youth from June 1st through August 31st. Purchase locations include the Downtown Bradenton and DeSoto Transit Stations, via the Token Transit mobile ticketing Smartphone application, and by mail order. Youth are required to show a valid form of identification when boarding MCAT buses using the Summer ConneXion bus pass.

Not surprisingly, 42% of Summer ConneXion bus pass sales in the summer of 2018 occurred through the mobile ticketing fare option, whereby students use their Smartphone as fare media.

Way to go MCAT!

Senior Skip Day Held in Orlando

A “Senior Skip Day” was held in Orlando during Mobility Week on October 31, 2018 at the Westminster Plaza, an independent living facility for older adults. The event was coordinated by many partners, including the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the Florida Public Transportation Association (FPTA), the Safe Mobility for Life Coalition, LYNX and AARP. The event was held to help educate older adults on the use of public transportation to help them get around their communities. The event also supports Florida’s Aging Road User Strategic Safety Plan.

The Senior Skip Day involved a fun, free, interactive safety event where participants learn directly from representatives from different agencies, as well as local transit providers and other agencies about:

- Transit services that are available in their community
- How to safely navigate streets and buses
- Benefits of public transportation
- Resources to assist in making a future transportation plan

After the presentation, the team took 10 older adults to LYNX and SunRail, then, we ate lunch in Winter Park. Rev. Carmelo Mercado, DMin, ChFC, a Westminster employee, stated, “The day was not only informative; it was so much FUN! Even today, our residents are so grateful for your hugs, and they are still talking about you all!”

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Prevost, a member of Volvo Group, is very proud to announce the opening of its new service center in Orlando, Florida. With this addition, the company’s Parts & Service Network is growing again after the opening of four new service centers in North America last year. With now 15 service locations, Prevost strengthens its network, already unmatched in the industry. In addition, the service network is supported by more than 190 bus certified Volvo Truck locations.

The Orlando service center, which opened for business at the end of August, supports local economy as it required investments of $6 million and plans to hire up to 50 employees. It is a full-service facility and staffed by technicians who are factory trained to work on Prevost, Nova Bus and Volvo motorcoaches, as well as other motorcoach brands.

“The efforts and investments we make in continually expanding our network of service centers reflect the importance the Volvo Group places on our American customer base,” said Håkan Agnevall, President of Volvo Buses. “We aim not only to satisfy our customers by providing quality, reliable and sustainable coaches, but also by providing better access to the best services”.

“The opening of this service center is a new demonstration of our commitment to get closer to our customers, meet their needs efficiently and better serve them,” said François Tremblay, Vice President and General Manager for Prevost. “The Orlando location brings the total of Prevost owned and operated service centers to 15, nearly double the size of the largest competitor network in the North American Market”.

“Our goal is to ensure that our customers have access to our services easily. Thus, by growing the number of service centers and combining them with our fleet of mobile vans, we’re offering to our customers more options, more accessibility and more flexibility,” added Randy Castillo, Services Network Director for Prevost.

“As Mayor of Winter Garden, it is with great enthusiasm that I welcome the opening of the Prevost Service Center here in Winter Garden. I am delighted that we’re able to attract investment from companies of this importance. I’m sure this facilitates continued economic development and demonstrates a true commitment to job creation in our community,” said John Rees.

“The Florida Public Transportation Association is extremely excited that Prevost is opening this new facility in our state. Florida is one of the fastest growing states in the country, and we have to keep our infrastructure growing at a similar pace. By opening this new service center, we believe Prevost will be a key player in ensuring that the transportation services being provided today can meet the increased future demand,” said Lisa M. Bacot, Executive Director of the Florida Public Transportation Association.

Paul Okumu is a true community hero, having put himself in harm’s way to prevent a sexual assault on the Votran bus he was driving on July 20, 2018. With no thought for his own safety, he physically restrained a violent passenger who was attempting to assault a woman and held the assailant until police arrived. It is truly remarkable that the cool, calm and fast-thinking Mr. Okumu single-handedly prevented a violent crime. Mr. Okumu is a Port Orange resident and active in his community. Mr. Okumu joined Votran’s team as a professional fixed-route bus operator in 2017 and has earned praise from passengers and coworkers for his humble and kind demeanor. Volusia County Council will be honoring him in September for his courageous actions and dedication to providing outstanding service to Votran clients. He recently received a Certificate of Appreciation from the City of Ponce Inlet where the crime occurred.
Please congratulate Omar De Leon, of Collier Area Transit, in Naples, Florida, on his recent promotion to Transit Manager for CAT. Omar brings a wealth of knowledge in his 13 years of transit industry experience, previously working for private providers in various positions and then transitioning to local county government, where he has held the role of CAT’s Senior Planner, since 2015. Good Luck Omar!

LYNX Names First Chief Innovation Officer

The Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (LYNX) continues its commitment to improve mobility and accessibility through enhanced innovation and technology.

The agency recently appointed William “John” Slot to the position of chief innovation officer. The creation of this new role is part of the agency’s effort in growing new technological solutions and develop programs helping the agency to operate more efficiently.

Slot joins LYNX with more than 25 years of experience as a business and information technology executive after serving as the chief information officer at Valencia College and serving in several leadership roles in the consulting world. He brings vast experience in implementing new technologies and has a keen sense of information technology systems.

Groundbreaking for New Pasco County (PCPT) Fleet & Transit Facility

Pasco County Public Transportation (PCPT) held a groundbreaking ceremony on August 22, 2018 for Pasco’s new east-side Fleet and Transit Facility. The new facility will be located at 10000 McKendree Road, San Antonio, Florida in the vicinity of I75 and State Road 52. Once established, the facility will provide administrative/operational amenities, such as, supervisory and administrative office space, training rooms, a breakroom, restrooms, and all the necessary features to serve east Pasco Fleet and Transit operations.

Over recent years and with the recent population influx, Pasco County has outgrown the current facility and is in critical need of a new one. The new facility will accommodate the number and types of buses and vehicles, the rising demand for maintenance, and the growth experienced by the Transportation and Maintenance departments. The state-of-the-art project includes a federally-funded bus wash, as well as refueling station for buses and other County vehicles, Fleet/Bus Maintenance Garage, and a Six (6) Bay Maintenance Facility that is capable of servicing the current and rapidly growing Pasco County vehicle fleet.

PCPT’s ultimate goal is to meet the service needs of our Citizens and Pasco County. Currently, there is no localized facility encompassing the equipment that enables the ability to perform the heavy-duty operations of the newly designed bus maintenance facility. PCPT projects the modernly new facility to be a stand-alone complex with up-to-date technology to meet or exceed environmental requirements. The location of the new facility is significant to the regional connectivity area it will serve. The facility and its components are key factors that provide the necessary equipment and bus transportation for evacuations and refueling of county vehicles in emergency situations/activations.

Penny for Pasco and grant funding from Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are providing the necessary financial support for the project.

Edward Johnson Named To APTA Board Of Directors

Edward L Johnson, chief executive officer, of the Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (LYNX) has been named to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) board of directors. He is honored to be amongst industry leaders as national policy is set for the coming years. Edward will serve a three-year term on the APTA board.

CAT Appoints New Transit Manager

Please congratulate Omar De Leon, of Collier Area Transit, in Naples, Florida, on his recent promotion to Transit Manager for CAT. Omar brings a wealth of knowledge in his 13 years of transit industry experience, previously working for private providers in various positions and then transitioning to local county government, where he has held the role of CAT’s Senior Planner, since 2015. Good Luck Omar!
Kenyatta Lee, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Interim Chief of Staff of the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) is a finalist for the 2018 Tampa Bay Business Journal's (TBBJ) BusinessWoman of the Year awards. Ms. Lee was recognized not only for her business success but her passion and drive to improve the public transit industry.

The annual award distinguishes the exemplary business women within their respective industries who have made a tremendous impact on our community. The award, in its 14th year of existence, celebrates the achievements of women by highlighting their successes in business throughout the Tampa Bay area. Honorees were selected from more than 300 nominations.

"I'm very honored and humbled to be a finalist for the 2018 Tampa Bay Business Journal BusinessWoman of the year award," said Lee. "HART is committed to innovation that offers mobility solutions to our transit customers and the community at large. All twenty-seven finalists are winners."

Over the course of more than 20 years, Lee's career has included many high-profile leadership positions throughout various industries. A results-oriented leader, Lee has an unbeaten track record at strengthening organizations through process improvement and implementing inventive methods to achieve organizational strategic goals and objectives. Ms. Lee is also a 2015 graduate of Leadership APTA, a competitive professional development program for transportation leaders sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). She is a member of the Society of Human Resource Management, Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, American Public Transportation Association and Women in Transportation Seminar. Lee's positive influence is known industry-wide, and her dedication to developing others through mentoring epitomizes the HART spirit of supporting and inspiring other women.

"Ms. Lee is passionate about the public transportation profession and recognizes the importance of transportation as an economic engine and a critical element of our country's quality of life," said HART Board Chair Commissioner Lesley "Les" Miller. "This recognition is well deserved, and we are fortunate to have Ms. Lee, a proven leader and dedicated HART employee, as our CAO and Interim Chief of Staff. The nomination is another testament to the hard work of HART staff, the Board of Directors, and the entire HART family, as we are always working together to provide the exceptional transit service this community deserves."

The TBBJ celebrated all the honorees at a gala August 17, 2018, at The Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina.

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Citrus Connection Spreads Good News

When one of Citrus Connection’s partners excels, we all get to celebrate. When Polk County Public Schools received news from the State Department of Education that the district received a “B” grade, it was time to spread the word and celebrate.

Citrus Connection and the Polk County Schools partnered to wrap a bus to brag about the district’s grade increase, which is the first “B” grade in eight years.

The Citrus Connection bus bears the school district’s new student-designed brand and the announcement, “We’re a B District for the First Time in Eight Years.” The custom graphics on the bus were possible through the generosity of sponsors Citrus Connection, ImageDepot Express, Southern Graphic Designs and Tinsley Creative.

A special celebration took place at Mulberry High School, one of the schools that made the biggest jump in its school grade, improving from a D to a B. Also on hand were several principals from schools that improved their own grades last year.

Citrus Connection Executive Tom Phillips praised the district for its accomplishment and expressed his pride on the continuing mutual partnership that provides free transit service to all public high school students.

“We couldn’t be more proud of the school district for all the work they put in to make this improvement to the education of the children of Polk County,” Phillips said. “This bus will serve as a rolling billboard celebrating the achievements of everyone who made this possible. We are honored to partner with them.”

Polk Public Schools Superintendent Jacqueline Byrd was the keynote speaker expressing her pride in the students, faculty and staff that helped make the improvement possible. She also spent time after the event in the driver’s seat of the bus to pose for photos.
The South Florida Regional Transportation Authority is partnering with regional 211 helpline & crisis lines to get a life-saving message out on signs displayed along the southern rail corridor - signs that read “IN CRISIS OR DEPRESSED? DIAL 2-1-1” “HELP IS HERE FOR YOU 24 HOURS A DAY! LIFE IS WORTH LIVING!”

The SFRTA & 211 hope to have a positive impact in suicide prevention efforts by placing these signs throughout the service area as well as in the stations.

It has been recently reported that in the United States, suicide rates have increased by 25% and with the recent series of celebrity suicides, it has become evermore important to spread the message that help is available to those struggling with suicidal thoughts.

“Every day the staff at 211 help people in crisis, with compassion and concern,” said President/CEO of the 211 HelpLine in Palm Beach County, Sharon L’Herrou. “We know we have the ability to save a person’s life, they just have to first know we exist. We are grateful to the SFRTA for seeing this as a critical need and allowing us to work together to combat the epidemic that is suicide.”

To add to the complexity of these tragic and preventable situations, a high percentage of the people involved in incidents involving the death of people on the tracks experience some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“We are grateful to have 211 as a partner in our efforts to mitigate the increasing incidents of suicides on the South Florida Rail Corridor. We want anyone who considers this action as their only recourse to whatever is going on in their lives to be aware that there are alternatives and that help is available if they reach out for it," said SFRTA Executive Director Jack Stephens.

Crisis intervention can be reached 24/7 by dialing 2-1-1, texting your concerns and zip code to 898-211 or also through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) which is answered in this region by 211 staff.

Specialty Vehicles is pleased to have recently become a member of the Florida Public Transportation Association. With trolleys in over 25 cities in Florida, and more on the way, we are excited to engage with all of the cities and transit agencies throughout the state.

Our low floor trolley is our most recent addition to our line of vintage trolleys and will be on display at the upcoming Florida Public Transportation Association meeting in October. Manufactured by ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, which is now owned by New Flyer Industries, the Spirit of America is the only low floor chassis built by Freightliner that does not have any aftermarket modifications. It offers Thermo King Roof Top Air conditioners, exterior rivet and corrosion free laminate construction, interior corrosion-proof brass and many other maintenance items carefully considered in the construction of this vehicle.

Specialty Vehicles has also recently added our Mini Trolley for Non-CDL applications. With a total capacity of 14 or less, this trolley offers small community transportation and is perfect for rural operators to offer the nostalgic trolley feel without breaking the bank.

Our standard American Heritage trolley still offers the most versatile floorplans and capacities without any of the vintage theming being spared.

Our trams also transport many passengers throughout the cities and attractions in Florida. We offer several types of trams, both street legal and off highway, including the Chance Rides Tramstar and Sunliner II models, the Advance Green METRO Tram, Diversified Golf Cars’ various lines of passenger trailers and two different types of small electric vehicles. SVI recently was awarded the Ft. Lauderdale bid for two sets of METRO power cars and trailers which will be delivered in 2019 and work within the city’s transit department.

Specialty Vehicles focuses on working with its customers to build trolleys and trams to the exact specifications for each customer’s particular application. Whether it’s a zoo, botanical garden, a university or a city’s public transportation, SVI can assist with your transportation needs.
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