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METRO RTA  
416 Kenmore Boulevard  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*METRO RTA team members recognized with state-level awards, announce federal grant funding during awards ceremony.*

On October 29, 2020, METRO Regional Transit Authority and three of its team members were recognized with state-level awards from the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA) during an awards ceremony at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center.

The OPTA Excellence Award winners are:

- Valerie Shea, Director of Planning and Strategic Development; Four Under Forty Award recognizing Shea's achievements in transit and leadership within the community.
- Operators Sandra Guess and Amanda Jones; Community Impact Award for helping a lost child reunite with their family in January 2019.
- METRO RTA; Milestone Award for celebrating 50 years on the road, with 100 years of experience, in August 2019.

“On behalf of METRO’s Board of Trustees, congratulations to the award winners for a well-deserved recognition,” said METRO Board President Robert DeJournett. “We are so proud of the team for their hard work and commitment to the community.”

During the ceremony, METRO also announced a \$450,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration’s HOPE Program. METRO is one of 25 recipients to be awarded this competitive grant.

The HOPE (Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone) Program targets projects with potential to introduce innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by areas of persistent poverty. METRO, in partnership with the City of Akron, will utilize this planning grant to evaluate the feasibility of transit-oriented development within the city to leverage existing transit investment and create job and housing opportunities.

Over the course of 12-18 months, METRO and the City of Akron will work closely with a consultant team to conduct a study of potential development opportunities of underutilized publicly-owned or vacant properties within the city and with access to frequent transit service.

“Inclusivity is a vital component of public transportation, and this grant will help us support the City of Akron and other partners’ efforts to revitalize areas of persistent poverty, creating opportunity within,” said Distler. “It will allow us to identify and assess underutilized, publicly-owned or vacant

properties with a goal of pursuing projects that benefit our community. In addition, this grant aligns with our Strategic Plan as we look to foster partnerships that enhance access to opportunity in Summit County.”

“Local transportation networks play a vital role in supporting our economic vitality,” said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan. “This planning grant will help us identify areas of need and potential development opportunities. Ultimately, the aim is to improve residents’ access to jobs and vital community services by increasing transit reliability and service to areas of greatest need within our City. We're excited to partner with METRO RTA on this study and future development.”

For more information about the OPTA Excellence Awards, visit [www.ohioneedstransit.org/awards](http://www.ohioneedstransit.org/awards). Read more about the HOPE Program at [www.transit.dot.gov/HOPE](http://www.transit.dot.gov/HOPE).

METRO RTA is the public transportation provider in Summit County. METRO enhances the quality of life for our community by providing innovative transportation solutions that are safe, dependable, cost-effective and customer focused, now and into the future.

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