

Best of the



2025

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH

MOBILITY MANAGER MINI-CONFERENCE

Direct invite only via ODOT. Lunch provided.

9:00AM-3:00 PM, Hopkins Room, Lobby Level, 401 Hilton Tower

CONQUERING YOUR QUESTIONS

Join industry experts to discuss a variety of topics including: DBE (Federal Updates), 2 CRF 200, 5311 Invoice Overview and OIG Investigations

10:00AM-12:30 PM, Emerson Burkhardt A, Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

Please note, you must pre-register for this session [here](#).

PROCUREMENT TRAINING SESSION sponsored by NEORide

Join NTI Instructor Margaret Mahoff to address the challenges faced by Ohio's small urban systems, while also offering broader insights useful to rural and larger agencies.

1:00-3:00PM, Emerson Burkhardt B, Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

Please note, you must pre-register for this session [here](#).

SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

Join Assistant Chief Fire Investigator and Hazmat Technician Instructor, Doug Hobson, to discuss how situational awareness can save you from dangerous items and scenarios found in public transit.

1:00-3:00PM, Emerson Burkhardt A, Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

OPTA BOARD MEETING AND 2026 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

All conference attendees are encouraged to join the quarterly board meeting.

4:00-4:45 PM, Emerson Burkhardt A, Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

WELCOME RECEPTION AT PINS MECHANICAL

All conference attendees and vendors are welcome to join the fun and enjoy an evening of complimentary food, drinks and games (no badge needed).

5:00-7:00 PM, Pins Mechanical, 141 N. 4th St., Columbus, OH 43215

A complimentary shuttle will be provided from the Hilton Downtown Columbus. Attendees are also able to drive and park on-site at Parking Lot 403 (corner of N. 3rd St. and E. Spring St.), compliments of OPTA.



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CONFERENCE SESSIONS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH MORNING

THE HUMAN EDGE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS & GRIT IN AN AI DRIVEN WORLD

Opening breakfast with Dr. Andrea Mata

8:30AM-9:30 AM George Bellows Ballroom, Lobby Level, 401 Hilton Tower

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS (9:40AM-10:40AM) Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

CONFIDENT TEAMS, EMPOWERED STAFF: REDUCING DEPENDENCE ON LEADERSHIP

by Celia King, Arrants McSwain Leadership Development

Emerson Burkhardt Room B

FOOD IS MEDICINE: MOBILITY PROJECT IN COAL COUNTY OKLAHOMA *by Todd O'Neal,*

South Central Mobility Navigator

Emerson Burkhardt Room A

REGULATORY UPDATES & HEIGHTENED AREAS OF EMPHASIS WITH IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL TRANSIT AGENCIES *by Robbie Sarles, RLS & Associates*

George Bellows F

CDL EXAMINER PILOT PROGRAM *by Charles Morrow, COTA & Kip King and Amanda*

Whittington, BMV

George Bellows E

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS (10:50AM-11:50AM) Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

PLANNING FOR TRANSIT GROWTH: TOOLS, TIPS & TRENDS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE DECADE *by Josh Sikich, GFT (Gannett Fleming TranSystems) & Steve Anderson,*

Cincinnati Metro & Maribeth Feke, GCRTA & Andy Volenik, DCTA & Elliott Doza, COTA

George Bellows E

TELL ONE STORY: ALIGNING MARKETING STRATEGY WITH GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ADVOCACY FOR GREATER IMPACT *by Sam Melden and Kwinlyn Tyler, TARTA*

Emerson Burkhardt Room A

REVERSING THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS *by Dr. Andrea Mata, BrightSpot Families*

George Bellows F

FROM SEAT AT THE TABLE TO STRATEGIC MOVEMENT: WHAT EVERY BOARD

MEMBER NEEDS TO KNOW *by Celia King, Arrants McSwain Leadership Development*

Emerson Burkhardt Room B



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CONFERENCE SESSIONS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH AFTERNOON

OPTA 2025 EXCELLENCE AWARDS LUNCHEON

A plated lunch celebrating the best of public transit employees

12:00PM-1:30 PM George Bellows Ballroom, Lobby Level, 401 Hilton Tower

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS (1:40PM-2:40PM) Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

DIFFERENT VIEWS, SHARED TRANSIT ROUTES: FINDING COMMON TRANSIT GROUND

George Bellows E

BUILDING A USDOT-COMPLIANT DRUG & ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY by Sean Oswald,
RLS & Associates

Emerson Burkhart Room A

**MICROTRANSIT 2.0: INTEGRATING MICROTRANSIT TO INCREASE COVERAGE & DRIVE
RIDERSHIP ACROSS FIXED ROUTE NETWORKS** by Elliott Doza, COTA

George Bellows F

BUILDING A BOARD THAT WORKS: CULTURE, CONNECTION AND COMMITMENT

by Celia King, Arrants McSwain Leadership Development

Emerson Burkhart Room B

EXPO & MICROSESSIONS (2:00-5:00PM) Expo Hall B, Greater Columbus
Convention Center (connected to the Hilton)

*Explore one of the largest expos in the country with over 70 vendors and 20 vehicles.
Enjoy complimentary snacks and drinks while interacting with vendors.*

**CHOOSING THE PERFECT RIDE: EXPERT ADVICE FOR SELECTING THE RIGHT ACCESSIBLE
VEHICLES** by Driverge

Expo Hall B- Midwest Bus Stop 2:30-3:00PM

WHY TRANSIT FLEETS CHOOSE PROPANE FUEL by Ohio Propane Gas Association

Expo Hall B - Buckeye Bus Stop 3:00-3:30PM

GREATER DAYTON RTA DIGITAL BOARDS-INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS by Cara Wood,
Senior Graphic Designer

Expo Hall B - Midwest Bus Stop 3:15- 3:45PM

CAN RURAL ON-DEMAND MICROTRANST SOLVE RURAL ACCESSIBILITY by Alana
McKeeman AICP of Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

Expo Hall B - Buckeye Bus Stop 3:45-4:15PM

WORKING WITH ODOT ON BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECTS by ODOT Staff

Expo Hall B - Midwest Bus Stop 4:00-4:30PM



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CONFERENCE SESSIONS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST

OPTA COMMITTEE MEETINGS (9:00AM-9:45AM) Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

MARKETING George Bellows A

PLANNING George Bellows B

OPERATIONS George Bellows E

FINANCE George Bellows F

LEGISLATIVE TBD

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT TO A BETTER MEMORY

Closing Brunch with Paul Mellor

(10:00AM-11:00AM) George Bellows Ballroom, Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS (11:10AM-12:00PM), Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

DRIVING RESULTS: HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING & RETAINING BUS

OPERATORS by Dr. Lee Gibson, TARTA

George Bellows A

THE ENERGY BUS: 10 RULES FOR THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE by Kristie Winchester, Central

Oklahoma Mobility Manager

George Bellows B

AUTHENTIC VOICES SPOKESPERSON TRAINING by Melanie Wilt, Shiftology Communication

George Bellows F

WORKFORCE MOBILITY: EARLY LESSONS & STRATEGIES by Kali Sawaya and Rick Bailey,

TARTA & Sam Wright Nelson/Nygaard, & Tim Bergeman, GLCAP

George Bellows E

Conference Closes

Grab and go snack options available

See you in 2026!

