

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. 4<sup>th</sup> 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. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

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**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*

*George Bellows E*

**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*

*Emerson Burkhardt Room B*

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**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

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**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

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**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-10:00AM) Lower Level, 401 Hilton Tower

**MARKETING** George Bellows A

**LEGISLATIVE** George Bellows B

**OPERATIONS** George Bellows E

**FINANCE** George Bellows F

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### 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

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**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 E

**WORKFORCE MOBILITY: EARLY LESSONS & STRATEGIES** by Kali Sawaya and Sam Melden, TARTA & Sam Wright Nelson/Nygaard, & Tim Bergeman, GLCAP

George Bellows F

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## Conference Closes

*Grab and go snack options available*

*See you in 2026!*

