

# Congratulations

## 2022 MISSOURI RURAL TRANSIT OPERATOR CHAMPIONS





## NEED TRAINING?

Call our office to schedule training for your agency at 573.341.6155.

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*The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) was initiated in 1986 by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to provide resources, training and technical assistance to rural transit providers. The Missouri RTAP Center is located at Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T) in Rolla. Since April 2012, Missouri S&T has been contracted by MoDOT to manage the RTAP program.*



National RTAP is a program of the Federal Transit Administration dedicated to creating rural transit solutions through technical assistance, partner collaboration and FREE training.

# LETTER FROM THE MANAGER



Heath Pickerill  
Missouri RTAP Manager

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### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Missouri University of Science  
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### THE FINE PRINT

Missouri RTAP quarterly eNewsletter is published by the Missouri RTAP office located on the campus of Missouri University of Science and Technology. The opinions, findings, and recommendations expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Missouri S&T, MoDOT or the Federal Transit Administration.

## DEAR TRANSIT FRIENDS,

Season's Greetings from the entire Missouri RTAP staff. I am happy to report we were selected under the recent request for proposals to continue providing Missouri's RTAP services. We appreciate being able to continue supporting and training our state's rural transit agencies. On a sad note, we were devastated to hear about the passing of Laura Oldham with Ripley County Transit. We are deeply saddened by the news. She was a friend and strong supporter of Missouri RTAP. She will be missed by so many. We wish her family, friends, colleagues, and all who knew her strength during this difficult time.

As the year draws to a close, all of us with Missouri RTAP have begun planning for next year. Remember we are here to assist in any manner possible. Please send your 2023 training requests to Doreen if you have not done so already. Additionally, John Rice has been busy updating courses with new videos and reviewing course content. In addition, he is attending two train-the-trainer classes in late December and will begin teaching both in January. Assault Awareness & Prevention for Transit Operators provides bus operators the knowledge necessary to develop skills on various prevention methods to reduce the likelihood of assault incidents during revenue service. The class will define assault, discuss the types of incidents that could be considered assault, and help operators recognize key vulnerability factors. Prevention strategies, focusing on communication and response skills as well as the value of reporting incidents, will also be covered. Violence in the Transit Workplace focuses on three areas: preventing, responding to, and recovering from workplace violence. Prevention methods include implementing system and personal security measures, recognizing and reporting the warning signs of potentially violent behavior, and using effective interpersonal skills. Response strategies focus on self-preservation and accurate reporting while recovery steps address the stress associated workplace violence and what to do to address its impacts.

The entire RTAP staff hope you, your employees, and families continue to stay safe and healthy. Everyone with Missouri RTAP wants to wish all our transit friends a very safe and happy holiday season. The semester is quickly wrapping up and the campus will soon be quiet. We are looking forward to our time away during the Holiday Break when campus closes from Christmas to New Years. Please keep in mind our office closure during this time when sending scholarship reimbursements or contacting Doreen with training requests.

Happy Holidays!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heath Pickerill". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Heath Pickerill,  
Missouri RTAP Manager



Happy  
Holidays





# OATS TRANSIT WEST REGION DRIVING ACADEMY HELD ON OCTOBER 22, 2022

## OATS TRANSIT'S SAFE DRIVING ACADEMY IS AN ANNUAL TRAINING PROGRAM THAT ALL DRIVERS GO THROUGH.

It is designed with evidence-based practices within our transportation industry, and with the collaboration of the OATS Transit drivers. The program includes OATS Transit policies and procedures relating to driving and targets our collision/accident trends. The program allows OATS Transit to specially design and implement our driving training, targeting common challenges.

*FOR EXAMPLE: OUR SKILLS SIMULATION  
COURSE IS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS AND  
IMPROVE OUR TOP FIVE ACCIDENT/  
COLLISION TYPES WITHIN OUR COMPANY.*



# MPTA HONORS TRANSIT OPERATOR CHAMPIONS FROM AROUND MISSOURI AT 2022 ANNUAL MEETING

**The Missouri Public Transit Association honored operators from across Missouri at the 2022 Annual Meeting as a part of the Missouri Transit Conference and Expo held in Springfield, MO this year.**

Operators were nominated by their respective agencies for going above and beyond the call of duty especially during the last two years. The 2022 Missouri Transit Operator Wall of Fame included the following Missouri rural transit personnel:



## **Scott Gaines, SERVE, Inc.**

Richard "Scott" Gaines shows his dedication to not only his job as a bus driver for SERVE, but also as an outstanding member in the community. Mr. Gaines is a constant reminder of compassion for our most vulnerable members in our county.

Besides his daily route for our special needs residents going to day programs, Scott is also a full-time employee for the School for the Deaf working with students.

Mr. Gaines also volunteers as a mentor at Fulton public schools to our teenage community. His passion is making a difference in young people's lives that need it the most. He believes that his volunteering will help our community show progress for the future. He makes a difference in many people's lives and Callaway County is blessed to have such a caring and compassionate person who does not hesitate to be there for anyone. His dedication to everyone around him is an example that we all should take notice of. As his supervisor for the past two and a half years, his drive for community betterment and the selfless acts that he performs on a daily basis is one that I will never grow tired of. This is just a few examples of what he does during the year and believe this is why he should be considered as an outstanding operator.

## **Rick Sitzes, SMTS, Inc.**

Rick Sitzes has been a driver for SMTS for 11 years. During his time with our company, he has proved to be a dependable and dedicated employee. However, the attention he gives our riders is what makes him an outstanding operator. He is eager to greet each rider and make sure that their trip on our bus is exceptional. Riders often request to have Rick as their driver. He is a great example to our other drivers. Carrying in groceries, assisting riders to the door - he really does it all!



## **Rita "Dianne" White, SMTS, Inc.**

Dianne White has been with SMTS for a little over 10 years. She acts as her own coordinator directly working with riders to make sure they get on the bus to get groceries, to their doctor's appointments, or whatever their need is. Mrs. White also leaves her house before 5 am, 3 days a week, to ensure riders in Reynolds County get to dialysis for their life-saving treatment. Dianne never complains when requested to do an additional task. You will often find Dianne with a Coca-Cola and a story to tell about how great her riders are.



## **Frankie Hedges, OATS Transit East Region**

Frankie has been an OATS driver for a little over 14 years. She comes in every day ready and willing to do whatever needs to be done. She rarely complains and keeps her schedule flexible to help support our clients however she can. Recently she had some personal time off scheduled, but we were very short staffed that day and she voluntarily rescheduled her appointments just to ensure our routes had coverage. She strives to do her





job well and without any mistakes. Frankie loves our clients, and our clients & families love her – she cares, and it shows.



#### **Sharon Bradford, SMTS, Inc.**

Sharon Bradford has worked for SMTS for nearly 9 years. Often leaving her house at 3 am to provide transportation service for the dialysis clients of Phelps County 6 days a week. Sharon's ability to interact with her fellow drivers to offer a helping

hand when they get behind is like none other. While you might not catch a smile on Sharon's face often, there is no question that she loves her job with SMTS. Even when Sharon has a trying day, she never fails to put the needs of her riders first!



#### **Donald "Joe" Bradshaw, SMTS, Inc.**

Joe Bradshaw started with our company 5 years ago. Joe wanted to fill his newfound time after retirement by giving back to his community. Joe has embraced the job's challenging moments and relishes them in the easy days. Joe is always willing to

help when short-staffed regardless of the start time that day. Joe has volunteered to help with projects in the community that spot SMTS and the services we provide. Joe is a friend to every rider and driver alike!



#### **Gerry McCloud, SMTS, Inc.**

Gerry McCloud is truly an example of what SMTS looks for when hiring employees. Gerry has been with SMTS for over 6 years. Gerry has done it all for SMTS. That includes early morning trips, helping answer the phone and schedule trips, and training numerous

other employees. You will never find Gerry without a smile on his face and a story to tell about one of his grandkids! Gerry is first in line to help riders with their groceries or pick up an extra shift. He is definitely an all-around great guy!

#### **Jerry Williams, SMTS, Inc.**

Jerry Williams has been an employee for over 4 years. While Jerry's title is operator, he is so much more. Jerry assists with vehicle issues and makes sure the preventive maintenance is handled for his whole county. He also acts as our driver trainer for all new operators. Jerry is often the rider's favorite driver after the very first trip on the bus. Jerry is willing to go above and beyond for SMTS including starting his shift at all hours of the day.



#### **Sandra Schultz, OATS Transit, Southwest Region**

Sandy Shultz is an exceptional employee and a human being of rare quality – so very caring and compassionate for others! She has been a driver, team leader, and driver trainer with OATS Transit for 12 years! Just a few of her recent above & beyond accomplishments are as follows:



- Excels at engaging with and motivating others to get involved, and to go above and beyond.
- Orchestrated a lakeside picnic for local sheltered workshop riders where they all played basketball and enjoyed a well-deserved social event outside of their norm.
- Assembled care packages with hygiene items and games for a group of disabled riders.
- Picks up prescriptions and delivers meals for several people when they are unable to do for themselves.
- Orchestrated dinner for a long-time rider who had been feeling very down. Arranged a cake and attendance by the rider's friends.
- Encourages her family involvement too! Her daughter gave a flat screen television, including delivery and setup, to a rider in need.
- Consistently ensures riders receive Get Well and We Miss You cards when they are unable to ride.
- Visits numerous who are hospitalized, and others who have entered into long-term care.

In Sandy's words, "...one of the best things about my job is being able to meet people who truly need this kind of help, and I'd never have known them otherwise. The most difficult part for all of us, is losing them."

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HIT A DEER WITH YOUR VEHICLE IN MISSOURI

MISSOURI RANKS 14TH IN THE COUNTRY FOR POTENTIAL VEHICLE/ANIMAL COLLISIONS



**MISSOURI — BECAUSE OF WILD ANIMAL MOVEMENT IN THE FALL, IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO SEE MORE DEAD DEER AND OTHER WILDLIFE ALONG THE NEARLY 34,000 MILES OF STATE ROADS.**

The Missouri Department of Transportation reminds motorists that there are several options that can be taken when a deer/vehicle collision results in the death of the animal.

According to Missouri law, an individual who has struck and killed a deer with their vehicle may claim the deer carcass if written authorization to possess the deer is granted by a Missouri Department of Conservation agent. The Wildlife Dispensation permit is free, but you need to contact the Missouri Department of Conservation to obtain the permit.

If the deer is completely off the roadway, MoDOT will not pick it up unless it impedes mail delivery or is in a neighborhood, especially at or near a bus stop. If a deer is located on the shoulder, MoDOT will address the deer during normal work hours. MoDOT crews are not called out after hours to remove an item unless it is a road safety hazard. MoDOT does not have specialized crews assigned to remove dead animals from the roadway and does not contract out any roadkill removal.

Missouri has crept up a notch in state rankings for deer collisions. According to a report from State Farm Insurance, the Show-Me State now ranks 14th in the country for

potential animal collisions, which is up from number 15 last year — with a 1-in-74 chance of hitting an animal while driving.

“Fall is breeding season and deer are on the move, especially in the dark as days grow shorter. Although deer strikes can occur at any time, the majority of these crashes occur in the twilight hours before sunrise and just after sunset in October and November, with the largest number taking place in November,” said Missouri State Maintenance Director, Natalie Roark.

According to 2021 statistics from the Missouri State Highway Patrol, drivers in Missouri experienced 3,779 traffic crashes where deer-vehicle strikes occurred. One deer strike occurred every 2 hours and 18 min in the state. In these crashes, there were three fatalities and 420 people were injured.

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) says that drivers should never swerve to avoid animals in the road, as it can cause loss of control of their vehicles, resulting in serious injury or death. To avoid hitting a deer, always be cautious and keep your eyes scanning both sides of the roadway. MoDOT also says to not jeopardize your safety to remove an animal in a high traffic area. They suggest you notify MoDOT at (888) ASK-MODOT or (888) 275-66368. You can also visit MoDOT’s website, [HERE](#).

[fourstateshomepage.com/news/local-news/what-to-do-if-you-hit-a-deer-with-your-vehicle-in-missouri/](https://fourstateshomepage.com/news/local-news/what-to-do-if-you-hit-a-deer-with-your-vehicle-in-missouri/)



# OATS Transit Northwest Region Training Day on November 3, 2022



**Randy Hillyard's celebrates his 10-year anniversary with his co-workers. Patrick Mahomes and Travis Kelce of the Kansas City Chiefs stopped by for the photo shoot!**

## OATS Transit's Employee of the Month



OATS Transit Southwest Region is accepting applications for drivers in Lawrence County. There is a friendly doe that frequently stops by a rider pick-up point to chat with the driver and passengers. On the day of this picture, the doe asked about the qualifications required to become a driver. She has applied, been interviewed and hired, and is officially in training to be the "deerest" driver in the OATS Transit Southwest Region. She has informed the company that she will be requiring all passengers to bring an apple as part of their bus fare.





# FTA ISSUES PARTIAL BUY AMERICA WAIVER FOR VANS AND MINIVANS

**THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) HAS ISSUED NOTICE OF A TIME-LIMITED, PARTIAL WAIVER FOR THE BUY AMERICA REQUIREMENT OF NON-ADA ACCESSIBLE VANS OR MINIVANS USED IN FEDERALLY-FUNDED VANPOOL PROGRAMS.**

FTA determined there are no mass-produced, unmodified, non-ADA accessible passenger vans or minivans that meet the Federal transit law domestic content requirement. Engines and motors must be manufactured in the United States and final assembly of these vehicles must occur in the U.S. The partial waiver is in effect starting Oct. 25, 2022, and expires in two years or if a fully compliant vehicle is available.

A similar waiver from the domestic content requirement for mass-produced, unmodified non-ADA-accessible vans and minivans was in effect from October 2016 through September 2019 and FTA says it has received requests to reissue the waiver.

In July 2022, FTA sought comments on a proposed partial waiver and received 126 comments with all

but one being supportive of the waiver and many asking for an expanded waiver.

Rural, small city, paratransit and nonemergency medical transportation providers are reporting concerns over supply chain challenges that have resulted in cancelled small bus contracts, price increases and growing wait times to receive vehicles. A survey by the Community Transportation Association of America found 80 percent of respondents reported feeling highly concerned with the state of standard vehicle replacements.

However, FTA stated in the Federal Register that it had not received any request to waive requirements for larger vehicles like cutaway vans and buses and declined to expand the waiver beyond the proposed scope.

The FTA's notice in the Federal Register is linked [here](#).

[masstransitmag.com/bus/article/21285096/fta-issues-partial-buy-america-waiver-for-vans-and-minivans](https://www.masstransitmag.com/bus/article/21285096/fta-issues-partial-buy-america-waiver-for-vans-and-minivans)



## *Enjoy a Safe* **HOLIDAY SEASON**

**From late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes, safety should be top of mind. Following is tried-and-true advice to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.**

### **Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children and adults should stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines. Updated bivalent boosters became available Sept. 2, 2022.

Of course anyone who has symptoms of illness should stay home. When gathering with people from multiple households, consider taking a COVID-19 test prior to the event to further reduce risk.

The National Safety Council and its partners provide additional vaccine information [here](#).

### **Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared**

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, according to Injury Facts. Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

### **Stay safe on the roads over the holidays — and every day:**

- Prepare your car for winter and keep an emergency kit with you
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid drowsy driving
- Leave early, planning ahead for heavy traffic
- Make sure every person in the vehicle is properly buckled up no matter how long or short the distance traveled
- Put that cell phone away; many distractions occur while driving, but cell phones are the main culprit
- Practice defensive driving
- Designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely after a holiday party; alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription and illegal drugs can cause impairment

### **Decorate Safely**

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency rooms see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season.

When decorating follow these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant”
- If using a live tree, cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it, and remove it from your home when it is dry
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with



small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them

- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house

## Watch Out for Fire-Starters

### Candles and Fireplaces

Use of candles and fireplaces, combined with an increase in the amount of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes during the holidays, means more risk for fire. The National Fire Protection Association reports that one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles and that two of every five decoration fires happen because the decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over and out of reach of children
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out of reach of children in a locked cabinet
- Use flameless, rather than lighted, candles near flammable objects
- Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace
- Use a screen on the fireplace at all times when a fire is burning
- Never leave candles or fireplaces burning unattended or when you are asleep
- Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year

### Turkey Fryers

Be alert to the dangers if you're thinking of celebrating the holidays by frying a turkey. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports there have been hundreds turkey-fryer related fires, burns or other injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage losses from these incidents.

NSC discourages the use of turkey fryers at home and urges those who prefer fried turkey to seek out professional establishments or consider using an oil-less turkey fryer. If you must fry your own

turkey, follow all U.S. Fire Administration turkey fryer guidelines.

## Food Poisoning Is No Joke

Keep your holidays happy by handling food safely. The [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) website from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides some valuable holiday food safety tips:

- Wash your hands frequently when handling food
- Keep raw meat away from fresh produce
- Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils for uncooked and cooked meats to avoid cross-contamination
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature
- Refrigerate hot or cold leftover food within two hours of being served
- When storing turkey, cut the leftovers in small pieces so they will chill quickly
- Thanksgiving leftovers are safe for three to four days when properly refrigerated

Watch this holiday food safety [video](#) for more information.

## It's Better to Give Safely

Gifts and toys should inspire joy, not cause injuries. Thousands of children are seriously injured in toy-related incidents every year. Avoid safety hazards while gifting with these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Toys are age-rated for safety, not for children's intellect and physical ability, so be sure to choose toys in the correct age range
- Choose toys for children under 3 that do not have small parts which could be choking hazards
- For children under 10, avoid toys that must be plugged into an electrical outlet
- Be cautious about toys that have button batteries or magnets, which can be harmful or fatal if swallowed
- When giving scooters and other riding toys, give the gift of appropriate safety gear, too; helmets should be worn at all times and they should be sized to fit

To find out about holiday toy safety and recalls, check the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission [website](#).

<https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/holiday>

# AVAILABLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The following is a list of the training programs and course length of each that are currently available to rural transit providers through Missouri RTAP. Requests for training can be made by contacting Doreen Harkins, MO-RTAP Program Specialist, at [harkinsd@mst.edu](mailto:harkinsd@mst.edu) or 573-341-6155.

1. ACTIVE SHOOTER PREVENTION AND RESPONSE – 2 HOURS.
2. AGGRESSIVE DRIVING – 1 HOUR.
3. BACKING SAFETY – 1 HOUR.
4. BASIC FIRST AID – 1 HOUR.
5. BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS – 1 HOUR.
6. CPR & BASIC FIRST AID – 4 HOURS.
7. DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PASSENGERS – 2 HOURS.
8. DEFENSIVE DRIVING – 3 HOURS.
9. DISTRACTIVE DRIVING – 1 HOUR.
10. DIVERSITY & AWARENESS TRAINING - PROVIDING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR TRANSPORTATION PASSENGERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES – 2 HOURS.
11. DRIVEN TO EXTREMES – 1 HOUR.
12. DRUG & ALCOHOL AWARENESS – 1 HOUR.
13. EMERGENCY & EVACUATION PROCEDURES – 1 1/2 TO 2 HOURS.
14. FATIGUE AWARENESS FOR DRIVERS – 2 HOURS.
15. HIPAA – 1 HOUR.
16. NIGHT DRIVING – 1 HOUR.
17. OPERATION LIFESAVER – HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSING SAFETY – 1 HOUR.
18. PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/MOBILITY AID SECUREMENT – 2 HOURS.
19. REASONABLE SUSPICION TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS – 2 HOURS.
20. SAFE & SECURE PROPER INFANT AND CHILD SEAT INSTALLATION – 2 HOURS.
21. SENSITIVITY AWARENESS – 1 HOUR.
22. SEXUAL HARRASSMENT – 1 HOUR.
23. SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS – 1 HOUR.
24. WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT – 2 TO 3 HOURS DEPENDING ON NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.
25. WINTER DRIVING SAFETY – 1 HOUR.

For more information on classes and to register please visit: [mltrc.mst.edu/mortaphome/mortaptraining/](http://mltrc.mst.edu/mortaphome/mortaptraining/)

## RESOURCES

### **National RTAP – Rural Transit Assistance Program**

[www.nationalrtap.org/](http://www.nationalrtap.org/)

### **Transportation Safety Institute – Transit Safety & Security Training Division**

[www.tsi.dot.gov/Transit.aspx](http://www.tsi.dot.gov/Transit.aspx)

### **Federal Transit Administration – Rural Transit Assistance Program Page**

[www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants\\_financing\\_3554.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3554.html)

### **Missouri Public Transit**

[www.mopublictransit.org/](http://www.mopublictransit.org/)

### **National Transit Institute**

[www.ntionline.com/](http://www.ntionline.com/)

### **Kansas RTAP – Kansas University Transportation Center**

[www.kutc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutc/rtap/index.php/index.html](http://www.kutc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutc/rtap/index.php/index.html)

### **Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP)**

[www.tcrponline.org/](http://www.tcrponline.org/)

