Thank you for attending and/or supporting TRU’s fourth annual Regional Transit Awards dinner! This wonderful event brings together the full transit community -- transit professionals and riders, urban planners and city advocates, business leaders and community supporters, and many others.

As I shared in my closing remarks, our region’s transit has been at a crossroads, teetering on a path of decline, with our underfunded transit providers struggling to provide basic transit service.

Today we have finally started down a more promising path as exemplified by the winners of this year’s Regional Transit Awards:

- Transit providers are coordinating better together, as exemplified by Transit Employee of the Year Cornelius Henry.
- The Regional Transit Authority, led by Paul Hillegonds and Michael Ford, is engaging the full region in creating an exciting new transit action plan.
- Communities are coming together with the RTA to create the best possible rapid transit lines, with leadership from Rising Transit Star awardee Jordan Twardy and Most Effective Public Servant awardee Melanie Piana.
- The powerful series in the Detroit Free Press about “Walking Man” James Robertson improved public understanding of the struggles of transit riders and the need to invest in better transit.
- Exemplary Innovation awardee PEAC is expanding the transit audience to many more who need it.
- And Unsung Hero awardee Rev. Louise Ott is leading the RTA’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee in broadening the transit conversation.

I congratulate and thank every nominee (detailed inside) for their contribution to improving transit!

While Detroit area transit has started down a new path, there is a long journey ahead of us to achieve the convenient, reliable, affordable transit system we seek. We need everyone to get even more involved:

- **Volunteer** with TRU to get our region talking about why #TransitMatters.
- **Donate** to TRU to enable our work as your transit advocate all year round.
- **Share your ideas** and suggestions to the RTA to help create a great new transit plan our region wants, needs, and is willing to pay for!

Thanks for being a vital part of this growing transit community!!

Megan Owens
TRU Executive Director
Congratulations to all of the Nominees for Regional Transit Awards

THE FORWARD MOTION AWARD FOR MOST EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SERVANT:

- Paul Hillegonds, Chair of the Regional Transit Authority
- Brian Sadek, first Chair of the RTA’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee
- State Representative Jim Townsend
- Melanie Piana, of the Downtown Detroit Partnership and Ferndale City Council

Transit Employee of the Year for 2015, Cornelius Henry and TRU Board President, Kelly Logan

THE UNSUNG HERO AWARD

- Larry Krieg, for service on the Board of AAATA, the RTA’s Citizens Advisory Committee and Michigan Association of Rail Passengers
- Reverend Louise Ott, Chair of the Metro Coalition of Congregation’s Transit Task Force and 2015 Chair of the RTA’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee
- Tim Wintermute, former Executive Director of the Hannan Foundation and founder and co-Chair of the Regional Elder Mobility Alliance

Melanie Piana accepts the Forward Motion Award from TRU Board President, Kelly Logan

TRANSIT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

- Dejuan Brown, DDOT Bus Driver
- Dusty Fancher, lobbyist for the Michigan Public Transit Association
- Michael Ford, CEO of the Regional Transit Authority
- Cornelius Henry, of the Detroit People Mover and RTA Providers Advisory Committee

Transit Employee of the Year Nominee, Dusty Fancher. Pictured with her husband, David Kletke (left) and Keith Cooley (right)
Haley Roberts, Communications Director for Metro Matters (formerly Michigan Suburbs Alliance)

Dan Sommerville, for his work with Trans4M, Michigan Environmental Council and Friends of WALLY

Jordan Twardy, Executive Director of the 8 Mile Boulevard Association

Martha Valadez, Organizer for Partners for Transit

Freshwater Transit, an innovative start-up with a fresh perspective on what transit could and should look like in Detroit

PEAC, which enables young people with disabilities to be independent and active by teaching them to ride bikes and ride the bus

Skillman Foundation, for funding the Detroit Bus Company to transport children to after school activities

SKOOT, a company that provides door-to-door advance-reservation shuttle service between Detroit Metro Airport and area hotels
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