

# True Tales of Rural Transit Heroes Twitter Chat July 12, 2018

## Summary

We all need heroes and there's no better place to look than among our own. National RTAP hosted a Twitter chat to talk about someone in transit who responded in a time of need. On July 12, 2:00-3:00 PM ET, Kari Banta, of TXDOT and the National RTAP Review Board, led a #RuralTransitHeroes Twitter chat. No deed is too small if it made a difference! Heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

Visit the [chat transcript](#) for questions asked during the chat and attendees' replies. We have also provided answers to questions received after the chat below. As Kari stated during the chat, "We've heard about some transit heroes that would make Superman blush!"

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**Question 1:** Who most inspired your interest in transit? Tell us about them!

**Answers:**

- Here's an inspirational hero from Alaska. My Dad's always been my hero. He got the GPS coordinates & found the "IntoTheWild"Bus in rural Alaska!  
[https://twitter.com/Ryan\\_cleveland/status/486367897279684609](https://twitter.com/Ryan_cleveland/status/486367897279684609)
- Angie Jones in John Day Oregon gets 5.5-6.5 rides per hour in a highly rural county. She got an insurance pool certified with FMCSA runs a veteran shuttle 150 north. There are no barriers only problems to be solved. I want to help.
- I am also lucky to have a friend and mentor that challenges me and engages me in the transit community. Allowing me to serve with NCPTA, and volunteer time with national transit efforts.
- I walked in to a cubicle with some files in it and had to build a policy and program for the state. Between #JeanPalmateer and #DinahVanderHyde's guidance I was able to imagine and implement a program that still is evolving and working.
- Our Executive Director continues to inspire me and mentor me. Camille Sterling has served at 3 different rural transit providers and inspires me to provide the best transit possible.
- #GraceCruncan when she was the director of ODOT she gave me responsibilities and challenges that engaged me and made me learn about the transportation system.

- The inspiration for transit has been a 91 rider. She's fearless & just started to ride transit at 88. Transit allows her to continue to live independently. She continues to encourage her friends to ride and embrace aging in place.
- My friend and former colleague #DinahVanderHyde she helped me take blue sky and make happen in rural Oregon.

**Question 2:** What's the most heroic thing you've seen on rural transit?

**Answer:**

- Rural bus drivers save the day! Thank you rural bus drivers!!! The heroes and champions of the day!! No plows; no problems!  
[https://twitter.com/McGuire\\_S\\_J/status/955830441881284609](https://twitter.com/McGuire_S_J/status/955830441881284609)
- A driver in Eastern Oregon caught in freezing fog. At the top a twisty 17 mi hill the fog lifted, trucks stopped in the middle of freeway, icy road, he drove right between them and shared off both mirrors. Behind them were crashing sounds. Passengers safe.
- Last year a local nursing facility caught fire. Multiple drivers and management staff responded & assisted Conover Fire Dept moving the residents to safer grounds. Only 3 residents were ambulatory. In addition, this was on the driver's day off.
- Here's a Massachusetts hero <https://bit.ly/2zFM3IM> - @tcshuttles driver Mark Trocchio found and returned a women's lost purse with her lifetime savings in it . . . and didn't even want a reward.

**Question 3:** Is there someone behind the scenes that you'd like to recognize as an unsung hero?

**Answers:**

- A transit agency in Texas lost over 70% of their fleet in a fire. Their neighbors pitched in and lent buses so they could keep service running.
- During natural disasters rural transit systems step up to the plate. #Fires in Lake County CA and the Okanogan in WA brought the value of transit to rural communities to the fore.
- I appreciate the people who are able to work with the rules and the forms and the reports.
- I have two. 1st would be a driver. She has been the person who recognized a senior was a health issue or even mental health. 1 story, she connected a suicidal rider with the right services and showed true compassion in a hostile situation. 2nd - our local non-profits. Regularly they join forces with us to get the word out about our services. Also attending planning meetings and providing quality feedback.
- #Dispatchers people who answer the phones and are courteous and helpful, help connect the dots when there are glitches so service happens, and manage trip flow so people get where they need to go when they need to get there.
- "I'm so thankful to have a bus stop close to my home. The bus is comfortable and clean. The drivers are always so helpful, and kind. I wished every older adult would give the bus a try. If I can learn how anyone can!" Madge at a bus stop  
<https://twitter.com/hashtag/ruraltransitheroes?f=tweets&vertical=default&src=hash>
- You are a hero Amelia! You figure out how to get your systems routes into Google Transit and now train other people!

- Organizations like @NRHAlliance are heroes too. Rural Hero Grants - pls help @RoyalFarWest Healthy Kids Bus Stop project by voting here. <https://twitter.com/NRHAlliance/status/731625030103105537>
- Rural transit is just as complex as urban transit but with fewer staff. You have all the same compliance and reporting but often with pen and paper.

**Question 4:** How can transit agencies recognize and commend their heroes?

**Answers:**

- WSDOT has an annual Wall of Fame with multiple categories and opportunities for every transit to nominate their top people. <https://watransit.com/wsdot-wall-of-fame-award/>
- Invite or take them to local transit conferences. The refresh is always uplifting/inspiring to keep me passionate about transit.

**Question 5:** Acts of heroism don't have to be large. What are some of the small things we can do to make a big difference in our riders' lives?

**Answers:**

- Drivers say hello. When drivers feel valued they reflect that back to the customer. As managers creating a culture where people are valued is contagious. My drivers (for the route I use) wave at me.
- Also, ride the system you manage. It's good to see our roles with a different perspective.
- Recognize them as a part of our shared community, instead of just a part of our job. The biggest difference I've seen between an "ok" driver and a great driver is taking the time to say hello.