



## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Patricia Harris-Morehead, (615) 880-3943

Melissa Stevens, (615) 862-6194

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### **NASHVILLE MTA DRIVERS WIN "BIG WHEEL AWARDS" AT STATE COMPETITION; VANDERBILT AND OTHER STAFF HONORED AS WELL**

**NASHVILLE** — Four Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bus operators received top honors for their performance in the state championship "roadeo" competition held during the Tennessee Public Transportation Association (TPTA) Conference last week in Nashville.

The bus operators brought home the "Big Wheel Award" in both the 40-foot and paratransit van divisions. Mark Johnson and Goran Ilicic finished first and second respectively in the 40-foot bus division and Darryl Howard and Ted Thompson placed first and second respectively in the paratransit van division.

In addition, several others were honored with awards by their peers at the Annual TPTA Awards Banquet held Thursday, November 3.

Travel Trainer Judy Shelton received the Urban Employee of the Year Award. MTA's Travel Training program assists anyone who would like to learn to use the bus system, but is specifically targeted toward seniors and people with disabilities. Since beginning in 2004, Shelton has had individual sessions with 128 people and completed nearly 70 presentations to more than 2,500 people in the community.

Team New Orleans, a crew of four bus operators, one supervisor and one mechanic, received the Extra Mile Award for their assistance during the recent hurricanes in the Gulf. The team of Mark Betts, Dawn Chandler, Jimmy Crutcher, Richard Maxwell, and Charles Patterson made their way to the Gulf Coast in September 2005 at the request of the Federal Transit Administration.

Bob Baulsir, MTA's Chief Operating Officer, was honored with the Urban Executive/Manager of the Year Award. He has more than 25 years of professional experience with public agencies including transit organizations in Tennessee and Ohio.

Vanderbilt University and Medical Center received the prestigious Corporate Patron of the Year Award for its commuter benefits partnership with the MTA. This initiative offers faculty and staff the use of MTA bus service as part of Vanderbilt's employee benefits package. Staff and employees simply swipe their identification cards through the MTA fare boxes each time they board the buses for trips to and from work. As of September 2005, there were approximately 36,000 boardings recorded since the program began in July of 2004.

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Editor's Note: To request this information in an alternative format, please call 862-5950 and ask to speak with MTA's ADA Coordinator.



From left, MTA AccessRide operator Ted Thompson, Darryl Howard, MTA Chief Executive Officer Paul Ballard, bus operator Mark Johnson, MTA Chief Operating Officer Bob Baulsir and bus operator Goran Ilicic

Photo by: Gary Layda