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PSTA Drivers Enjoy Special Thanks From Officials and Riders

Who: The [Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority \(PSTA\)](#) and transit agencies throughout the United States

What: Celebrating Transit Driver Appreciation Day

When: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Where: Various PSTA Customer Service facilities and PSTA Headquarters

Why: To thank those who provide safe, affordable and reliable transportation to millions of Americans every day

PSTA Bus Operator and 2009 Driver of the Year, Vance Wegner, couldn't help but smile when talking about his morning shift Wednesday, which was also Transit Driver Appreciation Day. "People were coming on the bus, shaking my hand and saying 'Thank you,'" he says. "It was wonderful."

Vance is one of 363 expert drivers who show up every day of the year to provide safe, reliable and affordable public transit for Pinellas County residents. He and his colleagues would be quick to remind people that safely driving a 40 foot buses through some of the most crowded roadways in Florida is not nearly as easy as many people think.

"Our job is to make it *look* easy," adds 2014 Driver of the Year Marcus Hughes (pictured). "As drivers, we have to watch out for unpredictable traffic, changing weather conditions and pedestrians, while keeping our riders and others sharing the road, safe and secure." Transit officials say that task has gotten more and more demanding over the years as PSTA ridership continues setting new records and is now more than 14.5 million rides a year. Agency leaders say that as ridership increases, it's harder to keep buses on schedule, because they spend more time at stops while people pay fares. A new regional "smartcard" fare system, which is in development with other transit agencies in the area, is expected to help speed the boarding process and better keep routes on time. That, in turn, helps ensure that drivers get their needed break time, which is now often sacrificed to keep buses on time.

"I love this job," says 12 year PSTA veteran Driver Zelda Robinson. "Sure, it can be tough at times, like any job, but I love it and I love seeing my passengers every day. I take them where they need to go and they make me laugh," she says with a smile. That positive attitude was not lost on agency leadership or riders Wednesday, as they partnered throughout the county to take a little extra time for a special "Thank you" to these skilled and dedicated public servants.

Transit Driver Appreciation Day began in 2009 when a group of transit riders in Seattle decided it would be a great way to honor the hard-working men and women who provide safe transportation options for our community.

PSTA officials also want to remind the public that it's *always* a good day to pass along "Thanks" to your Bus Operators.

To learn more about PSTA, please visit the agency's award winning website at www.psta.net.

[PSTA B-Roll](#)



PSTA Board Member Wengay Newton (left) and CEO Brad Miller (right) thank 2014 Driver of the Year Marcus Hughes (Center) at PSTA's Grand Central Station.

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The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority is the public transit provider for Pinellas County, providing more than 14.5 million rides per year. PSTA operates nearly 40 bus and trolley routes with a fleet of 203 vehicles. To learn more about the services offered by PSTA, or for schedule and fare information, passengers are invited to call the PSTA InfoLine at (727) 540-1900, or visit www.PSTA.net. PSTA is an equal opportunity employer.