

THE FACES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



BY CHRISTOPHER KAZARIAN

On an annual basis, the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (CCRTA) conducts an average of 121,500 trips, equating to roughly 2,350 trips a week and 330 trips a day. Its services range from taking passengers off-Cape to medical appointments to Boston area hospitals to transporting students to Sturgis Public Charter School and Pope John Paul II High School in Hyannis, to ensuring Cape Codders have safe, reliable access to and from work.

“We cover 400 square miles and 15 towns with 1.6 million trips a year [prior to the pandemic],” said CCRTA Administrator Thomas S. Cahir. “We work closely with each town, so we can provide the best, safe, accessible service we can. We’ve had great success over the years.”

With a fleet of 140 buses, the CCRTA runs fixed route rides throughout the Cape as well as flexible Dial-A-Ride-Transportation (DART) rides for passengers who may need door-to-door service for any purpose. While the numbers tell some of the story, it’s the CCRTA’s employees—its drivers, dispatchers, and mechanics—who complete it.

CCRTA general manager John F. Kennedy had high praise for what he called “the heroes who have been unflinchingly providing transportation through the pandemic and more usual times with a dedication to the good people who really need our services. It takes a huge family of like-minded missionaries that narrow their attention in the kindest ways to get people to where they need to be and keep our region moving, quite literally.”

The following are a few of these CCRTA heroes who are on the frontlines of delivering the agency’s services, making its work possible.

Andrew Cascio (Mechanic)

Ever since he was a child, Andrew Cascio has been mechanically inclined. “I spent a lot of time as a kid taking things apart and putting them together,” he said. “I guess it’s always come naturally—to be able to mechanically decipher how something works.”

He pursued that interest as a student at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School before he landed his first job as a mechanic at a motorcycle dealership at the age of 19. He has since held several jobs in the industry that have included stints at Meineke in Hyannis, and Cape Destinations in Harwich, where he serviced limousines, trolleys, school buses, passenger vehicles, and heavy equipment.

About six years ago, he brought his expertise to the Cape Cod RTA. He works out of its Dennis garage where he maintains, repairs, fuels and sanitizes the agency’s fleet of vehicles with roughly a dozen other mechanics. On a daily basis, each bus is inspected; this includes everything from checking brake pads to reviewing tire tread depth to ensuring all lights are working.

He expressed pride in his role at the agency. “There’s a certain sense of gratification in working on these vehicles,” he said. “I’m representing the company by presenting them in the proper condition when they arrive to pick up passengers. I like that I’m contributing physically with my hands and mind to help provide an essential service to the public.”

He acknowledged that many passengers rely on the CCRTA to get them to work, to appointments, and to do vital tasks such as grocery shopping. “Some of the people are unable to drive their own car or may be less fortunate and not have a vehicle and are relying on our buses to get them to work,” he said. “I think about these things when I’m working on these buses. I care about doing a good job, so people are getting on a clean bus that is not in disrepair or unappealing to look at or sit in.”

Samuel DeVonis (Driver)

When Samuel DeVonis of Sandwich retired after a more than 30-year career as an accountant, it took him less than six months to get “bored out of my mind,” he said with a laugh. It was around that time he ran into a friend who was driving for the CCRTA who convinced him to apply as a driver.

He was hired in the spring of 2010. Twelve years later, DeVonis couldn’t be happier. “You feel like you’re helping your community,” he said. “I drive the DART buses, which are door-to-door. About 80 percent of our passengers are seniors or disabled people who wouldn’t be able to get around otherwise.”

Far removed from retirement, DeVonis works a

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Samuel DeVonis

minimum of 40 hours per week. His days start off at 4 in the morning and they end around noon. His first

passengers are typically patients being treated for dialysis; he drops them off at their medical appointments, which are

critical to their health.

He admitted that “you get really attached to the passengers. You know if they have tomorrow off from work and get to know their schedules. ...A lot of the people I pick up, even the younger ones, they may get kind of lonely and when you pick them up, you’re one person they see. You get to know a lot about people’s lives and their families. You get to do a lot of chatting with the passengers. It is fun.”

This is precisely why DeVonis, who will turn 65 in June, has no plans of slowing down. “I’m enjoying the job and I feel good,” he said. “There’s no reason to leave now.”

Ronald Langlois (Driver)

Known affectionately by his peers as Captain Ron, Ronald Langlois can be seen on his route giving his fellow CCRTA drivers a “big gesture,” as

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he passes them on the road, he said. “I give them a big salute and point at them. It puts a smile on their face.”

The nickname was self-appointed. “I was doing runs in Provincetown and, up there, there are a lot of tourists and you’re bringing them to hotels and restaurants and vice versa,” he explained. “This one night I was picking up some tourists who had a few cocktails and I told them, ‘I am your bus captain this evening. I am Captain Ron.’ And they all went, ‘Hi, Captain Ron.’”

He later shared the story with his coworkers, and the name has since stuck with Langlois, who celebrated his three-year anniversary in January. He came to the CCRTA after a 45-year career in construction.

Langlois is both a driver—he oversees a fixed route which runs from Hyannis through Sandwich



Ronald Langlois

to Buzzards Bay and back—and a trainer for new employees. “I enjoy the people I work with. My

coworkers are a great bunch of people,” he said. “And I like the people we pick up. It is an enjoyable

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job, and something I look forward to every day.”

While he enjoys his work, Langlois said, “I take it as a badge of honor to make sure I’m doing my job properly every single day.”

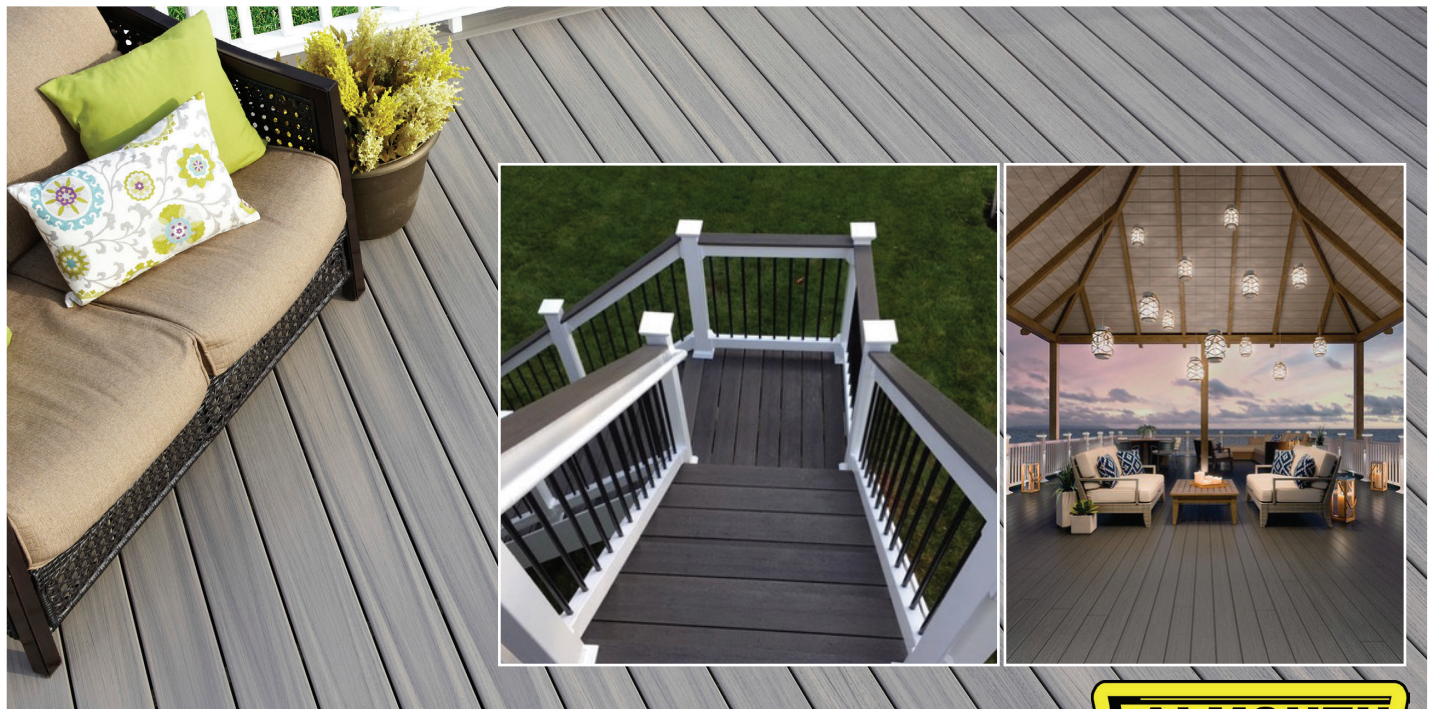
It’s why he became a trainer: so he can guide new employees in how to do the same. “A big part of this job is having empathy for people,” he said. “There’s a reason why people are riding the bus. Maybe they lost their license or don’t have a car. It’s up to us to get them from point A to point B. I truly enjoy doing this as

do the other drivers I work with.”

For Langlois, who has been married to his wife, Dianne, for 42 years—the couple have two children, Brittany and Eli—this job came at the perfect time in his life. “The Cape Cod RTA is a great place to work,” he said. “This is the place where if somebody is not happy with their career, they can come to the RTA to make a career.”

Lynn Patrick (Dispatcher)

For nearly 35 years, Lynn Patrick worked in hotel management before she realized she needed a change to something less physically demanding. “I was tired of



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having a job where I was on my feet for 12 hours a day,” she said. “I saw a Craigslist ad for a job here. I applied, and six years later I’m still here.”

Working out of the CCRTA’s operations center in Dennis, Patrick is the intermediary between passengers and drivers.

With passengers, she said, “they’ll call wanting to know what time their rides are picking them up and to verify their trips. Sometimes I’ll field calls from people with last-minute requests for rides.”

She also is in close communication with drivers, assisting with emergencies that can include their GPS failing. “GPS doesn’t always work very well on Cape Cod, so we may have to give them directions to

where they’re going,” she said.

While her previous career and her current one may look different on paper, Patrick said, they share one similarity—working with the public. “It’s something I’ve done all my life and it’s really quite natural for me,” she said. “It’s a matter of listening to people and figuring out what they need.”

That may be the most enjoyable part of her job. “It’s about helping people,” said Patrick, who lives in Harwich Port. “We get people from all walks of life riding our buses. We have kids going to charter schools. We have kids going to college. We have people going to jobs or appointments. And we have people riding the bus for fun and to visit their friends.” ■



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