



## PRESS RELEASE

### Kitsap Transit operator wins 35-foot coach national competition

*Operator Val Quill becomes first woman to win category in national Rodeo*

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BREMERTON, Wash. – Already lauded for her driving skills and commitment to safety, Kitsap Transit Routed bus operator Val Quill added a national trophy to her mantel last month after taking home first place in the 35-foot bus competition at the 2025 national rodeo put on by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).



Quill is the first woman to win CTAA's 35-foot bus national competition since the organization launched the category last year. In 2022 the National Safety Council selected Quill as [Safe Driver of the Year](#) for the Pacific Region. In 2024, she won the state 35-foot bus rodeo competition and earlier this year placed in the top third at the International Rodeo sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

"It's just amazing," Quill said of her CTAA first-place win. "I've reached the top!"

CTAA's rodeo is the only national venue to honor and celebrate the value of rural and community transit operators. The rodeo tests bus operators' proficiency in the technical skills needed to operate buses safely and assist passengers within time limits. In this year's competition, operators were awarded points based on how they performed on four tests – a 25-question written exam, bus driving course, passenger-assistance test, and pre-trip inspection. Contestants had to complete these tests within 7 minutes, except for the written exam, for which they were given up to 30 minutes.

The driving course, worth just over half the total score, involved driving a bus through an obstacle course in a specific order and trying not to hit cones to reach a finish line. Starting at 7 minutes, drivers lose one point per second. The course measures both accuracy and speed.

With 40 years of driving for Kitsap Transit, Quill is the most tenured Routed Operator in Kitsap Transit's history and achieved the top score in a field of six transit agencies competing in the 35-foot bus category at CTAA's Rodeo in San Diego.

"This accomplishment is not only a personal triumph for Val but a tremendous honor for Kitsap Transit," Executive Director John Clauson said. "Her performance is a testament to the talent, dedication and excellence that defines our workforce."

Quill started driving for Kitsap Transit in 1985, [following in her mother's footsteps](#), and has become a driver mentor as well as a familiar face to many Kitsap Transit riders over the years. Her dedication to Rodeo competitions means she frequently uses time off work to practice, sometimes traveling to Olympia or other cities to prepare.

To prepare for the CTAA Rodeo, Quill said she studied the training manual for obtaining a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and the Rodeo's guide so she knew exactly what to expect.

The CTAA Rodeo was different, Quill said, from what she experienced at the APTA Rodeo: The wheelchair-securement test and pre-trip inspection for defects were done on a body-on-chassis bus (like Kitsap Transit's *ACCESS* buses), not a 35-foot bus, Quill said. In addition, there was a multiple-choice written test before driving the 35-foot New Flyer bus powered by compressed natural gas on the rodeo course. After watching another driver take 10 minutes to drive the rodeo course – penalties accrue after 7 minutes – Quill completed the driving course with four seconds to spare.

"I'd say to others to take the time to practice and listen to other operators who have participated in rodeo competitions," Quill said. "I wanted to achieve this before I retired so I made plans to practice up to six hours a day over seven weekend days I had off before this competition. Once at the CTAA rodeo location, I made sure to take the on-site class about how to properly secure a passenger in a wheelchair using the Q'Straint automatic securement system."

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### **About Kitsap Transit**

Kitsap Transit has been operating friendly, convenient public transit since 1983. The transit agency for Kitsap County carried more than 3.2 million riders in 2024 across a multi-modal system of routed buses, passenger ferries, paratransit shuttles, vanpools, and worker/driver buses for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

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