

It all began with a

Problem...



...and the need to find a  
**Solution.**

*The  
Early Years  
of the*

# New Jersey Council on Special Transportation & Paratransit


Some people say that the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (COST) was formed in 1979, while others insist it was 1981. According to COST archives and discussions with Founding and Charter Members, both dates can be considered correct.

In 1979, COST founders Lawrence Cuomo and James Holman met each other for the first time. Larry was the Transportation Planner for the Essex County Division on Aging and Jim was the Director of the Mercer County Special Transportation System. Prior to meeting each other, both Larry and Jim had separately envisioned a statewide consortium of county paratransit and special transportation agencies being formed in an effort to work together and discuss issues pertinent to operating a county transportation program. It was at that first introductory meeting they realized they shared the same vision.


In the later part of 1979, Jim and Larry began planning the first consortium meeting. They also named the group, the “New Jersey Council on Special Transportation”. The first meeting took place in 1980 with invitees representing county paratransit and special transportation programs and not-for-profit agencies providing transportation services.

Although the words paratransit and special transportation are different, back in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the definitions were the same; providing transportation services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Also, during this time period only a few counties had a county-operated transportation program. Paratransit was a pioneering new transportation mode and everyone was learning how to plan, manage, and operate their system from on-going experiences and also from one another. They were “writing the book” on paratransit! COST was formed simply to help these transportation systems improve their operations through networking.

The newly created New Jersey Council on Special Transportation consortium met occasionally throughout 1980 but, there was no formal structure, no elected officers, and no by-laws. Larry and Jim facilitated the meetings with topics about funding, vehicle specifications, and other issues that addressed the quality and effectiveness of paratransit.



It was not until 1981 that those attending the consortium meetings decided COST needed to become a formal organization. The group decided they would meet monthly, adopt by-laws, and elect a Chair. Larry Cuomo was elected as the first Chairman and his term ran from April 1981 until March 1983. In April 1983, Jim Holman became COST’s second Chairman.



During these early years of paratransit, transportation programs were small. They operated with sedans and station wagon, 12 to 15 passenger vans and accessible and non-accessible “pop-top” vans. Services mainly consisted of transportation to non-emergency medical appointments, senior food shopping, nutrition sites, and the occasional recreational trip.

The availability of funding for paratransit services was mainly provided through county Office's on Aging. Funding included Title IIIB of the Older Americans Act, Title XX (Social Service Block Grant) and Title XIX (Medicaid) of the Social Security Act. Additional funding was sometimes provided through county budgets as well as the Comprehensive Employment & Training Act (CETA) and, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA, now known as the Federal Transit Administration) of the US Department of Transportation. These federal USDOT funding sources included Section 16(b) (2) (now known as Section 5310 and a key source of funding for vehicles) and, UMTA Section 147 Rural Demonstration Funds (replaced by Section 18 Rural Public Transit funding now known as Section 5311).

During the early days of COST, funding was relatively stable, although not very much was available; resulting in transportation programs providing the same level of services year after year and not expanding.

In 1977, the Casino Revenue Fund was created requiring casino taxes to be deposited for programs benefiting senior citizens and persons with disabilities. In 1981, New Jersey voters approved an amendment to the state Constitution expanding the Casino Revenue Fund to include transportation as an eligible program. The Casino Revenue Fund generates an 8% tax on the "win" or gross revenues from each Atlantic City casino. The "win" is the amount the casinos keep after all bets are paid, but before they pay taxes and other expenses.



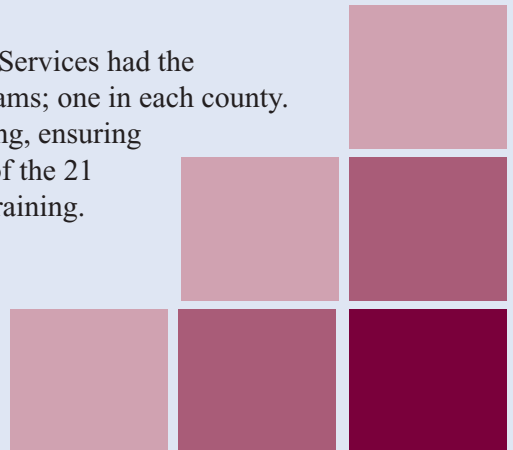
One of the earlier type of paratransit "pop-top" vehicles used to transport senior citizens and persons with disabilities

In January 1984, Governor Thomas H. Kean signed into law the Senior Citizens and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Act. This act made casino revenue funding available for meeting the transportation needs of New Jersey's senior citizens and persons with disabilities. The act also established the "Senior Citizens and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program" (SCADRTAP). The SCADRTAP legislation provides that 7.5% of the Casino Revenue Fund be appropriated for transportation services for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

The SCADRTAP legislation also designated New Jersey Transit's Office of Special Services to take the lead in administering the program. The Office was created in 1981. Prior to 1981, the existing county paratransit systems worked closely with the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Office of Special Services.

Under the SCADRTAP Act, the New Jersey Transit Office of Special Services had the responsibility to organize 21-county coordinated transportation programs; one in each county. They were also responsible for reviewing grant applications for funding, ensuring compliance to federal and state regulations, monitoring the progress of the 21 county paratransit programs, and providing technical assistance and training.

Before SCADRTAP funding could be distributed to the 21 county programs, program guidelines needed to be established and a decision on how to distribute the funding as well as reporting requirements needed to be decided. In 1984, COST was asked by New Jersey Transit to join their SCADRTAP planning committee.



According to the original SCADRTAP legislation, New Jersey Transit was authorized to distribute 75% of the available funding to the 21 county-coordinated transportation programs for capital, operating, and administrative expenses. The remaining 25% was to be retained by New Jersey Transit for administrative expenses and capital accessibility projects. These percentages would change in 1997 when a bill, strongly supported by COST, was approved amending SCADRTAP's funding distribution to 85% for the counties and 15% to New Jersey Transit.

As a result of the SCADRTAP planning meetings, it was determined that the amount of funding each county receives would be an allocation formula based on the number of residents 60 years of age and over as reflected in the most recent US census report. The newly established guidelines also set minimum and maximum levels of funding for each county. No eligible county would receive less than \$150,000 or more than 10% of the total funds available.

In fiscal year 1985, counties received their first SCADRTAP funding contracts. The total amount available in SCADRTAP during this initial year was \$10 million of which the counties received \$7.5 million and the remainder went to New Jersey Transit.

It was with the introduction of SCADRTAP funding that New Jersey's paratransit and special transportation programs were not only able to expand, but in cases where there were no county transportation services at all, they were created.

As paratransit and special transportation was growing in New Jersey, so too was the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation. From the vision of two people, to a formation of a consortium, to the opportunity to help shape New Jersey's "new" mode of transportation, COST continues to be a leader for New Jersey's paratransit, special and community transportation and its members have received state and national recognition.



Monmouth County's "Monmouth Stage Coach" was the first accessible public bus route in New Jersey - November 1, 1980

# The Early Years



Larry Cuomo  
Founder



James R. Holman  
Founder

## Charter Members

- Karen Bevans**, Sussex County
- Terry Boyle**, New Jersey Transit
- Steven Fittante**, Monmouth County
- Lillian Hall**, Hunterdon Pioneer on Wheels
- Ron Hand**, New Jersey Department of Transportation
- Joe Huggler**, New Jersey Department of Transportation
- Margaret Jamison**, Ocean County
- Stephen W. Jamison**, Ocean County
- Dale Keith**, Sen-Han Transit of Camden County
- Lou Klein**, New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Donna Kovalevich**, Sen-Han Transit of Camden County
- Bob Malloy**, New Jersey Department of Transportation
- Brenda Maye**, Union County
- Marie Richardson**, Somerset County
- Bea Roughgarden**, Sussex County
- Betty Saloom**, Middlesex County
- Jack Salveson**, Cape May County
- Gail Sherman**, Passaic County
- Diane Stephens**, Sen-Han Transit of Camden County

1981 - 1982

# Founder



## Lawrence Cuomo

The concept of the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (COST) began in the late summer to early fall of 1979. At that time, every county throughout New Jersey was trying to establish a transportation system for the elderly and disabled - who's population was rapidly increasing and expecting a much greater growth over the next 15 years.

To further complicate the problem, there were only two or three funding sources for county's and not-for-profit agencies to receive grants for vehicles. At that time, I was the Senior Planner at the Essex County Division on Aging and was funding not-for-profit agencies that were trying to provide transportation service to this growing population. I began to uncover that the present systems throughout the state of New

Jersey were fragmented and the few funding sources had little to no communications with each other, therefore, not fostering any coordination of transportation services.

It was at this point, that I knew there had to be one centralized consortium that would allow the funding sources (federal/state) and county transportation agencies to come together to discuss and professionally plan a network to provide a coordinated transportation system for the elderly and disabled in New Jersey.

I began attending the New Jersey Department of Transportation meetings, which was the major funding source providing vehicles to county transportation systems. At the state meetings, I introduce the concept of forming a centralized consortium consisting of county transportation agency representatives, which would become a sounding board and could work together to create a coordinate transportation system in New Jersey.

During that year, I met Jim Holman, Director of the Mercer County Special Transportation System. We both shared the same vision to create a statewide special transportation consortium and came up with the name "New Jersey Council on Special Transportation". We invited all county transportation representatives and not-for-profit transportation agencies that provided transportation to the elderly and disabled to a joint meeting.

The meeting took place in early 1980, and the statewide group agreed with the concept and the formation of the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation. Throughout the remaining year and into 1981, COST worked closely together with the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the newly formed New Jersey Transit, which eventually took over, the responsibility for elderly and disabled transportation services in New Jersey. Soon, COST was asked to become a member of the New Jersey Transit Elderly and Disabled Advisory Board, this was a major accomplishment. COST assisted New Jersey Transit in developing the policy and procedures for the distribution of Casino Revenue Funding which allowed each county to receive funding to provide special transportation services. The Casino Revenue Act has become the largest funding source for county special transportation services in New Jersey.

By the end of 1981, COST was on track for being recognized as the statewide sounding board for all special transportation services for the elderly and disabled in New Jersey.

# Founder

1983

## James R. Holman



When I look back at my year as Chairman of COST, I can not help but think about how young we were; not just the people but also the type of service we were providing.

The early members of COST were mostly all Human Services Transportation providers receiving funding from DYFS and their County Offices on Aging. We were a group of people who got together once a month to discuss common issues and share solutions to problems. If we had written it all down we would have filled a three inch binder with “Best Practices”.

As I stated, most of us were funded through Title XX, and Title III. Then during my tenure as Chair, Governor Thomas Kean, signed into law, the Casino Revenue's Senior Citizens and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program Act which legislatively provided 7.5% of the casino revenue tax to be appropriated for transportation services for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

With the expectations of additional transportation funding, COST devoted a lot of time and energy assisting the New Jersey Transit Office of Special Services in establishing Casino Revenue Guidelines and the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement. We worked together as one for a common goal.

I like to say that COST learned to talk when we were 3 years old and we were heard. COST has not stopped talking since. It is impressive that important people are still listening to what COST has to say.

Another highlight during my tenure was the idea of a paratransit rodeo competition. During a COST meeting, Larry Cuomo and myself brought up the idea holding a driver competition similar to what school bus and truck drivers hold at state and national levels called a "Rodeo". If they could have a rodeo, why not us? At the meeting, the consensus was "If you think a Rodeo is needed - do it". So Larry and I began the planning for an event that has continued to last for many years.

I never dreamed that “my baby” would be around for 25 years. As any creator would be – I am extremely proud of my association with COST and the organizations accomplishments through the years. Members have not always agreed with each other but COST has remained intact and focused on providing quality transit service. I cannot imagine what the state of transportation for elderly and disabled residents of New Jersey would be if COST had not been established.

Congratulations on 25 years!

# Chairwoman

1984 - 1986



## Margaret Jamison

I became Chairperson of the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation in the spring of 1984 to 1986. During this time period, it was the beginning of a new era in transportation not only in New Jersey, but also throughout the entire country. People were in need for specialized transportation services and public transportation was not always able to accommodate their needs.

One of the problems we faced in New Jersey was that there was only a few counties actually providing specialized/paratransit services and each was doing it in a different way. For many of us, this was a new form of transportation and we had little experience in providing these types of services. At the time, the only place we could go to get assistance and advice was to the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Office of Special Transportation.

Throughout my years as COST Chairperson, members shared information with each other such as vehicle specifications and funding grants. We also worked with other state agencies to secure standardized requirements for each of the three-designated regions in New Jersey because at the time, the leaders in the northern and southern counties were saying that Medicaid transportation funding could not be obtained, however, the central region was providing these service and receiving reimbursement through their Board of Social Services. This made coordination of financial resources difficult. COST extended invitations to representatives from all the agencies that provided funds for transportation to discuss better methods for funding distributions and reporting requirements, especially to help those agencies which were short staffed.

A great accomplishment during my term was the coordination of the first Paratransit Roadeo. Thanks to the vision of Larry Cuomo and Jim Holman, and help from our great friends at the NJ DOT; Joe Huggler, Ron Hand and Bob Malloy, the Roadeo was a success.

We had learned so much from the "DOT Boys". They had solutions to many of our problems and provided much guidance. Their unofficial motto was "Ask for forgiveness not for permission". They allowed us to do what was best for everyone in the state regarding transportation for the elderly, disabled and transportation disadvantaged. In addition, they provided the room for our meetings and provided the coffee and cake and would not take any reimbursement. Thanks Guys.

While serving as COST Chairperson, I was also the Vice-Chairperson of the NJ Transit Office of Special Services Advisory Board. This allowed me to give the NJ Transit Board a different view on how to distribute the "new" Casino Revenue Funding. In addition, we discussed the format to report ridership as well as the information that was required by other state agencies which provided transportation funding. What we did not want to do, was put any additional burden on the counties that were just starting services.

It was a great honor to be associated with such fantastic people and an organization that has helped so many.

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-Chair

Karen Bevans

#### Treasurer

Lewis Ware (1985 & 1986)

#### Corresponding Secretary

Noreen Conway (1984 & 1985)

James Holman (1986)

#### Recording Secretary

Betty Saloom

# Chairwoman

1987 - 1989



## Karen Bevans

In March of 1987, I took over the reins of COST from Marge Jamison with great trepidation. This was a big roll to fill, and I had only been in the job for not quite six years. I was following people who had the energy and foresight to identify this need for a network of sharing and mutual support in a very fledgling business - and then to make this group a viable mouthpiece on the statewide Transportation scene.

Paratransit??? People thought we were hang gliding or something. This was probably our biggest challenge - awareness. Once we got to know our counterparts around the State, we had to make COST and its membership known to legislative leaders, policy makers, funding agencies, advocacy groups and most of all, to our customers.

During my three years as Chairperson, we went about this public relations task on several fronts. In December of 1987, the Executive Committee met with DOT Commissioner Hazel Gluck to raise her awareness of the existence of paratransit services around the State and the need for additional resources to address unmet needs. We also provided testimony at various statewide forums to provide a spotlight on paratransit. I represented COST at "Transportation 2020", a gathering of all agencies with an interest in the State's transportation future. Steve Fittante, as Legislative Chairperson spoke before legislative committees on the needs of the paratransit industry.

We communicated with our legislative representatives on such matters as the need for maintaining the UMTA Section 18 funding at current levels, fostering greater coordination of community transportation resources by allowing public bodies to operate Section 16(b)2 vehicles, and supporting the authorization of three-year contracting for transportation services.

We had become a partner in the annual TransAction Conference, contributing panels on policy, vehicles, safety, community relations and computer

technology. The COST Awards program was developed in 1988 and the first presentations were made at TransAction in 1989.

During my tenure, our partnership with New Jersey Transit saw the creation of the P.E.R.F.E.C.T. paratransit management software program with Pam Young. The SCADRTAP contract year was changed to January to December. With COST's support, Lyle Peterson became the Director of the New Jersey Transit Office of Special Services.

Lastly, I want to remember some very special people that very unselfishly provided the foundation for so much of our work. In 1988, the COST Roadeo was named in honor of our mentor, Charles Deacon. The First Place traveling trophy is presented each year in his memory. Three gentlemen from DOT, Joe Huggler, Ron Hand and Bob Malloy paved the way for us on so many avenues. They were the ground breakers that have allowed us to rise to the levels of excellence that we maintain today. In the struggling, early years of this business, they helped us to try any and everything that made sense in our efforts to put service on the road. They had a certain disdain for bean counters, and I can still hear them telling us that it was better to ask forgiveness, rather than permission.

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-Chair

Steven Fittante

#### Treasurer

James Holman (1987 & 1988)

John Murphy (1989)

#### Corresponding Secretary

Michael Nuskey (1987)

Roberta Grayson (1988 & 1989)

#### Recording Secretary

Dale Keith (1987)

Donna Kovalevich (1988 & 1989)

# Chairman

1990 - 1991



## Steven Fittante

The New Jersey Council on Special Transportation had just completed its 10th year during the beginning of my term as COST Chairperson. As Vice-Chairman under Karen Bevans, I had worked with the Executive Committee and New Jersey Transit to establish the first staff consultant to COST. The RTAP program funded the consultant, who was to provide support services for COST activities.

In 1990, Bob Jones, a career educator, became the first COST consultant. Bob served as publisher of the first COST newsletter called "*COST News*", which released its first issue in April 1990. In addition to the various news articles on COST events and profiles of individual member organizations, I used the column of the Chairman's Report to highlight national paratransit issues for the organization. One of the first of these, in the September 1990 issue dealt with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which became law on July 26, 1990 and the anticipated development of the complementary paratransit program under this Act. The article dealt with the pros and cons of a separate ADA paratransit system and spoke of the advantages of an integrated mobility system in which NJ Transit "begin viewing paratransit as a partner rather than a competitor with public transit". While ultimately, NJ Transit elected to develop a separate complimentary paratransit system, Access Link, this issue was among the many that COST took an active position on during this period and COST was invited by NJ Transit to work on the development of the new paratransit service.

Another issue that became important to COST was the establishment of an agreement where COST became a true partner in the sponsorship in the TransAction Conference. TransAction 1990 was the first year that COST began to receive a share of the net proceeds. The funds received from the TransAction Conferences were to be used to supplement RTAP funding and provide statewide training in the form of national guest presenters at COST sponsored workshops as well as other COST sponsored events.

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-Chair

Donna Kovalevich

#### Treasurer

John Murphy

#### Corresponding Secretary

Roberta Grayson

#### Recording Secretary

Betty Saloom (1990)

James Flynn (1991)

#### Northern Director-at-Large

Margaret Cook (1991)

#### Central Director-at-Large

Margaret Jamison (1991)

#### Southern Director-at-Large

Donald Brauckman (1991)

In May 1990, COST reached out to the Community Transportation Association of America and to the legislative offices of Senator Frank Lautenberg to oppose an UMTA regulation that would prohibit not-for-profit recipients from the leasing of the then Section 16(b)2 vehicles to public agencies. This interpretation would have forced COST's public members to turn back a portion of their fleets to not-for-profit agencies. The effort was ultimately successful and the dialogue may have contributed to the ultimate change of making what are now Section 5310 funds open to public agency recipients.

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## 1990 - 1991

In June 1990, the first National Paratransit Roadeo was held in Phoenix, Arizona. New Jersey State Paratransit Roadeo Champion Tyrone Gause of Essex County placed third.

Among the activities in the Fall of 1990 was the development of a COST Mission Statement, which was then adopted at a January 1991 COST meeting. The goals of this Mission Statement were to increase the visibility of COST by reaching out to national partners including the recently created Community Transportation Association of America. This period also marked a substantial growth in the number of COST members who became members of the national organization and as the first State Delegate from New Jersey, I brought CTAA members to New Jersey to learn more about our programs and to provide training and technical assistance to our members.

In December 1990, the COST organization was incorporated as a Section 501(c) (3) corporation, which was exempt from Federal Income Taxes. This incorporation reflected a major milestone in the maturation of COST as a not-for-profit organization.

In January 1991, COST member Michael Vieira from Essex County introduced a proposal to encourage the participation of vendor members. This was the beginning of an effort that would eventually lead to the Fall Vendor Expo that has become an annual event that has enhanced our working relationship with our vendor members.

In the Spring of 1991, one of the most divisive issues resulting from the ADA became a hotly debated issue between COST and NJ Transit. The concerns about the financial impact of the goal of having 50% of all County paratransit fleets become accessible and that all vehicles purchased using State and Federal funds be lift equipped led to a development of a position paper drafted by COST and ultimately a compromise that ensured progress on accessibility while mitigating the financial impacts on the counties.

During the Fall of 1991, COST took an active role in supporting legislation in the New Jersey Assembly and Senate to permit counties and municipalities to contract for transportation related services for up to three years. Before this legislation, all service contracts were limited to one year and this limited the number of potential contractors, many who would not bid on contracts that forced them to amortize their capital costs over a one-year period.

The years I served as COST Chairman were characterized by a reaching out to forge partnerships with other organizations with interests that intersected with those of COST. Among those were the State Association for the Offices on Disabilities with whom we had joint meetings, the NJ County Transportation Association which worked jointly on supporting state legislation of mutual interests (and for which I also served as Chairman from 1990 – 1992) and CTAA who's Board Members and Executive Director made visits to our state, providing training and technical assistance as our members began to become CTAA members. Finally, the participation in the financial proceeds from the TransAction Conference helped COST to increase the amount of training and technical assistance provided to our members.

1992 - 1994

# Chairwoman

## Roberta Grayson



Serving as Chairperson of the New Jersey Council in Special Transportation was a rewarding experience. My goal was to attempt to continue to move COST in the direction of its original intent - "to share knowledge with our fellow transportation providers and become an effective representative in the transportation network."

During my tenure as Chairperson, COST continued one of the practices of Steve Fittante, the previous Chairperson, by reaching out to other organizations with a common interest in paratransit services. In 1992, COST held its first joint meeting with the New Jersey Offices on Aging. The meeting was held at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris County and was a great success.

The turning point for the Vendor Members of COST commenced in 1992. At that time there were nine paid Vendors. In June of that year, at a meeting in Atlantic County, COST Secretary Michael Vieira suggested a proposal that would allow one Vendor Member to start off each meeting with a presentation of their product and/or services. The proposal was overwhelmingly supported by the membership. This tradition continues to date and allows COST members to become educated with many of the new and ongoing products and services that are available to the industry.

As the county paratransit systems began to expand and the funding for transportation began flattening out, there was a need to locate additional funding and somehow streamline our transportation programs.

Two legislative bills were introduced during this time in order to answer the counties cry for help. Because some counties collected fares and/or donations from riders, a bill was introduced to eliminate the attempt on the part of the NJ Department of Transportation to require that county vehicles participate in their (DOT) elaborate vehicle inspection process. Frank Reilly of Morris County was determined to change this "inconvenience". Thanks to the efforts of Frank and several COST members, a bill was introduced and passed exempting paratransit vehicles from DOT inspections regardless of whether a fare or donation was collected.

The other legislative bill (which really strained relations between New Jersey Transit and COST), was a bill that would eventually be passed that changed New Jersey Transit's administration allocation of the Casino Revenue's Senior Citizen and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Programs (SCADRTP) from 25% to 15%. The 10% difference that New Jersey Transit lost was a gain for the 21-county coordinated transportation programs. It should be noted that when this bill was originally introduced, COST did not support it because the bill had recommended taking the entire 18% administrative allocation away from New Jersey Transit.

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-Chair

Margaret Cook

#### Treasurer

John Murphy (1992)

Marie Richardson (1993 & 1994)

#### Corresponding Secretary

Michael M. Vieira

#### Recording Secretary

James Flynn

#### Northern Director-at-Large

Roger Fardin

#### Central Director-at-Large

Margaret Jamison

#### Southern Director-at-Large

Rick DeCosta (1992)

Donna Kovalevich (1993 & 1994)

In closing after years of guessing "who done it?", I confess it was I. At a meeting in 1991, where COST and New Jersey Transit were debating the famous (or infamous) "White Paper" (opposing the decision to make all county fleets 50% wheelchair accessible). Lyle Peterson, the Director of NJT's Office of Special Services, provided a cake in the shape of a hand that was inscribed " Don't bite the hand that feeds you". During the meeting, no one had noticed that I had secretly removed four of the fingers of icing, leaving only the middle one. To this day, I can still remember the looks on everyone's face when the cake box was opened.

# President

1995 - 1997

## Margaret Cook



The first COST meeting that I attended was in 1986 and held in a small room at the NJ Department of Transportation in Lawrenceville. At the time, usually 12-15 people attended - including the founders Jim Holman and Larry Cuomo.

When I became COST President in 1995, we had long outgrown the facility at DOT and after meeting in many different locations, were able to settle at the Monmouth County Library Building. The library served us so well over the years and the attendance averaged 35 people at each meeting.

In the early 1990's, COST had gone through a very adversarial period with NJ Transit. Counties had been looking for additional transportation funding and COST supported legislation which changed the Casino Revenue split from the original 75% - 25% to 85% - 15% - this gave the counties some much needed revenue but reduced New Jersey Transit's allocation. The antagonism got so bad that we were surprised at one meeting by a cake in the shape of a hand, brought in by a New Jersey Transit Executive which read "Don't bite the hand that feeds you.". On closer inspection of the hand, someone had removed all of the fingers except for the middle one... we all got the message.

I felt that one of my priorities as President was to develop a better working relationship with New Jersey Transit. To get anything accomplished, we needed each other and needed to work together as a team. Relationships began to improve.

After three years of bad weather at the Transaction Conference in Atlantic City, our vendors were not getting the kind of visibility that they needed for their vehicle displays. As a result, the Executive Committee came up with the idea of an EXPO in September that has become a major event. In the early 1990's a young man, new to the industry, joined our ranks and soon was elected to the COST Executive Committee due his hard work and dedication. Michael Vieira was my Vice President and gave the organization new life doing an excellent job with a newsletter and events like the EXPO.

While I was President, I had the opportunity to attend an UMTA Conference in Portland, Maine in an attempt to get a better recognition of the importance of Community Transportation within the transit field. I was surprised at how little they knew about the services we provide and the amount of transportation we offer.

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-President

Michael M. Vieira

#### Treasurer

Marie Richardson (1995 & 1996)

Roberta Grayson (1997)

#### Corresponding Secretary

Roger Fardin

#### Recording Secretary

James Flynn (1995 & 1996)

Jim Casa (1997)

#### Northern Director-at-Large

Joseph Roethel (1995)

John Stanik (1996 & 1997)

#### Central Director-at-Large

Margaret Jamison (1995 & 1996)

Richard Pinho (1997)

#### Southern Director-at-Large

Donna Kovalevich

The greatest benefit in being a member of COST is the wonderful networking opportunities we have as a group. Running a transportation system can be very stressful and the times that we get together as a group relieve the pressure when you have others who have walked in your shoes and know what you're dealing with. We all have an obligation to help out the new person in the business and support one another in making transportation available to the many that depend us.

# President

1998 - 2000



## Michael M. Vieira

In 1998, I had the honor of being elected President of COST. Not too long after being elected, I wrote my first "From the Desk of..." article in the COST Newsletter. Still today, many years after I wrote it, I vividly remember the first paragraph word for word.

*"Nine years ago, an inexperienced young man became employed as an assistant Operations Manager for one of New Jersey's largest paratransit systems. At first, this young man did not even know what paratransit was. He joined COST and was taken "under the wing" by a few experienced members. Today, this inexperienced man, a little older now, is the Transportation Administrator for the Essex County Special Transportation System, and most recently, elected COST's President."*

### Executive Committee

#### Vice-President

Jim Casa

#### Treasurer

Roberta Grayson

#### Corresponding Secretary

Roger Fardin (1998)

Kathleen Belles (1999 & 2000)

#### Recording Secretary

Nancy Nicola

#### Northern Director-at-Large

John Stanik

#### Central Director-at-Large

Richard Pinho

#### Southern Director-at-Large

Kathleen Belles (1998)

Dale Lloyd (1999 & 2000)

Although, no longer working for the Essex County Special Transportation System Program, I had learned much in my 11 years there, and was proud to have had the opportunity to build and expand the transportation program into one of the largest in the State. I was also very proud when the transportation program was awarded the COST System of the Year in 1993, 1994 and 1996.

The one thing that I learned from COST is that this organization is a very close group. Our members learn from one another and there is no hesitation to offer each other help, when needed.

I feel that I was very lucky to have "hooked" myself up with four people who, over the years I called my transportation mentors; Larry Cuomo, Roberta Grayson, Margaret Cook and Frank Reilly. These are the people to whom I give credit to for my early transportation knowledge.

When I became COST President, I was fortunate to have had a very dedicated Executive Committee with the desire to promote, enhance and expand paratransit throughout New Jersey. My philosophy as President was to operate COST as a business rather than an association.

My first "act of business" as President was to meet with Bob Koska at New Jersey Transit. During the last few years, the relationship between

COST and NJ Transit began to improve, but there was still room for even more improvement. Three years before becoming President, county transportation members were removed from the NJ Transit Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - this became one of our first agenda items. The COST membership believed that having experienced operators sitting on the CAC, was important and would allow the CAC members to learn more about paratransit directly from the people who operate them on a day-to-day basis. In June 1998, NJ Transit informed COST that three representatives selected by COST would again become voting members of the advisory committee.