

## TCLA 25 Class Roster & Contacts



**Lydia Benda**

[Lydia.Benda@nashville.gov](mailto:Lydia.Benda@nashville.gov)

Project Manager - Engineering & Construction  
WeGo Public Transit

Since 2018, I've worked at WeGo Public Transit as a Project Manager in Engineering and Construction. My work entails improving transit stops and improving the safety and efficiency of the WeGo transit system. From 2018 to 2021, I was the Project Manager for the Transit Signal Priority project on Murfreesboro Pike and the Nolensville Transit Improvement Project. I coordinate weekly with the Nashville Department of Transportation and Multi-modal infrastructure and Metro Water Services. Currently, I am the project manager for the Transit

Stop Improvement Project which focuses on adding sidewalks and improving transit stop platforms throughout the city, with a focus on the High Injury Network.



**Chris Bowe**

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Construction Manager  
AeroFarms

My name is Chris Bowe, and I will be starting a position shortly with OHM Advisors as an Assistant Project Manager. In addition to my work, I also advocate for safer streets via the NDOT Vision Zero Advisory Committee, advocate for more housing with Housing Now Nashville, and help lead the Maplewood Neighbors Association. I am 32 years

old, originally from the St. Louis, MO area and moved to Nashville a little over two years

ago by way of Newark, NJ. I have a dual degree in Civil and Architectural Engineering from the Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T).

I am a dedicated urbanist, with a passion for all things city life! My interest in TCLA stems from a personal mission to improve my city and bring greater quality and life and opportunity to all Nashvillians. I believe that our overreliance on the personal vehicle is choking out prosperity, visiting terrible harm on the environment, and degrading the casual bonds that help people build community and pride of place. I hope to learn more about how transit can be a part of Nashville's greener, kinder, richer future.

Outside of work and urbanism, I enjoy playing baseball with my sandlot team the Blue Jean Baseball Club, golfing, playing tennis with my wife, and working on DIY projects around the house. I am looking forward to meeting all of my fellow TCLA classmates and teachers very soon!



**Samantha Bowie**

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Engineer-in-training  
KCI Technologies

I am originally from Maryland and have lived in Nashville for a little over two years. Since starting my career with KCI, I have worked on various statewide, county, and private projects throughout Tennessee, including TDOT's Highway Performance Management System, NDOT's Bikeway Design, NDOT's SoBro Mobility Study, and numerous traffic impact studies. I have sizeable knowledge in Vistro, VISSIM, Synchro, Microstation and AutoCAD. I am currently working on the Connect Downtown Project which is a large planning effort that includes recommendations to improve transit through downtown Nashville with new transit hubs, transit exclusive lanes and transit signal priority. I am excited to be working in a city that is growing and has problems to solve. Growing up in Maryland, I frequented the Metro in DC and took the train or bus when visiting friends in New York. I enjoy traveling to new places to see how people move around whether that be foot, bike, car, bus or train.

No Photo

**Edmund (Ted) Carey**

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M.D., J.D.

Self

Mostly retired physician, attorney, and newspaper reporter.



**Veronica Allen Carter**

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Transportation Planner

Fairpointe Planning

Veronica has worked in the transportation industry for 3 years as a GIS analyst and now as a transportation planner. She uses her data visualization skills to create engaging surveys, present data analysis, and provide crucial information to make strategic decisions. Veronica has experience working in the public sector for the Tennessee Department of Transportation and is familiar with statewide, regional, and local transportation studies. In her free time, she likes to play tennis and experience Nashville spots with her husband and friends.



**Nick Cavin**

[nick23394@gmail.com](mailto:nick23394@gmail.com)

Affordable Housing Task Force  
NOAH

Nick Cavin is an organizer from Nashville, TN and currently serves on NOAH's Affordable Housing Taskforce. Since he moved back to Nashville after graduating from Rhodes College, Nick has organized dozens of workshops, protests, presentations, and campaigns centered on issues of racial justice and affordability. He was one of the core organizers for the successful campaign to establish Davidson County's Community Oversight Board, and worked as the Nashville New Leaders Council Co-Director for 2 years. He was also appointed to the Davidson County Democratic Party where he volunteered for 2 years. Nick is a graduate of the James Lawson Institute and New Leaders Council program, and has served on the board of several local nonprofits.



**Deirdre Curtis**

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Operations Supervisor  
WeGo Public Transit

Deirdre Curtis Transit Operations Supervisor, CPT, CBCS, CMA.

Operations Supervisor at WE GO PUBLIC TRANSIT, formerly Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority. Worked in transportation for 17 years, 35 years in the Medical field. I'm all about growth and community development. Finding ways to help everyone reach their full potential and destination when traveling using Public Transportation.



**Dee Davis**

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Realtor  
Parks Realty

“Relentless, savvy, and fun” are words clients have used

to describe Dee Davis with Parks Real Estate. Since January of 2001 Dee has been a Realtor in the Nashville and middle Tennessee area. A native Nashvillian like her father and grandfather, Dee knows this area and its people. Her valuable experience, relentless dedication, and adventurous spirit have kept her in this business through all kinds of tumultuous market conditions.

Dee graduated from University of the South in 1989 with a B.A., and was an advertising photographer until about 2002.

When not wrangling deals for her clients, Dee’s passions include competitive ballroom, swing, salsa dancing, triathlons, axe-throwing, cross fit, and distance swimming in pools, lakes, rivers,(including the Cumberland)and ocean and 2 escapes

from Alcatraz! She resides in Nashville and donates a portion of her commissions from every closing to dog rescues in Middle Tennessee.



**Karriem Dean**

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Assistant Vice President  
AllianceBernstein/ Nashville Downtown Partnership

A 20 plus year education advocate serving with United Negro College Fund and Fisk University as recruitment specialist to serve community with standardized test prep, application admission counsel. As an enterprise risk management specialist, I have 20 plus years of corporate experience supporting infrastructure, technology and operations. In the process of pursuing PhD in Accounting for fall 2024.

Currently serving as process auditor for technology and operations for AllianceBernstein.

Proud Alum of Fisk University.



**Ian Dinkins**

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Account Executive  
MP&F Strategic Communications

A Nashville native, I graduated from the University of Alabama in May 2017 with a bachelor's degree in communication and information sciences. During my time at MP&F, I've worked with a variety of clients in numerous industries, including Job Corps, the National Museum of African American Music, Austin Peay State University and CSX. My professional specialties include media relations,

social media planning, writing, digital advertising and grassroots efforts. Outside of the office, I'm a dedicated member of the Nashville community and passionate about making it a better place for everyone (Even New Nashville!) who lives here.



**John Dotson**

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Broker  
Parks Realty

I spent 30 years in the music business. I have been a real estate broker for 18 years. As a member of Greater Nashville Realtors, I've been actively engaged in Metro politics for more than 20 years. In both of attempts for better transit, including the 2018 referendum, I was an active advocate for progress. Although they both failed I understand the critical importance of not dropping this ball a third time. I believe I understand why the first two failed and just

how critical it is to get it right this time. Realtors play a critical role in moving this forward because of what and how we do what we do. I believe I have a position of influence immersed in understanding that will make my voice and presence effective.



**David 'Trey' Fussell**

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Intern

Calvert Street Group

My name is David Fussell (I also go by Trey), and I am an intern at Calvert Street Group. I recently graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Colorado Boulder with a degree in English and Journalism. Transit has been a strong interest of mine for years now, and I love reading / watching anything I can about the issues that specifically the United States has with regards to transit. I believe that cities and counties, especially Davidson County, have the ability to reshape American public transit and reduce or eliminate car dependency, though I recognize there are tall barriers blocking even the simplest of improvements. With this course, which is very exciting, I aim to achieve a deeper understanding of how transit is funded, what can or can't be done, and how to get the public to understand the importance of public transit. When I'm not working or thinking about transit, I like to read, bike, climb, watch movies, and shoot some hoop. Thank you for considering my application!



**Katie Galbato**

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Marketing Specialist II

HNTB

I have been in and out of the transportation industry since 2016. Growing up in Franklin, TN, I have witnessed an abundance of growth in Middle TN. Attending school at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, I was exposed to growth as well, and I'm curious to see where the state is headed with new and old businesses relocating their headquarters

here!



**Manaen Hall**

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Human Resources Associate Partner  
Amazon

I moved to Franklin, Tennessee as a youth. Prior to moving to Tennessee, I lived in Pasadena, California and enjoyed taking trips on the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's trains and busses into and around the city. After moving to Middle Tennessee, I deeply felt the loss of transit access and the inability to access nothing more than the surrounding few blocks of suburbia. As I grew, I got to experience and use other cities transit options like Denver, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York, which grew my interest in and desire for better transit in Middle Tennessee. As an adult, I moved to Nashville and was carless for years using WeGo as my primary mode of transit. I am passionate about public transit and prefer to take it over private passenger vehicles. I often evangelize to my friends and acquaintances about the merits, value, and better experience that can be had in public transit, and I hope to add to that knowledge and growth of transit through this program.



**Janie Haynes**

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St. Augustine's Chapel - Justice Salon

BA Vanderbilt University. French major, Spanish minor.

Occupations: teacher, caterer, bookseller, community volunteer!

Cookbook Chm. and Treasurer of Nashville Jr. League; Salvation Army Board member and Ladies Auxiliary President; member of Friends of Nashville Ballet, Children's Hospital and Carnegie Society of Nashville Public Library, St. Augustine's Chapel and NOAH; volunteer at Siloam Health Clinic; and 1st and 2nd Vice President of the Centennial Club.

Interests: hiking, listening to books, tennis, and Barre3!



**Jacob Kupin**

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Founder/Realtor  
The Kupin Group

Growing up outside of Westchester, New York, I have been an active user of transit my whole life.

I believe that transit provides accessibility, affordability, and it is a backbone to a thriving city.

I am a lifelong learner and excited for the potential to learn more about transit through this program. Additionally, I would love to share what I learned with others, and use it to make a positive impact on my city.

I believe as a leader in the transit space we can help shape our city's future!

I am currently the Buena Vista neighborhood, association president and the district 19 representative to the participatory budget. In these roles I have used my knowledge to serve my community. I look forward to continuing that.



**Ariel Long**

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Commuter with Enterprise

Growing up with 5 older brothers in a small town of SW Virginia, I learned the value of my voice. My dream for decades was to merge a career with helping those around me.

My role with Commuter with Enterprise delivers on that dream: helping people across the state of TN sustain their lives through creative, reliable transportation. I speak with employers daily on the importance of offering a benefit of transit to

employees, utilizing my voice for the welfare of others.

From this academy, I am hoping to gain a wholistic understanding of Transit in Tennessee. In the classes, I am excited to meet other leaders who are passionate about transit and building sustainable options for the community.



**Valeria Martinez**

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Planner I  
City of Gallatin

Valeria Martinez, a Tennessee native with an extensive background in community development currently serves as a Staff Planner for the City of Gallatin. Valeria is primarily responsible for land development and zoning cases. Valeria holds two undergraduate degrees from East Tennessee State University and a Master's degree from DePaul

University. Her interests include riding bikes, trail running, and Chicago White Sox baseball.



**Meghan Mathson**

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TDM Administrator  
NDOT

Meghan has 7 years of public sector experience in the transportation field. She specializes in transportation demand management, community outreach, and everything multimodal. Meghan is currently the TDM Program Manager for the Nashville Connector, the city's first transportation demand management program. The Nashville

Connector works with community stakeholders and employers to implement mobility strategies to reduce traffic congestion. Prior to joining NDOT, she oversaw a Transportation Management Organization program called Commute Solutions in Anoka County, Minnesota. During her time at Anoka County, she grew the TMO program from the ground up. It focused mainly on implementing strategic initiatives that supported commuter benefits and inspired mode shift travel behavior. She's currently participating in the Association of Commuter Transportation's ImpACT! Leadership Program, and serving as a co-chair overseeing Membership on ACT's SEACT Board.



**Kailey Newcome**

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Civil Engineer  
AECOM



**Zach Opheim**

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Affiliate Broker  
Compass Real Estate

Born and raised outside Chicago and a local Nashvillian for going on 12 years, I'm a licensed residential real estate agent looking to get more educated and involved with the ever-changing community and its needs. I'm a husband and dad to two beautiful children with the third coming in January. I'm on two committees with Greater Nashville Realtors Association after going through their leadership academy last year, as well as running for their Board of Directors this fall. I'm currently on the Emerging Leaders Board with Pencil and have sat on SOLID's board of directors in 2019.

I love to network with other like-minded and motivated individuals. I'm hoping this course can deepen my education and understanding of our cities' transit needs and provide me with the resources to bring awareness to the growing cause.



**Benjamin Passino**

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Grants Program Manager  
Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce  
Development

Ben Passino is an incoming Urban and Regional Planning graduate student at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. He's a Nashville native, graduating from Hume-Fogg Academic high school in 2009. Passino has served on various boards and

commissions including the Charlotte Robertson Neighborhood Association, Davidson County Young Democrats, Interagency Council on Homelessness, and Metro Nashville's Participatory Budget Steering Committee.

Passino returned to Nashville in 2014 after earning his bachelor's in history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America in partnership with Room In the Inn. Now at the State of Tennessee's Workforce Insights, Research and Reporting Engine Division (WIRED), his modern quantitative analysis of Tennessee's public workforce network has been recognized through the National Association of State Workforce Agencies.

He recently married his beautiful wife Brittany and loves their baby blue-heeler Dani.



**Philip Randall**

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Transit Planner  
WeGo Public Transit

I am a transit planner with WeGo Public transit specializing in equity efforts such as Title VI and public engagement efforts. Prior to moving to Nashville I earned my Masters in Community and Regional Planning at the University of Texas at Austin where I specialized in transportation issues as well as working with a transportation research agency while attending school. I eventually came across the opportunity to work with WeGo as a transit planner where I have been able to work on a variety of projects ranging from more outreach driven work such as surveying riders concerning work in North Nashville to more technical work such as NEPA for a park and ride in Murfreesboro. I have only begun working with WeGo since April of 2023 but in that time I have been able to work on so many different kinds of projects and am excited for future opportunities.



**Duane Robinson**

[Duane.robinson@nashville.gov](mailto:Duane.robinson@nashville.gov)

Transit Stop Supervisor  
WeGo Public Transit

I have a lot of years experience and in transportation as a driver. From shuttle buses in Chicago, to shuttle buses at the Atlanta airport to being a limousine driver. I have been a part of WeGo for over 8 yrs. I started my career with this company working as a general helper cleaning buses. Now I'm a couple of weeks away from my first year as transit stop supervisor.



**Spencer Sharpe**

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Lead Software Engineer  
Tend

My name is Spencer Sharpe. I've been a resident of Nashville for almost 10 years. I originally moved to Nashville to pursue music, and while that world is behind me, my wife and I have planted roots in our great city.

I am a graduate of Nashville Software School and work as a Software Engineer for a Nashville-based healthcare company, to which I commute via the WeGo 56 and 50.

Transit is one of my greatest passions. I am eager to learn more about how public transit and infrastructure works, what goes into funding and building this kind of development, and how to be a better advocate for making Nashville a more walkable, bike-able, and less car-oriented city.



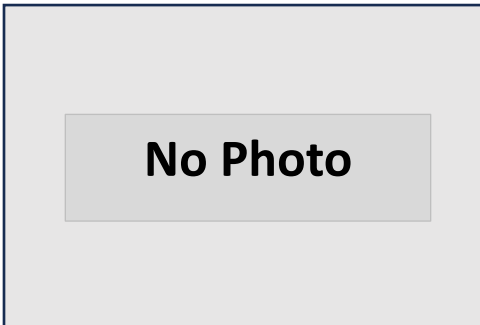
**Meghan Sigler**

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Senior Project Engineer  
KCI Technologies, Inc.

Meghan Sigler is a traffic engineer for KCI Technologies, Inc. who excels in the completion of traffic impact studies, mobility and network studies, and coordinated signal system timing. She is also an experienced traffic modeler with proficiency in Sidra Solutions, Synchro, and PTV VISSIM/Vistro.

Meghan has played a wide range of roles on traffic projects throughout the United States and understands the impact that accurate and comprehensive data collection has on a traffic project's outcome. She is detail-oriented and enjoys finding innovative solutions for incorporating all roadway users into a network.



**Christy Smith**

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NOAH



**Stephanie Tillman**

[stillman@tmagroup.org](mailto:stillman@tmagroup.org)

Business Development Director  
The Transportation Management Association (TMA)  
Group

Stephanie has over 20 years of business development and sales experience. She has successful skills developing new sales programs and launching strategic marketing plans earning multiple Presidents Clubs along the way. She also has experience developing growth strategies focused on increased market penetration, enhanced brand awareness and customer satisfaction.

Stephanie lives in Franklin, TN with her husband Glenn of 20 years and their beloved Weimaraner Zoey. Stephanie grew up in Ohio where she attended Ohio University and moved to Nashville in

1999. Stephanie loves being a part of the southern charm of the Nashville community. She has a passion for helping others and has recently joined TMA Group to help with their goal of providing everyone in every community and in every stage of life with an affordable and convenient travel option.

**No Photo**

**Gay Vekovius**

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NOAH/West End United Methodist Church

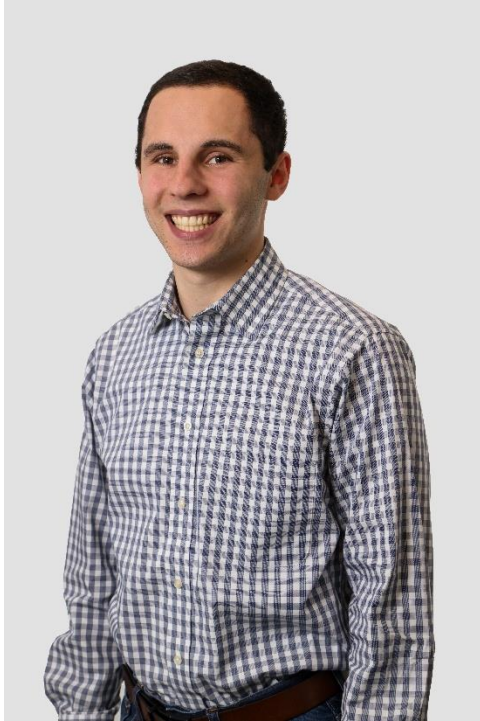


**Billy Ward**

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Operations Manager  
Murfreesboro Transit

I began my career with Murfreesboro Transit 3 years ago as a Driver, then Supervisor, and now the Operations Manager. It has been a rewarding experience allowing me to excel in the industry. I enjoy helping those in our community who need transportation for employment, shopping, or just simple freedom of movement. Prior to Murfreesboro Transit I worked in the Trucking industry as well as the Mental Health field.



**Ian Weiner**

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Marketing Coordinator  
Gresham Smith

I am currently a marketing coordinator for the transportation market at Gresham Smith, where I assist the firm with preparing proposals and other procurement deliverables for the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Transportation, and other municipalities in middle Tennessee and the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Previously, I was a member of the firm's communications team and created communications campaigns for the Land Planning, Healthcare, and Water + Environment markets. Prior to moving to Nashville, I was a press assistant at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C., where I coordinated public

relations strategies for several projects focused on securing racial justice and equity for underserved populations. I am passionate about TCLA and public transit for numerous reasons, but above all, I believe that robust public transit is the greatest influence on providing marginalized communities with access to socioeconomic mobility.



**Dannelle Whiteside**

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Vice President for Legal Affairs and Organizational  
Strategy  
Austin Peay State University

Dannelle Whiteside currently serves as Vice President for Legal Affairs and Organizational Strategy at Austin Peay State University where she is the institution's chief legal officer and also oversees public relations and marketing and strategic initiatives. She joined Austin Peay in 2017 as general counsel and was promoted to vice

president in the spring of 2019. During her career at Austin Peay, she also served as Secretary to the Board of Trustees. In August 2020, she served as interim President for seven months, leading the institution through the COVID-19 pandemic. Whiteside has also been an adjunct professor of education law at Belmont University's College of Law. Prior to her time at APSU, Whiteside served as General Attorney for the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, General Counsel for the Tennessee State Board of Education, and District Policy Advisor for Metro Nashville Public Schools. She is admitted to practice law in the State of Tennessee.



**Eric Wyse**

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Broker  
Parks Realty

It was the music business that brought me to Nashville, but it is my love for Music City that keeps me here. Originally from Vermont, I have found Nashville to be a great place to live, work, and play.

With prior experience in the music industry as a songwriter, keyboardist, and producer, I now focus on helping my friends and neighbors as they buy and sell the homes that make middle Tennessee living so rewarding.

I've lived in the historic Belmont/Hillsboro neighborhood, north Williamson County, Inglewood, and now reside in Bellevue.

I serve on the Board of Directors for Greater Nashville REALTORS® and chair the Professional Development Committee. I am also on the board of Tennessee REALTORS® and am a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee. I am a founding member and VP of the Nashville chapter of the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance.

I am a graduate of Belmont University (BS) and Lee University (MCM).