

## Get to Know IBTTA's 2019 President, Christopher Tomlinson

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Chris Tomlinson is the Executive Director of the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA), the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and Interim Executive Director of the newly created Atlanta-region Transit Link Authority (ATL).

Bill Cramer, IBTTA's Communications Director, recently sat down with Chris Tomlinson to learn a bit more about his background and interests.

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**Q: How did you become interested or begin working in transportation?  
Please tell us a bit about your work in the transportation industry.**

**A:** I began my career in transportation when I joined the Georgia Department of Transportation as General Counsel in 2008. I then moved to Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) in July 2009, where I served as Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel before becoming the Executive Director in 2013.

What I truly enjoy about my work in transportation is the variety. My work in the tolling sector of transportation represents an interesting blend of public finance, technology, public policy and of course transportation. Over the past three years, my role and that of my agency, SRTA, has expanded into the transit sector, as well. Collectively, my work is best classified as a focus primarily on urban mobility issues and the roles that congestion-priced toll facilities can play to move vehicle-based commuters and public transit through our congested surface transportation networks, as well as how tolls can be used to help finance the public transportation infrastructure.

I have the privilege of leading three state-level authorities focused on different aspects of Georgia's transportation needs, as well as serving on the Board of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Atlanta's largest public transit services operator.

**Q: How long have you been a member or involved with IBTTA?**

**A:** SRTA is a long-standing member of IBTTA, and its involvement as a member long predates me. I personally have been involved with IBTTA since 2009, and I've loved every single minute of it!

**Q: What is the number one benefit you and SRTA receive by being a member of IBTTA?**

**A:** The number one benefit is access to a global network of peers, subject-matter experts and colleagues, all focused on bringing innovative solutions to advance the toll industry’s contributions to the world’s transportation networks. Through one organization, I can tap into a wealth of knowledge and experience that enhances my ability to deliver on my responsibilities and overcome obstacles to achieving the needs and goals of my agency.

**Q: Please share with us your vision for the year and how your theme, *Driving the Future of Mobility*, fits in.**

**A:** My vision for 2019 is for us as an organization to expand the reach of IBTTA and its members, to help address the transportation needs of our stakeholders. Specifically, to further define the role that our members play in the greater transportation sector by bringing our unique viewpoint and track record of innovation to meeting the transportation needs of today, and more importantly, the challenges in front of us to meet the needs of tomorrow.

We can see a convergence of technological advancements in the areas of connected and autonomous vehicles; exponential growth in the areas of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications; a resurgence and renewed focus on the role transit will play in meeting our urban mobility needs; and, unfortunately, continued increases in congestion in our urban areas. My chosen theme, *Driving the Future of Mobility*, focuses on IBTTA helping to define the role its members can and should play in shaping these trends and addressing the associated challenges. The theme is designed for us to play more of the role of “Driver” in addressing these trends, as opposed to the more passive role of “passenger” that merely observes and reacts to these trends.

**Q: What do you see as the two or three biggest opportunities or challenges facing surface transportation today?**

**A:** Opportunities:

1. The convergence of technological advancements in the areas of connected and autonomous vehicles, vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications;
2. the resurgence and renewed focus on the role transit will play in meeting our urban mobility needs; and
3. the upcoming federal transportation reauthorization bill.

Challenges:

1. The continued increases in congestion in our urban areas;
2. the lack of adequate funding for transportation infrastructure; and
3. the lack of technological standards in our industry (primarily within the U.S.).

Q: What role is IBTTA playing in building practical solutions on these issues?

A: IBTTA's aggregation of industry-wide data through our TollMiner initiative brings value to our members and a source of credible data to our stakeholders and the public. Our work on addressing U.S. Interoperability has helped identify best practices in terms of business requirements and helped forge a regional approach that is flexible to meet the unique needs and issues faced by varied geographic regions. Finally, IBTTA's efforts to make investments in identifying and encouraging the next generation of transportation professionals to consider careers in tolling is a practical solution that will sow the seeds of future innovators of our industry, ensuring that they are in place and ready to address new challenges that have yet to present themselves.

Q: Please share with us the reasoning behind and your hopes for the Peer-to-Peer Networking Program that you established this year.

A: As I stated earlier, one of the greatest member benefits of belonging to IBTTA is the ability to learn from the experiences of our peers. We are known for the rich, informative content at our meetings, where members can share their challenges and learn how others have overcome them. The Peer to Peer exchange is an opportunity for a more in-depth form of networking, where agencies can move beyond panel discussions and PowerPoint presentations. They can get to the details of what works, and learn the lessons of what does not work, in a more intimate environment which allows for an ongoing dialogue that simply is not possible during a conference session attended by hundreds of participants.

The Exchange Program will also introduce the next generation of toll agency leaders who are at the journeyman stage of their career to their peers at other agencies, while giving them an opportunity to learn from and interact with C-level leadership beyond their own home agency.

The goal here is to forge new relationships and introductions that might not have otherwise had an opportunity to occur; as well as expose toll professionals to the fact that there are multiple approaches to similar problems and job responsibilities. It is my hope that everyone who participates simply learns something new and expands their networks at an earlier stage in their career than might have otherwise occurred but for this new program.

Q: What is your favorite food, book, movie, music or way to spend your free time?

A: Favorite Food: New York Pizza or a good steak.

Favorite Book: All of Tom Clancy's novels.

Favorite Movie: Depends on the genre -- *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* is my favorite western. *Ronin* is my favorite action thriller (best car chases ever!), and *The Usual Suspects* is my favorite "whodunit."

Favorite Music: Totally depends on my mood - Reggae (EVERYTHING by Bob Marley), Neo Soul (anything by Jill Scott), Jazz (Coltrane), Old School Hip Hop (I need to be able to understand the words!)

Free Time: Traveling to new places; hanging out with family and friends