

*The*  
**APTA**

**HONORS**

*Celebrating Excellence & Leadership*

SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

# Welcome to the 2025 APTA Honors, celebrating excellence and leadership in public transportation!

APTA is honored to celebrate with you this year as we gather in Boston to recognize the industry's great talent and potential. From executives and leaders who have helped distinguish our industry for decades to students and young professionals who are just embarking on their careers, the APTA Honors represent the best of public transportation's recent achievements, current innovations, and future aspirations.

The **APTA Awards** recognize individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the public transportation industry in North America. Their ideas, improvements, and vision have greatly propelled our industry. This year, we induct six industry icons into APTA's prestigious **Hall of Fame**, a special honor reserved for individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to public transportation and who have long and distinguished careers in the industry and with APTA.

APTA's **Sustainability Commitment Program** recognizes organizations for their continued achievements in sustainability.

The **AdWheel Awards** recognize the marketing, communications, and customer experience efforts of APTA's members. Additionally, this annual competition creates a structure to share best practices and to raise awareness of the critical value of public transportation marketing professionals to the industry.

**Leadership APTA** is our industry's investment in a broad-based group of highly motivated and dedicated future leaders.

We thank you as we celebrate and congratulate all our honorees!

Boston, Massachusetts  
2025 APTA TRANSform

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# AWARDS

*Celebrating Excellence & Leadership*

## Outstanding Partnership in Public Transportation

This award honors a public transportation project or program where a transit agency, a prime contractor, and a certified small business worked in true partnership to deliver exceptional results—demonstrating innovation, transparency, capacity building and shared success.

### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Kimley-Horn, and Foursquare ITP

The Better Bus Network Redesign represents a groundbreaking collaboration between the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro), Kimley-Horn, and certified woman-owned small business Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning (ITP)—a model partnership that exemplifies the values of innovation, equity, and customer-focused planning. This first complete overhaul of the Metrobus system in 50 years delivers a faster, more frequent, and more reliable bus network to the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, providing greater access to hundreds of thousands of daily customers.

Together, Metro, Kimley-Horn, and Foursquare ITP have delivered an ambitious, data-driven vision by blending Metro's strategic leadership with Kimley-Horn's communications and program management expertise and Foursquare ITP's small-business innovation in service planning and data analysis. This trio—operating as a single, united team—transcended



traditional consultant-client boundaries. During the planning effort, the team jointly led one of the most inclusive public engagement campaigns in Metro’s history, hosting more than 225 events and receiving more than 33,000 comments across three phases. These insights directly shaped the final 2025 Better Bus Network, approved by Metro’s Board in November 2024 and implemented in July 2025.

This partnership’s impact is both measurable and meaningful:

- Improved service: Adding 11 more routes to the Frequent Service Network and expanding weekend service for 20,000 more residents.
- Focused outcomes: Increasing access for residents to key destinations such as hospitals, groceries, and entertainment locations, resulting in an anticipated increase in ridership of 13,000 daily trips.
- System efficiencies that reduced vehicle needs by 4 percent, while increasing service by 7 percent, all within existing funding resources.

Metro guided the redesign, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, and executed communications through its various channels. Foursquare ITP played a central role in engagement design and technical planning. Its leadership was evident in crafting route-level changes, building interactive digital tools, and operational implementation guidance of comprehensive bus changes.

Kimley-Horn brought a regional perspective, translating technical findings into accessible, visually compelling communications that guided stakeholder understanding and support, and applied a custom-built comment mapping and processing tool that facilitated feedback loops with public and stakeholders.

Beyond deliverables, the project’s true innovation lay in its collaborative structure. Metro and its consultant partners adopted a “war room” approach—meeting daily, sharing files on a unified platform, and ensuring quality control through mutual accountability. The team was structured to promote communication, eliminate hierarchy, emphasize shared ownership, and prioritize the best idea, regardless of source. This approach set new standards in consultant-agency collaboration.

The team’s inclusivity extended to the grassroots. Through ride-alongs, multilingual outreach, and the launch of more than 80 “Better Bus Partner” community organizations, the project redefined what it means to plan with the public—not just for them.

The Better Bus Network is more than a service redesign—it is a reinvestment in people, community, and the future of transit. The partnership between Metro, Kimley-Horn, and Foursquare ITP, with additional subconsultant support from Cambridge Systematics, WBA Research, and NeoNiche Strategies, is an inspiring example of how a transit agency, a prime contractor, and a certified disadvantaged businesses can come together as equals to deliver lasting, community-centered change. Their success is already serving as a national model—and makes them truly deserving of the 2025 APTA Outstanding Partnership in Public Transportation Award.

## Distinguished Service

This award honors a public transportation decision maker, an elected or appointed official, or private citizen who has contributed to the public transportation industry through policy, legislative initiative, and leadership.

### Matthew J. Welbes

Matthew Welbes has served in top leadership positions at FTA, including the past 17 years as the agency's executive director. During his tenure, he has advanced major positive changes to public transportation through policies, programs, and projects, all while building relationships that support transit passengers in communities across the United States.



In coordination with FTA's appointed Administrator and Deputy Administrator, Matthew guides the management of the agency's \$21 billion annual budget and more than 500 people who work with its stakeholders. He provides FTA with leadership continuity while regularly accelerating critical changes to carry out each administration's vision for stronger public transportation. During the four most recent federal transit law reauthorizations, beginning with SAFETEA-LU in 2005, Matthew has coordinated FTA-wide teams to deliver major statutory changes in areas such as safety, state of good repair, accessibility, emergency relief, and major capital projects.

Matthew is known for solving novel challenges, including responding to disasters and economic crises. In early 2009, during a global economic recession, FTA received \$8.4 billion to invest in transit. Matthew brought a focused FTA team together and through timely work with thousands of transit providers delivered the intended results. He also engaged FTA

after Hurricane Sandy struck in 2012, effectively managing \$10.4 billion for rebuilding and hardening transit infrastructure. Again, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, he worked to ensure more than \$69 billion in relief funding sustained critical services. Repeatedly, with the federal transit program in the spotlight, Matthew has collaborated with key stakeholders to meet the moment.

Matthew is a champion of a measurement and results-oriented culture at FTA. This framework has guided initiatives to both improve existing transit asset conditions and expand high-capacity public transportation. Early in his career, he authored FTA Conditions & Performance Reports to Congress, and, later worked on state-of-good-repair initiatives and creation of the 2012 Transit Asset Management law.

As executive director, Matthew has helped guide FTA funding and oversight for construction of 130 new high-capacity Capital Investment Grants bus and rail projects totaling 1,400 miles and more than 1,800 stations. He has led efforts for improved investment analysis, more sophisticated project management, and accelerated project delivery. Matthew is a proponent of research and learning practices—such as FTA’s Predicted vs. Actual studies and Construction Roundtables—to drive on-schedule and on-budget project outcomes, all supporting more places where communities can grow.

Matthew first collaborated with APTA 30 years ago, conducting FTA passenger surveys to measure transit’s economic value. While leading FTA’s research office, he helped secure funding to sustain the Transit Cooperative Research Program’s practical research. He is currently working closely with APTA’s Bus Task Force, a collaboration that led to FTA policy announcements and outreach bolstering the competitiveness and health of U.S. bus manufacturing.

During organization leadership transitions, Matthew has served more than a year performing the FTA Administrator role and more than eight years performing the Deputy Administrator duties. With investments in early-career hiring, mentoring, leadership training, and team building, FTA evolved into a high-performing, mission-focused agency, repeatedly recognized for increased employee satisfaction, effective leadership, and the ability to get things done.

Growing up along the #5 bus route in south Minneapolis, he routinely rode Metro Transit to reach jobs, attend high school, and go to college. Matthew Welbes knows that the transit industry exists to serve others, and that working closely with FTA and industry colleagues to improve public transportation is our shared legacy.

## Outstanding Public Transportation Business Member

This award honors an individual, employed by an APTA public transportation business member, who has made outstanding contributions to the public transportation industry.

### Buddy Coleman

Buddy Coleman exemplifies what it means to be a business leader in service of the public good. As Chief Customer Officer and Principal Owner of Clever Devices, Buddy has driven extraordinary innovation in transit technology while elevating industry standards through integrity, collaboration, and a deep commitment to community impact. His leadership is not about titles—it is about transformation.



Since joining Clever Devices in 2009, Buddy has helped shape the company into one of North America's most respected providers of intelligent transportation systems. Under his leadership, Clever Devices has achieved consistent double-digit growth, executed three successful acquisitions, and expanded its global footprint. Yet for Buddy, success is measured not only in numbers, but in outcomes for agencies, operators, and passengers. He leads from the field as much as the boardroom, engaging directly with frontline teams to tailor solutions that improve service reliability, safety, and communication.

Buddy's influence reaches far beyond his company. As Chair of the APTA Business Members Board of Governors (BMBG), he brought renewed energy and vision to the group—launching a now-annual volunteer initiative that has contributed hundreds of hours of service to communities across the country. His leadership on the APTA Board of Directors,

Executive Committee, Audit Committee, and Business Development Committee reflects his unwavering dedication to governance, accountability, and strategic advancement. His role as a connector—linking public agencies with private-sector innovation—has made him a trusted voice across all corners of the industry.

Whether representing APTA on global study missions or mentoring rising professionals, Buddy shows up with purpose. He has served as a U.S. delegate to transit systems in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, bringing global best practices home to enhance domestic operations in zero-emissions, Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), and post-pandemic resilience.

Buddy's leadership is also deeply human. He is admired for his humility, authenticity, and tireless commitment to doing right by people. His ethos is rooted in service—cultivated over three decades in the food service industry and carried into every interaction in transit. As a mentor, strategist, and ambassador, Buddy uplifts others and builds lasting trust. Agencies rely on him. Peers endorse him. Communities benefit from him.

For his visionary leadership, transformative impact, and selfless dedication to advancing public transportation, Buddy Coleman is more than deserving of the 2025 APTA Business Member of the Year Award. He doesn't just represent the best of the business community—he redefines what that community can achieve.

## Outstanding Public Transportation Board Member

An individual serving on the governing board of a public transportation system who has made outstanding contributions to the public transportation industry.

### David M. Stackrow

For nearly three decades, David Stackrow has been a steadfast force in public transportation governance, embodying the highest ideals of leadership, service, and innovation. Appointed to the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) Board of Directors in 1995, David's tenure is a testament to enduring commitment and visionary thinking. Serving as Board Chair in three distinct terms and in every officer role, David has guided CDTA's evolution from a conventional bus operator to a mobility leader and community cornerstone. His influence reshaped policy, deepened community trust, and fostered transformative growth.



David's hallmark initiative, *Simple Fare*, revolutionized CDTA's fare structure. Recognizing the customer experience as central to transit ridership, he proposed a streamlined payment system that eliminated confusing options and transfer slips, creating a simpler, rider-focused approach that directly contributed to record-breaking ridership. This single innovation exemplifies his intuitive leadership: practical, rider-oriented, and impactful.

Equally transformative has been David's national influence through the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). Since joining APTA's Transit Board Member Committee in 2009, David has steadily

advanced through leadership roles—culminating in his term as APTA Chair from 2018 to 2019. His legacy includes championing the APTA Strategic Plan and Surface Transportation Law Recommendations, achievements rooted in a spirit of unity and service. With a steady hand and collaborative approach, David urged the industry to “speak with one voice,” and that voice led to meaningful change.

Perhaps most notably, David played a pivotal role in guiding APTA through one of its most emotionally complex initiatives: the development of the *Racial Equity Action Plan*. As Chair of the newly renamed Strategic Engagement Council during a time of national reckoning, David led with empathy, resolve, and fairness. His leadership ensured a process that was deliberate, equitable, and ultimately unanimous, reflecting his deep belief in public transit as a vehicle for justice and opportunity.

A sought-after mentor, David co-authored *Building a Solid Board-CEO Partnership*, a guide widely regarded as essential reading for board members and CEOs nationwide. His mentorship at CDTA and across APTA is unmatched, with him always taking the time to share insights and foster the next generation of transit leaders.

Beyond transit, David is a civic leader, youth mentor, CPA, and volunteer, whose service spans from local school boards to national industry committees. His lifetime of public service exemplifies APTA’s values of leadership, integrity, and excellence.

David Stackrow is more than an outstanding board member, he is the embodiment of what thoughtful, dedicated public service can achieve. He holds the distinct honor of being the only Transit Board Member in the history of the APTA Awards who has twice received this award. For his visionary leadership, lifelong commitment, and unparalleled contributions to APTA, CDTA, and the national transit community, David Stackrow is worthy of the recognition of the 2025 APTA Outstanding Transit Board Member Award.

## Outstanding Public Transportation Chief Executive Officer

This award honors a manager of an APTA public transportation system member who has made outstanding contributions to the public transportation industry.

### Kenneth A. McDonald

Kenneth A. McDonald's distinguished 28-year career in public transportation exemplifies strategic leadership, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to operational excellence. As President and CEO of Long Beach Transit, and through a legacy of impactful roles across major agencies, Kenneth has proven himself as one of the most accomplished and forward-thinking leaders in the industry.



Kenneth's journey began at MARTA, where his work in operations and maintenance led to a 10 percent reduction in service interruptions and a boost in rail on-time performance from 85 to 92 percent. He championed employee training and maintenance accountability, laying the groundwork for improved rider experiences and greater system reliability. At the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, he further distinguished himself by achieving the agency's highest on-time performance since Proposition E, reducing missed service by more than 7 percent and cutting collisions by 28 percent—a testament to his relentless pursuit of safety and operational efficiency.

Beyond agency operations, Kenneth broadened his influence at Parsons Brinckerhoff, where he oversaw critical transit infrastructure projects across North America. From Toronto to Atlanta, his leadership

ensured multimillion-dollar initiatives were completed with excellence, sustainability, and public benefit at their core.

At Long Beach Transit, Kenneth has redefined the organization's trajectory. His focus on strategic planning, activity-based budgeting, and conflict resolution has created a culture of performance and accountability. Under his leadership, the agency has embraced innovation, spearheading the transition to a zero-emission fleet and advancing environmental sustainability. His emphasis on workforce development, including a transformative six-week supervisory training program, has empowered staff and improved service delivery across the board.

Kenneth's contributions transcend agency borders. His long-standing involvement with APTA—serving on the Bus and Paratransit CEOs Committee; Planning, Policy and Program Development Committee, and the Mid-Size Operations Committee, among others—demonstrates his national leadership and commitment to advancing the transit industry as a whole. He is a frequent speaker, respected thought leader, and trusted advisor in shaping federal policy and funding strategies.

Further reinforcing his qualifications is Kenneth's integrity and professionalism. He is a leader who builds trust, inspires collaboration, and delivers measurable results. Whether advocating for sustainable transit policy, mentoring emerging professionals, or engaging with local stakeholders, he exemplifies the APTA core values of leadership, accountability, and excellence.

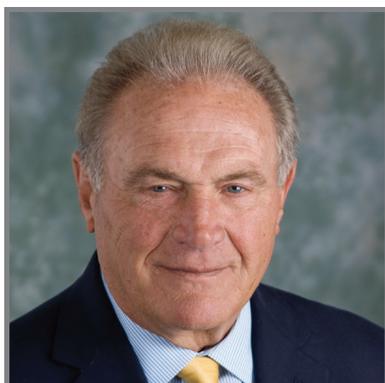
Kenneth McDonald has elevated every agency he has touched, improved service for millions of riders, and left an enduring mark on the industry. His visionary leadership and unmatched dedication to public transportation make him eminently deserving of the 2025 APTA Outstanding Public Transportation CEO Award.

## Hall of Fame

This special honor is reserved for individuals whose careers and contributions to public transportation and to APTA have been significant, substantial and distinguished. Induction to the APTA Hall of Fame is a prestigious honor that recognizes outstanding achievements and a lasting legacy within the industry.

### Frank DiGiacomo (*posthumous*)

Frank DiGiacomo's enduring legacy in the public transportation industry is marked not only by his professional achievements but by the character, commitment, and quiet leadership he brought to every endeavor. Over decades of dedicated service, Frank left an indelible imprint on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the broader transit community through his visionary work, principled leadership, and deep commitment to mentoring the next generation.



A long-serving and respected member of the Business Member Board of Governors (BMBG), Frank's contributions to APTA were far-reaching and foundational. He was not simply an active participant—he was a builder of institutions and ideas. As Chair of the BMBG Bylaws Committee, Frank safeguarded the group's historical record and ensured its governance remained robust and relevant. But perhaps his most visible legacy is *Business in Motion*, the BMBG newsletter he founded and published, which became an essential voice for business members and a model of clear, inclusive, and impactful communication within the industry.

Frank also played a central role in shaping industry conversations. He led key roundtable events, championed APTA's strategic planning goals, supported industry-wide funding efforts, and was a regular presence at

APTA Board of Directors meetings. Yet his most significant contributions were behind the scenes—as a mentor, guide, and champion for countless professionals across both public agencies and private suppliers.

A tireless advocate for the American Public Transportation Foundation (APTF), Frank not only contributed on behalf of his organization but gave personally, reflecting his deep belief in the power of education and opportunity. His generosity extended far beyond financial contributions—he gave his time, wisdom, and encouragement freely, shaping the careers of many and strengthening the fabric of the industry.

Frank’s commitment to APTA’s core values is both exemplary and enduring. His leadership shone through in his editorial work and committee service; his integrity defined his journalistic standards and personal conduct. He modeled excellence in every interaction and demanded the same in his work. Through his editorial team, which he supported selflessly, Frank embodied fairness, teamwork, and professionalism. His approach to accountability was unwavering—ensuring balanced, thorough, and accurate reporting on the complex issues facing the industry.

Recognized for his distinguished service, Frank was named APTA’s Outstanding Business Member in 2002 and later was honored by the National Association for Pupil Transportation with its Distinguished Service Award (2014) and Hall of Fame induction (2016). These accolades affirm what his colleagues had long known: Frank DiGiacomo was one of the most respected and influential figures in transportation media and governance.

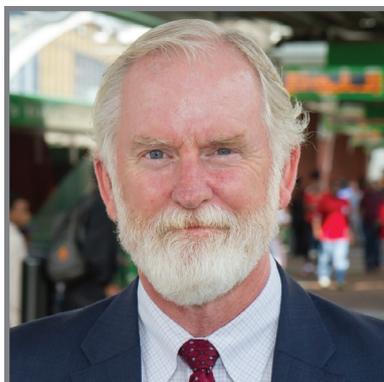
For his visionary leadership, unwavering integrity, and immeasurable impact on the people and principles that define public transportation, Frank DiGiacomo merits this honor of receiving the 2025 APTA Hall of Fame Award.

## Hall of Fame

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### Mark Donaghy

Mark Donaghy's remarkable 45-year career in public transportation is a masterclass in courage, integrity, and transformative leadership. A second-generation transit professional and the son of APTA Hall of Fame inductee James W. Donaghy, Mark has not only honored his family legacy but has also forged his own through groundbreaking achievements; unwavering advocacy; and an unmatched commitment to equity, community, and operational excellence.



Mark's journey began humbly in 1976 as a driver and mechanic during Omaha's school desegregation. That early act of stepping forward when others stepped back foreshadowed a lifetime of service marked by moral clarity and principled action. Throughout his decades in roles across Nebraska, Minnesota, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Montana, and Ohio, Mark's focus remained consistent: protect the vulnerable, build opportunity, and raise the standard for all.

His most historic achievement came as CEO of the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (RTA), where he successfully challenged the City of Beavercreek's refusal to allow public transit—securing the first-ever Federal Highway Administration civil rights ruling against a city for discrimination in transit access. Mark did not just oversee this

victory—he drove the first bus across the threshold of justice. This pivotal moment, captured in Ohio State University’s documentary *Free to Ride*, stands as a landmark in transportation civil rights history and earned him a lifetime NAACP achievement award.

Mark’s leadership legacy spans policy, operations, and human impact. From launching ADA-accessible programs and championing women and minorities in the workplace, to lobbying with The Bus Coalition and co-founding the American Bus Benchmarking Group, he has left an enduring footprint on both service quality and funding equity nationwide. His leadership helped shape TEA-21 and laid groundwork for reauthorization frameworks like MAP-21 and the FAST Act, ensuring transit systems of all sizes had a seat at the table.

Through APTA, Mark served with distinction on the Board of Directors, Legislative Committee, Bus and Paratransit CEOs Committee, CEO Coordinating Council, and several task forces, offering selfless service even to the point of volunteering to eliminate his own board seat for greater organizational reform. He championed minorities and women through award-winning agency practices and steered his teams through some of Dayton’s darkest hours with poise, compassion, and unity. Under his guidance, RTA became a symbol of strength during natural disasters, civil unrest, and tragedy—offering not just mobility, but hope.

A recipient of countless national and state honors, including APTA’s award for Advancement of Minorities and Women in the Workplace in 1997 and Spirit of the ADA Awards in Kentucky and Ohio, Mark’s impact is measured not just in programs and policies, but in the people he empowered. He is remembered as a CEO who rode the buses, worked the floors, and never asked for more than he gave. He has been, and remains, the embodiment of APTA’s core values: leadership, fairness, professionalism, excellence, and accountability.

For a lifetime of fearless advocacy, barrier-breaking service, and transformational leadership, Mark Donaghy stands as a profound and deserving candidate for the 2025 APTA Hall of Fame Award.

## Hall of Fame

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### Jeanne Krieg

For more than three decades, Jeanne Krieg has exemplified the highest ideals of leadership, integrity, and innovation in public transportation. As the longtime CEO of the Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority, more commonly known as Tri Delta Transit, Jeanne transformed a small suburban agency into a nationally recognized leader in sustainable operations, impartial workforce development, and customer-focused service. Her lasting impact on both her community and the industry at large makes her a deeply deserving recipient of the 2025 APTA Hall of Fame Award.



Jeanne began her public transportation journey in 1991 in Tri Delta Transit's marketing department, where her creative campaigns earned numerous APTA AdWheel Awards. Just four years later, she was named the agency's third General Manager—and ultimately its CEO—a role she held until her retirement in 2023. Under her stewardship, Tri Delta Transit grew from a modest three-route operation with 13 buses into a robust regional system with 106 buses, 17 lines, and four distinct services.

Jeanne's vision extended far beyond operational growth. She led Tri Delta Transit to become an early adopter of alternative fuels, real-time passenger information systems, and zero-emission technologies. Her agency was one of the first of its size to embrace sustainability, earning multiple local and state awards including the Leadership in Sustainability

and Environmental Partnership Awards. She also championed accessibility and fairness, evidenced by the Ilene Lubkin Senior Transportation Provider Award for Contra Costa County and her persistent efforts to build a workforce culture rooted in accountability and advancement.

Jeanne graduated in 1998 from Leadership APTA and is the first in its history to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. She has been a powerhouse within APTA governance—serving on the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, CEO Coordinating Council, Strategic Engagement Council, Legislative Committee, and more. Her national leadership also includes extensive work with the Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), where she served as Chair of the TOPS Committee. She has long been a tireless advocate for small and mid-sized agencies, helping shape policy frameworks and creating collaborative spaces for peer learning through the Small Operations Committee.

Beyond her titles and accolades, Jeanne is known as a generous mentor, a passionate advocate, and a trusted connector. She has shared her expertise with institutions like the Greater Plains Transportation Institute and CALACT, while being an enthusiastic champion for tools and technologies that enhance community service. Her legacy includes a peer review system for small operators, workforce development pipelines, and a culture of care that earned Tri Delta Transit one of the lowest turnover rates in the industry.

From her 2024 WTS Katherine G. Johnson Trailblazer Award, the 2021 California Transit Association Small Operator of the Year, and the 2014 APTA Outstanding Transportation System Award, Jeanne's career is marked by visionary leadership and tangible outcomes. But what truly sets her apart is how she led, with humility, collaboration, and a commitment to public good.

For her transformative service, unwavering dedication to fairness, and enduring contributions to the industry, Jeanne Krieg is not only eligible but eminently worthy of being inducted into the APTA Hall of Fame.

## Hall of Fame

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### Feysan Lodde

Feysan Lodde is a pioneer whose impact on the public transit industry is both historic and transformative. Nearly 50 years ago, she co-founded MV Transportation with a single para-transit van and a bold vision: to provide safe, dignified mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities—at a time when such access was neither common nor required by law.

Today, her work has touched millions, helped shape national standards for accessible transportation, and created career opportunities for hundreds of thousands of employees.

Feysan's leadership was never limited to the boardroom. She worked every job at MV—from driving and dispatching to managing operations—gaining firsthand insight into the challenges of frontline workers and the needs of vulnerable riders. Her hands-on, servant-leader approach laid the foundation for MV's people-first culture and performance-driven growth. Under her stewardship as Chief Administrative Officer, MV became the largest privately owned passenger transportation company in North America, providing more than 100 million trips annually.

What truly distinguishes Feysan is her unwavering commitment to equity and inclusion. Her founding vision predated the Americans with Disabilities Act by 15 years, and she proved that the private sector could



not only meet public need but set a higher standard for access, dignity, and service. She infused those same values into the company's culture, championing workforce development, creating career paths for underrepresented groups, and investing in community partnerships that extended MV's impact far beyond mobility.

Feysan's commitment to advancing public transportation did not stop at MV. She has been a dedicated supporter of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for more than two decades. Under her leadership, MV has actively participated in APTA's conferences, committees, technical panels, and white papers—contributing thought leadership on ADA compliance, paratransit innovation, and public-private contracting. MV has also invested more than \$500,000 in support of APTA initiatives, reflecting Feysan's belief in industry collaboration and collective progress.

She prioritized sending emerging leaders from MV to APTA events, helping grow the next generation of transit professionals and positioning MV staff in key APTA roles, including Leadership APTA graduates and committee leaders. Her strategic foresight ensured MV's legacy of service would continue through strong, diverse leadership.

Feysan has been recognized nationally for her leadership and advocacy, receiving awards from the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, Black Enterprise, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, and many others. But her most enduring legacy is the standard she set; that transit can and must be inclusive, innovative, and purpose-driven.

Through vision, humility, and relentless service, Feysan Lodde has not only built a company, but helped shape the modern ethos of American public transportation. Her induction into the APTA Hall of Fame would not only honor a remarkable legacy, it would remind the industry of what is possible when leadership is rooted in compassion and driven by purpose.

## Hall of Fame

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### **William R. Mooney III** (*posthumous*)

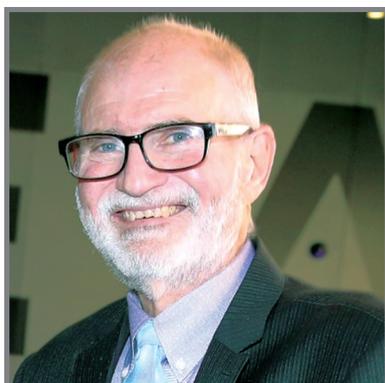
Few individuals have shaped the public transportation industry with the lasting impact, quiet strength, and visionary leadership of William R. Mooney III.

Over a remarkable 48-year career, Bill rose from a Police/Security Officer at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to become its Chief Operating Officer—the pinnacle of leadership at one of the largest transit systems in the United States. But it was not only the roles he held that distinguished Bill; it was how

he used those roles to transform systems, uplift others, and serve the mission of public transportation with integrity, humility, and excellence.

At CTA, Bill's leadership was responsible for some of the agency's most ambitious capital projects, including airport-serving rail lines, the expansion and modernization of the Brown Line to meet ADA requirements, and the procurement and rehabilitation of more than 1,700 railcars. Under his stewardship, CTA experienced record ridership gains and posted its safest operational performance in history—reducing accident rates by 30 percent for rail service and 20 percent for bus.

Following his retirement from CTA in 2010, Bill transitioned to the private sector, where he continued to elevate the industry. From Halcrow to H.W. Lochner and later through his own firm, WRM & Associates, Bill lent his expertise to projects across the U.S. and abroad—developing



asset management programs, advising on billion-dollar procurements, and shaping open-payment fare systems. Whether in Boston, New York, Riyadh, or Singapore, Bill's insights drove innovation and reliability.

Yet, what truly set Bill apart is not only what he accomplished, but how he did it. Bill was the embodiment of servant leadership. He mentored and inspired hundreds of professionals, many of whom now serve in senior roles across the industry. He championed and empowered women and people of color, and ensured underserved communities had better access to transit.

Bill's contributions to APTA were equally profound. A constant presence at conferences, committees, and peer reviews, he chaired the Rail Standards Policy & Planning Committee for 12 years and served on more than a dozen other committees—lending his time and wisdom generously. He played pivotal roles in peer reviews from New York to Hong Kong, offering guidance during critical moments, including NYC Transit's post-9/11 response.

Throughout his life, Bill avoided the spotlight. He deferred praise, elevated others, and let his work speak volumes. He lived APTA's values: integrity, respect, excellence, and collaboration. His legacy is etched not only in safer, more reliable systems, but in the lives he changed, the leaders he mentored, and the industry he helped shape.

Inducting Bill Mooney into the APTA Hall of Fame posthumously is only fitting. APTA honors a man who never sought honors for himself, but who gave everything to ensure the industry could move forward with purpose, people, and pride.

## Hall of Fame

This special honor is reserved for individuals whose careers and contributions to public transportation and to APTA have been significant, substantial and distinguished. Induction to the APTA Hall of Fame is a prestigious honor that recognizes outstanding achievements and a lasting legacy within the industry.

### Peter Varga

Peter Varga's remarkable 48-year career in public transportation exemplifies the absolute best of APTA's values: visionary leadership, unwavering integrity, and a lifelong commitment to public service. From his early days as a bus driver to his transformative 25-year tenure as CEO of the Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid) in Grand Rapids, MI, Peter has redefined what it means to lead with purpose, humility, and results.



Peter is more than a transit executive, he is a builder, a connector, and a national voice for mobility and equity. Under his leadership, The Rapid twice received APTA's Outstanding Public Transportation System Award (2004 and 2013). He spearheaded major advancements in sustainability, innovation, and infrastructure, including the development of Michigan's first BRT service, the Silver Line, and the first LEED-certified transit building in the United States, Rapid Central Station. His strategic vision also led to the construction of the Laker Line BRT and the conversion of one-third of the fleet to compressed natural gas.

What makes Peter's legacy unique is his steadfast belief that transit must be community-driven. He championed five successful transit millages, linking service expansion to regional job growth, and ensuring that The Rapid became an engine for economic opportunity. His leadership

extended beyond system operations—he empowered his staff, encouraged professional development, and promoted a culture of fairness, teamwork, and accountability. Many of his team members have gone on to greater positions, a testament to Peter’s mentorship and people-first approach.

Peter’s leadership also shaped APTA at the highest level. As Chair from 2013–2014, he energized the industry with his call to “Energize, Organize, Authorize”—a rallying cry for transportation reauthorization that continues to resonate. More than three decades of service to APTA includes roles on the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and leadership of numerous influential committees, including Small Operations, Legislative, Access, and Sustainability. He also played a vital role in mentoring through the American Public Transportation Foundation.

Even in retirement, Peter’s influence remains strong. As a consultant and advisor to transportation agencies and firms nationwide, he continues to guide emerging leaders and shape new transit systems, including efforts underway in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Peter Varga does not seek accolades—he seeks impact. He has proven repeatedly that one can achieve extraordinary things when driven by service rather than self. He has helped build cleaner fleets, smarter systems, stronger communities, and a more connected industry.

For his lifetime of service, innovation, and principled leadership, Peter Varga is a truly deserving recipient of the 2025 APTA Hall of Fame Award. His legacy is not only measured by the systems he helped build—but by the people he has inspired, mentored, and empowered to carry public transportation forward.

## Innovation

For demonstrating innovative concepts in the provision of public transportation services.

### Oklahoma Transit Association

#### Rolling Oklahoma Classroom – A Mobile Force for Transit Training and Human Trafficking Awareness

The *Rolling Oklahoma Classroom (ROC)* stands as a trailblazing innovation in public transportation education and safety awareness. Developed by the Oklahoma Transit Association (OkTA), with support from FTA and a network of public-private partnerships, the ROC is redefining how training, public awareness, and transit engagement are delivered across a geographically vast and diverse region.



The ROC is a mobile, hands-on classroom built inside a bus, designed to reach every corner of Oklahoma—rural, tribal, and urban alike—with customized training and public education. Its central focus is combating human trafficking, one of the most pressing and complex safety issues facing the transportation sector. As Oklahoma sits at the crossroads of major interstate corridors used for trafficking, this training is not just beneficial, it is critical.

The ROC provides in-the-field, adaptable, and accessible training to transit workers, equipping them with the tools to recognize and respond to signs of trafficking. It also includes a wheelchair securement training station, mobility awareness education, and career exploration resources, ensuring that every interaction fosters safety, empathy, and opportunity. Its resource library and on-board multimedia tools are designed to adjust based on audience needs—from schoolchildren to transit professionals—offering a uniquely tailored experience at every stop.

What makes the ROC truly innovative is its delivery model. It brings training directly to the frontlines, addressing a significant challenge in states like Oklahoma: geographic barriers that make centralized training inefficient and costly. By eliminating the need for agencies to travel long distances for professional development, the ROC increases access, reduces cost, and supports workforce development amid driver shortages—without compromising training quality.

The initiative's impact is already being recognized on the national stage. In October 2024, USDOT awarded the ROC third place in its Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Awards. Then Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg commended OkTA for expanding regional access and driving innovation through mobile outreach. Thousands of individuals have already benefited from ROC programming, with the vehicle making appearances at fairs, school events, tribal gatherings, casinos, and training seminars across Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas.

Supported by more than 35 rural and tribal transit agencies, the Oklahoma Tribal Transportation Council, EMBARK, Tulsa Transit, Grand Gateway EDA, and several private-sector partners, the ROC is a community-led, scalable model. It has generated interest from transit systems across the country eager to replicate its success.

As OkTA looks to expand the program regionally, the Rolling Oklahoma Classroom exemplifies how innovation in mobility can transcend infrastructure. It empowers people—by bringing life-saving education to communities, strengthening the transit workforce, and creating a model of safety and engagement that others can follow. It is mobile, inclusive, scalable, and profoundly impactful—everything an APTA Innovation Award winner should honor.

## Innovation

For demonstrating innovative concepts in the provision of public transportation services.

# New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bridges and Tunnels

## Congestion Relief Zone – A Groundbreaking Solution to Gridlock and Transit Funding

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Bridge and Tunnels' *Congestion Relief Zone* project represents a historic leap forward in urban mobility. Implemented on January 5, 2025, this initiative marks the first fully realized congestion pricing program in the United States, transforming the most traffic-choked area in the country—Manhattan's Central Business District—into a zone of smarter travel, faster commutes, and cleaner air.



For decades, gridlock had stymied mobility in New York, not only slowing private vehicles, but also impacting the performance and reliability of public buses, paratransit services, and essential deliveries. The Congestion Relief Zone has fundamentally changed that. By charging a once-a-day toll (\$9 peak, \$2.75 overnight) for vehicles entering Manhattan below 60<sup>th</sup> Street—and applying a variable pricing system for trucks—the program has cut vehicle entries by 12 percent, or 10 million vehicles in just five months. Bus speeds have improved by up to 3.4 percent, and drivers are reporting time savings of 20–30 minutes. Perhaps most compelling: even those paying the toll, especially frequent users, have expressed support for the initiative because of its tangible impact on travel time and predictability.

But this is not just a traffic solution, it is a funding revolution. The Congestion Relief Zone is on pace to generate \$500 million in 2025 alone, providing a sustainable revenue stream of up to \$15 billion in capital

investment. These funds will deliver critical improvements: ADA accessibility upgrades, signal modernization, fleet replacements, and the expansion of the Second Avenue Subway. These upgrades directly benefit the 90 percent of Central Business District commuters who rely on transit, creating a virtuous cycle of improved service, increased ridership, and reduced congestion.

Technologically, the program is a marvel. Its innovative tolling infrastructure includes an array of detection points and a dynamic algorithm that factors in real-time traffic patterns, ensuring fairness and adaptability. It seamlessly incorporates exclusions, exemptions, and discounts, and it was launched with minimal disruption—despite being an entirely new tolling system. Importantly, the system has been designed with flexibility and scalability in mind, including integration opportunities for third-party vendors and the ability to adapt as new technologies emerge.

The program's rollout also set a new standard in public engagement and environmental review, incorporating nearly 100,000 public submissions and conducting deep analysis of regional transit impacts. Support for the program has grown steadily post-launch, reflecting global trends seen in Stockholm and London and affirming public recognition of its benefits: reduced congestion, faster transit, improved air quality, and safer streets.

New York's Congestion Relief Zone is not only innovative, it is catalytic. It provides a replicable model for cities across the United States facing similar traffic and funding challenges. By seamlessly linking policy, technology, infrastructure, and equity, the MTA has redefined how American cities can address 21st-century mobility needs. For its vision, execution, and transformative impact, the Congestion Relief Zone is a clear and compelling recipient of APTA's Innovation Award.

## Innovation

For demonstrating innovative concepts in the provision of public transportation services.

### Sound Transit

#### I-90 Segment of the East Link Project: A Global Innovation Milestone in Transit Infrastructure

Sound Transit's I-90 Segment of the East Link Project is a transformative innovation in public transportation—one that redefines what is possible in fixed-rail transit infrastructure.

This project exemplifies bold vision, advanced engineering, and sustainable transit delivery on a global scale.

Spanning seven miles of double-track light rail, the I-90 Segment connects Seattle to Mercer Island and Bellevue, serving as a critical east-west spine within the Puget Sound region's rapidly expanding light rail network. When it opens in 2026, it will link Sound Transit's existing north-south system to the new Bellevue-to-Redmond Line, dramatically improving mobility for residents, commuters, and visitors while providing a viable alternative to driving on the congested I-90 corridor.

This segment is globally significant because it represents an unprecedented engineering feat: integrating light rail onto the Homer M. Hadley Memorial Bridge—a *floating* bridge. This is the first time that fixed-rail transit has been installed on a floating structure, confronting a formidable technical challenge: how to maintain safe, stable, high-speed train operations on a bridge that moves with wind, waves, and traffic.

To solve this challenge, Sound Transit pioneered the Curved Element Supported Rail (CESuRa) system—an innovation with worldwide implications. This system uses pivoting track supports mounted on curved elements, functioning like a three-legged stool to accommodate bridge



movement in all directions (pitch, roll, and yaw), while maintaining precise track alignment. This level of dynamic adaptability—essential for operational safety and ride comfort as trains reach speeds of 55 miles per hour—has never been achieved in rail engineering before.

The innovation extends even further. To protect the bridge’s integrity and reduce structural load, Sound Transit used lightweight precast concrete blocks affixed to the bridge deck with advanced epoxy and elastomeric grout, eliminating the need for invasive drilling. The track system’s durability was validated through exhaustive testing at the University of Washington, including full-scale fatigue testing over hundreds of thousands of load cycles, ensuring long-term performance under complex real-world conditions.

By repurposing existing highway infrastructure rather than building a new crossing, the I-90 Segment saved billions of taxpayer dollars and minimized environmental impact. This strategy serves as a model for other transit agencies operating in dense, infrastructure-constrained urban environments. The project introduced scalable solutions for integrating light rail into challenging corridors, including techniques for stray current mitigation, modular testing and risk management, and transit deployment on seismically sensitive or flexible structures.

The East Link I-90 Segment is not just an engineering marvel, it is a catalyst for global change in how transit agencies can adapt legacy infrastructure for modern, sustainable use. With its blend of technical ingenuity, environmental responsibility, and regional connectivity, this project addresses today’s most pressing transit challenges while setting the standard for future mobility.

For Sound Transit’s unprecedented accomplishments and profound influence on the industry, the APTA 2025 Innovation Award goes to the I-90 Segment of the East Link Project.

## Innovation

For demonstrating innovative concepts in the provision of public transportation services.

### Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet)

TriMet's breakthrough in cable theft prevention—affectionately nicknamed the “burrito” method—is a shining example



of how low-cost, field-driven innovation can solve a persistent, industry-wide challenge. This innovative solution, developed entirely in-house using only materials found in maintenance trucks, not only eliminates copper theft but does so more affordably, efficiently, and effectively than any previous method. For its originality, scalability, and real-world success, TriMet's cable armoring burrito method is a clear APTA 2025 Innovation Award winner.

The challenge TriMet faced was not unique—copper wire theft has plagued transit agencies nationwide, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages and putting public safety at risk. TriMet experienced more than 30 incidents over four years, each costing up to \$10,000 and disrupting MAX Light Rail service. Traditional mitigation tools such as concrete encasement and flexible conduit proved costly, difficult to install, and insufficient against increasingly sophisticated theft tactics.

In response, TriMet's Maintenance of Way team, led by Donovan Young and with strong support from Sean Hall, engineered a hands-on, tamper-resistant cable enclosure made from construction foam, wire mesh and ballast. The process is simple but effective.

Wire mesh is laid down, a layer of foam sprayed, a liberal amount of ballast added, cable placed on top, add another layer of foam, and then the wire mesh is linked together. The result is a burrito-type structure that when buried provides a concealed, resistant barrier.

Since this cable armoring method was first implemented, theft has been completely eliminated in treated areas.

This success is not just measured in security; it is also a victory for cost-efficiency. At only \$54 per foot, including labor and materials, the method is 35 percent more affordable than concrete encasement and 22 percent cheaper than flexible conduit, while delivering a better deterrence. With just \$11 in materials per foot, and 44 feet installable in under three hours using standard tools during regular shifts, TriMet has unlocked a fast, effective response to an urgent threat—no contractors, special equipment, or service interruptions required.

What truly sets this innovation apart is its scalability and transferability. The “burrito” method is already sparking interest from other transit systems. Its simplicity makes it ideal for agencies of all sizes, especially those with limited resources. Whether used in ballasted track, signal rooms, at-grade crossings, or telecom cabinets, this method offers a modular, adaptable solution to an escalating problem.

The “burrito” method protects rail infrastructure, improves safety for passengers and workers, reduces emergency response demands, and supports service reliability. It is also a sustainability success—reducing material waste, avoiding rework, and preserving existing assets. Moreover, this is innovation with a heart. Created by frontline employees, the approach demonstrates the immense value of empowering transit workers to lead.

TriMet’s “burrito” approach is not just an innovative idea, it is a transformational breakthrough. It addresses a widespread problem with simplicity, speed, and smarts, making it a model solution for the entire transit industry. This is exactly the kind of achievement that defines an Innovation Award winner.

# Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement

For public transportation systems that have demonstrated significant leadership, are outstanding role models of excellence, and whose accomplishments and innovations have greatly advanced public transportation.

**CATEGORY:** Providing 3 million or fewer annual passenger trips.

## Monterey-Salinas Transit

Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding public transportation system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over the past three years, MST has delivered transformative progress in equity, sustainability, innovation, and operational performance—improving lives, protecting the environment, and setting new standards for public transit nationwide.



In 2022, MST marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by boldly redefining its mission: *“Connecting communities. Creating opportunity. Being kind to our planet.”* That vision was brought to life with the launch of the Better Bus Network (BBN), MST’s first complete system redesign in two decades. BBN expanded service to underserved and carless communities, shortened travel times, and improved frequency, all while launching a more affordable fare structure—\$2 for two hours of unlimited rides, supported by fare capping and mobile payment options.

Through partnerships with colleges and the launch of a subsidized vanpool program, the agency broadened mobility options for students, workers, and rural residents. MST also connected youth facing adversity to opportunity through new service to Rancho Cielo, a school serving students overcoming incarceration, homelessness, and poverty.

Environmentally, MST is leading the way. Its zero-emission fleet, renewable biodiesel transition, and the SURF! BRT are reshaping

sustainable mobility in the region. In just one year, MST's fleet eliminated the equivalent of 140,000 single-occupant vehicle trips—equal to removing 10,000 cars or planting 300 acres of forest. With \$78 million secured for the SURF! BRT, the agency is poised to deliver the region's most transformative transit investment.

From collaborating with emergency responders to train for battery-electric vehicle incidents, to launching a GIS-based Safety Incident Dashboard that maps risks and informs targeted interventions, MST has created a data-driven safety culture. Visual ramp warnings and public safety videos have addressed passenger injury trends and protected riders and employees alike.

Through CDL training, retention bonuses, and the *Mentors in Motion* peer-support program, the agency is investing in a future-ready workforce. Its flexible work policies, ADA accommodations, and mental health support reflect a holistic approach to employee well-being.

Operational excellence is backed by fiscal discipline. MST has earned the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 23 consecutive years. It recently modernized procurement procedures, digitized Human Resources operations, and overhauled its communications infrastructure—restoring full fleet radio functionality and improving real-time coordination.

As the first small transit operator in the United States to adopt open-loop contactless fare payments and integrate with Google Wallet, MST is a leader in fare accessibility and rider convenience. Its investment in real-time apps, multilingual communication, and fare capping empowers riders and enhances equity.

Community engagement is a cornerstone of MST's identity. The Summer Youth Pass, free rides during BBN rollout, vintage trolleys for tourists, Narcan access initiatives, and disaster response during the 2023 floods underscore MST's role as an essential community partner. Its bus stop beautification efforts—funded by a \$570,000 Clean California grant—enhanced 56 locations with new shelters, landscaping, and amenities.

With nearly 3 million passenger trips in 2024 and a 25 percent year-over-year ridership increase, MST's results speak for themselves.

For its bold leadership, measurable impact, and deep commitment to the communities it serves, Monterey-Salinas Transit is a deserving recipient of the 2025 Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award.

# Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement

For public transportation systems that have demonstrated significant leadership, are outstanding role models of excellence, and whose accomplishments and innovations have greatly advanced public transportation.

**CATEGORY:** Providing more than 3 million but fewer than 15 million annual passenger trips.

## Metro Regional Transit Authority, Akron, OH

METRO Regional Transit Authority exemplifies what it means to be a modern public transportation system. With its visionary leadership, wide-ranging outreach, and steadfast commitment to innovation and fairness, the agency is more than a transit provider, it is a community builder, a connector of people and purpose, and a catalyst for regional advancement.



At the heart of METRO’s community impact is the Robert K. Pfaff (RKP) Transit Center. This welcoming, accessible space transforms into a platform for health fairs, voter registration drives, and public engagement events, all hosted in partnership with local nonprofits..

METRO’s embrace of community extends beyond the walls of the RKP Transit Center. From 2022 to 2024, the agency actively partnered with leading local organizations—including the Akron Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Akron Partnership, Summit County Public Health, the Akron Art Museum, the Akron Summit County Public Library, and the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority—to ensure its services aligned with the evolving needs of the region. Team members

are encouraged to serve on local boards and committees, empowering METRO to collaboratively shape the future of the communities it serves.

METRO's *Art in Transit* program, featuring rotating art exhibits at the RKP Transit Center and artwork on shelters, spotlights local artists, making transit more vibrant and inspiring and helping to integrate public art into the daily lives of thousands of riders.

Perhaps the most transformative development in recent years has been the *Reimagine Network*, launched in June 2023. This comprehensive redesign of METRO's fixed-route services was shaped through three rounds of public meetings, ensuring community voices led the process. The result: expanded regional access; increased frequency on key corridors; and enhanced connections to jobs, healthcare, and education. Within months, METRO's fixed-route ridership surged from 71 to 84 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

By 2024, riders logged more than five million trips across fixed-route and paratransit services—underscoring a renewed public trust in METRO and its vision.

Beyond transit, METRO has distinguished itself through acts of compassion and creative problem-solving. In 2023, the Board of Trustees approved the donation of a retired bus to the nonprofit *Forever R Children*. The bus was converted into a mobile hygiene unit, providing showers, toilets, and sinks to economically insecure individuals. Deployed in 2024, the bus is stationed regularly at the RKP Transit Center. This initiative exemplifies METRO's belief that public transit must address the full spectrum of community wellbeing.

In response to extreme weather, METRO has partnered with local organizations serving the unhoused community, distributing bus passes to individuals seeking safe, climate controlled environments. These small but vital actions remove transportation barriers during times of crisis and reaffirm METRO's mission to serve *all* residents with empathy and care.

At every level—planning, programming, partnerships—METRO operates with a deep-rooted mission: to uplift the lives of its riders and neighbors. METRO's work expands opportunities, fosters inclusion, promotes public health, and enriches cultural and civic life.

For its exceptional community leadership, pioneering service redesign, and unwavering commitment to empowerment and innovation, the METRO Regional Transit Authority of Akron is a model for what public transportation can and should be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. METRO is not just driving transit—it is driving change.

# Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement

For public transportation systems that have demonstrated significant leadership, are outstanding role models of excellence, and whose accomplishments and innovations have greatly advanced public transportation.

**CATEGORY:** Providing more than 15 million but fewer than 50 million annual passenger trips.

## Utah Transit Authority

Resilience. Restoration. Results. These three pillars define the Utah Transit Authority's (UTA) extraordinary rise as one of the most innovative, responsive, and impactful public transportation systems in the United States. UTA has delivered record-breaking outcomes, earning trust from the public, state leaders, and national peers alike in one of the fastest growing and most fiscally conservative states in the U.S. The agency's leadership helped secure the 2034 Winter Olympic Games, ensuring transit readiness through long-range planning and integrated infrastructure delivery.



UTA is embedded in the fabric of Utah communities and now, in its 55<sup>th</sup> year, stands as a model of what public transit can be: a catalyst for economic vitality, a lifeline for communities, and a national standard of operational excellence.

Despite fiscal constraints and post-pandemic uncertainties, UTA never wavered in its mission, *We Move You*, providing service to more than 80 percent of the state's population. By 2024, UTA's ridership rebounded to 91.5 percent of its pre-COVID levels with more than 40 million riders—placing it 4<sup>th</sup> nationally in ridership recovery among peer agencies, according to APTA. UTA's ability to fully staff operations allowed for system expansion this year.

UTA's community impact is substantial. According to a recent independent study, for every \$1 invested in UTA, the community receives a \$5.11 return. The agency services are responsible for 79,000 jobs and UTA generates \$9.6 billion per year in goods and services through time and mileage savings. The S-Line alone has spurred \$2 billion of new investment in and around the corridor since it began service in 2013 on an initial federal grant of \$26 million.

In April 2025, UTA launched its five-year service plan, adding 9 million new service miles through 2029. Recent expansions include the Ogden Express BRT with nearly 1 million boardings in its first year; a new TRAX station at the entrance to the Salt Lake Bees ballpark (a decade early through a public-private partnership); and the new Mid-valley Express BRT opening ahead of schedule in April 2026, supported by a \$68 million federal grant.

Organizational excellence is central to UTA's identity. Its commitment to employee input, optimized working conditions, and development opportunities has created one of the most resilient and engaged transit workforces in the U.S. With 322 maintenance apprentices graduated and 97 currently enrolled, UTA is shaping the future of public transportation from within. The agency's Ambassadors Program, launched in 2024, has logged more than 43,000 interactions, providing essential assistance to homeless riders, tourists, and event attendees. And UTA's drive to exceed customer expectations earned the agency back-to-back national honors from Transit app for best operators and responsiveness.

Through a simple, sincere, and direct mission, *We Move You*, UTA proves that transit is more than a service; it is a transformative force in the community. For these reasons and more, the Utah Transit Authority exemplifies what it means to rise stronger and is richly deserving of the 2025 APTA Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award.

# Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement

For public transportation systems that have demonstrated significant leadership, are outstanding role models of excellence, and whose accomplishments and innovations have greatly advanced public transportation.

**CATEGORY:** Providing 50 million or more annual passenger trips.

## Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro)

Through bold leadership, regional collaboration, and a relentless commitment to continuous improvement, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) has rebuilt public trust, modernized, and redefined what excellence in public transportation looks like.

Metro has led the United States in ridership growth for two consecutive years, achieving 52 straight months of year-over-year growth. The agency has seen record-setting customer satisfaction in FY24: 92 percent on Metro-rail, 83 percent on Metrobus, and 84 percent on MetroAccess. These results are backed by improved service frequency, reduced wait times, and more seamless connections.

The agency has become a leader in reducing collisions, derailments, and customer injuries, earning APTA's 2024 Gold Safety Award. Fare evasion has dropped by 82 percent due to modernized faregates and enhanced police patrols. Part-1 offenses have declined by 49 percent—a seven-year low—and customers' safety concerns have dropped significantly, with the assistance of more than 30,000 system cameras and the Crisis Intervention Specialist Bureau. In addition, bringing the Metro Transit Police Department training academy in-house is saving the agency \$1 million annually.



Metro's renaissance is powered by its people and an emphasis on meaningful interactions. Metro Ambassadors, Metro Rewind, and the Fleet of the Future Expo have forged stronger customer connections. Metro has also made record-setting operational advancements. The return of automatic train operations has boosted speed, reliability, and projected cost savings of \$7 million annually. Technological upgrades—from digital displays, the launch of real-time data application MetroPulse and tap.ride.go., a contactless payment option—have made transit more intuitive and accessible.

Metro's commitment to wide-ranging services is evident in programs such as *Metro Lift*, which offers reduced fares to SNAP recipients—more than 13,000 customers enrolled since 2023—and *Abilities-Ride*, which supported more than 1 million paratransit trips in 2024. Metro is preparing for the arrival of new ADA-friendly 8000-series railcars and enhancing wayfinding with clearer visual cues and signage—making every customer feel welcomed and empowered.

Economically, Metro supports \$12.2 billion in annual impact, enables 250,000 job connections within an hour of transit, and has catalyzed \$330 billion in property value near stations. Its joint development projects have delivered more than 17 million square feet of mixed-use space, with \$100 million dedicated to affordable housing. The opening of six new Silver Line stations—including access to Dulles International Airport—and the Potomac Yard infill station have expanded regional reach.

More than \$500 million in cost savings and efficiencies have been achieved through staffing, modernized maintenance, and reimagined scheduling. The agency has ratified four long-term labor agreements, reduced time-to-hire by 79 days, and welcomed 1,510 new employees in 2024 alone.

Metro's success is community-driven. From 1,360 outreach events in 2024—including the Back-to-School Bash and Metro Fest—to partnerships such as Casey Trees and University of Maryland's biodiversity initiatives, Metro is investing in livability. Its New Bus Network, which launched in July, reimagines a 50-year-old system that more readily supports the growth of a region that spans the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

With record ridership, soaring satisfaction, industry-leading safety, and a focus on modernization and innovation, Metro has redefined public transit excellence. Metro is fully deserving of the 2025 Outstanding Public Transportation System Achievement Award.

# Sustainability Commitment Program

## Gold Level: Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), TX

DART is advancing sustainability through strategic infrastructure upgrades and a long-standing commitment to clean energy. In 2021, the agency completed an Investment Grade Audit (IGA) Report that laid the foundation for a more energy-efficient and environmentally responsible system. Guided by the IGA, DART implemented measures including the installation of LED lighting across all buildings, rail station facilities, and parking areas. These upgrades were further enhanced with occupancy sensors and motion detectors, significantly reducing energy use—by as much as 40 percent in parking lots and garages.

In 2022, DART took a major step toward climate responsibility by securing a new electricity contract sourced entirely from renewable energy. Within two years, the agency transitioned to 100 percent renewable electricity for all facilities and light rail operations, reinforcing its leadership in sustainable public transit. DART buses using 100 percent renewable compressed natural gas contribute to cleaner air and a reduced carbon footprint across the North Texas region.



## Silver Level: Pierce Transit, Takoma, WA

Since piloting its first compressed natural gas buses in 1986, Pierce Transit has kept sustainability at the forefront of how it serves and engages with the community. The agency has reduced its total emissions by 19 percent (adjusted for service levels) since 2017. In 2018, Pierce Transit's CEO issued Executive Order No. 1, committing to the use of green technologies and strategies. The agency's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan prioritizes sustainability across its finances, infrastructure, and environmental practices.



Pierce Transit's commitment to sustainability extends to its practices for recycling fluids and materials, coordinating employee transportation benefit programs with local businesses, opening a new fueling and bus wash facility that reduces wastewater by 90 percent, and installing energy-efficient lighting at its base and regional transit hubs.

# 2025 AdWheel Grand Award Winners

## Best Marketing and Communications on Workforce Development

**San Joaquin RTD**, Stockton, CA

**Community Transit**, Everett, WA

**Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority**, Austin, TX

**Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority**, Atlanta, GA

**RATP Dev**, Fort Worth, TX

## Best Marketing and Communications to Increase Ridership or Sales

**Valley Regional Transit**, Meridian, ID

**RTC of Washoe County**, Reno, NV

**Sound Transit**, Seattle, WA

**Toronto Transit Commission**, Toronto, ON

**Transit app**, Montreal, QC

## Best Marketing and Communications Educational Initiative

**Mountain Line**, Flagstaff, AZ

**Santa Cruz METRO**, Santa Cruz, CA

**Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority**, Austin, TX

**Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority**, Washington, DC

**Transit app**, Montreal, QC

Learn about the winning campaigns at [apta.com/AdWheel](https://apta.com/AdWheel).

# Leadership APTA Class of 2025

## **Jamie Adelman**

Executive Vice President & Chief  
Financial Officer  
Dallas Area Rapid Transit  
Dallas, TX

## **Juan A. Carbonell**

Senior Vice President, Sales &  
Partnerships  
Masabi  
Miami, FL

## **Leann M. Caver**

Chief Executive Officer  
C-TRAN  
Vancouver, WA

## **Paul DesRocher**

Director, Transit and Rail  
Colorado Department of  
Transportation  
Denver, CO

## **Jennifer Donaldson**

Vice President, Operational  
Controls  
Stacy Witbeck  
Salt Lake City, UT

## **Melissa DuMond**

Vice President  
Kimley-Horn  
Seattle, WA

## **Bonnie Epstein**

Director of Mobility Services  
Pinellas Suncoast Transit  
Authority  
Saint Petersburg, FL

## **Tiffany J. Gunter**

Chief Executive Officer  
Suburban Mobility Authority for  
Regional Transportation  
Detroit, MI

## **Michael D. Henry, Jr.**

Chief Mechanical Officer for  
Fleet Maintenance  
SFMTA  
San Francisco, CA

## **Mary L. Hill**

Senior Director, Operations  
Command Center & Rail  
Operations  
TriMet  
Portland, OR

## **Arlana Johnson**

Senior Advisor of Strategic  
Initiatives  
Chicago Transit Authority  
Chicago, IL

**Jorel Joseph**

Commercial Director  
Keolis  
Arlington, VA

**Howaida Kamel**

Deputy CAO  
MBTA  
Boston, MA

**Jacki Lenners**

Deputy General Manager  
Mountain Line  
Flagstaff, AZ

**Steven Loehr**

Deputy Chief Development  
Officer  
MTA Construction &  
Development  
New York, NY

**Lance MacNiven**

Senior Vice President,  
Alternative Fuels Fleet  
Planning Lead  
WSP  
Los Angeles, CA

**Jeff McCormack**

VP Transit Rail and Cybersecurity  
AECOM  
Baltimore, MD

**Erin Mitchell**

Assistant Director, Service  
Development  
Metro Transit  
Minneapolis, MN

**Charlotte Obodzinski**

Department Manager, Priority  
Project Management Office  
Pace Suburban Bus  
Arlington Heights, IL

**Myat Ohn**

Vice President, Rail Transit  
Jacobs  
San Francisco, CA

**Arya Rais-Firouz**

Senior Division Manager, Rail &  
Transit, California  
AtkinsRéalis USA Inc.  
Los Angeles, CA

**Nicole Ramos**

Director of Marketing &  
Communications  
Omnitrans  
San Bernardino, CA

**Jay Rank**

Operations Director  
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General Superintendent,  
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**Shanita Wilkinson**

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Officer  
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**Many thanks to the APTA committees that selected this year's APTA Honors Awards and scholarship recipients.**

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