



## **The APTA Sustainability Commitment: Business and Non-Operators Overview**

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Sustainability, preserving the environment, being socially responsible and maintaining economic vitality, with an overall contribution to quality of life, is integral to what we do and what we provide as the public transportation industry. Many APTA members have already made sustainability a strategic objective and have made great strides to increase the sustainability of their own organizations, in great part to become more resource efficient, engage more with employees and customers, market share and funding support. As the drive towards sustainability is increasing, issues such as climate change resilience and mitigation, energy independence, preservation of resources and quality of life have risen to the forefront in the public and political arenas.

The APTA Sustainability Commitment aims to put APTA members on a pathway of continual improvement in sustainability. It gives APTA members credit for the efforts they are already making in sustainability as well as supporting those who are taking first steps. In that context, the Commitment sets out core sustainability principles, an action plan and a course for progress. The Commitment also supports the exchange of good practice and aims to document the achievements in sustainability that the public transportation industry is making overall. Through the Commitment, the public transportation industry is demonstrating the value for sustainability and its significant contribution to leadership on sustainability.

All APTA members, whether from the public or private sectors, are eligible to sign the APTA Sustainability Commitment on a voluntary basis. There are no prerequisites for signing the Commitment, and signatories can meet the core principles on their own timing and resource availability. They commit to putting internal processes and actions into place that set the basis for continual improvement on environmental, social and economic sustainability. By meeting the core principles and achieving additional actions, putting long-term processes into place and attaining reduction targets for a series of set indicators, signatories can obtain higher recognition levels of the commitment.



## Entry level

Upon signing the Commitment, APTA Sustainability Commitment Signatories receive Entry-level status. Receiving Entry-level status indicates your organization's intent to fulfill a series of core sustainability principles. The core principles help your organization establish an earnest commitment to sustainability. Signatories are not required by the program to meet the core principles in order to maintain signatory status, and can meet the core principles based upon time and resource availability. APTA, however, does ask commitment signatories to report on their sustainability progress through a brief annual status update using a template provided by APTA. The core principles for businesses and non-operators are listed below, and when appropriate, the italicized text offers guidance on how signatories may meet the core principles.

### The Core Principles

1. Make sustainability a part of your organization's strategic objectives  
*This can be referenced as part of a formal organizational policy or strategic plan.*
2. Identify a sustainability champion within the organization coupled with the proper human and/or financial resources and mandates
3. Establish an employee outreach program that engages staff on:
  - how they can help realize the organization's sustainability goals;  
*This can be communicated through regular staff meetings, newsletters and/or a staff sustainability team, for example.*
  - the organization's progress in meeting those goals.  
*This can be included as part of an annual internal sustainability report, for example.*
4. Undertake a sustainability inventory of your organization  
*The list below outlines a set of indicators that signatories need to measure. If an APTA member cannot measure an indicator, it should provide justification and identify alternative policies or programs to achieve indicator targets. Members unable to measure indicators can use the prescriptive track to participate in the program (see pages 4 – 8 for further information).*

*Signatories determine the baseline year based on data availability and are encouraged to establish baselines as close to the Sustainability Commitment signing year as possible. APTA members that have been measuring and managing certain indicators prior to becoming a signatory may set their own baseline year, based upon when they started measuring and managing for improvements.*

*To assist organizations in developing baseline figures, APTA provides resources such as the [APTA Recommended Practice for Quantifying and Reporting Transit Sustainability Metrics](#), the [APTA Recommended Practice for Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Transit](#) and its companion resources, the [APTA Transit Emissions Quantifier Tool](#) and [User's Guide](#). For Business Members and other non-operating APTA members, measure the following indicators:*

- water usage
- criteria air pollutant emissions (required if your business must report these)
- greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- energy use (electricity, fuel)
- recycling levels/waste

To adjust for organizational differences, we ask business and non-operating members to normalize indicators, choosing the best fit of the following factors:

- employees
- units of production (may be further defined to fit business outputs)

5. Provide the transit industry with products and services that contribute to sustainability *The sustainability benefits of these products and services must ultimately link to how they would realize improvements to a transit agency's baseline indicator measures (as outlined by the Sustainability Commitment overview for Transit Agencies) or otherwise meet generally-accepted sustainability practices (i.e. use of recycled content in products manufactured, etc.). The transit agency baseline indicator measures are:*

- *water usage*
- *criteria air pollutant emissions*
- *GHG emissions and GHG savings*
- *energy use (electricity, fuel)*
- *recycling levels/waste*
- *operating expense*
- *unlinked passenger trips per capita in service area of operation*
- *VMT per capita in service area of operation*



## Recognition levels – Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum

As Signatories advance their progress in sustainability, they can apply for further recognition of their achievements and make further commitments. The higher levels of recognition are defined as Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Signatories advance to higher levels by cumulatively building upon past successes and achieving their goals, and can apply for any level regardless of their current recognition status after being an Entry-level signatory for at least six months. As organizations advance through the commitment to higher levels of recognition, they are expected to more rigorously adhere to the core principles and excel in these practice areas.

### Elements of the recognition levels

Business and non-operating members can participate via **performance or prescriptive paths**. Members participating in the **performance path** work towards realizing baseline measure improvements. Members participating in the **prescriptive path** work towards realizing additional action items in lieu of realizing baseline measure improvements.

**Action items** are achievements realizable in the short-to medium-term (1-3 years). They are individually distinct actions chosen by the signatory to complete in addition to the core principles of the commitment. They typically address operations, maintenance and capital, products and services and education and outreach with a view to achieving economic, environmental, and social sustainability objectives. Action items can focus on all or a single part of an organization or facility. The higher the recognition level aimed for, the more completed action items are, cumulatively, required.

The application template provides a list of example action items for which members can receive recognition. These items are not intended to be exhaustive but to provide guidance on the different kind of achievements suitable for commitment recognition. These action items are broken down in the following categories and subcategories:

- Sustainable Business Practices (reflecting the baseline measures)
  - Water
  - Criteria Air Pollutant Emissions
  - Energy Use: Electricity
  - Energy Use: Fuel
  - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - Recycling Diversion Rate
  - Waste
  - Innovation in Organization Sustainability
- Social Sustainability
  - Professional Development
  - Employee Health and Safety
  - Corporate Stewardship
- Sustainability Governance

Members may modify the example items provided to speak more directly to their achievements, and

add additional achievements when appropriate.

**Stretch goals** are programmatic, policy-related or process goals realizable in the long term (4-6 years). They are individually distinct goals chosen by the signatory to complete in addition to the core principles of the commitment. They should challenge organizations striving for Silver, Gold or Platinum recognition to realize a significant difference in the way they function. The higher the recognition level aimed for, the more completed stretch goals, cumulatively, are required.

For each recognition level, increasingly ambitious **performance targets** are set for key indicators based on baseline measurements made as part of adhering to the APTA Sustainability Commitment.

Examples of reduction targets:

- Reduce your organization's greenhouse gas emissions per employee by \_\_\_% over baseline year 20\_\_\_\_by 20\_\_\_\_\_

In the commitment, action items and stretch goals help an organization communicate how it met its performance targets. Organizations are encouraged to demonstrate this nexus in their applications.

The **market-oriented narrative** provides applicants the opportunity to highlight the sustainability benefits or innovations their products and services provide to the transit industry. These benefits or innovations should directly link to how they would improve a transit agency's baseline indicator measures (as outlined by the Sustainability Commitment overview for Transit Agencies), or should otherwise describe how they meet generally-accepted sustainability practices (i.e. use of recycled content in products manufactured, etc.). The baseline indicator measures for transit agencies include:

- water usage
- criteria air pollutant emissions
- GHG emissions and GHG savings
- energy use (electricity, fuel)
- recycling levels/waste
- operating expense
- unlinked passenger trips per capita in service area of operation
- VMT per capita in service area of operation

Organizations may only use unlinked passenger trip increases or VMT reductions as a sustainability benefit or innovation of their product or service when the product or service explicitly addresses these concerns (i.e. integrated and innovative mobility management services/products for unlinked passenger trips and VMT, planning for transit-oriented development for unlinked passenger trips and VMT, etc.).

For each recognition level, increasingly ambitious performance targets for **contributing offices** are set to clarify the minimum extent to which a business's or non-operator's reported sustainability achievements apply to the organization. As businesses and non-operators achieve higher levels of recognition, more of their organization's offices are expected to contribute to the organization's sustainability commitment. For the commitment, applicants self-determine their overall office count (including headquarters) and must provide justification for this determination. At a minimum, this count should reflect the number of offices that house staff who work directly on transit initiatives or

provide support to staff working directly on these initiatives. Since businesses and non-operators can expand or contract operations in response to market changes, an office must have five or more full-time equivalents within two years of an application submission. For the same reasons, applicants must determine their overall office count each time they apply for higher levels of recognition.

For each Action Item and Stretch Goal, applicants have the option of reporting the specific number of offices contributing to the organization's achievements (since various achievements may be distributed across different locations in an applicant's office portfolio, yet still meet the contributing offices threshold in each case). Applicants must, however, report whether their headquarters is contributing to the organization's achievements.

Though applicants are not required to provide supporting documentation for any reported achievements as part of their applications, they are encouraged to do so as a way of enriching their applications.

### **General application requirements**

In its application for recognition, an organization specifies the level for which it is applying and is expected to meet the minimum requirements of that level. To enter recognition levels of silver and above, signatories must also show that they are maintaining an effective environmental compliance program or the equivalent, when applicable.

Business and non-operating members can participate via performance or prescriptive paths:

- Members participating in the **performance path** work towards realizing baseline measure improvements.
- In lieu of realizing baseline measure improvements, members participating in the **prescriptive path** work towards realizing additional action items that would otherwise help in achieving performance targets. This path is intended for members unable to develop indicator measures and manage for improvements, and applicants must provide justification for pursuing recognition in this path. As members participating in this path achieve higher levels of recognition, APTA increasingly expects members to realize achievements in all of the action item categories, especially those that fall under each of the Sustainable Business Practices subcategories.

### **Performance path requirements**

The requirements for all levels in the performance path are as follows, with a summary table after the descriptions (see Table 1 on the next page):

- **Entry:** a commitment to work towards adhering to core principles
- **Bronze:** at the organization's headquarters or 40% of other offices with +5 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 5 action items have been achieved, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve 5 additional action items and reduction targets of 2% over baseline for 2 indicators

- **Silver:** at the organization’s headquarters and 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 10 action items have been achieved, reduction targets of 2% over baseline for at least 2 indicators, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve an additional 10 action items, reduction targets of 5% over baseline for 2 indicators and a 2% reduction for an additional 2 indicators, as well as 3 stretch goals
- **Gold:** at the organization’s headquarters and 70% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 20 action items have been achieved, reduction targets of 5% over baseline for 2 indicators and a 2% reduction for an additional 2 indicators, 3 stretch goals have been met, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve an additional 20 action items, reduction targets of 10% over baseline for 2 indicators and 5% for an additional 2 indicators and 2% for all other outstanding indicators, as well as 3 stretch goals
- **Platinum:** at the organization’s headquarters and 100% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 40 action items have been achieved, reduction targets of 10% over baseline for 2 indicators, a 5% reduction for another 2 indicators and a 2% reduction for all other outstanding indicators, 6 stretch goals have been met, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve reduction targets of 20% over baseline for at least 2 indicators and a 10% reduction for an additional 2 indicators and a 5% reduction for all other outstanding indicators, as well as 3 stretch goals

APTA Sustainability Commitment Requirements by Recognition Level: Performance											
	Core principles		Action Items		Baseline improvements per indicator		Stretch Goals		Market-Oriented Narrative	Contributing Offices	
	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Require	
<b>Entry</b>		✓									
<b>Bronze</b>	✓		5 ✓	+5		2 at 2%			4 ✓	Headquarters OR 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓	
<b>Silver</b>	✓		10 ✓	+10	2 at 2% ✓	2 at 5% +2 at 2%		3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓	
<b>Gold</b>	✓		20 ✓	+20	2 at 5% ✓ 2 at 2% ✓	2 at 10% 2 at 5% +all other at 2%		3 ✓	+3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 70% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓
<b>Platinum</b>	✓		40 ✓		2 at 10% ✓ 2 at 5% ✓ all other at 2% ✓	2 at 20% 2 at 10% +all other at 5%		6 ✓	+3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 100% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓

Table 1: Performance Path Requirements at Each Level

## Prescriptive path requirements

The requirements for all levels in the prescriptive path are as follows, with a summary table after the descriptions (see Table 2 at the bottom of the page):

- **Entry:** a commitment to work towards adhering to core principles
- **Bronze:** at the organization’s headquarters or 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 6 action items have been achieved, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve 6 additional action items
- **Silver:** at the organization’s headquarters and 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 12 action items have been achieved, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve an additional 12 action items, as well as 3 stretch goals
- **Gold:** at the organization’s headquarters and 70% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 24 action items have been achieved (with 14 in Environmental and 6 in Social Sustainability, and 4 in Sustainability Governance), 3 stretch goals have been met, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve an additional 24 action items (with 14 in Environmental, 6 in Social Sustainability, and 4 in Sustainability Governance), as well as 3 stretch goals
- **Platinum:** at the organization’s headquarters and 100% of other offices with +5 FTEs in the last two years, a prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 48 action items have been achieved (with 28 in Environmental, 12 in Social Sustainability, and 8 in Sustainability Governance), 6 stretch goals have been met, and 4 products or services that provide a sustainability benefit to the transit industry; a commitment to achieve an additional 3 stretch goals.

APTA Sustainability Commitment Requirements by Recognition Level: Prescriptive								
	Core principles		Action Items		Stretch Goals		Market-Oriented Narrative	Contributing Offices
	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Require
<b>Entry</b>		✓						
<b>Bronze</b>	✓		6 ✓	+6			4 ✓	Headquarters OR 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓
<b>Silver</b>	✓		12 ✓	+12		3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 40% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓
<b>Gold</b>	✓		24 Total ✓: 14 in Environmental ✓ 6 in Social ✓ 4 in Governance ✓	+24 Total: +14 in Environmental +6 in Social +4 in Governance	3 ✓	+3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 70% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓
<b>Platinum</b>	✓		48 Total ✓: 28 in Environmental ✓ 12 in Social ✓ 8 in Governance ✓		6 ✓	+3	4 ✓	Headquarters ✓ 100% of other offices with +5 FTEs in last two years ✓

Table 2: Prescriptive Path Requirements at Each Level



## **Continual achievement in the Commitment**

When an organization first receives recognition at Bronze, Silver or Gold, it begins to accumulate achievements from that and subsequent successful applications until it receives Platinum. As a result, organizations that go above and beyond the minimum requirements for each level benefit by having fewer achievements to realize in subsequent applications for higher levels of recognition. In an application, an organization that realizes more required items than the minimum may choose to realize fewer “Commit to” targets for the next level.

When a signatory specifies which action items and stretch goals it commits to achieving in the future, the signatory is expected to realize these commitments in subsequent applications for higher recognition. If it does not, the organization is welcome to identify alternative achievements and provide justification for why it did not realize prior commitments.

## **Application Process**

### **Entry level**

At any time, an APTA business or non-operating member can apply to become an Entry-level signatory by signing and submitting [the following application](#). Once it becomes a signatory, it submits a brief status update every year to APTA to demonstrate that it is maintaining its commitment to continual improvement. Signatories may use [the following template](#) to submit their status updates.

### **Recognition Levels**

When Signatories can demonstrate enough achievements to receive higher-level recognition, they may submit an application to APTA for any level before the application deadline every year (generally during February). A specific application template for [business members/non-operators](#) is available.

Once applications are submitted, peer review teams comprised of higher-level signatories review applications for adherence to program requirements. Table 3 at the top of the next page reflects the general timeframe for submission a review of applications for recognition in a calendar year.

Examples of successful applications for higher levels of recognition may be found in the [APTA Sustainability Resource Library](#) (for signatories only). To learn more about the peer review process, please read [the following peer review process overview document](#).

<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>
Q2	submittals	<b>February 1</b>
Q2	first review call	First – Third Weeks of February
Q2	applicant feedback on points of clarification	Third Week of February – Second Week of March
Q2	team review of feedback and final decision	Third Week of March – Second Week of April
Q2	final team leader call	Second to Fourth Week of April
Q2-Q3	APTA Sustainability contacts recognition recipient and asks agency press officers to contact APTA Communications to plan best time for local news rollout, APTA press release, and in Passenger Transport.	By end of April
Q3	announcements at APTA Sustainability Committee	<b>early May</b> (APTA Mobility Conference)
Q3	official recognition on stage at APTA Sustainability & Multimodal Planning Workshop	<b>late July/early August</b> (APTA Sustainability & Multimodal Planning Workshop)
verbal recognition of pending applications at APTA Sustainability Committee meetings, and certificate presented formally to recognition recipients at APTA Sustainability & Multimodal Planning Workshop		

*Table 3: General Timeframe of Application Review Process*