



The APTA Sustainability Commitment: Transit Agencies 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 as a way to become more resource efficient, engage more with employees and customers and grow ridership, 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 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. 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. If an APTA member cannot measure an indicator, it should provide justification and identify alternative policies or programs to achieve indicator targets. 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](#).
 - a. For Transit Agencies, measure the following indicators:
 - 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

To adjust for level of service, we ask transit agencies to normalize indicators, choosing the best fit of the following factors:

- passenger miles traveled (PMT)
- produced seat miles (PSM)
- unlinked passenger trips (UPT)
- vehicle miles (VM)
- vehicle revenue hours (VRH)
- vehicle revenue miles (VRM)
- revenue vehicle length (RVL)



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

Action items are achievements realizable in the short-to medium-term (1-2 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. Examples of these action items are listed in **appendix 1**.

Stretch goals are programmatic, policy-related or process goals realizable in the long term (3-5 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 as a whole. The higher the recognition level aimed for, the more completed stretch goals, cumulatively, are required. Examples of these stretch goals are listed in **appendix 2**.

For each recognition level, increasingly ambitious **reduction 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 unlinked passenger trip and vehicle revenue mile or per employee by ___% over baseline year 20___ by 20___

Recognition level 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.

The requirements for all levels are as follows:

- **Entry:** a commitment to work towards adhering to core principles

- **Bronze:** prerequisite that core principles adhered to and 5 action items have been achieved; a commitment to achieve 5 additional items and reduction targets of 2% over baseline for 2 indicators
- **Silver:** prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 10 action items have been achieved and reduction targets of 2% over baseline for at least 2 indicators; 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:** 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, and 3 stretch goals have been met; 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:** prerequisite that core principles adhered to, 40 action items have been achieved, reduction targets of 10% over baseline for 2 indicators and a 5% reduction for another 2 indicators and a 2% reduction for all other outstanding indicators, and 6 stretch goals have been met; 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

To enter recognition levels of silver and above, signatories must also show that they are maintaining an effective environmental compliance program or the equivalent.

The table below summarizes the requirements at each level:

APTA Sustainability Commitment Requirements by Recognition Level								
	Core principles		Action Items		Baseline reductions per indicator		Stretch Goals	
	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to	Require	Commit to
Entry		✓						
Bronze	✓		5 ✓	+5		2 at 2%		
Silver	✓		10 ✓	+10	2 at 2% ✓	2 at 5% +2 at 2%		3
Gold	✓		20 ✓	+20	2 at 5% ✓ 2 at 2% ✓	2 at 10% 2 at 5% +all other at 2%	3 ✓	+3
Platinum	✓		40 ✓		2 at 10% ✓ 2 at 5% ✓ all other at 2% ✓	2 at 20% 2 at 10% +all other at 5%	6 ✓	+3

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 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 templates for [transit agencies](#) is available.

Once applications are submitted, peer review teams comprised of higher-level signatories review applications for adherence to program requirements. The chart below reflects the general timeframe for submission a review of applications for recognition in a calendar year:

Quarter	Item	Date
Q2	submittals	February 1
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	early May (APTA Mobility Conference)
Q3	official recognition on stage at APTA Sustainability & Multimodal Planning Workshop	late July/early August (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	

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](#).

APPENDIX 1

Examples of Action Items

a) Operations, maintenance and capital (internal process and policy driven)

- Initiate an ISO 14001, EMS and/or SMS process
- Put in place procurement methods that require (or favor) sustainable practices for at least one product line or area
 - Identify and purchase office supplies that make use of recycled products or have other environmentally-friendly attributes
- Locate future offices in urban centers with good transit accessibility
- Use sustainable practices in the operations and maintenance of organizations and transit systems:
 - Carry out a system-wide energy and/or resource-use audit and a waste stream audit
 - Purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) for one or more sites
 - Reduce water usage in at least one facility/office
 - Reduce hazardous waste and chemical usage in all agency facilities
 - Have a mobility plan for your organization and offer transit passes as part of employee benefits
 - Set a minimum recycling policy
 - Establish a composting system where possible
 - Establish policies for reducing paper use.
 - Reduce carbon footprint of meetings e.g. establishing collaborative sites and email distribution of documents as part of a paper-reduction policy
 - Establish a reduced idling policy to minimize fuel consumption
- Optimize employee travel by the use of tele-conferencing equipment, transit ridership, cycling and walking and car-pooling and other sustainable options
 - Establish a travel policy focused on sustainability, encouraging the reduction of carbon emissions and air pollutants associated with air travel
 - Incentivize employee commuting emissions reductions, establish policies for encouraging employee transit use and carpooling.
- Integrate sustainability into system and facilities design and construction:
 - Use green building principles for one new construction project or the adaptation of old infrastructure
 - Build in photovoltaics and/or green roofs at least one agency/company building
 - Make contracting with DBE firms part of the design and construction policy
 - Adopt an energy efficient appliance purchasing policy and other sustainable office equipment and supplies
 - Establish a program to continually green the vehicle fleet
 - Put energy-efficient lighting into all facilities and motion sensors where appropriate
 - Put in place glazed/tinted exterior windows at one or several facilities
 - Put in place a storm water management system
 - Update HVAC systems with more energy-efficient equipment

b) Products and services (services or products that are externally based)

- Integrate sustainability into system and facilities design and construction:
 - Establish new energy efficient targets for key products
 - Investigate how to quantify, measure, and determine the carbon footprint for each product produced.
 - Improve sustainability performance of key products
 - Work systematically with customers to establish more sustainable processes and products
 - Put in place a service(s) to help customers become more sustainable themselves

- Expand programs for populations with few transportation options, such as free passes for low-income school children
- Use sustainable practices in project planning, development and implementation:
 - Integrate transport and land-use decision-making in all project development
 - Establish a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process for a new project
 - Put in place targets for costs savings from use of recycled materials/energy efficiency measures in all new projects
 - Establish a “sustainable proposals” policy (e.g. proposals for bids sent in on 100% recyclable paper, double-sided, only one hard copy, maximum set for amount of pages etc.)
 - Ensure all system offices/stations/facilities are in areas zoned for compact, mixed-use development with good transit accessibility
 - Put in place sustainability criteria in specifications for all new projects

c) **Education and Outreach**

- Initiate training for employees on sustainability overall and/or on EMS (Environmental Management Systems), SMS (Sustainable Management Systems) and/or ISO 14001 practices
- Put sustainability on the agenda of regular staff meetings
- Establish resources and tools for use by employees, clients and the community on what sustainability means and how it can be achieved
- Establish an in-house knowledge management system on sustainability
- Put in place a regular internal reporting system on the progress of sustainability initiatives
- Establish an employee green team(s) or other formal programs for employee input coordination/engagement in the organization’s sustainability program
- Put in place partnerships which can allow for resource exchange to achieve sustainability
- Establish an employee recognition program for contributions to the organization’s sustainability efforts
- Put in place a sustainability hotline for employees and the general public
- Integrate sustainability into leadership development and recruiting
- Establish a strong collaboration with your MPO to exert influence on achieving more sustainable modal splits in your area of service
- Participate in region-wide sustainability planning

APPENDIX 2

Examples of Stretch Goals

- Establish a comprehensive measuring and reporting process on targets set, progress made, results achieved, and disseminate both internally within the organization as well as externally, available to all interested stakeholders, including the publication of an annual sustainability report
- Establish an organization-wide policy and action plan which covers economic, social and environmental sustainability
- Ensure all new construction meets LEED-like principles and bring existing construction into line
- Implement EMS, SMS and/or ISO 14001 standards
- Put in place an sustainable procurement policy and/or supply-chain policy which is based on comprehensive sustainability principles
- Develop in conjunction with your MPO an integrated transit/land use plan to reduce the acres of developed land/capita in your community and thereby reductions in VMT
- Obtain 3rd party verification of measurements and reductions
- Become viewed as a sustainability leader in one’s community or areas where can play an active

role in the community through established community programs

- Establish a Chief Sustainability Officer or equivalent post in your organization
- Establish a climate action plan for your organization
- Obtain “green business” certification of all corporate offices (where available)
- Establish policy to hold a regular and rigorous program of internal study/presentations into sustainable building and transit technologies.
- Achieve carbon neutrality and/or have a carbon neutral policy.
- Become a paperless office