

# APTA Racial Equity Action Plan



AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION

# Context

The disparate health and economic impacts of the ongoing pandemic and the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and so many more have exposed even further the systemic racism and long-standing racial inequities that are deeply ingrained in our society. It is now estimated that the U.S. gross domestic product has lost \$16 trillion in the last 20 years due to discriminatory practices against black and brown Americans.<sup>1</sup>

Systemic racism and racial inequity is also starkly visible in our transportation infrastructure, when highways have been favored over transit lines, when communities underserved by transit are also the communities most in need of affordable transportation options and when our essential workforce is also the one most dependent on an “essential” service such as transit.

It is imperative that APTA and the transit industry reassess our role and responsibility in ensuring racial equity<sup>2</sup> and acknowledge that we can and must do more.

As an association, this means ensuring that we support our members with tools to measure and recognize progress on racial equity, provide leadership in educational programming and resources, support workforce development from a racial equity perspective and leverage our advocacy tools and partnerships.

For APTA members representing the transit industry from both the public and private sectors, this means ensuring that transit is central to the protection and restoration of community, that we take this moment to transform underserved communities’ access to resources and opportunities, that everyone has a fair and just means of mobility and that we engage with our workforce and our transit ridership in a way that is culturally-sensitive, authentic and responsive.

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1. Closing the Racial Inequality Gaps: The Economic Cost of Black Inequality in the U.S, September 2020, Citigroup.
  2. Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. Racial equity is viewed as one part of racial justice, and thus also includes work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. Source: Center for Assessment and Policy Development.

# Executive Summary

The APTA Racial Equity Action Plan sets out where we can and must act as an association and how we best engage and support APTA members in their racial equity efforts. The aim is to create truly transformational change within the transit industry and support the planning and operations of public transportation services from a racial equity and mobility justice perspective through explicitly anti-racist policies and ideas<sup>3</sup>.

The action plan outlines five key goals and accompanying areas for action:

1. **Measure and recognize progress** on racial equity in the transit industry, providing APTA members with a tangible roadmap for advancing racial equity as part of a comprehensive equity framework within and for their organizations;
2. **Offer the necessary training**, technical support and resources to individuals and member organizations to develop practices, policies and programs that support racial justice and equity;
3. Create more **mentorship, sponsorship and engagement** opportunities for transit students, transit professionals and transit businesses;
4. Be a more influential **advocacy** force for equity and transit, promoting inclusion and diversity in the composition of executive leadership at transit agencies, the businesses that provide transit-related goods and services and their respective board of directors and equity in the delivery of transit-related goods and services, and;
5. Implement impact-oriented **partnerships** with organizations dedicated to equity, diversity and inclusion that is supportive of the goals and mission of APTA and its Racial Equity Action Plan.

The APTA Racial Equity Action Plan has been developed by the APTA Diversity and Inclusion Council's Racial Equity Working Group as part of a broader mandate to proactively create and maintain a diverse, inclusive and equitable environment within the association and across the industry. This action plan is not only integral, but a priority element of APTA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, which has been in place since October 2017.

APTA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan underscores the inclusion of differences and similarities from all categories of members regardless of ability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, race and geographic origin, size of transit property or business member organization, all of which contribute to the fulfillment of APTA's mission. Racial equity is therefore approached through an intersectional<sup>4</sup> lens.

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3. Anti-racism is defined as the work to actively oppose racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. An anti-racist idea is any idea that suggests racial groups are equals in all of their apparent difference and that there is nothing wrong with any racial group. Antiracists argue that racist policies are the cause of racial inequity. Source: *How to Be An Anti-Racist*, Ibram X. Kendi. One World, 2019, p. 24.

4. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines intersectionality, as the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. – *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. April 2017, Merriam-Webster Incorporated.

# Action Plan

## 1. MEASURE AND RECOGNIZE PROGRESS

**GOAL:** Provide APTA members with a tangible roadmap for advancing racial equity as part of a comprehensive equity framework within and for their organizations.

### OUTCOMES

- Enable members to hold themselves and others accountable beyond compliance
- Give members the tools to measure their existing racial equity performance and impact, as well as their progress
- Implement proactive, transformational and lasting change at APTA and in member organizations

### ACTIONS

- Create a voluntary Commitment and Recognition Program on Racial Equity for APTA members from both the public and private sectors. Core principles to adhere to as a signatory to include:
  - Adoption of a commitment to racial equity by the Board, with leadership from the CEO and adequate resourcing as well as inclusion in strategic plans/goals;
  - A zero-tolerance policy for hate-related behavior/language/signs and related penalties for violations;
  - Conducting a workplace climate survey on the perceived employee and stakeholder experience of existing policies, practices, and procedures from the perspective of equity and inclusion;
  - Onboarding of employees and stakeholders to underscore organizational commitment to diversity, inclusion and racial equity;
  - A standardized set of metrics (for transit agencies and for business members) to provide an assessment tool on the effectiveness of policies and programs covering both what is internal to an organization (e.g., employee make-up, resources, etc.) as well as external (e.g., revenue service, projects, ridership/the customer experience, etc.), and;
  - Annual progress reports on achieving the core principles, including reporting on a standardized set of metrics, the current demographics of their workforce and the results of workplace climate assessments.

- Include a transparent way to recognize signatories to the commitment via a seal or logo.
- Allow for recognition of progress made through a rating system (eg. with set levels of achievement, a LEED-like approach).

## **METRICS**

- Number and diversity of member organizations who sign on to the commitment
- Number and diversity of member organizations who achieve higher recognition levels
- Collective impact of measures taken by members and the association
- APTA as an association's adherence to commitment principles and level of progress on its equity performance

## **2. TRAIN AND SUPPORT**

**GOAL:** Offer the necessary training, technical support and resources to individuals and member organizations to develop practices, policies and programs that support racial justice and equity.

## **OUTCOMES**

- Take leadership in programming and education on racial justice and racial equity
- Offer members a framework for understanding racial equity and the criteria by which to assess the current equity impacts of programs, practices and policies and future decision-making
- Support members to develop equity programs and equitable service delivery
- Create a platform for members to tell and record their stories
- Support resource-sharing and the cross-pollination between transit agencies

## **ACTIONS**

- Organize platforms for critical and meaningful conversations on racial equity, including through programming sessions at APTA conferences and workshops and with partners including COMTO, Latinos in Transit and WTS, and their chapters across the country.
- Develop an online educational series on racial equity which provides guidance on how to have courageous conversations, tools for creating dialogue and empathy, awareness of systemic racial and social inequities, what racial injustice looks and feels like, what true allyship means.

- Develop a resource library on effective member D&I programs and actions, including actions taken to meet the core principles of APTA Commitment on Racial Equity, equity frameworks for service planning, operations and transit policing, equity assessment tools, equity scorecards, inclusive career advancement, hiring and procurement practices, where to find funding, training and educational resources to begin equity programs, financial resources made available to address the digital divide in the workforce, why, when and how to carry out climate surveys, a glossary of common terms and a recommended reading list on race and equity, and a resource pool of transit professionals who are well-versed on the topic of racial equity.
- Focus on transit policing and the creation of collaborative relationships with agencies and with communities through APTA’s Security Coordinating Council, including issues such as fare enforcement, de-escalating techniques and addressing mental health episodes.

## **METRICS**

- The number of agencies and business members communicating about their equity programs through APTA
- The number of forums for critical conversations on racial equity provided by APTA per year
- Amount of individuals and organizations participating in APTA educational programming and training on racial equity
- Number of visitors to the online equity and inclusion resources on the APTA website
- Level of satisfaction with equity training and resources provided by APTA

## **3. MENTOR, SPONSOR AND ENGAGE**

**GOAL:** Create more opportunities, programs and systems for a diversity of students interested in transit, professionals and businesses to learn, grow and advance in their respective areas of interest and expertise with the support of: 1.) Mentors who will offer guidance, insight and feedback through informal and formal structures; 2.) Sponsors who will personally promote and drive connections through their networks to champion the advancement of the aforementioned groups, and; 3) Meaningful engagement opportunities at APTA.

## **OUTCOMES**

- Provide more engagement opportunities at APTA for entry- and mid-level staff from member organizations and for Minority-Owned Businesses
- Support members in creating more entry-points to a career in the industry and pathways to career/leadership growth

- Support members in engaging with minority youth locally and working with local non-profits aligned with this objective
- Support members in encouraging their staff to become involved in local/civic organizations, including grass roots organizations and community events, as well as advocacy organizations such as COMTO and Latinos In Transit
- Support members in amplifying recruitment efforts through undergraduate and graduate placement offices (with a focus on HHCUs/HBCUs - Historically Hispanic or Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and apprenticeship programs

## **ACTIONS**

- Create an educational online program and materials on how to develop sound coaching, mentoring and sponsorship programs focused on diversity, inclusion and equity and provide members with a simple template to create and track outcomes for their own structured coaching, mentorship and sponsorship programs from a social and racial equity lens with clearly defined goals and tied into performance management and succession-planning.
- Increase non-executive-level participation in APTA meetings and programs.
- Share best practices in grass-roots campaigns to increase recruitment diversity, inclusive employee engagement and job mobility and succession planning practices in both the public and private sector.
- Promote existing transportation-oriented curricula for middle/high school and college programs and support transferability of programs.
- Create an APTA award on diversity, equity and inclusion including innovative workforce development initiatives.

## **METRICS**

- Percentage of non-executive level attendance at APTA events/meetings and involved in APTA programming
- Annually increase in the number of agencies/businesses that have equity scorecards as part of their procurement, hiring and service delivery programs, the number of agency and business recruitment efforts/events at HHCUs/HBCUs, coaching, mentoring and sponsorship programs.

## 4. ADVOCATE

**GOAL:** Be a more influential advocacy force for equity and transit, promoting inclusion and diversity in the composition of executive leadership at transit agencies, the businesses that provide transit-related goods and services and their respective board of directors and equity in the delivery of transit-related goods and services.

### OUTCOMES

- Address leadership representation in the transit industry, including at the executive and board-level of agencies and the companies that provide them with products and services, to better reflect the employee and ridership base
- Be a more influential advocacy force on racial equity and transit
- Raise awareness within and outside of the industry of transit's contribution to and responsibility for racial equity
- Support members in ensuring an equitable return to work/ an equitable return to transit service

### ACTIONS

- Provide more data and a baseline on current workforce and ridership demographics/DBE participation/levels of investment in programs that promote racial equity/ levels of service delivery in equitable target areas to inform decision-making, program development and policy advocacy.
- Develop a new policy brief on transit's equity impact and potential and illustrate with examples of success in the industry.
- Support the development of more inclusive and effective messaging and outreach to communities of color, including working with local transit/transportation coalitions to ensure their participation and engagement in transit ballot initiatives.
- Help disseminate information on DBE participation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- Advocate for streamlining the DBE certification process and work with DBEs as advocates.

### METRICS

- The survey response rate / quality of data allowing for a comprehensive racial equity performance assessment of the industry
- The quality of data to be in a position to effectively communicate the community-based impact of transit on social and racial equity
- Media uptake and hits on APTA coverage of transit and racial equity

## 5. PARTNER

**GOAL:** To establish relationships with organizations and individuals who support the goals and mission of APTA and its Racial Equity Action Plan.

**OUTCOMES:** Implement impact-oriented partnerships with organizations dedicated to equity, diversity and inclusion

### ACTIONS

- Build on existing partnerships with COMTO, WTS, the Transportation Diversity Council, Latinos In Transit, the Young Professionals in Transportation network, the ADA community and organizations that support and serve the differently-abled, CTAA, AGC, IBTTA, AARP, AMAC, TRB, AIA, APA, ASCE to identify opportunities for and establish joint programming and training programs, collaborate on research and join forces on advocacy.
- Collaborate with organizations that provide racial equity/racial justice resources, training and/or funding (eg: the Center for Racial Justice, Government Alliance on Race and Equity, the Center for Urban and Racial Equity, PolicyLink, Color of Change, the Southern Poverty Law Center, SHRM, Civic Dinners, the Anti-Defamation League) to develop a common understanding and frame of reference of equity issues and concepts.

### METRICS

- The extent to which partnerships extend the capacity for action for APTA and amplify resource availability, outreach and impact