

RFP Strategic Communications and Resource Support for CFTE (Center for Transportation Excellence)

Request for Proposals:

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is seeking services for the Strategic Communications and Resource Support for APTA's Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE), including management and operation, on behalf of and under the direction of APTA.

About APTA:

APTA is a non-profit international association of more than 1,600 public and private member organizations, including transit systems, and high-speed, intercity and commuter rail operators; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions, transit associations, and state departments of transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical transit services and products.

Project Description:

The Center for Transportation Excellence (CFTE), a non-partisan resource center, was created to provide research materials, strategies and other forms of support to communities seeking quality transportation choices. Since 2000, CFTE has provided strategic information and connections to equip local and state leaders with the information they need to be successful with their public transportation initiatives and ballot measures.

As a clearinghouse for information in support of quality transportation choices, CFTE is committed to two main objectives: (1) defending the merits of transit and (2) equipping local leaders with the information they need to be successful with their public transportation initiatives and ballot measures.

Proposals should design a program to make CFTE an effective resource for helping communities achieve success in local campaigns and transit elections, and in other pro-transit initiatives at state and local levels. The role of CFTE is not to run or operate local campaigns, but to serve as a resource for pre-campaign decisions, and service as an ongoing information clearinghouse.

Proposals are requested from qualified contractors or firms to deliver strategic communications, technical assistance, campaign support services, educational meetings (in-person and virtual) and to assist in a biennial CFTE conference. The selected contractor will implement a robust work program to support local and state transit initiatives, enhance public transportation advocacy and counter misinformation. The contractor will build on past successes and expand capacity in proactive advocacy through custom campaign strategy support, accessible database of resources and toolkits, and facilitation of opportunities for peer-to-peer discussions.

Scope of Work

The selected contractor will be responsible for the following core areas:

A. Foundational Activities

- Maintain and enhance the CFTE work program.
 - Establish regular communication with campaigns, agencies, and advocates, actively providing guidance, information, or technical assistance.
 - Track transit elections and state/local transportation legislation.
 - Analyze trends and develop case studies.
 - Identify educational opportunities and organize webinars, training, and peer learning events.
 - Advise and assist in biannual conference focused on transportation campaigns and strategies.
 - Serve as external face of the organization, presenting at analysis and ballot measure trends at conferences and webinars throughout the year.
 - Deliver regular, strategic updates to APTA, including elections news, key dates and opportunities.
- Maintain and update the CFTE website, featuring campaign content and thought leadership.
 - Maintain a comprehensive election and campaign database.
 - Create toolkits and strategic resources for local leaders.
 - Maintain library of images, case studies and toolkits.
 - Create an online forum to facilitate peer-to-peer conversations.
- Coordinate with APTA and national coalitions to deliver integrated advocacy support.
 - Provide customized technical assistance.
 - Facilitate media outreach and build a network of supportive grassroots organizations.
 - Provide APTA with regular updates, alerts, and insights into campaign developments.

B. Campaign Strategy and Custom Support

- Assist, upon invitation, in developing specific campaign strategies.
 - Use polling and analytics for targeted campaigns.
 - Create custom campaign guides and tools.
- Maintain a national toolbox of messaging assets and sample materials.
- Support peer-to-peer networks among campaign leaders, both through an online forum and in-person.

C. Rapid Response to Transit Critics

- Establish a quick-response system to counter misinformation.
 - Create an accessible toolkit of rebuttals.
 - Engage scholars to serve as public transportation spokespeople.
 - Mobilize responses to critical media coverage (e.g., letters, Op/Eds).
- Distribute fact-based messaging and monitor dialogue during key election moments and respond proactively.
 - Coach community leaders to effectively address opposition.
 - Take initiative as a spokesperson when necessary.

Proposal Requirements

Interested contractors should include the following in their proposal:

1. Company Background:

- Brief (one page) company description including company history
- General statement of the understanding of the scope of services
- Proposed project team including proposed sub-consultants
 - Staffing plan and bios of key personnel.
 - Relevant experience and examples of past work.
- Project team's experience with activities included in their proposed project plan
- Experience of the proposed project manager and individuals who will be working on the project.

2. Project Plan:

- Overview of your approach to the scope of work.
- Methods for evaluating impact.
- Work plan and timeline.
 - A proposed task list and level of effort for each task.
 - A schedule for activities and milestones over the course of the contract.
- Identify activities to assist communities achieve success in local campaigns and transit elections.
- An assessment of how CFTE can be helpful to states and regions where transit ballot measures are less common.
- Develop ways the CFTE brand can be most closely associated with APTA.
- An approach for managing the project and communicating with APTA.

3. Budget Proposal

- Detailed line-item budget.
- Billing rates for personnel.
- Any anticipated expenses or subcontractor costs.
- Billing and Expenses:
 - Monthly invoices submitted to APTA, accompanied by an activity report detailing progress, deliverables, and metrics of success.
 - Preapproved expenses with a not to exceed amount.

4. Agreement to Terms

- Proposers shall indicate agreement to the terms outlined in this RFP.
- All data collected, work products and web content are the property of APTA and cannot be used for any other product.
- Media contact and/or other promotional activities regarding the work product will be at the sole discretion of APTA.

5. References

At least three references from past clients with similar scope or sector experience.

Evaluation and Award Process:

In accordance with the provisions of this RFP, APTA will evaluate the submittals. The final selection will be to the proposer, which in the discretion of APTA best meets the requirements set forth in this RFP and has the lowest cost and technically acceptable solution.

Proposers are discouraged from submitting lengthy submittals. Instead, APTA strongly encourages submittals that are concise and clearly written with the essential information only. Proposals should be ten pages or less (exclusive of resumes and other addenda.) All submittals will be reviewed first to determine whether it is responsive to the requirements of this RFP.

Responsive submittals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Experience and Technical Competence: 50%
- Work Plan and Level of Effort: 30%
- Record of Past Performance & Project Examples: 20%

Process Schedule:

Pre-bid conference call: Friday, January 9, 2026, 2:00 p.m. ET, (872) 242-8065, call ID 559 593 962#

Submittals are due to APTA: **EXTENDED to Tuesday, January 9, 2026.**

APTA may schedule interviews with the most highly qualified technical proposals (as determined by APTA in its sole discretion). If interviews are conducted, APTA will allow a 30-minute presentation by the responders, followed by up to 45 minutes of questions by APTA.

Contractor selection to occur on or about on or about Friday, February 6, 2026.

Start-date will be March 1, 2026.

The contract shall extend from the contract date March 1, 2026, for a duration of three years. The contract may be extended for an additional twelve months upon mutual consent.

Terms and Conditions

- APTA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.
- All submitted materials become the property of APTA.
- This RFP does not constitute a commitment to award a contract.
- The selected contractor will enter into a written agreement with APTA outlining terms, deliverables, and compensation.

Questions

Questions about this RFP must be submitted in writing to the contact below by Thursday, January 8, 2026. Questions and responses will be shared with all interested parties.

Point of Contact

Please submit your proposal via email in PDF format to:

Art Guzzetti, VP Policy & Mobility, APTA

aguzzetti@apta.com

Subject Line: Proposal for CFTE Strategic Transit Support