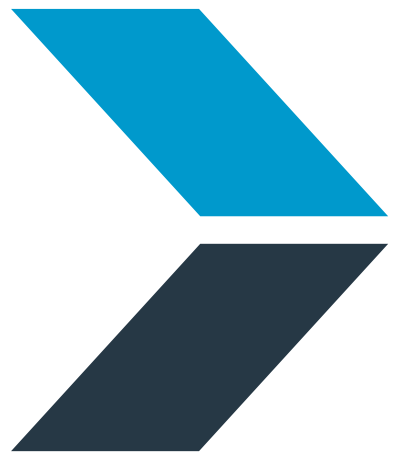


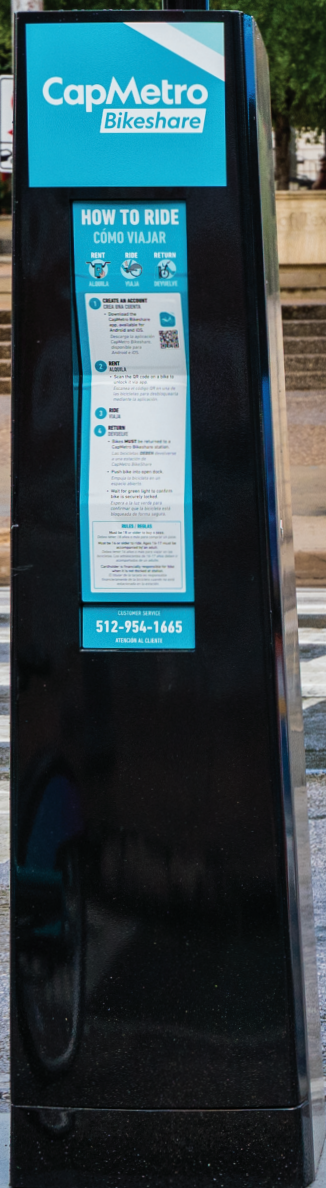
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THE SOURCE FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NEWS AND ANALYSIS

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025

2025 Mobility Conference AUSTIN, TX





COMMENTARY

BY KWADWO ATTA
Southeast Transit Leader
HDR

Driving Bus System Success

Public transit agencies continue to be challenged post-COVID. Ridership patterns, public expectations, and even the emphasis on farebox revenue generation have changed. At the same time, communities and public transportation users want immediate service improvements.

The bus mode—whether traditional fixed route, enhanced, flexible routing, or BRT—is a valuable tool to address these challenges head on. The mode's flexibility in service delivery, its scalability, and its cost effectiveness are major benefits for communities and those setting local budgets. This appeal can be seen in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grants Program, where more than 60 percent of projects are now Bus Rapid Transit.

As our industry seeks to capitalize on this flexibility, five best practices and strategies come to the fore:

Improve Business Intelligence as Ridership Shifts

New hybrid work patterns have redefined transit demand in recent years. Traditional peak-hour commuting, though it has rebounded in many areas, remains below desired levels while midday, evening, and weekend ridership continues to grow. And the changes continue. We are likely to experience another shift in travel patterns if return-to-office mandates by public agencies and private companies are accelerated. Public transit agencies should proactively and continuously seek business intelligence to understand their communities' mobility needs and the attitudes/preferences that drive mobility decisions. There is a lot of business intelligence that can be garnered using farebox, automatic passenger counter systems, cell phone, surveys, and focus groups.

Speed Capital Improvements with Program Management

The transit industry often experiences boom and bust cycles of funding that make it challenging to rapidly implement improvements. This challenge has been further exacerbated by a shortage of procurement and project delivery staff. Program management contracts represent a great opportunity for agencies to leverage consulting expertise to advance capital program delivery.

Moreover, many agencies are now facing budget shortfalls and are being conscious about hiring. Program management contracts offer a solution as they can be scaled to match funding availability and can address capital program requirements such as procurement support, project definition, and environmental and preliminary engineering without adding to agency headcount.

Seek Dedicated Local and State Funding

A dedicated source of local or state funding is foundational for today's public transportation programs. The best practice combines a dedicated source to enhance operations with matching funding that can help access FTA programs for expansion and state of good repair projects. The good news is that transit programs with a focus on bus improvements continued to fare well at the ballot box in 2024, with voters nationwide approving 46 out of 53 transit ballot measures, securing more than \$25 billion in local and regional funding for system expansions, service improvements, and operational sustainability.

Public transit agencies should proactively and continuously seek business intelligence to understand their communities' mobility needs and the attitudes/preferences that drive mobility decisions.

Going forward, transit agencies should consider options for more regional and local funding, and, where applicable, explore public-private partnerships. Based on recent successful initiatives in Nashville and Columbus, referendums that align rider, community, business, and political stakeholder sentiment fare better at the ballot box.

Prioritize Effective Community Engagement

Listening to our communities and sharing the importance of public transportation are foundational to improving bus services. Given our challenges related to safety, security, and ridership, it is critical that agencies have a robust community centric engagement plan. Transit projects and operations are extremely public efforts that require the support of allies who see the value of public transportation.

Targeted outreach to influential leaders, positive media attention, and data such as economic impact reports are all helpful in creating a diverse group of backers to support long-term implementation of community-wide programs. But the effort begins with gathering and respecting the feedback from the riders and communities we serve. A best practice for agencies is encouraging staff to become routine riders of the transit system.

Re-Examine Revenue Needs

Beginning with the Great Recession, transit agencies have experienced significant shifts that now must be reconsidered. For example, some agencies implemented fare free systems or significantly reduced fares and now may need increased revenues to offset the impact of inflation that has occurred in recent years. Transit agencies should proactively conduct financial analyses to capture ridership forecasts, projected revenues, and to understand current and future cost trends compared with operating and capital needs. Timely advancing the re-examination of revenues and expenses allows the agency to analyze options and collaborate with key stakeholders.

It is impossible to know exactly what the future will hold. But implementing these strategies can set the right foundation for success and help bus systems continue serving riders well for decades into the future.

ISSN 0364-345X

The Source for Public Transportation News and Analysis

APRIL 7, 2025

ESTABLISHED 1943

Published by the **American Public Transportation Association**,
1300 I St., NW, Suite 1200 East, Washington, DC 20005;
(202) 496-4800; Fax (202) 496-4321; www.apta.com

It is the mission of *Passenger Transport* to communicate news and information about public transportation and to serve as the voice of the public transportation industry. Visit <https://aptapassengertransport.com>.

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News & Commentary: *Passenger Transport* welcomes articles, announcements, commentary, and letters to the editor. Submitted photographs become the property of APTA and may be used for other association purposes. Send submissions to driddy@apta.com.

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Howdy Y'all and Welcome to the Live Music Capital of the World!

BY DOTTIE WATKINS

President and CEO
Capital Metropolitan Transportation
Authority (CapMetro)
Austin, TX

CHANCES ARE, WHEN YOU ARRIVE

in Austin, you won't get far before you'll start to hear musicians playing their favorite tunes, and that's just one piece of what makes Austin, Austin! There's no better place for a conference focused on the future of mobility than in a city that's vibrant, innovative, and always on the move.

Austin is known for its eclectic energy, as I'm sure you've all heard the phrase "Keep Austin Weird." Whether you're exploring the trails around Central Texas, catching a live band on Sixth Street, or grabbing some BBQ, this city is always alive. And the best part? You'll find that Austin's transportation options are just as diverse as the city itself.

CapMetro's comprehensive network connects Austin and the surrounding Central Texas region through an integrated system of 71 bus routes, 12 innovative Pickup Zones offering on-demand neighborhood service, 32 miles of commuter rail, and over 70 Bikeshare stations—all designed to connect our communities to oppor-



Dottie Watkins

tunity. Enjoy your ride on CapMetro next to Austinites from all walks of life traversing to all corners of our community, like a concert, school, or the grocery store. This is public transportation at its best—not just moving people, but building community connections.

We've been moving our region for 40 years, and we have no plans on stopping. CapMetro, just like the region itself, is undergoing a significant growth spurt. In 2020, voters approved a big initiative to expand and transform public transportation in Central Texas. Since then, we've expanded our Pickup network, added new Rapid routes, and improved our commuter rail system. We're also working with our partners to bring Austin Light Rail to life. Big things are on the horizon for us, and we can't wait to show you as you maximize your experience here.

As you stay in Downtown Austin, we encourage you to get outside and explore our mild climate, exceptional green spaces, and historic streets. Here are some of my top favorites, and how you can best get there by CapMetro!

- **Bats at the Congress Avenue Bridge:** There are up to 100,000 bats present year-round, and you can view hundreds of them come



Courtesy of Visit Austin/Gino Barasa

to life at dusk under the Congress Bridge. It's a short walk from the hotels, or you can take Bikeshare! Just download our Bikeshare app to create an account.

- **Barton Springs:** If you're looking to take a dip in the water, head to this natural pool that's kept at 68 degrees year-round! Take a short walk to Republic Square, one of the city's green spaces that's been around since the birth of Austin, to catch bus route 30 to get you there.
- **The Broken Spoke:** If you're ready to put on your dancing shoes, take Rapid 803 down to the Broken Spoke for a true Texas dancehall. Some of the biggest country legends have been known to play

here, like Willie Nelson and George Strait.

- **South Congress Avenue:** Hop on the Rapid 801 to get to this vibrant neighborhood shopping district! SoCo is known for its boutiques, restaurants, and music venues that both locals and tourists love to explore.
- **Breweries and wineries:** This city is also home to several different breweries and wineries. Our commuter rail can take you from Downtown up north to explore all the different hot spots. Just plan your trip at capmetro.org or on the Transit app!

We're so excited to welcome you to our great city and we hope to see y'all on board in between conference sessions!

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Motivated by Improving Customer Experience

BY MJ MAYNARD

Chair, APTA
CEO, RTC Southern Nevada

BEING A TRANSIT CEO IS NO SMALL

task in today's climate. Our industry relies heavily on federal support, and with each new Administration comes a wave of policy changes impacting public transportation and how we operate. I may not know what comes next within this landscape, but as CEO of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC), one thing remains clear: We must stay focused on providing safe, efficient, and affordable transportation options for the communities we serve.

Public transit is more than just a way to get from point A to point B—it fuels economic growth, enhances quality of life, and creates vibrant communities by increasing access to jobs, education, and healthcare. Given today's financial and operational challenges, expanding transit service can be difficult. However, by embracing technology, forging strong partnerships, and implementing innovative solutions, we can continue to enhance the customer experience for transit and paratransit riders in meaningful ways.

Through the power of technology, we've expanded options and features for paratransit customers that provide them with more flexibility, independence, and efficiency. Our paratran-



MJ Maynard

sit customers now have **on-demand options** using services such as Tango Car and Lyft, giving them greater flexibility by allowing them to book 24/7, same-day rides, unlike traditional

paratransit. We've invested in digital tools to empower their independence. The **myRTCpara website and mobile app** allows paratransit customers and caretakers to seamlessly book, cancel, and manage rides from their smartphones or computers and also provides real-time trip tracking, push notifications, and estimated arrival times.

We're making it easier than ever for eligible individuals to certify for paratransit service. This summer, we are launching a **new online certification**

portal, streamlining the application process, enabling applicants to complete their forms online, submit via email, and receive real-time updates throughout the certification process. This innovation eliminates paperwork, reduces wait times, improves accessibility for applicants, and ensures a more efficient experience for new and returning customers.

Beyond digital tools, we are committed to providing hands-on resources to help riders navigate the transit system with confidence. Our **Mobility Training Lab**, a mobile extension of the RTC's Mobility Training Center, brings personalized travel training directly to the community. This innovative program helps seniors and



individuals with disabilities practice boarding, paying fares, and planning their trips in a controlled environment, empowering them to use transit safely and independently.

We also rolled out the **Tap & GO payment system**, a reloadable smartcard that

expands payment options for transit riders via a single card, simplifying how customers pay for their rides. Tap & GO prevents lost funds or paper passes; streamlines the boarding process; integrates our mobile app; and supports existing discount programs for veterans, students, seniors, and those with disabilities. It also allows multiple cards to be connected to a single account, making transit more accessible for families and group travelers. By modernizing our fare system, we're creating a more seamless, convenient, and user-friendly experience.

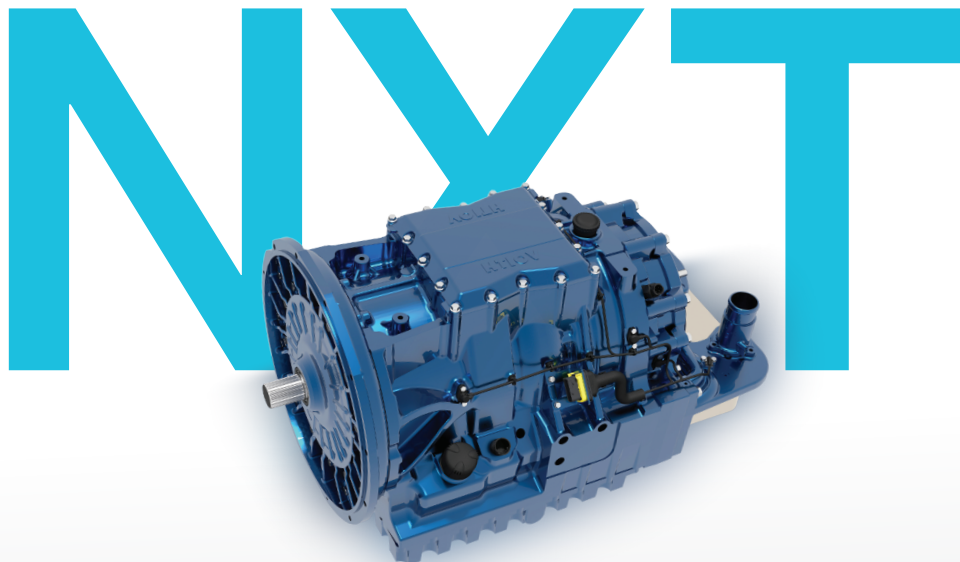
As a transit CEO, I'm passionate about enhancing mobility for all users. Innovation allows us to make transit more efficient, accessible, and responsive to the needs of our riders. Public transportation has the power to transform lives, strengthen economies, and connect communities. By embracing smart, strategic solutions, we will continue making progress toward those goals.



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NJ TRANSIT Breaks Ground on Interim Hoboken Bus Terminal

CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN ON NJ TRANSIT's interim bus terminal near Hoboken Terminal, ushering in the next phase of the Hoboken Connect mixed-use project that will dramatically transform the historic waterfront area. The terminal is expected to be completed this summer and will allow for the rehabilitation of the current facility.

The new bus terminal is one aspect of the public infrastructure improvements the Hoboken Connect project will realize. Other work includes a complete restoration of the second floor of the historic ferry terminal into a premier events space, improvements and flood resiliency work in Warrington Plaza, and new streetscapes to improve pedestrian and bicycle access.

"Construction on the Hoboken Bus Terminal represents the start of public space improvements at Hoboken Connect," said Brian Barry, senior vice president at LCOR, the project's developer.

"We're working closely with NJ TRANSIT and the City of Hoboken on the redevelopment of the Bus Terminal, which will improve intermodal connectivity while enhancing the overall commuter experience. Once complete, Hoboken Connect will completely transform the Hudson Waterfront, creating a highly desirable, mixed-use project comprising state-of-the-art office, residences, and an enhanced transportation experience."

The temporary terminal is critical to allow uninterrupted bus service as construction progresses on the permanent bus terminal at Hudson Place. An existing parking lot on NJ TRANSIT property at Hoboken Terminal is being converted to an interim bus operation. The area will include temporary shelters, pedestrian pathways, lighting and passenger loading, unloading and queuing areas.

"The start of work on this interim bus terminal at Hoboken reflects NJ TRANSIT's commitment to delivering

long-term customer experience improvements while maintaining reliable service during construction," said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kris Kolluri. "The interim terminal, along with the permanent bus facility, Hoboken Connect, and the upcoming Long Slip project, will collectively transform Hoboken into a more connected gateway for the region."



Tolar Supplies Shelters, Amenities to WeGo

TOLAR MANUFACTURING HAS delivered bus shelters and other amenities to WeGo Public Transit, Nashville, TN, for upgrades at 164 bus stops. Included are 100 PV Stop+ solar lighting units, as well as Sunset BRT Shelters, Real Time Information Signs (RTIS), EcoShade shelters, Sunset Advertising shelters, and Voyager MAX shelters.

Amenities include advertising displays, and, on 10 EcoShade shelters, there are two fully welded bench seats mounted on both sides of the center column, providing seating at smaller bus stops. Other amenities include 13" pole-mounted E-Paper RTIS signs that operate with long-life battery power and 100 PV Stop+ with RTIS and dusk-to-dawn security lighting.

All shelters feature a radius roof design, aluminum and steel construction, and fully welded roof structure. Solar lighting systems are integrated into the roof structures. All parts are finished in a super durable baked powder coat.

"We are proud to partner with WeGo Public Transit to enhance the rider experience with our innovative and durable transit

shelters," said Scott Williams, business development manager for Tolar Manufacturing Company. "With features like solar-powered lighting and E-Paper Real Time Passenger Information Signs, these amenities not only provide comfort and convenience, but also support WeGo's mission to create a more efficient and rider-friendly transit system."



Long Beach Transit Aims to Electrify Paratransit Vehicles

LONG BEACH TRANSIT (LBT), CA, aims to electrify its paratransit fleet after a successful pilot program of using a battery-electric van, which improved sustainability and the customer experience.

A 2023 Ford E-Transit was added to LBT's paratransit service, Dial-A-Lift (DAL), in January 2024. DAL is LBT's curb-to-curb, shared-ride demand-responsive service for customers with qualifying disabilities who are unable to use LBT's fixed-route bus system. DAL serves approximately 2,600 customers in the greater Long Beach area.

"LBT has prioritized giving our customers with disabilities high-quality service

since 1975," said Kenneth A. McDonald, CEO and president of LBT. "Electrifying our paratransit fleet not only improves the environmental well-being of the communities we serve, but the quality of service for customers with

disabilities."

The 2023 Ford E-Transit was introduced as a pilot program to assess the feasibility of transitioning the DAL fleet of 10 to electric vehicles. The primary focus was to evaluate operational performance, charging efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

In a survey of some 60 customers, 68 percent of respondents rated their experience as excellent or good, several months after the electric van was introduced. The majority also found the vehicle easy to use.

"Electric vehicles bring a smoother, quieter, and greener

ride to our community," said Chaka Garbutt, LBT's Dial-A-Lift coordinator. "Our customers are excited; this is a game-changer for accessibility."

The van offers seating for up to three passengers, in addition to two wheelchairs. The average daily operation is up to eight hours, with approximately 70-84 miles per day. The van has a steady six hours per full charge, with up to 100 miles per charge.

The electric van joins a fleet of nine other vehicles, Mobility Ventures Mobility Vehicle-1 vans, that operate with compressed natural gas.

Based on charging efficiency, operational performance, and positive customer feedback, LBT aims to add more electric vans to its paratransit fleet, moving toward the agency's goal of a fully zero-emissions fleet by 2040.

Three more electric vans are expected to join the Dial-A-Lift fleet in 2025.





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An Industry Driven by Kindness and Grace

BY BRYAN D. SMITH

Chief Executive Officer
CityBus
Lafayette, IN

FOR TRANSIT PROVIDERS, SINCE

2020, the pandemic was (hopefully) a once-in-a-lifetime experience that tested resiliency, civility, and faith in our fellow humans; the IIJA represented the largest investment of federal funds in public transit in a generation with the potential to change our collective world; we have a new presidential Administration with fundamentally different views on the role of the federal government.

I have worked in public transit for 30 years because I am driven to make a difference, improve the lives of the community members I serve, and hopefully, leave the world a little better than I found it. How can any agency or individual navigate all the last half decade brought and retain a desire to serve? I do not know a universal answer. Perhaps there isn't one. What I can share is my own experience, strength, and hope that worked for me.

For me, it is summed up in two val-



Bryan D. Smith

ues: kindness and grace. How does this apply to our work? I tell new operators this: It is a function of the human condition that we are all fighting a battle that people around us know nothing about. When I say this, you can see

people thinking of their personal battles, they almost float above their heads in the room. Our passengers, our vendors, our board members, our coworkers are no different than us in this regard. They are fighting battles we know nothing about.

Since we are all fighting these battles, how about we all agree to offer up kindness when it is an option.

For drivers, this can be the first step in de-escalation. There has been a rising incivility in the country, as evidenced by the increase in attacks on transit workers. We can train drivers in ways to deflect and mitigate.

Kindness also means being kind to yourself. Do not take someone else's internal battle personally. Chuck was a 35-year-safe driver at one of the properties I worked at. I asked what his secret was, and he told me he didn't let bad behavior get to him. If someone wants to argue about the fare, ask them to sit,



is signed, I often tell my private-sector partners that I don't expect a problem-free implementation, but rather a partnership approach to addressing problems when they happen.

Grace, for me, comes from a personal place as well. At the start of my 30 years in transit, I often didn't appreciate the opportunities I was offered, and even thought I had achieved much of my success by myself. As time went on, I realized that I had taken those opportunities for granted, and even squandered them. At my nadir, it came to me how fortunate I really was, and, but for grace, I could be in a much worse place. Ever since, I am pushed to offer grace to others as it was offered to me; to pay back the karmic debt I have

incurred. so you can keep everyone moving, and let it go. If a car is going to cut you off, back off, and let them over and let it go. That mentality earned him over three decades without a chargeable accident.

Kindness can apply in vendor relations, too. Isn't it kindness to have a clear RFP with a scope of work that is understandable and a response format that is easy to fill out? After the contract

incurred.

Again, how does this fit with our industry? Every transit agency I've ever worked at struggled to find operators and mechanics. Are we looking hard enough? Do we allow for grace in our candidate selection? Do we offer

CITYBUS: KINDNESS AND GRACE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Expanding Mobility through Innovation and Community Partnerships

BY JESSICA MEFFORD-MILLER

CEO
Valley Metro
Phoenix, AZ

AS TRANSPORTATION professionals

in an industry where change is as constant as transit's spinning wheels, we have a unified vision: making public transit more accessible and effective.

To meet this goal, we must change how we think about our customers, putting ourselves in their seats. Valley Metro is orchestrating a system-wide evolution of service delivery and system design that will help meet the needs of our customers today, and tomorrow.



Jessica Mefford-Miller

reservations. With demand soaring, the program is on track to deliver nearly 400,000 trips this fiscal year, reflecting an impressive 45 percent growth over the past 12 months.

One-Stop Shop for Demand-Response Services

A major milestone in transportation innovation is the completion of Phase 1 of a new centralized system for managing all demand-response services. This comprehensive platform will unify ADA complementary paratransit, RideChoice, deviated fixed-route services, and

microtransit under a single access point. Ultimately, residents across the metro Phoenix region will have a streamlined experience, with one phone number, website, or mobile app to book the most suitable transportation option for their needs.

Bringing ADA Eligibility Assessments to the Community

For years, individuals applying for ADA complementary paratransit services have had to travel to a centralized eligibility center for functional assessments—often spending an entire day commuting back and forth. To make the

process more convenient and accessible, Valley Metro has been piloting mobile assessments, partnering with local cities and towns to conduct evaluations in community facilities. This customer-centric approach has significantly improved satisfaction by reducing travel burdens and expediting service eligibility.

Breaking Down Silos with a Multi-Modal Approach

Another transformative step is the procurement of a single multi-modal provider to serve Phoenix's large and growing West Valley region. This operator will integrate multiple transit modes,

including fixed-route bus services, commuter express routes, ADA complementary paratransit, rural deviated routes, and microtransit. By consolidating services under one provider, the region aims to enhance efficiency, improve coordination, and create a more seamless transit experience for riders.

These forward-thinking initiatives are redefining mobility across metro Phoenix, fostering a more inclusive and accessible transportation network for all. With continued investment in innovation and collaboration, I am happy to share that the region is setting a new standard for equitable and efficient transit solutions.



Valley Metro bus service connects with WeRide microtransit service in metro Phoenix's fast-growing West Valley.

‘SacRT Flex’ Brings Reimagined, Fiscally Sound Mobility to California’s Capital Region

BY HENRY LI

General Manager/CEO
Sacramento Regional Transit District,
CA

CONTINUOUSLY SEARCHING FOR

economically sustainable ways to provide innovative mobility options, we at the Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) recently made a major service adjustment, transforming our outdated SmaRT Ride microtransit service into a new, cost-effective shared-use platform called SacRT Flex. SacRT Flex, operated in



Henry Li

partnership with Via Transportation, is designed to provide enhanced accessibility and mobility for riders with the greatest transit needs.

Here’s why we made the transformation. In 2018, we launched our community-based SmaRT Ride service with a one-time infusion of grant funding to replace an outdated dial-a-ride service model, offering curb-to-curb rides that can be booked and tracked using a mobile app. Smart Ride quickly expanded across nine geographic zones in the Sacramento capital region, becoming one of the largest microtransit programs in the

nation at the time.

However, as many transit agencies have experienced since launching similar microtransit services, although the service is popular, the cost per trip can be expensive and unsustainable long-term. We also recognized through extensive community engagement that many of our most vulnerable riders depended on SmaRT Ride to get them to medical appointments and food resources, especially those living in areas where there is limited fixed-route service, so discontinuing service was not an option.

I knew the time was right to reimagine our approach. By working strategically with our board of directors,



as well as SacRT’s Mobility Advisory Council, passengers, and labor partners, we were able to quickly plan and implement SacRT Flex service within a matter of months, saving approximately \$8.5 million a year without compromising quality. In fact, since implementation of the program almost four months ago, customer satisfaction has been very high.

SacRT Flex officially launched in January 2025 as an 18-month pilot, offering curb-to-curb, shared-ride service with real-time status updates. The program is available to eligible seniors 62 and older, persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, and minors aged 13-17 in low-income households within SacRT’s service area. It operates in the same nine geographic zones as SmaRT Ride did, Monday through Friday. All SacRT Flex vans have space for one

wheelchair, and the cost to the rider is \$2.50 per trip—free for children riding with parents.

Via, our transportation partner, provides vans, drivers, and scheduling technology. In making the change, we also offered all of our in-house SmaRT Ride shuttle operators the opportunity to seamlessly shift to other SacRT driving assignments, avoiding any loss of workforce.

The new SacRT Flex program ensures that SacRT continues to meet the mobility needs of our community while maintaining fiscal responsibility by focusing on optimizing resources. By reimagining mobility and engaging the public early and often, the industry can deliver innovative, cost-effective transportation solutions that empower agencies to thrive, even in the most challenging environments.

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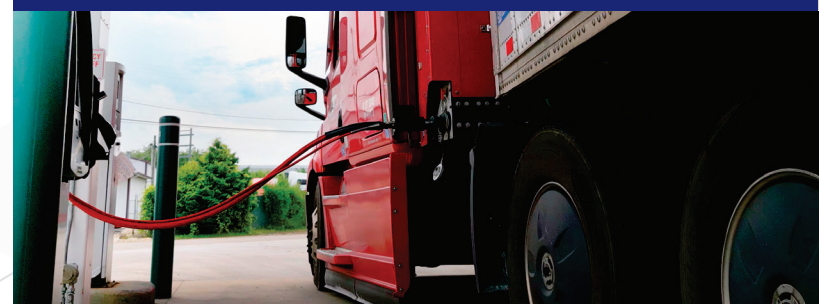
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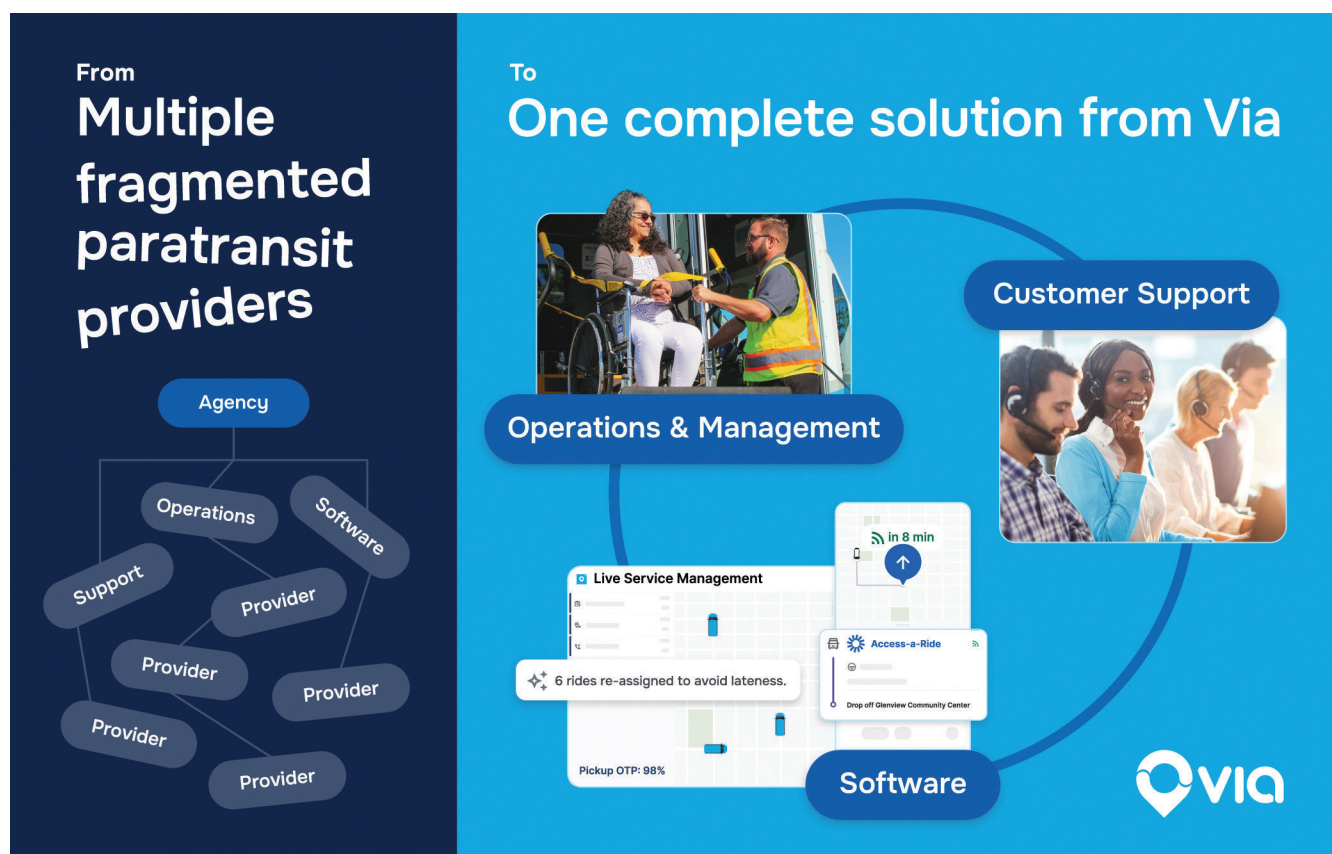


ALTERNATIVE FUELS



ELECTRIC CHARGING

A new vision for paratransit: breaking down the tech-operations silos



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Service administration is easier, too. A unified provider means one point of contact, and finely-tuned internal processes — not to mention technologies — to facilitate smooth daily service. You'll never feel like the middleman, stuck coordinating between your tech and service providers. Problems get solved faster, with fewer phone calls.

Risk-proof, turnkey innovation — nobody is a guinea pig.

A unified system doesn't just optimize today's service, it allows agencies to implement cost-saving, rider-friendly innovations, risk-free. Instead of navigating the uncertainty of new vendors and complex integrations, you can safely test and scale service enhancements from one accountable provider, such as commingled service, same-day booking, or fleet electrification.

Investing in innovation pays off. By commingling paratransit and microtransit fleets, High Valley Transit in Summit County, Utah, significantly enhanced vehicle capacity and rides aggregation, increasing productivity by over 150%.

The future of paratransit belongs to agencies that embrace unified partnerships — ones that seamlessly integrate technology and operations for smarter, more efficient service.

Looking forward.

Not ready to adopt a unified model just yet? You can start by evaluating potential software providers' operational experience and know-how. This is a great step in the right direction. Ready to learn more about what this could mean for your system? We'd love to chat.

Rachel Birnbaum
VP Paratransit Services

Email us at Partnerships@ridewithvia.com or visit ridewithvia.com/solutions/paratransit.

Growing ridership. Funding uncertainty. Shrinking resources. Ever-evolving passenger expectations. Delivering lifeline paratransit services is more complicated than ever. In response, many agencies are embracing modern, dynamic scheduling software, a step proven to improve efficiency and on-time performance.

However, those seeking truly dramatic improvements are going even further: unifying paratransit operations and technology by choosing one provider specializing in both. This unified approach allows providers to streamline procurement and vendor management, provide higher-quality service, and serve more riders more efficiently.

From a coastal town in Wisconsin to the most populous metropolitan area in Texas, leading transit agencies are seeing results:

- On-time performance increased to 98% in Green Bay Metro's commingled paratransit and microtransit service.
- Capital Area Transit System reduced call response time by 86%.
- Customer complaints were cut by 32% within a few months in Fort Worth, Texas.

- Trinity Metro reduced rider calls by 20%. That's 1,130 hours saved for the staff time in the call center since October 2024.

Here are some of the ways this holistic tech-operation solution helps agencies achieve higher quality and higher efficiency paratransit service.

Operational excellence for you and your riders.

This unified approach is demonstrated to improve safety, efficiency, and rider experience across the board. Here's how:

- Safer service. When technology is woven into every aspect of the operator and passenger experience, operators can identify and intervene in many potential issues before they happen, keeping your riders safe and service running smoothly. For example, AI-enabled telematics proactively monitor driver behavior, flagging risky behavior and automatically triggering operator retraining. If an incident does occur, the unified provider can easily investigate it using GPS and rider complaint data, and quickly implement corrective measures to prevent future issues.

- Maximized efficiency achieved via data-driven, nimble operations. Real-time and historical data from your service (and others like it) is analyzed to inform better service design, scheduling, operator incentives, and more. When operations and tech are integrated, your service can adapt quickly. For example, Via's Supply Studio uses data from millions of rides to optimize shift planning, proactively adjusting for seasonality, weather conditions, and local patterns. The result? Exactly enough vehicles on the road to serve every ride, and no paying for empty hours.

- Smoother rides, happier riders. A complete provider uses technology to provide 5-star customer service. Sophisticated scheduling and routing optimize trip assignment and planning in real-time, improving on-time performance and reducing trip duration. Rider-facing technology, like mobile booking apps, online eligibility applications, and AI-powered IVR systems, creates a modern, accessible service experience for riders, and fewer phone calls for you.

How Technology Can Solve Agencies' Biggest Challenges

BY JÉRÔME TREDAN
CEO
Matawan

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IS essential to making cities more accessible, sustainable, and efficient. However, the industry faces obstacles that impact its effectiveness and financial health. Ridership and revenue shortfalls, staffing shortages, service quality, and mismatched supply and demand are challenges to overcome to secure revenue, ensure smooth operations, and improve passenger satisfaction. The promise of technological solutions offers a potential lever to ensure that public transit remains a viable and attractive mobility choice.

Ridership & Revenue: Securing Finances

Increasing ridership and revenue requires modern, flexible fare-collection systems that improve accessibility and ease of payment for all riders. Innovative account-based ticketing (ABT) solutions make fare payments such as open-loop systems, e-wallets, and mobile transactions more secure, scalable, and accessible for riders, reducing the dependency on cash.

In Drummondville, Canada, advanced fare-management and open-loop hardware have resulted in 60 percent less manual processing and an estimated saving of \$20,000 CAD/year on fraud and paper ticket costs. Networks like La Rochelle in France shifted 45 percent of all validations to open payment systems in just one year, highlighting the opportunity ahead.

ABT platforms leverage data and

AI-driven analytics to help optimize fare structures, enhance service planning, and ensure efficient revenue collection. Real-time fare monitoring and digital ticketing create a frictionless experience

that attracts more passengers while supporting the financial sustainability of transit networks.

Staff Shortages: Keeping Public Transport Running

Transit agencies are facing a critical workforce shortage, resulting in service disruptions, longer wait times, and increased pressure on staff,

ultimately degrading the passenger experience. Cloud-based ABT systems integrated with CAD/AVL, like the one we deployed in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Canada, can reduce operational strain and improve service reliability, by optimizing workforce management.

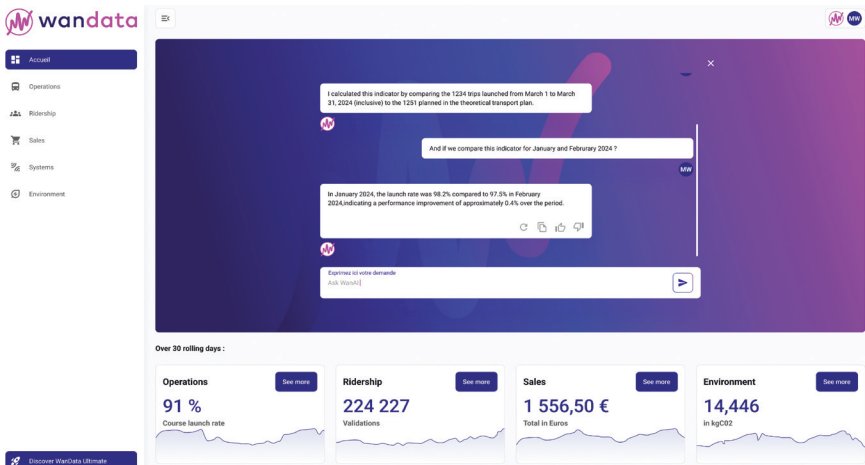
The digitalization of manual processes around maintenance and passenger information, often time consuming and prone to errors, is a game-changing opportunity for transit agencies. Imagine being able to fully automate the creation of schedules and make instant updates with just a few clicks. Ferrara and Bologna, Italy, now have the ability to do just that and save up to 80 percent time in the process, ensuring seamless operations and improved passenger service.

Service Quality: Enhancing Passenger Experience

Ensuring a high quality of service is fundamental to public transit success as passengers rightly expect safe, clean, and comfortable public transport. Issues like damaged shelters or inaccurate schedules erode their trust



Jérôme Tredan



and create operational headaches. Digital reporting tools transform maintenance. Systems we deployed in Spanish cities like Valencia and Alicante enable passengers and staff to report in real time a damaged shelter or inaccurate schedule, and agencies to manage the process efficiently with important permanence and quality of service gains.

GPS-based systems improve service quality through real-time passenger information with accurate bus tracking, improving passenger experience and safety with the capability for parents

to monitor their children's school commute. Reliable, real-time information enhances the passenger experience and promotes greater confidence in public transit.

Supply-Demand Optimization: Adapting to Changing Mobility Patterns

Imagine simply asking a chat interface about the performance of your lines

MATAWAN'S TECHNOLOGY
CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

CITYBUS: KINDNESS AND GRACE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

second-chance employment after a criminal conviction? We should be looking at our progressive action steps to see if we are looking for a root cause and working to correct it, rather than three strikes and you're out.

Grace works with passengers, too. How do we respond to issues on the bus and at transfer centers with mental health workers and police? It's clear we cannot arrest our way out of drug addiction and the lack of housing and mental health resources. At one property, we hired a community member who worked with a social worker to help those who needed it at our transfer center. She was able to offer a ride token, directions to

local health centers, even socks and underwear where needed.

As we face the next half decade, I won't pretend that kindness and grace will be the solutions to all our issues, but perhaps our issues can lessen a little if we practice kindness and grace while going through them.



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How Palm Tran Is Adjusting to a Growing Community

BY ANAND PERALA

Senior Public Relations Specialist
Palm Tran
West Palm Beach, FL

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION connects people to jobs, education, healthcare, and essential services. Like transit systems operating in large county areas, Palm Tran, the transit agency for Palm Beach County, faces unique challenges in providing mobility to residents and visitors across its sprawling areas. However, unlike many other transit systems, Palm Tran exceeds its fixed-route network boundaries to serve disabled and transportation disadvantaged persons who are unable to meet their transportation needs.

The agency transports people across the entire county, from the white sand beaches on the Atlantic coast to the

growing metropolis of West Palm Beach and the rural Glades area, known for its rich “black gold” soil. The county spans 2,383 square miles and is one of the largest counties in the eastern United States by area, with more than 1.5 million residents and a continuously growing population.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Ivan Maldonado, Palm Tran has faced these challenges by enhancing service through innovation. In 2024, the agency successfully increased ridership on its fixed-route system by 1.1 million trips, the first transit agency in Florida to surpass pre-COVID numbers. Recent key initiatives include the BusLink program, a partnership with UZURV for paratransit customers, and the Port St. Lucie (PSL) Express line.

The BusLink program provides first-and-last-mile solutions through

rideshare and taxi partnerships, allowing Palm Tran to reallocate resources to increase frequency on its fixed-route system. This innovation has led to increased ridership.

“Innovation is at the core of our strategy,” Maldonado emphasized. “We need to be creative to meet the needs of our community.

Public transit is no longer just about buses, it’s about mobility management.” Palm Tran is shifting its approach to provide more flexible, demand-based services that meet the evolving needs of riders.

Paratransit services have also evolved. Partnering with UZURV and Lyft has expanded on-demand services for riders with disabilities, increasing accessibility. Connection, Palm Tran’s paratransit system, is the second largest in Florida, delivering nearly 4,000 trips daily.

Last year, Palm Tran launched the Port Saint Lucie Express commuter service pilot program in partnership with Florida DOT and St. Lucie County. This service provides non-stop trips between Port St. Lucie and West Palm Beach, easing traffic congestion along Interstate 95.

Looking ahead, Maldonado envisions Palm Tran continuing to adapt to the county’s growth by leveraging technology, strengthening partnerships, and enhancing services to keep pace with county growth.

“We are committed to ensuring that public transportation remains a viable



A UZURV driver assisting a passenger out of the vehicle.

option for all citizens, whether they are commuting to work, attending school, or accessing essential services,” Maldonado said. “By focusing on innovation and strategic service enhancements, we are confident that we will continue to meet the evolving needs of Palm Beach County.”

Ultimately, Palm Tran’s mission is driven by the people it serves. “Public transit is about people,” Maldonado concluded. “Our decisions are centered on internal and external customer services and how we can best serve our community. We remain committed to finding creative, cost-effective ways to expand our services and enhance the rider experience.” As the agency moves forward, it will continue to collaborate with partners, listen to riders, and invest in mobility solutions that ensure access and connectivity for all.



The Port St. Lucie Express.

DART Reimagined: Reshaping Service to Meet the Needs of Today and Beyond

BY CATHERINE SMITH

Planning & Development Manager
Delaware Transit Corporation (DART)

DART EMBARKED ON A YEAR-LONG comprehensive study focused on improving transportation services across the state and charting the course for a more sustainable transit future.

As the state’s population grows and mobility patterns change, DART’s current service model, although widespread, becomes increasingly outdated. The existing broad service coverage remains susceptible to varying conditions of high and low ridership demand. After the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer nine-to-five commuters indicated that the previous model of offering commute-oriented trips was no longer needed. Our transit demand has changed dramatically and forced us to take inventory of our existing statewide network.

The DART Reimagined transit study consisted of an unprecedented amount of community engagement that

included countless outreach activities, i.e. formal community workshops, conducting pop-up community events in neighborhoods and at transit bus stops and transit centers, conducting meetings with key stakeholders in the business and service agency community, distributing digital and paper surveys for the first six months of the study, and establishing four separate advisory committees (an Executive Advisory; and four geographic based Advisory Committees, that included the City of Wilmington, New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties, Delaware). The Advisory Committees were critical to our success in garnering transit service feedback, representing and serving as community ambassadors and communicating their needs, reviewing and evaluating all transit service plans, and making final recommendations on the preferred and final DART Reimagined transit network.

The network equated to an increased need for higher frequency and off-peak service to meet the needs of Delaware’s most vulnerable populations.

From the insights gathered from a multi-level service evaluation and robust community engagement approach, the DART Reimagined transit network emerged with a concentration on establishing a core network, offering a revised family of transit service categories,

improving service quality (with revised service standards for the family of services), promoting a system that is easy to use, enhancing the user experience, and prioritizing safe access.

Ultimately, the final network recommendations identified service changes and investments to improve the transit network and access to it (from one-third of all Delawareans to one-half, with full implementation), a higher level of service quality, and ultimately better matching of transit services to market demand and community needs.

The Reimagined network embraces the heart of DART and enables the agency to continue to fulfill its mission connecting transit riders to what matters—every ride, every customer, every day—and remain adaptable to the state’s evolving landscape. More information can be found on the project website, www.dartreimagined.com.



The Tech Corner

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



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Streamline Transit Ticketing for Enhanced Ridership

Transit agencies often face the challenge of accepting multiple ticketing technologies, including barcodes, NFC/RFID and EMV payments. This complexity can slow down boarding times and disrupt schedules, frustrating passengers and staff alike.

The Challenge: Ticket Reading Complexity

Transit systems today must support various ticket types, from printed and digital barcodes to RFID tokens and open-loop payments. With multiple ticket reading interfaces, confusion can arise, leading to delays and inefficiencies.

A Smarter Approach

HID's multi-media TripTick reader interface simplifies ticket validation by offering a **single point of presentation** for all ticket formats. Passengers can use barcodes, closed-loop smart cards or contactless payments on devices such as the HID® [VAL100](#) on-board validator,

[VAL150](#) platform validator or [TripTick 220](#) OEM reader for fare gates. This streamlined approach enhances rider experience, accelerates boarding and keeps operations running smoothly.

Driving Efficiency and Ridership

Faster boarding and punctual departures enhance trust and reliability. When passengers experience a seamless, efficient process, ridership increases, benefiting both operators and the communities they serve. For example, the [Jacksonville Transportation Authority](#) improved boarding times by deploying HID VAL100 validators with mobile ticketing.

Prioritize Payment Security

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APTA PROFILE COMMITTEE



BUS OPERATIONS COMMITTEE | 541 members

SALVADOR LLAMAS, Chair

Chief Operating Officer
Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District
Oakland, CA

APTA Staff Advisors: Lisa Jerram, Senior Director, Bus Operations & New Vehicle Technologies; Tdisho Pendleton, Senior Program Manager, Technical Services, Technical Services & Innovation Department

What is the role of APTA's Bus Operations Committee?

The Bus Operations Committee provides a forum for general managers, chief operating officers, and directors of transportation to discuss and share best practices around the management of bus transit operations.

We champion innovation, advocate for our shared interests, and lead the way toward a more robust and visionary future. An example is the incredible collaboration between our committee and other APTA committees, where we collectively seek out challenges with a resilient commitment to inspire solutions from the industry and share them.

What are the committee's top priorities for the year?

A survey of committee members resulted in the following seven priorities: driver assaults/safety; recruitment and retention; operating funding challenges; ZEB operations; unhoused people on transit; structuring service post-COVID; and mega-event planning.

How does the committee engage its members in these priorities?

When planning our committee meetings, we use the seven priorities to select meeting topics and invite committee members and other SMEs to present best practices, solutions, and ideas to better manage challenges and impacts.

Can you describe some practices adopted by the industry that are a result of the work of the committee?

There has been a lot of focus recently on transit worker assault prevention. We took this topic on in 2024 with presentations on Risk Assessment of Worker Assaults from four member agencies, and APTA provided a presentation on Transit Worker Assault Prevention. Many best practices and creative solutions came out of these efforts.

What attracted you to the industry and to the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District [AC Transit]?

I have dedicated my entire career to service—first in the United States Marine Corps after graduating High School. I then moved to public transportation, serving the Los Angeles County and San Francisco Bay Area communities.

I remember being around four years old on a cold rainy day, standing at a bus stop holding my mom's and sister's hands while my mom also held my brother's hand. It was windy and pouring down so hard; the rain fell at what looked like a 45-degree angle. We stood there embracing each other to try and stay warm for several minutes until we saw the headlights of a Southern California Rapid Transit District (RTD) bus approaching. As we boarded, the driver greeted us with a smile, and the bus was so warm and dry, I could not stop smiling for two reasons: the comfort of the RTD bus

(#1) taking us to Huntington Park City Hall where my younger sister and I were getting vaccines to start school (#2).

I would probably not be the COO at AC Transit right now if that RTD bus had not shown up, and if the city did not offer a free vaccine program for school children. This experience has kept me devoted to our industry.

Please describe your role at AC Transit.

In my current role as COO, I am responsible for leadership oversight of AC Transit's operations department to ensure safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation services are provided to San Francisco East Bay residents and surrounding communities. Departments within my area of responsibility include transportation, maintenance, operations control center, road supervision, training and education, and technical services.

How is the work of the committee reflected in your own agency?

AC Transit is very active, not only in the Bus Operations Committee, but in many other APTA committees. This is extraordinarily rewarding; we have executive, director, and manager-level employees sharing impacts to our agency during committee meetings and bringing back industry best practices to our day-to-day operations.

APTA's committees play an important role in fulfilling the association's commitment to developing industry leaders. Please share how your committee encourages young professionals to participate in its work.

We love hosting APTAU Leadership programs' young professionals and supporting their research efforts. During the committee meeting at APTA's TRANSform Conference, we hosted two Leadership APTA Capstone Presentations and recently helped conduct surveys for research projects.

How can an individual's service on this committee add value to their career?

Very simple: immediately, they will be connected to an incredible network of transit professionals at all levels of leadership with countless years of collective experience. If there is a challenge impacting bus operations, we will find a solution. Don't be shy; get involved by attending meetings, asking questions, presenting ideas, and staying connected!

What are the main challenges facing the public transportation industry over the coming years?

Financial uncertainty, changing regulations, the generational knowledge gap, and emerging technologies will continue to present challenges, priorities, and opportunities for the industry.

Omnitrans' Path to Zero-Emission Transit

BY KILEE BRENNAN

Marketing and Communications Intern
Omnitrans
San Bernardino, CA

PUBLIC TRANSIT AGENCIES ARE working toward being more innovative and are transitioning their bus fleets to be more reliable, safe, and environmentally responsible. The California Air Resources Board has mandated that all state public transit vehicles be zero-emission by 2040, and Omnitrans is taking bold steps to meet this goal. The agency is actively transitioning its fleet to advanced zero-emission buses, cutting greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining service efficiency.

Advancing a Sustainable Future

Omnitrans is deploying a mix of electric and fuel-cell buses to achieve a zero-emission fleet. New electric advancements reduce reliance on fossil fuels and lower operational costs while providing clean, quiet transportation.

Omnitrans is integrating new fuel-cell buses utilizing advanced clean energy technology, funded by an 80 percent investment from the Low or No Emission (Lo-No) FTA grant program and 20 percent from local sources.

Omnitrans' buses feature sensors, detectors, and automatic shutoff mechanisms at fueling stations and maintenance facilities. The technology is reliable, and more than 2,000 similar transit vehicles operate worldwide. Workforce training and community education will ensure a seamless transition.

West Valley Connector: A Key Step Forward

As part of its sustainability efforts, Omnitrans construction is underway at the West Valley Connector (WVC), San Bernardino County's second Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. One of 10 planned BRT routes to connect the region, the WVC is expected to launch in September 2026 and will utilize 40 new, first-of-its-kind New Flyer Xcelsior electric buses with three-door boarding for improved passenger flow—enhancing efficiency and sustainability.

By committing to a zero-emission future, Omnitrans is positioning itself as a leader in sustainable transit. Through ongoing investment in clean transportation, the agency is improving air quality and creating a more efficient, environmentally responsible transit system for its community.



MATAWAN'S TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

and receiving instant, actionable feedback. A reality, not a dream. Efficient transit hinges on aligning with demand, yet many cities struggle with accurate assessments. Inflexible schedules and static route planning lead to wasted resources and operational inefficiencies.

AI simplifies data analysis, providing valuable insights by analyzing passenger flows, travel patterns, and peak-hour demand, and making it impactful. In the French region of Occitanie, we offer instant access to unified data from

13 local authorities and 200 concessionary companies, fostering seamless collaboration, and providing multi-level access to key stakeholders for aligned decision-making.

Planning decisions, like route and fare adjustments, are now grounded in analyzed data, not anecdotal evidence. By leveraging existing data sources and these user-friendly AI tools, transit agencies can optimize route planning, dynamically adjust service levels, and efficiently allocate resources.

The Future of Transit: A Tech-Enabled Transformation?

The future of a thriving public transit system in the U.S. depends on the strategic adoption of advanced technology solutions—as per those described above—driving greater operational efficiency and enhanced passenger experience.



MEET THE APTA STAFF



JENNELISE HAFEN

Senior Program Manager—Mobility, Access,
State & Local Affairs
Policy Department

Q What are your primary responsibilities at APTA, and those of your department?

A I work in the Policy Department, so I help people understand trends and opportunities regarding mobility and accessibility and facilitate conversations to find solutions to the issues that agencies have in common.

I am very fortunate to work with folks in the industry who actively look at ways to improve and expand public transportation for everyone. Playing a role in those positive changes makes my workdays exciting and well worth it.

Q How do the initiatives and programs you work on contribute to APTA's overall goals?

A I facilitate planning of the yearly Capital Projects session at the APTA Rail Conference. This year I am working with the APTA High-Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (HS&IPR) to plan the High-Speed Rail Seminar, and I assist in planning the biannual Transit Ballot Initiatives Workshop.

The members of the Capital Projects and HS&IPR committees really go all out in planning the workshops to highlight and help folks understand different project delivery methods and innovative high-speed rail projects and to share the exciting projects our members work on day in and day out.

Q To what extent do you have direct contact with APTA members?

A I love seeing APTA members in real life! I have been able to work at the Mobility, Rail, and TRANSform conferences and the Transit Ballot Initiative Workshop, in addition to helping at a few others. Getting to see folks in real life that I know from virtual meetings, emails, and APTAconnect correspondence is always exciting.

APTA members really are like celebrities to me. I am in awe of every single member and the work they do. They are so passionate, so innovative, and make incremental changes daily to make the world a better place. If you see me running around at a conference or out and about in life, please say hello!

Q How did you come to be at APTA? Please describe your professional background.

A I am so fortunate that I found APTA. I undertook graduate work in City Planning, but my path to APTA took a detour through a public library. I ran a library in South-

ern California prior to my move to Washington, DC. My work there was centered around creating community through connecting folks and making sure information and resources were accessible and available.

I moved to DC in 2024 and took that move as an opportunity to set a new career path that aligned with my dedication to public service. I have been at APTA for approximately a year, and I couldn't have imagined how great a fit this would be for me.

Q Have you worked in or around public transportation besides APTA?

A I drove 40-foot buses for the student transportation department at UC Santa Cruz as my college work-study job. Although not work, as such, when I was 15, my 10th grade English teacher let me organize a field trip taking a city bus to the public library. Thirty+ teens showed up at the bus stop and at the library that day!

Q What interests you most about public transportation?

A Community, community, community! I love the idea of knowing your bus driver by only a nod or riding the train with the same folks (you never speak to) every day. It is also a necessary public service. We need fewer cars on the road and more people moving through their communities and recognizing we are part of something larger than ourselves. I have always opted to use public transportation whenever possible.

Q Could you tell us something about yourself that might surprise us?

A I have been to four NCAA Final Four championships. I mostly go for snacks, but I do love the energy of live sports, and no one celebrates like a college basketball fan. I have been to 38 states in the U.S. Almost half of the remaining 12 begin with the letter M. My middle name is Yolanda.

I have a few books I always like to recommend: *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer; *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander; *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein; *Exile and Pride* by Eli Clare; and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs.

Contact Jennelise Hafen at
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Congratulations on Joining — and Thank You for Supporting APTA

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Universities

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Public Interest Groups

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San Francisco Transit Riders
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Transportation Riders United
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Executive Director
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Retirees

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303-299-2839

Scott Smith
Mesa, AZ
480-686-3419

..... All About Austin

Austin was originally called **Waterloo** before being renamed in honor of Stephen F. Austin, the “Father of Texas.”

■ ■ ■

Austin was chosen as the **capital of the Republic of Texas** in 1839.

■ ■ ■

The **Texas State Capitol building** is taller than the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

■ ■ ■

Austin is home to the **oldest university in Texas**, the University of Texas at Austin, founded in 1883.

■ ■ ■

Austin has a unique motto, “**Keep Austin Weird,**” which promotes local businesses and culture.

■ ■ ■

The **Cathedral of Junk**, a whimsical art installation, is made entirely of discarded items.

■ ■ ■

Austin is known as the “**Live Music Capital of the World.**”

■ ■ ■

Austin hosts the annual **South by Southwest (SXSW) festival**, which features music, film, and interactive media.

■ ■ ■

Austin City Limits, a famous music television show, has been broadcasting since 1974.

■ ■ ■

The city is home to more than 250 **live music venues**.

■ ■ ■

Country music legend **Willie Nelson** has a strong connection to Austin and helped shape its music scene.

■ ■ ■

Shiner Bock, a popular Texas beer, is brewed in nearby Shiner and widely enjoyed in Austin.

■ ■ ■

Austin has a thriving **food truck culture**, with more than 1,000 food trucks offering a variety of cuisines.

■ ■ ■

Breakfast tacos are a beloved Austin staple, with many local spots serving up their own unique versions.

■ ■ ■

Austin is famous for its **barbecue**, with iconic spots such as Franklin Barbecue drawing long lines of hungry patrons.

■ ■ ■

The **Driskill Hotel**, built in 1886, is home to one of Austin’s most historic and elegant dining experiences.

■ ■ ■

The **Austin Film Festival**, founded in 1994, is one of the most respected film festivals in the country.

■ ■ ■

Eeyore’s Birthday Party, an annual event in April, is a whimsical celebration in Pease Park.

■ ■ ■

Austin is often referred to as “Silicon Hills” due to its **growing tech industry**.

■ ■ ■

Dell Technologies is headquartered in Round Rock, a suburb of Austin.

■ ■ ■

Google, Apple, and Facebook all have significant operations in Austin.

■ ■ ■

Circuit of the Americas, a world-class motorsports facility, hosts the **Formula One** United States Grand Prix.

■ ■ ■

The **Austin Symphony Orchestra**, founded in 1911, is the oldest performing arts group in the city.

■ ■ ■



Photo by Paul Hudson

Honoring the APTA Emerging Leaders Class of 2025

APTA'S EMERGING LEADERS

Program (ELP) Class of 2025 has completed its year-long international leadership development program. Since June 2024, the class has participated in workshops and webinars and worked together to complete comprehensive capstone projects on topical industry issues. These issues have included safety on public transit, transit as a food network, a mega events tour playbook based on Taylor Swift's *The Eras Tour*, rebranding public transportation, challenges and opportunities of childcare as an employee benefit, mode selection and the future of transit, and navigating the operational funding fiscal cliff.

In addition, participants were paired with national and local mentors throughout the program. These mentors have been integral in helping participants navigate real-world challenges. The mentorship network alone promises to have a long-lasting impact on the graduates, ensuring they have the guidance and support needed to bring their visionary ideas to fruition.

The ELP Class of 2025 marks the eleventh class to graduate since the program's launch in 2013.

Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony

The Emerging Leaders Graduation will be held April 7 at the JW Marriott Austin during APTA's 2025 Mobility Conference in Austin, TX. Conference attendees can hear reflections on the program's past year, including the class's capstone projects, and celebrate the program's success and accomplishments.

Capstone Project Presentations

Over the past several months, the ELP Class of 2025 explored key issues facing public transportation with industry leaders, who serve as program mentors and faculty, and their peers. Each group selected a current industry challenge to research, and collected data through national surveys, literature reviews, and interviews with public and private APTA member organizations. Project topics included:

- The Perception of Safety on Public Transit
- Transit Network as a Food Network: Transit's Role in Food Access
- Was She Trouble When She Walked In? A Mega Events Playbook based on Taylor Swift's *The Eras Tour*
- Reimagining Public Transportation: A New Vision for Your Agency
- Putting Childcare in the Driver's Seat: Challenges and Opportunities of Childcare as an Employee Benefit



- Shaping the Future of Transit: What Drives Mode Selection?
- Navigating the Operational Funding Fiscal Cliff

The ELP groups presented their recommendations and lessons learned in the online Class of 2025 Capstone Project Industry Presentations in March. Recordings of the presentations, along with the slides and handouts, will be available on the APTAU Learning website (search "Emerging Leaders") at <https://learning.aptagateway.com> by the end of April.

Graduates of the Class of 2025

Graduates of the Class of 2025 are:

- **Jonathan Ahn**, Assistant Director, Metro Transit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
- **Benjamin Aitoumeziene**, Data Analyst-Organizational Health Data, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA)
- **Grace Almeida**, Service Analyst, Metro Transit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
- **Sina Anesteh**, Rail & Engineer, Kiewit
- **Rahmane Camara**, Supervising Planner, Connecticut DOT
- **Alexis Carter**, Senior Government Relations Representative, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), CA
- **Jose Cervantes**, Senior Transit Planner, North County Transit District, North San Diego County, CA
- **Cindy Chen**, Project/Program Manager, King County Metro, Seattle, WA
- **Charles Clark**, Manager, Paratransit Services, TriMet, Portland, OR
- **Maya Coleman**, Transportation Planner, District DOT, Washington, DC
- **Alex Cruz**, Senior Transit Planner, Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County, NV
- **Deepika Gangwani**, Manager, Corporate Deliverables, Toronto Transit Commission
- **Lauren Garoppo**, Vehicles Engineering Specialist III, STV Inc.
- **Alexander Houck**, Deputy Chief Safety Officer, Safety Management System, Maryland DOT MTA
- **Geo Joy**, Maintenance Manager-2, Detroit DOT
- **Kaden Killpack**, Commercial Program Manager, Stadler Rail
- **Alexa Kolosky**, Land Analyst, Rio Tinto, Bakersfield, CA
- **Alex Kumnik**, Director of Transportation Training, Pittsburgh Regional Transit
- **Cindy LaBranche**, Senior Personnel Specialist, Miami-Dade Transit
- **Kevin Liao**, Senior Software Engineer, Token Transit
- **Ashlee McLaughlin**, External Affairs Director, Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, IL
- **Bryan Mulrooney**, Chief Operating Officer, City of Madison Transit, WI
- **Erik Mumm**, Transit Project Manager, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
- **Theophile Nkenfack**, Transit System Designer, HDR Inc.
- **David Oppong**, Project Engineer, Allworld Project Management
- **Mimi Pinna**, Partnerships Associate Principal, Via Transportation Inc.
- **Taskin Sehitoglu**, Senior Project Engineer, HNTB
- **Mitchell Stoops**, Account Manager, Swiftly Inc.
- **Bruce Thompson**, Manager of Fare Programs Operations, San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), CA
- **Miles Varga**, Supervisor of Traction Power, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
- **Emily Watts**, Community Engagement Planner & Tribal Liaison, Washington State DOT
- **Eva Williams**, Director, Budget & Grants, Trinity Metro, Fort Worth, TX
- **Tao Xue**, Senior Designer, Gannett Fleming
- **In (Rachel) Yoo**, Transit Administrative Supervisor, City of Gardena (GTrans), CA

Congratulations to the next generation of leaders in transit!

A special thanks to Matt Olson (HDR) and Jorge Quintana (Foothill Transit), who served as class representatives from the Class of 2024. They were active members of the Emerging Leaders Program Committee, played a pivotal role in the Class of 2025 application selection process, and contributed onsite at workshops as presenters and moderators for class discussions.

Emerging Leaders Class of 2026

The Emerging Leaders Class of 2026 will be announced in mid-April.



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Navigating Change: How Detroit Is Tackling Evolving Transit Challenges

BY ERICKA ALEXANDER

Communications and Public Relations Manager
Detroit Transportation Corporation

DETROIT IS EXPERIENCING A NEW era of innovation and growth that requires innovative and modern mobility to retain and attract the next generation. The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) operates city bus service, and public agency Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC) owns and operates the Detroit People Mover elevated rail system. Robert Cramer, the new executive director of transit for the City of Detroit, took on the larger role of guiding both agencies earlier this year.

As a city department, DDOT operates routes for 250,000 weekly passengers primarily within Detroit's 143 square miles and nearby destinations in adja-

cent communities. DDOT opened the new Jason Hargrove Transit Center in a fully remodeled historic structure, which received the 2024 Regional Best Project Award in the airport/transit category by *Engineering News Record*. The center is named for Hargrove, a bus driver who advocated for the safety of drivers and riders and who contracted and died from COVID. Additionally, a new state-of-the-art \$180 million bus terminal will open in early 2026, with both facilities supporting more safe, reliable service and better rider experiences.

Quarterly service improvements are following DDOT Reimagined, a transformation roadmap to redesign routes and improve daily frequencies to match the growing workforce and educational needs outside of the old traditional weekday peak times. The changes will continue to evolve with sustained implementation, but the



focus remains to nearly double the percentage of riders with access to high frequency routes across Detroit.

The Detroit People Mover is a fully automated three-mile elevated light rail system and a unique fixture of the city's downtown landscape since 1987. DTC has transformed the Detroit People Mover into a 21st Century system by growing partners and implementing new station technologies and a free-fare program—showcased during major events such as the NFL Draft, Detroit Grand Prix, Detroit Auto Show, and all four major sports teams.

The success resulted in a nation-leading 80 percent ridership increase and generated new interest in People Mover's role in supporting major developments and growing residential

neighborhoods. With its \$1 billion Hudson's Tower Project nearing completion, Bedrock is partnering with DTC and UNStudio to study how an adjacent station and surrounding area might be improved to anchor a new innovation district with possible street-level improvements, activating the facade of the People Mover station and more. DTC is also developing a People Mover System-wide plan with AECOM to be completed in early 2026 that will provide an examination of improvements and possible expansion projects.

Together, these agencies are evolving mobility in Detroit. The mission for Robert Cramer is clear: transform and grow ridership by delivering safer, reliable services, improve service quality, adapt to change, and elevate the rider's exposure to public transit. "Detroit is a resilient city, and our transit systems are part of that story," Cramer added. "We're committed to ensuring that public transportation supports Detroit's future by rebuilding confidence in service today and ensuring these two agencies push for improvements that residents and visitors can count on as safe, reliable, and part of a positive experience in the city every day."



Expanding Access: How Pace Is Enhancing Mobility for All

SERVING ONE OF THE LARGEST metropolitan areas in the U.S., Pace, Arlington Heights, IL, is committed to delivering innovative, accessible, and responsive transportation solutions. Covering nearly 3,677 square miles across six counties, our service area extends from densely populated neighborhoods to the farthest suburbs, ensuring that public transit remains a viable and attractive option for all.

Investing in public transportation is essential to building a system that meets the evolving needs of our riders

and strengthens communities. Over the past year, Pace has demonstrated how strategic investments translate into real-world improvements.

One of our key priorities is expanding mobility options for riders with disabilities. In 2024, we launched the Rideshare Access Program (RAP), offering ADA-certified paratransit riders a convenient, subsidized transportation option across our suburban service area. The response has been strong, with more than 640,000 trips taken in the program's first nine months.

Pace has also enhanced technology to improve the rider experience, earning recognition for our Mobility as a Service program. Our recommended trip-planning app, *Transit*, now integrates more Pace services and connects riders seamlessly to CTA and Metra.

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annual trips that link people to jobs, schools, healthcare, and other essential destinations.

In historically underserved communities, Pace continues to expand accessible transit. This past fall, we launched our 11th On Demand service, giving southern suburban riders a reservation-based option for first- and last-mile connections. Flexible, on-demand services provide essential transportation in lower-density

areas, benefiting seniors, low-income residents, and those without personal vehicles.

The past year provides only a glimpse of our ongoing efforts to ensure all riders have access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation. As we look to the future, we are reminded that an investment in Pace represents an investment in expanded mobility, accessible services, and a stronger quality of life for those we serve.

Each month, more than 10,000 users rely on the app to plan trips, track buses, and receive real-time updates.

To further support riders with disabilities, Pace launched the *TripCheck* app, replacing an outdated system and allowing paratransit customers to easily track trips without calling or searching the website.

Pace's fixed-route bus service also plays a critical role in connecting communities, providing nearly 20 million



2025 Hot Companies

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



Vontas: Integrate CAD/AVL Systems with VoIP Technology

Vontas Highlights the Value of Integration with CAD/AVL and VoIP Solutions

In the heart of Kansas City, Missouri, Vontas held their annual ThinkTransit conference, showcasing products that are moving the transit industry forward with innovative technology. Andrea Costa, Product Manager, highlighted the power of integration between Computer-Aided Dispatch/Automated Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) and VoIP solutions. With Vontas OnCall, Costa shared stories on why agencies need an alternative to radio and how it can be integrated with their CAD/AVL system.

OnCall is a modern VoIP communication platform designed specifically for public transit agencies. Built to enhance operational efficiency and connectivity, OnCall provides seamless, reliable communication over public cellular networks and is tailored to meet the diverse needs of transit agencies.

OnCall comes in two offerings: Essential and Advanced. Essential is a standalone VoIP solution, perfect for transit agencies focused on affordability and scalability. Essential provides reliable, high-quality communication without the need for expensive private radio infrastructure.

Advanced is an integrated VoIP solution featuring intelligent switching between public cellular and private radio networks. Advanced is ideal for agencies prioritizing uninterrupted connectivity, enhanced reliability, and robust backup capabilities. It can be utilized in combination with the Vontas OnRoute CAD/AVL system.

While onstage in front of a large audience, Costa shared many stories of why OnCall is a preferable alternative to radio. Agencies run into issues such as saving costs, sharing bandwidth with other services, dead zones, or damages to

radio tower that can lead to costly repairs. With OnCall, agencies can avoid these problems and plan accordingly while also saving money.

One of the major benefits of OnCall is fast and easy implementation. At Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), it took two weeks to implement OnCall on 375 vehicles. At the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), it only took 48 hours on 750 vehicles. With quick implementation, agencies can quickly realize the benefits a robust communication solution that prioritizes reliability and operational continuity. With OnCall, agencies can ensure seamless communication across public cellular data and private radio infrastructure, providing advanced features to safeguard critical transit operations.

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MV Transportation: Celebrating 50 Years of Service

MV TRANSPORTATION BEGAN WITH

Feysan and Alex Lodde's determination to help their community's most vulnerable citizens. In 1975, realizing the limited transportation options for the elderly and people with disabilities, the Loddies began providing transportation services throughout San Francisco—one of the least accessible cities in the U.S. at the time. Today, these transportation services are known as paratransit services.

Feysan and Alex started this service because it was the right thing to do for members of the community who did not have viable transportation options. This commitment to serving people remains a defining feature of MV today.

Feysan recounts carrying her passengers in her arms down several flights of stairs, as buildings often were not equipped with elevators. "You had to balance a wheelchair and sometimes I had to carry somebody up in my arms if they didn't weigh any more than 150 pounds," she said in a recent interview. "Sometimes we had to go and get a fireman from the fire department to help us take someone upstairs."

All too frequently, her pickups were the first time many of her passengers were able to leave their apartments in a long time.

In 1990, the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, mandating accessible transportation for passengers with disabilities. The ADA marked a turning point for MV. With 15 years of experience in paratransit, MV stood ready to provide transportation solutions at scale, on behalf of municipalities and transit agencies. The period from 1990 to 2025 has been one of remarkable growth and transformation for MV, as the company was awarded hundreds of operations and maintenance contracts across the U.S. and Canada.

What started as a husband-and-wife operation in 1975 has grown to become a dedicated team of approximately



10,000 employees across 26 U.S. states and one Canadian province, united by a shared commitment to safety, reliability, and customer service. Today, MV still operates under the Loddies' founding principles, and the needs of people and the community continue to drive the company's mission every day.

The New MV

As 2025 marks the company's 50th anniversary and provides a moment to reflect on the company's storied past, MV's leadership team is focused on building on this rich heritage. With their sights set firmly on the future, the team is building what has come to be known within the organization as the "New MV."

In August 2022, Harry Wilson joined MV as chairman and CEO, bringing decades of experience in transforming and growing companies across a range of industries, including several in-market logistics businesses. Kevin Klika returned as the company's president and COO at the same time. Under their leadership, MV completed a substantial transformation that has set the stage for deeper investments in its employees and an expansion of service capabilities to better meet the needs of passengers and clients.



"We are building a high-performance culture of teamwork and collaboration, all in the service of our passengers and customers," said Wilson. "We have made unparalleled investments in developing our people, building the best team in the industry, and establishing deep capabilities in the areas most important to our customers. Our commitment to world-class safety and outstanding customer service is fueled by our terrific teammates across North America, who embrace our shared mission every day. As we celebrate 50 years, we look forward to even greater achievements in the years to come."

MV is committed to the communities it serves, constantly exploring new technologies and service models to enhance its offerings and meet the evolving needs of its customers, passengers, and communities. By maintain-

ing industry partnerships that leverage innovative ideas and cutting-edge technology in areas such as safety, zero emissions, and microtransit, MV continues to shape the future of mobility.

"I've seen MV grow from a small, dedicated team to a national leader," said Klika. "What has remained constant is our focus on our people and our commitment to providing safe and reliable transportation. We have always put the needs of our passengers and our people first, and that will never change."

After 50 years, the heart of MV is stronger than ever, dedicated to serving people and communities. This commitment has defined its past and will continue to shape its future. As Feysan put it best, "If I had to go back to work today, I would go back as a driver. I want to be out there helping people."

Denver RTD Ramps Up New Detective Bureau

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD)'s history, the agency's Transit Police Department (RTD-PD) has launched its own internal detective bureau. The in-house bureau will enable RTD to directly perform investigations on thefts and any other criminal activity that may occur on its property—"anything that affects the ability of our customers to ride the system safely," said RTD-PD Commander Brian Cousineau, who is leading the new detective bureau. "We want people to utilize our services and feel safe doing so."

As bureau protocols are established for working with the eight counties in RTD's district, the department will be able to file its own cases and carry out investigations on related cases that occur in different municipalities. As an example, Cousineau pointed to last year's copper

wire thefts from RTD tracks.

"If a copper wire theft happens in Aurora on our property and the wire was valued at \$900, that's a misdemeanor crime; we would hand it over to the Aurora Police Department. Let's say the same \$900 copper wire theft then happened a week later in Thornton, and then a week later at Lakewood. The benefit of having our own detective bureau is that we can assign our detectives to all those cases," he said. "This changes the crime from being a misdemeanor to a felony-level crime."

The RTD-PD has been relying on its collaborative partnerships with other police agencies for criminal investigations. The new bureau will enable RTD-PD to directly investigate cases and offset reliance on outside agencies that may be experiencing time and resource constraints.



The Tech Corner

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

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**The Falcon® is the
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The First Solar-Powered, ADA Compliant, Stand-Alone Text-to-Speech Device

Providing Information & Innovation for 20 Years

Connectpoint is at the forefront of smart city digitalization, providing cutting-edge technology that enhances public transportation systems. As the leading provider of solar-powered ePaper displays for public transportation in the United States, Connectpoint continues to revolutionize the transit experience through innovative solutions.

A key offering in their portfolio is The Falcon Text-To-Speech device, a groundbreaking solar-powered button that delivers real-time, multi-language voice announcements at a lower cost than smart city digital signage and yet provides the same functionality to a wider audience. This makes it an ideal solution for tier two and tier three bus stops.

The Falcon provides dynamic messaging capabilities, including real-time or scheduled departure information and important alerts. It also allows transit agencies to deliver custom messages such as public service announcements (PSAs). The device is ADA-compliant and features an integrated solar film skin, CAT-M1 IoT connectivity, and backup battery power, ensuring reliable operation in any environment.

Designed for easy deployment, the device can be installed by simply bolting the integrated locking mount to any pole or shelter, making it a cost-efficient solution for bus stops, rail stations, and transit hubs. With an IP66 environmental rating, it stands as an eco-friendly, energy-efficient solution suitable for modern smart city infrastructure. With a five-year warranty, the Falcon offers long-term value and reliability.

The Falcon has been recognized for its innovation, receiving the IoT Global Award in the "Smart Cities, Government, and Utilities" category. Connectpoint enhances the efficiency of the Falcon through the Connectpoint Asset Management System (CPAM™), a cloud-based platform that enables remote monitoring and management of power, volume, and content.

Rick Wood, President and CEO of Connectpoint, emphasized the Falcon's mission, stating, "When we commenced development on The Falcon, our goal was to provide the transit industry with a cost-effective, standalone, real-time information device that is solar powered and provides accessibility to all customers." The Falcon serves as an affordable

and practical option for both high-traffic transit locations and smaller stops alike.

Since the company's inception in 2018, Connectpoint has seen widespread adoption of its smart city digital signage options across the nation, with agencies such as PRT Pittsburgh, King County Metro in Seattle, Tri-Met in Portland, GRTC Richmond, and SMART Michigan integrating them into their passenger information solutions.

Through its innovative technology, Connectpoint continues to transform urban transit, making real-time information more accessible, cost-effective, and sustainable for transit agencies and commuters alike.

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APTAtech

AUGUST 3-6
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Sustainability/ Operations Planning and Scheduling Workshop

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TRANSform

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APTA Student Member Writing Challenge 2025

THE CHALLENGE IS ON! BECOME PUBLISHED BY WRITING ARTICLES FOR APTA's *Passenger Transport*!

APTA Student Members may individually, or in groups of two or three, submit an article for consideration to be published in *Passenger Transport*. A Student Member may submit more than one article (on their own, and as part of a group).

The winning article will be featured in the special Sept. 15 printed issue of *Passenger Transport*, which will be distributed at APTA's TRANSform conference in Boston, MA, September 14-17. Other submitted articles, if accepted, will be published in the online *Passenger Transport: APTA's News Center* at <https://aptapassengertransport.com>.

Article Submission Specifications

- Article Length: Up to 1,000 words in a Microsoft Word Doc. Submit along with photographs (either found in the public domain or taken by the writer(s)). Photo credit will be given.
- Articles should include two or more quotes from public transit leaders, and facts and data accurately cited.

Suggested Topic Ideas

- Urban Transformation: Improving Walkability of Transit Hubs
- Talent Recruitment: The Next Generation of Transit Leaders
- Will High-Speed Rail Attract New Customers?
- How Can Light Rail Impact Local Communities?
- Will the Next Generation Delay Car Buying and Focus on Public Transit?
- Sustainability: What's Important to Emerging Transit Leaders?

Submit articles to Lisa Lockman at llockman@apta.com by **June 27**.

Questions? Mark your calendars and attend APTA Student Member Zoom calls, April 23, 3:00 p.m. and May 7 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern. Invitations and Zoom details will be shared soon.



TRANSform

SEPTEMBER 14-17, 2025
BOSTON, MA



Student Member Travel Stipends Available

A LIMITED NUMBER OF TRAVEL stipends are available for *current* APTA Student Members to attend TRANSform in Boston, MA, Sept. 14-17. This program is generously supported by APTA Business Members, who look forward to engaging with students at the conference.

All applications received from APTA Student Members will be reviewed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Letter of support from the student's university program Dean, Administrator, or Faculty Member.
- Level of engagement with APTA as a Student Member.
- The student's essay about what they will gain by attending TRANSform.

Learn more and apply at www.apta.com/student-member-travel-stipend-program-2025 by **June 6**. Notifications will be made by Aug. 1. Stipend awardees must self-fund and attend the conference as travel stipends will be distributed on site. Awardees must be available to be on site from 10:00 a.m. Sept. 15 to 4:00 p.m. Sept. 16.

Questions? Mark your calendars and attend APTA Student Member Zoom calls, April 23, 3:00 p.m. and May 7 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern. Invitations and Zoom details will be shared soon.



DAVID MUGICA
Vice President of Business Development
Avail Technologies, Inc.
State College, PA

Digital Signage: The importance of digital signage to your ridership.
Today’s riders expect real-time updates on arrivals, departures, and potential disruptions to their daily commute. Providing timely information and enhancing the overall rider experience can be achieved through on-board and wayside displays, delivering critical updates when and where they are needed most.

Q: What types of real-time information can digital signage provide to transit riders?
A: Digital signage systems can provide a wide range of real-time information to enhance the passenger experience. This includes live updates on bus and train arrival times, service delays, route changes, and emergency alerts. Additionally, they can display information about transfers, alternate routes during disruptions, and even current crowd levels on upcoming vehicles. Advanced systems also integrate with weather services and local news feeds to offer comprehensive updates that keep riders informed throughout their journey.

Q: How do digital signage systems improve accessibility and inclusivity in public transit?
A: Digital signage is designed to meet the needs of diverse populations, ensuring inclusivity across transit systems. Many systems feature multi-language support

to cater to non-English speakers, while others offer audio announcements for visually impaired passengers. High-contrast displays and adjustable font sizes enhance readability for individuals with visual impairments. Additionally, strategically placed signage at accessible heights ensures that information is available to wheelchair users and individuals with other mobility challenges, promoting a more inclusive transit environment.

Q: What technologies are being used to enhance digital signage capabilities in public transit?
A: Cutting-edge technologies are revolutionizing digital signage in public transit. Cloud-based platforms enable remote content management and real-time updates across multiple locations, ensuring consistency and accuracy. Touchscreen displays and interactive kiosks are also becoming more common, allowing passengers to access personalized travel information, plan multi-modal trips, and even receive notifications via QR codes and mobile integration.

Q: What are the key benefits of upgrading digital signage in transit systems?
A: Upgrading digital signage offers several key benefits for both transit agencies and passengers. For riders, it provides greater convenience and peace of mind

by delivering accurate, real-time updates that reduce uncertainty and improve trip planning. For agencies, modern signage helps streamline operations by reducing the need for printed schedules and manual updates, leading to cost savings and improved efficiency. Furthermore, digital signage can serve as a valuable communication tool during emergencies, ensuring passengers receive critical safety information promptly. As public transit continues to evolve, digital signage will remain a cornerstone of passenger engagement and operational efficiency. By investing in advanced signage solutions, agencies can enhance the travel experience, build trust with riders, and streamline their own operations.

Ready to elevate your transit system with cutting-edge digital signage?
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Revolutionizing Transit: How PRT's Bus Line Redesign Is Connecting More People to More Places

FROM OUR HISTORIC STREETCARS and inclines to the current bus lines, Pittsburgh is a region with deep roots in public transit. We were the first city in the nation to have a dedicated busway and our evolution continues with the future BRT corridor, the University Line.

Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) is taking bold steps to modernize our bus network to better serve the evolving needs of Allegheny County. Through the ambitious Bus Line Redesign project, we are reshaping transit service to improve accessibility, reliability, and better match transit demand where and when people want to travel. This initiative, part of our long-range NEXTransit plan, aims to create a more connected and equitable transportation system for the region.



A Vision for Smarter, More Efficient Transit

The Bus Line Redesign is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine how the bus network serves the community. Since the last comprehensive overhaul of the system and particularly since the pandemic, travel patterns have shifted dramatically. With changing job centers, increased demand for weekend service, and a growing need for reliable connections between Pittsburgh's 90 neighborhoods and the county's 96 boroughs and 30 townships, the redesign aims to build a system that works for today's riders—not just those of the past.

PRT published the first draft of the project, Draft Network 1.0, for public review and comment in September 2024 and was shaped by service requests and extensive public engagement collected since the project launched in October 2023. The draft plan focused on key improvements, including more direct routes; new connections; increased frequency; and expanded access to job centers, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, and shopping areas. By February 2025, PRT had hosted or attended more than 80 events across the county to gather community feedback, laying the groundwork for Proposed Network 2.0, set for release later this year.



Key Benefits for Riders

Draft Network 1.0 introduced a host of rider-focused improvements, including:

- **More Frequent Service:** A 27 percent increase in routes operating every 30 minutes or better, with more late-evening and weekend service options.
- **Better Connectivity:** New crosstown routes, with a reduced need for transfers in Downtown Pittsburgh, make trips faster and more convenient.
- **One-Seat Rides to Oakland:** Expanded direct service to Oakland improves access to jobs, universities, and hospitals.
- **More Reliable Scheduling:** Shorter and more efficient routes mean

buses stay on time, with a reduction in unpredictable delays.

- **Equity-Driven Improvements:** 143,000 residents in high-need areas now have access to frequent transit service, a 32 percent improvement.

Equity at the Heart of the Redesign

PRT has long been committed to ensuring that public transit remains a reliable and accessible service for all. We developed an Equity Index of Mobility Need to prioritize service improvements for communities with high concentrations of low-income and minority residents

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A Career in Public Transportation: Choosing the Right Path

FLORE MOUNTAMBOTE IS THE recipient of an American Public Transportation Foundation (APTF) scholarship. APTF aims to increase and retain the number of individuals choosing the transit field as a career by providing scholarships and engagement opportunities to deserving students and transit professionals. The APTF scholarship supported Mountambote's studies in an MS in Transportation Management program (MSTM) offered at San Jose State University, a program supported by the Mineta Transportation Institute. This is her story:

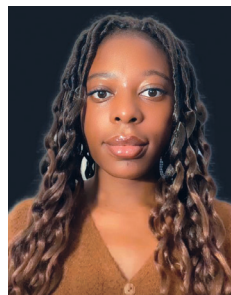
Flore Mountambote, MSTM '24

The Mineta Institute Master's in Transportation Management (MTSM) program played a pivotal role in advancing my career. Choosing to invest in my education while coming from a family-oriented Congolese culture was not easy. In October 2020, I had just pur-

chased a home for my multi-generational family and had no savings left. Despite this, I decided to pursue my graduate degree the following fall—earning a master's had always been a goal of mine, and this was my chance to invest in my career.

I would not have completed the program without the scholarship I received from APTF. At times, I considered pausing my studies due to financial strain, but this scholarship allowed me to stay focused. Most importantly, being recognized and encouraged by my peers gave me the confidence to know I had chosen the right path.

When I began the program, I was a planner at Union City Transit in the San Francisco Bay Area, still learning public transportation. The MTSM program deepened my understanding of finance, particularly funding structures



Flore Mountambote

from state to local levels. I also learned from inspirational speakers who shared real-world insights beyond textbooks. Leadership courses helped me identify my workplace strengths and weaknesses and provided strategies for improvement.

During the program, I requested a promotion at Union City Transit but was turned down. Although disappointed, I realized I had to invest in myself—so I decided to promote myself. Having a master's degree gave me an edge when applying for jobs, leading me to secure two promotions. The knowledge and confidence I gained helped me land a position as a project analyst with the Alameda County Transportation Commission, where I worked on federal and local mobility projects. As I completed the MTSM program, I secured a role as a

transportation planner at the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, focusing on travel demand management and mobility strategies.

Flore Mountambote received the APTF Donald Hyde Memorial Essay Scholarship in 2022. Learn more about her in a reflection published by the Mineta Transportation Institute at <https://mailchi.mp/sjsu/inspiredtoconnecttheworld-jan2023>.



New TCRP Reports

SPONSORED BY FTA, THE TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM (TCRP) serves as a means for the public transportation industry to develop innovative near-term solutions to a multitude of demands. TCRP reports and other tools help public transportation practitioners solve problems and inform decision-makers. Read the following recently released reports:

TCRP Synthesis 177

Electronic Surveillance of Railroad-Highway Crossings for Collision Avoidance: State of the Practice documents current practices and lessons learned from rail service providers and others regarding the types, nature, implementations, successes, and failures of rail crossing electronic surveillance programs, particularly related to safety.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/28291>

TCRP Web-Only Document 78/NCHRP Web-Only Document 410

Protecting Transportation Employees and the Traveling Public from Airborne Diseases, a joint publication from TCRP and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, provides information regarding strategies that reduce exposure to airborne contagions by transportation employees and passengers on various modes, especially in buses.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/28285>

TCRP Research Report 246

Transit Traction Power Cables: Replacement Guidelines presents current practices for assessing insulation aging and replacement of cables before failure, including approaches used in transit systems for which there are no monitoring programs or testing systems.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27907>

TCRP Research Report 250/ACRP Research Report 275/ NCHRP Research Report 1129

Intermodal Passenger Facility Planning and Decision-Making for Seamless Travel from TCRP, the Airport Cooperative Research Program, and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program describes the state of the practice, emerging lessons, and recommended practices for how intermodal passenger facilities can meet the needs of users as new technologies emerge.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27953>

TCRP 2024 Annual Report of Progress

TCRP has released its annual report, which provides an overview of the program, status of each of TCRP's projects, and a summary of some of the program's accomplishments for the year.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/28025/tcrp-2024-annual-report-of-progress>

TCRP Problem Statement Submission: FY26

TCRP research is conducted in all areas of public transportation, including operations, policy, planning, service configuration, engineering of vehicles and facilities, maintenance, human resources, and administration. The TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Commission will select the research problem statements for the FY26 program in the fall of 2025. The deadline for problem submittals is **June 20**. Learn more at <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8151276/TCRP-Problem-Statement-Submission-FY-2026>.

How Have You Benefited from TCRP Research?

TCRP wants to know how its research has impacted your agency and would like to share your success story with the public transportation industry in a case study. Tell your story at www.apta.com/research-in-action-submission-form.

Attending APTA's 2025 Mobility Conference?
Be sure to use the official conference hashtag:

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SamTrans Same-Day Paratransit: Expanding Access, Enhancing Efficiency

BY RANDOL WHITE

Public Information Officer
SamTrans
San Carlos, CA

FOR PARATRANSIT CUSTOMERS, flexibility can mean the difference between missing an important appointment or making a last-minute social gathering. Recognizing this, SamTrans launched its Same-Day Paratransit service, providing riders with a vital option for unexpected trips while optimizing system capacity.

The space-available service allows paratransit users to request same-day rides at a slightly higher fare, ensuring that regularly scheduled trips remain the primary choice. While initially cautious about demand overwhelming the system, SamTrans found that the program successfully balanced availability and efficiency without negatively impacting ADA-mandated paratransit service.

The pilot program launched in December 2023 to test feasibility, monitor demand, and assess operational impacts. After demonstrating that same-day trips could be successfully



integrated with pre-scheduled service, the program transitioned into a permanent offering last December, giving riders a long-term flexible transportation option.

"We knew there was a need, but we wanted to make sure this service would enhance—not disrupt—existing paratransit operations," said SamTrans

Chief Operating Officer David Olmeda, who spearheaded the initiative. "What we found is that Same-Day Paratransit is making life easier for customers while improving service efficiency."

The impact has been profound. Riders aren't just using the service for urgent medical appointments, they're also visiting friends, enjoying meals

out, running errands, and attending social events. This newfound flexibility promotes equity with fixed-route riders, granting paratransit users more freedom in how they travel.

"I am supportive of Same-Day Paratransit trips," said Paratransit Advisory Council Chair Ben McMullin. "I believe it will allow for more flexibility to users of the service to make same day trips."

Operationally, integrating same-day and pre-scheduled trips has improved service efficiency, ensuring that existing capacity is utilized effectively. The success of the pilot program demonstrated that this innovative model could be a game-changer for paratransit operations, providing a template for other transit agencies looking to expand mobility options without requiring additional resources.

SamTrans' Same-Day Paratransit program stands as a model of how transit agencies can enhance accessibility while maintaining operational sustainability. With customer needs at the forefront, this initiative underscores the power of innovation in public transportation.

Trinity Metro Pursues On-Demand Solutions

TRINITY METRO (FORT WORTH, TX), in its ongoing quest to find innovative solutions for customers, is pursuing a path for sharing resources across demand-response services, both citywide paratransit service and on-demand microtransit service within limited geographic zones. Known as comingling, this new approach strives to reduce operating costs, improve quality of service, and give customers more choices to travel and greater flexibility.

So how does that work? Paratransit-eligible riders pre-book their trips, and the software creates an optimized schedule based on those bookings. All other riders book on-demand microtransit trips based on real-time

availability, and the software dynamically routes vehicles for pick-ups and drop-offs. This allows for three levels of comingling: reservations, fleets, and trip/vehicle dispatching. Reservations use the same technology platform for all services. Fleets utilize a common pool of drivers and vehicles. Traditional paratransit and on-demand microtransit riders share vehicles during their trips.

David Welch, a paratransit customer who serves on Trinity Metro's On-Demand Task Force, says he enjoys the freedom to travel when he wants to go somewhere. "What I like most about Trinity Metro service is that it allows me to regain my feelings of independence and not have to rely on other people. The new Trinity Metro app allows me

the freedom to make my own plans, and it allows me to book multiple trips at a time without having to wait. It also adds to the accuracy of booking times for trips because the app accepts plans as you build your itinerary for your personal trips."

While many will choose online booking, customers who prefer to call to book appointments still have that option.

Trinity Metro's goal is to drive up service efficiency during lower productivity times of the day while maintaining strong on-time performance for

paratransit trips. Projections show an estimated savings of 300 or more driver hours weekly through comingling.

"The key here is that the service has started paying more attention to cutting time down on pick-up and making a greater effort to get the customer to and from their trip in a timelier manner, which cuts down on customer complaints and adds to greater customer satisfaction," Welch added. "And a happy customer is inclined to use the service more and pass the word on to encourage more people to use the service provided by Trinity Metro."

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without access to a vehicle. Through this approach, the redesign specifically enhances access to employment centers, education facilities, and essential services for those who need it most.

Additionally, our community engagement efforts have been tailored to include historically underserved populations. Public meetings, multilingual materials, and digital accessibility efforts ensure that all voices are heard in shaping the future of transit in Allegheny County.

Looking Ahead: Proposed Network 2.0

With feedback from thousands of residents, we are now developing Proposed

Network 2.0 to refine and improve upon the initial draft. This next phase will undergo another round of public engagement in 2025, ensuring that the final network reflects the needs and priorities of riders across the county.

PRT's Bus Line Redesign is not just about rerouting buses, it is about creating a more equitable, efficient, and reliable transit system that serves the Pittsburgh of today. This network plan will help us use our resources to optimize services to match transit demand and connect more people to more places. As the project moves forward, one thing is clear: public transportation in Allegheny County is on the road to a better future.



One Seat Streamlines Paratransit Services Between Bay Area Agencies

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL PILOT, San Francisco Bay Area transit agencies County Connection, Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA, operating as Wheels), Tri Delta Transit, and WestCAT have made the One Seat Regional Ride (OSR) shared paratransit program permanent. The first of its kind nationally, OSR has improved the rider experience while lowering costs for the agencies.

Before the change, each agency followed the traditional model of providing paratransit service coverage within their fixed-route service area. Riders who needed to travel from one area to another would be dropped off at a

transit hub within the originating agency's service area, often waiting until the neighboring agency arrived, and then transferred to a second or even third paratransit agency vehicle to reach their destination.

In the past, transfer trips were very disruptive for paratransit schedulers, and any delays impacted subsequent connections. Now, with OSR, transfers have been eliminated, reducing the burden on schedulers and improving overall system on-time performance. Schedulers can now be more confident that drivers will be able to maintain schedules, allowing more reliable and efficient operations.

a cost minimally greater than it would have cost to provide the initial paratransit trip," said John Sanderson, County Connection Director of ADA & Specialized Services. "With OSR, we are saving the cost of second and third legs of trips."

The program saves money for riders as well as agencies. Under the old system, riders paid separate fees for each transit area and agency they used on a cross-agency trip. Today, they pay a single fare to get to their destination and a single fare for their return. Currently, One Seat is solely for trips that cross transit service areas while each agency continues to maintain its existing paratransit service.

"The old system was inefficient because each passenger's individual trip across agency service area borders was actually two or three paratransit bookings done by different agencies, with complicated fare and transfer rules," said David Mark, Director of Customer Experience for LAVTA. "One Seat is much simpler as a one-stop shop in terms of booking the whole trip



instead of having to coordinate between separate agencies. Moreover, paratransit passengers may be older or have medical issues. Staying in one vehicle is a more consistent and comfortable rider experience."

The OSR program has been a major win for partner agencies as well as their customers. The paratransit program has helped protect core service quality for the partners while also significantly cutting operation costs. Passengers pay less for trips that are easier to take and often faster than using the old system. The remarkable results of this pioneering program may lead to future Bay Area expansion.



County Connection, which serves County Costa County, manages OSR, including the cost-sharing agreement with its partners. "Today, OSR can pick a person up in Concord and drive them all the way to a destination in Livermore at

King County Metro Reduces 'Bus Bunching'

EVERY WEEK, HUNDREDS OF thousands of riders use King County Metro's RapidRide bus service in the Seattle, WA, region. To further improve the consistency and frequency of RapidRide, the agency is expanding the use of Advanced Service Management (ASM).

The key change is moving from scheduled service (meaning buses aimed to arrive at set times on a clock) to more evenly spaced or headway-based services (meaning buses arrive a set number of minutes apart). Reliability means regularly spaced bus service and less 'bus bunching,' reducing gaps between buses, and ensuring that any issues that could lead to delays are identified and resolved quickly.

King County Metro piloted ASM on

the RapidRide A and F lines last year, with passengers experiencing more reliable service. Due to the success of the pilot, the agency is now expanding ASM to the RapidRide G Line.

Advanced Service Management is a system of staff collaboration, street designs and features, and transit-specific technology that results in faster, more reliable service, while also improving the employee experience.

Drivers, service quality teams, and Transit Control Center staff work together to solve problems in real time. That means relaying issues that could delay service, such as an accident along the route or a driver not receiving their scheduled rest break. Onsite supervisors assist drivers to switch buses, be aware of reroutes, and to

manage driver break times. Street designs include bus lanes, bus stop and boarding designs (such as all-door and left-lane/median boarding), and bus transit signals that give buses an

advantage at intersections.

Information is relayed to drivers via onboard technology and to passengers waiting at stops via the Real Time Information System.

SEPTA Introduces 'Stroller Spot' Buses

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has launched a new initiative to add designated stroller areas to selected buses on six routes that operate across the City of Philadelphia to make travel on public transportation more accommodating to families.

"Stroller Spots" will be available on a total of 120 buses, marked with a special decal on the exterior above the boarding door. The space inside is also identified with blue signage. Passengers may request the accessibility ramp to be deployed when entering or exiting the bus.

"We know that it can be difficult for customers with young children to find adequate space on board buses, and it is a challenge for our dedicated drivers to manage

this while they are providing service," said Scott A. Sauer, SEPTA interim general manager. "To address this, it was important for us to get input from both our customers about how they navigate these spaces, and from our drivers."





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