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APTA Sustainable Urban Design  
Standards Working Group and Climate  
Change Working Group

# Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies

## *Framework for Approaching Economic and Social Sustainability and Overview of Recommended Practices*

**Abstract:** These guidelines introduce recommended practices for designing and operating sustainable transit with a focus on the internal and external social and economic impacts. This document complements APTA SUDS-CC-RP-004-11, published on March 31, 2011.

**Keywords:** access to jobs, affordability, asset management, community building and engagement, cost structure/debt ratio, DBEs, diversity, economic impact, education, employees and workforce, funding and grant management, financial management, green procurement, growth opportunities, healthcare, job creation, job satisfaction, leadership and governance, livability, local sourcing, mobility and accessibility, mode share, multimodal connectivity, place making, public and employee education programs, resilience, ridership, risk management, safety and emergency preparedness, services and goods, stakeholder interrelations, state of good repair, social justice, team building, universal design, value creation, wellness

**Summary:** For the transit industry to achieve true sustainability, it must take a holistic approach toward what a transit agency can and should contribute. This means designing and operating systems that are not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and economically valuable and viable. It means viewing transit's contribution to a community's economic and social development as just as vital as reducing its environmental footprint. These guidelines focus on practices that can maximize the positive economic and social impacts of transit.

**Scope and purpose:** This document is intended to guide transit agencies in their approach to social and economic sustainability by providing a conceptual framework and recommended practices.

This document represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. The application of any standards, recommended practices or guidelines contained herein is voluntary. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a transit system's operations. In those cases, the government regulations take precedence over this standard. The North American Transportation Services Association and its parent organization APTA recognize that for certain applications, the standards or practices, as implemented by individual agencies, may be either more or less restrictive than those given in this document.

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## Table of Contents

Participants.....	iii
Introduction.....	iii
<b>1. Executive summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Relation of these guidelines to sustainable development.....	1
1.2 Document structure.....	2
<b>2. Community building and engagement.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Community engagement.....	3
2.2 Rider engagement.....	4
2.3 Collaboration and partnerships.....	4
2.4 Good design elements.....	5
<b>3. Economic impact .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Measure and Communicate Economic Benefits of Transit.....	6
3.2 Extend Economic Reach of Public Transportation.....	7
3.3 Understand distributional effects on specific areas or groups.....	7
3.4 Politically Leverage Economic Benefits.....	8
<b>4. Employees and workforce.....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1 Employee recruiting.....	8
4.2 Employee retention.....	9
4.3 Organizational culture and workforce engagement.....	10
<b>5. Financial.....</b>	<b>11</b>
5.1 Fiscal responsibility.....	12
5.2 Sustainable investments.....	12
5.3 Procurement strategies.....	13
<b>6. Mobility and accessibility.....</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1 Affordability (housing and transportation).....	14
6.2 Access.....	15
6.3 Multimodal connectivity.....	17
<b>7. Safety and emergency preparedness .....</b>	<b>18</b>
7.1 Safety.....	18
7.2 Security.....	19
7.3 Emergency preparedness.....	19
Related APTA standards.....	21
References.....	21
Definitions.....	21
Abbreviations and acronyms.....	21
Document history.....	22

## List of Figures and Tables

<b>Table 1</b> Elements of Social and Economic Sustainability.....	2
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## Participants

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## Introduction

Designing and operating sustainable transit requires not only attention to its environmental impacts but also to its social and economic impacts. For the transit industry to achieve true sustainability, it must take a holistic approach toward what a transit agency can and should contribute. Improving transit systems' performance and integrating transit with community development is more vital to sustainability than simply reducing the environmental footprint of agency operations and facilities. To serve sustainably, transit needs to foster healthier lifestyles, sound economic development and a more livable community overall. These guidelines cover a wide spectrum of internal and external social and economic sustainability opportunities for transit agencies. The objectives for these guidelines are listed below, and covered in more detail in the sections following:

- community building and engagement
- economic impact
- employees and workforce
- financial management
- mobility and accessibility
- safety and emergency preparedness

The framework and guidelines introduced in this document are designed to lead to the realization of the above sustainability objectives.

# Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies

## 1. Executive summary

The framework and guidelines introduced in this document are a furtherance of the *Recommended Practice* “Transit Sustainability Guidelines” released in 2011. At the time of the release of that document, there was a greater capacity for the transit community to develop environmental guidelines. At that time it was understood that social and economic guidelines were nascent in the industry and could be developed at a future time. This document is designed as a complementary addition to that *Recommended Practice* and illustrates the ways public transportation providers can address social and economic factors in addition to environmental ones to support true sustainable development in our communities.

Designing and operating sustainable transit requires not only attention to its environmental impacts but also to its social and economic impacts. For the transit industry to achieve true sustainability, it must take a holistic approach toward what a transit agency can and should contribute to the communities it serves. To serve sustainably, transit needs to foster healthier lifestyles, sound economic development and a more livable community overall. This is a furtherance of that initial guidance, which draws more extensively from best practices for economic and social sustainability at transit agencies.

### 1.1 Relation of these guidelines to sustainable development

APTA has previously developed sustainability guidelines through its *Recommended Practice* “Transit Sustainability Guidelines.” While that *Recommended Practice* touches upon the importance of social and economic impacts, it focuses more on the environmental pillar of sustainability and does not specifically address the social and economic pillars. That weakness is addressed in this document, which complements “Transit Sustainability Guidelines” by illustrating the ways public transportation providers can more fully contribute to sustainable development through addressing social and economic factors in addition to environmental ones. By doing so, public transit agencies can better demonstrate to new and existing stakeholders the ways they contribute to local and regional sustainability and livability goals.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of sustainability initiatives elements can have social and economic impacts. Additionally, the “Transit Sustainability Guidelines” *Recommended Practice* and the APTA Sustainability Commitment for Transit Agencies recommend and allow for recognition of sustainability initiatives that have demonstrated impacts internally within transit agencies and/or externally in the communities they serve. Following this approach, this document provides guidelines for social and economic sustainability initiatives that have both internal and external impacts.

Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies

Table 1 provides an overview of the six elements that frame social and economic sustainability for transit agencies, along with their interconnectedness and impacts.

**TABLE 1**  
Elements of Social and Economic Sustainability

	Social		Economic	
	Internal	External	Internal	External
<b>COMMUNITY BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT</b> Engage diverse groups to improve transit service, create hospitality in customer service, and demonstrate goodwill through engagement techniques and commitment to good design in the public realm.	X	X		
<b>ECONOMIC IMPACT</b> Support the economic growth of our regions and the nation.		X	X	X
<b>EMPLOYEES AND WORKFORCE</b> Create a conducive and supportive environment for all transit employees.	X			
<b>FINANCIAL</b> Ensure the reliability of transit services through financial stability.			X	X
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b> Make it easier for people of all abilities to affordably and reasonably access different goods and services to meet their daily needs.		X		X
<b>SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS</b> Ensure that operations are safe and do not compromise the well-being of riders, staff or the public.	X	X	X	X

**1.2 Document structure**

Each section of this document introduces one of the above elements of social and economic sustainability at public transportation agencies, the intended outcome and recommended practices to achieve the outcome. Each section features introductory text that describes the rationale for including each section as an element of social and economic sustainability, along with illustrating its relation to other elements in the document. For each element, guidelines are generally structured in a goals-objectives-policies framework that transit agencies might consider adopting.

**2. Community building and engagement**

Community building and engagement helps public transportation agencies be better stewards of the common good by understanding and supporting the communities they serve. Public agencies are funded by taxpayers and riders, and therefore have a responsibility to further public goals. Establishing trust with diverse stakeholders (including the community, riders and partners) through active engagement is an essential element in developing and furthering these public goals.

These guidelines are aimed at engaging diverse groups to improve transit service, create hospitality in customer service, demonstrate goodwill through engagement techniques, and commitment to good design in the public realm. These initiatives help members of the public develop a positive relationship with the transit agency, helping the agency to attract and retain riders, create a safer and more welcoming transit system, build community support and become an iconic part of a community’s identity.

Community building and engagement relates to many elements of social and economic sustainability. Aspects here relate to the “Mobility and accessibility” section, namely through the integration of good design in

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

station areas and using public engagement to make better service planning decisions, and to the “Employees and workforce” section, namely through participation in career and/or job fairs.

**2.1 Community engagement**

Outreach is integral to build trust in the community that an agency serves and to promote the benefits of transit to the community as a whole, including nonriders.

**2.1.1** Dedicate support staff to external engagement.

**2.1.2** Engage with the community in public events beyond the express purpose of traditional public hearings or information gathering.

**2.1.2.1** Participate in community events such as festivals, celebrations, culturally specific events and parades.

**2.1.2.2** Participate in career and/or job fairs.

**2.1.2.3** Establish free ride days to introduce nonriders to the transit system.

**2.1.2.4** Use a variety of communication methods to engage the public about the transit agency, including the following:

- press releases
- newspapers (both traditional and culturally specific)
- social media
- public opinion surveys
- public affairs programs
- editorial boards

**2.1.3** Continually engage with communities and demonstrate how their input was incorporated into agency plans or decision-making activities.

**2.1.3.1** Consider use of IAP2 practitioner tools in designing and implementing engagement plans.

**2.1.3.2** Incorporate as part of any outreach plan a discussion on how the agency acknowledges community input and will respond to it.

**2.1.3.3** Include in any published plan involving public outreach a discussion of how and when engagement occurred and the major findings from outreach.

**2.1.3.4** Recognize staff excellence in public engagement and community outreach (e.g., awards or written acknowledgement from leadership, as highlighted through SFMTA’s POETS program).

**2.1.4** Take a community-specific approach to engagement.

**2.1.4.1** Tailor outreach strategies to diverse communities in a way that recognizes varying values, customs and priorities (e.g., cultural, generational, language, seen and unseen disabilities).

**2.1.4.2** Provide training for employees involved in customer engagement (e.g., diversity and inclusion, addressing implicit bias, cultural awareness).

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

## **2.2 Rider engagement**

Broader community engagement efforts will naturally include rider engagement. In addition, there are specific strategies transit agencies may use to build trust with, solicit feedback from, and promote safety awareness to transit riders.

### **2.2.1 Dedicate support staff to ridership engagement.**

**2.2.1.1** Recognize staff excellence in public engagement and community outreach (e.g., awards or written acknowledgement from leadership, as highlighted by SFMTA's POETS program).

### **2.2.2 Use a variety of methods to engage riders about the transit agency.**

**2.2.2.1** Use social media not only to inform riders about service issues, but also about ways the service relates to their lives (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., as highlighted by the Instagram accounts for LACMTA, TriMet, SEPTA, Foothill Transit and other agencies).

**2.2.2.2** Develop a customer community communications platform to engage riders (e.g., as highlighted by TriMet's Rider's Club, WMATA's Amplify and LACMTA's On the Move).

**2.2.2.3** Use communication media to engage riders and to inform them about transit-accessible community events.

**2.2.2.4** Develop a public relations campaign across multiple modes and communication media for safety and security awareness (e.g., examples of common safety hazards to educate riders, Passenger Safety Days).

### **2.2.3 Use a variety of methods to address customer issues.**

**2.2.3.1** Create multiple avenues beyond telephone for customers to submit complaints and compliments (e.g., to report safety hazards or issues) or for non-emergency security response. The transit agency should use these same avenues to respond.

**2.2.3.2** Develop a layered response tailored to the nature of and differences in complaints received.

**2.2.3.3** Provide de-escalation and conflict resolution training for operators.

**2.2.3.4** Develop simple communication platforms to provide and receive customer-focused information related to transit operations (e.g., service updates or safety and security concerns).

**2.2.3.5** Publish anti-harassment information, including information on whom passengers can call if they are victims, and safe places where they can go in stations.

## **2.3 Collaboration and partnerships**

Collaborate and partner with other government agencies, the nonprofit sector and businesses to advance programs that grow ridership and build trust while supporting community service initiatives and communicating the social benefits of transit.

### **2.3.1 Dedicate support staff to external engagement.**

### **2.3.2 Establish long-term partnerships with CBOs that serve transit riders.**

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**2.3.2.1** Leverage CBO capacity to engage community on transit-related issues while providing resources to do so (e.g., compensation, stipends for participants).

**2.3.2.2** Sponsor CBO events and fundraisers, especially for organizations that serve likely transit riders.

**2.3.2.3** Connect customer-facing employees (e.g., transit police, local police, fare inspectors, operators) with community organizations.

**2.3.2.4** Establish equity and social justice advisory groups.

**2.3.3** Collaborate and support community partnerships on issues related to community displacement and rising housing costs resulting from transit investments.

**2.3.3.1** Engage housing authorities, affordable housing developers, tenants' rights organizations, etc.

**2.3.4** Partner with local businesses to increase visibility and to promote transit options for large employers.

**2.3.4.1** Partner specifically with local and regional chambers of commerce, ETCs and business associations.

**2.3.5** Design and develop community partnerships that assess hazards and facilitate emergency preparedness (e.g., working with large employers).

**2.3.6** Partner with organizations that provide support to vulnerable populations (e.g., National Safe Place).

**2.3.7** Sponsor and promote programs and events developed by other organizations around safety and security awareness (e.g., Operation Lifesaver).

**2.3.8** Take a community-specific approach to engagement.

**2.3.8.1** Tailor outreach strategies to different communities in a way that recognizes varying values, customs and priorities (e.g., generational, language, seen and unseen disabilities).

**2.3.8.2** Provide training for employees involved in customer engagement (e.g., diversity and inclusion, addressing implicit bias, cultural awareness).

## **2.4 Good design elements**

Enhance the public transit rider's experience and the community's relationship with public transportation providers through good design.

**2.4.1** Create an agency definition of good design as reference during the design process of any capital investment or upgrade.

**2.4.1.1** Establish agency design guidelines per the APTA *Recommended Practice* "Why Design Matters for Transit" (APTA SUDS-UD-RP-003-11).

**2.4.2** Integrate the arts in facility design and capital projects.

**2.4.2.1** Follow recommendations in the APTA *Recommended Practice* "Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects" (APTA SUDS-UD-RP-003-13) to the greatest extent practicable.



### 3. Economic impact

The economic impact of transit on the economy cannot be understated; transit access supports economic competitiveness at the regional and national levels. The value of transit is significant in terms of job creation, tax revenues, economic output and perhaps, most importantly, its ability to potentially catalyze development. Public transit agencies strive to provide real-time bus and rail service in the regions served, and this dedication is reflected in efficient and effective public transportation that provides access to the labor pool, businesses and vital community resources.

#### 3.1 Measure and Communicate Economic Benefits of Transit

**3.1.1.** Measure and communicate the public transit agency as a generator of jobs and as a purchaser of goods and services through the expenditure of its operational and capital budgets.

**3.1.1.1.** Measure and communicate the direct employment and income of agency staff, and their indirect impact on the local and regional economy.

**3.1.1.2.** Measure and communicate the agency's impact of procured goods and services on economic investment and job creation.

**3.1.1.3.** Measure and communicate the agency's impact on creating local and regional job accessibility for all users, and access for employers to labor pools.

**3.1.1.4.** Measure and communicate the agency's economic impact on improving business success through mobility access.

**3.1.2.** Measure and communicate commuter wages and support for business sales.

**3.1.3.** Measure and communicate the agency's impact on improving overall transportation system efficiency.

**3.1.3.1.** Measure and communicate time savings generated through regional transit accessibility.

**3.1.3.2.** Measure and communicate savings generated from reduced maintenance, financing (e.g. auto loans, insurance), and operating expenses of a personal vehicle.

**3.1.3.3.** Measure and communicate savings generated from reduced congestion, collisions, and emissions.

**3.1.4.** Measure and communicate savings generated from more land-efficient development patterns and reduced infrastructure installation and maintenance costs resulting from compact, transit-oriented development.

**3.1.5.** Understand and measure long-term effects of transit investments.

**3.1.5.1.** Measure outcomes from long-term sustained investment through scenario planning in:

- Future urban development and density
- Future car ownership patterns
- Future levels of greenhouse gases
- Future growth of business clusters.

## **3.2 Extend Economic Reach of Public Transportation**

**3.2.1** Improve the customer experience through effective use of technology for transparent communications, as outlined in the section on Community Building and Engagement.

**3.2.2** Use methods outlined in the section on Community Building and Engagement to realize goals of the section on Mobility and Accessibility to expand service to new markets and develop markets around existing transit corridors.

**3.2.3** Design service to expand access to labor markets, as outlined in the section on Mobility and Accessibility.

**3.2.4** Partner with public and private employers, housing developers, and medical/social service organizations to support transportation demand management programs.

**3.2.5** Promote multimodal and intermodal connectivity, as outlined in the section on Mobility and Accessibility.

**3.2.6** Promote the idea of transit as a “Mobility as a Service” platform.

**3.2.7** Develop partnerships with local business, business improvement districts, and chambers of commerce, as described in 2.3.4 and 2.3.4.1 in the section on Community Building and Engagement.

**3.2.8** Support TOD, TOC, and/or Community Oriented Development (COD) initiatives, and livable communities generally.

**3.2.9** Encourage or where possible require LEED for neighborhood development or similar guideline for development around stations.

**3.2.10** Consider transaction efficiency (e.g., travel time in route planning) when implementing items from the section on Mobility and Accessibility to improve customer service and expand to new markets.

**3.2.11** Efficiently leverage existing investments in transportation across the region including lifecycle costs.

## **3.3 Understand distributional effects on specific areas or groups**

**3.3.1** Promote social inclusion and environmental responsibility in procurement of goods and services.

**3.3.1.1** Expand supplier diversity of businesses including ensuring inclusion of local and disadvantaged business enterprises in contracting opportunities.

**3.3.1.2** Establish department responsible for achieving inclusionary procurement goals, with direct reporting to the agency’s chief executive/president.

**3.3.1.3** Proactively inform business communities of sustainability components on future capital projects to develop business capacity in providing sustainable products or services.

**3.3.2** Promote regional and economic development.

**3.3.2.1** Support internal and external labor force development to retain and build skills that are relevant as the transit industry evolves, as described in the section on Employees and Workforce.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**3.3.3 Measure TOD and neighborhood impacts.**

**3.3.3.1** Perform market and impact analyses to determine transit's impact on the economy.

**3.4 Politically Leverage Economic Benefits**

**3.4.1** Develop relationships with local jurisdictions to communicate transit's benefits to the economy, including but not limited to, increased real estate values/local tax, contribution to regional sustainability branding and amenities, and efficient use of land and infrastructure investment.

**3.4.2** Partner with local government to communicate, minimize, and mitigate displacement associated with gentrification associated with transit access through a greater supply of housing across the income spectrum in desirable communities near transit.

**3.4.3** Incorporate participation of agency staff into communication strategy regarding business equity and economic benefit of transit efforts.

**3.4.4** Send local administrators of contractor's letter of award, and publicize contract awards to legislative representatives of awardees.

**3.4.5** Develop partnerships with local business, business improvement districts, and chambers of commerce to highlight the importance of transit service to business interests.

**4. Employees and workforce**

Successful organizations strive to create a conducive and supportive environment for employees, promoting a healthy workplace culture. This section provides guidance on various strategies to help public transportation agencies recruit, retain and develop the best workforce. Guidelines outlined are applicable to full-time, part-time and contract employee groups, as well as represented and non-represented employees. Concepts and actionable recommendations discussed include defining capacity needs, improving workforce capability, modernizing workforce policies, and incorporating knowledge management and succession planning approaches to maintain an engaged workforce. This section is organized into three key concepts: employee recruiting, employee retention, and organizational culture and workforce engagement.

The goals of this section relate to the "Community building and engagement" section. Applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations are referenced as a minimum compliance aspect across the goals. These guidelines draw concepts from the Global Reporting Initiative, Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, and the Transportation Learning Center to support policies and practices that exceed minimum regulatory requirements.

**4.1 Employee recruiting**

An organization benefits from well-established policies and strategies that define workforce capability and capacity needs met through recruiting practices to meet or exceed the organization's ability to achieve its mission, vision and values.

**4.1.1** Define comprehensive recruitment strategies to support organizational needs and objectives.

**4.1.2** Establish capability and capacity needs across workforce segments to match available employment pool with organization needs and requirements.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**4.1.3** Establish policies that meet or exceed local, state and federal regulations and procedures regarding fair hiring practices as applicable to your organization.

**4.1.4** Develop and implement internship, apprenticeship and scholarship programs to build future employment resources.

**4.1.5** Host career day activities for various student groups, to include elementary, high school, technical and college-level students.

**4.1.6** Establish policies for job description creation and candidate interview processes.

**4.1.7** Partner with local units of government, social service agencies and providers, and job development centers to help individuals facing employment barriers (veterans, differently abled/those with accessibility needs, workforce rehabilitation and reentry, etc.) find job opportunities and training with the agency.

**4.1.8** Establish modern recruitment screening and onboarding policies and practices that meet or exceed fair hiring requirements to create an inclusive and diverse work place.

**4.1.9** Define and manage drug testing policies that address specific workplace accommodations or medical treatments.

## **4.2 Employee retention**

Organizations determine various approaches to retaining employees, addressing efforts to target valuable, contributing and high-performing employees. Sustainable organizations define and implement policies and procedures supportive of effective workforce change management.

**4.2.1** Define comprehensive retention strategies for a well-performing and inclusive workforce that addresses key workforce segments in an organization.

**4.2.2** Establish an organizational onboarding strategy to orient new hires to the culture, structure and policies of the agency.

**4.2.3** Define and implement a performance management program across all workforce segments where applicable (e.g., depending on an agency's relationship with unions or contracted labor), inclusive of employee development opportunities and open communication strategies, and aligned with organizational strategic objectives and mission, vision and values.

**4.2.3.1** Have ongoing conversations about employee performance more frequently and regularly than an annual basis.

**4.2.3.2** Apply a positive discipline approach with supervisor-employee relations to create ongoing opportunities for employee development.

**4.2.3.3** Recognize employees for their work and achievements on an ongoing basis.

**4.2.3.4** Continually align employee performance assessments with agency mission and goals to establish accountability in meeting and defining goals/objectives.

**4.2.4** Define the Standard of Ethics and hold all workforce segments accountable.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**4.2.5** Conduct exit interviews to better understand the reasons for employees electing to leave the organization.

**4.3 Organizational culture and workforce engagement**

To create and maintain an inclusive workforce culture, establish policies and programs to ensure effective engagement across all workforce segments to meet or exceed the mission of the organization.

**4.3.1** Create training programs for employees highlighting inclusivity in the workplace.

**4.3.2** Implement nondiscrimination policies beyond what is legally required.

**4.3.3** Accommodate employees with physical and mental health impairments above and beyond what is required by ADA.

**4.3.4** Establish effective practices to professionally develop the workforce.

**4.3.4.1** Establish leadership and management training programs accessible to all workforce segments.

**4.3.4.2** Create an internal, cyclical leadership/management program.

**4.3.4.3** Leverage industry resources for external training and development opportunities (APTA, Eno Center for Transportation, NTI, WTS, etc.).

**4.3.5** Provide professional training and development opportunities for all workforce segments.

**4.3.5.1** Provide technology training for front-line staff working with new vehicle technologies or computer programs (e.g., dispatch software).

**4.3.5.2** Use apprenticeships to train employees for more technical positions.

**4.3.6** Create partnerships with universities and technical schools for employee education.

**4.3.7** Provide reimbursement for fees associated with tuition or professional accreditation/certification programs.

**4.3.8** Define and manage career progression and succession planning programs using skill-based career assessments.

**4.3.8.1** Create job sharing programs that divide workloads across similar job types and allow for new skill development for staff.

**4.3.8.2** Develop job shadowing programs to support upward career mobility for current staff at the agency.

**4.3.9** Identify and develop work transition programs for promoted or transitioning employees.

**4.3.10** Develop and implement programs to enhance workforce engagement and satisfaction.

**4.3.10.1** Conduct employee satisfaction and engagement surveys or programs that collect actionable feedback across workforce segments, and define impact on sustainability and strategic objectives.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**4.3.10.2** Engage front-line employees and operators in the development of new programs and initiatives, and educate them on their implementation and importance to the organization (e.g., emergency preparedness planning and engagement process, environmental risk).

**4.3.10.3** Implement workforce modernization policies around the following:

- maternal and paternal leave
- telecommuting
- shared workspaces
- ergonomic workspace design
- best practices that generate a healthy and respectful workplace environment
- flexible job arrangements/work hours

**4.3.10.4** Create communication strategies to support reliable feedback loops with all workforce segments.

**4.3.10.5** Implement psychologically healthy workplace practices identified by the American Psychological Association’s Center for Organizational Excellence.

**4.3.10.6** Provide space to accommodate breastfeeding area beyond legal and regulatory requirements.

**4.3.10.7** Ensure comprehensive and modern compensation and benefits programs are available for all workforce segments, including the following:

- a clearly communicated compensation plan
- performance driven compensation options
- employee recognition programs
- employee assistance programs
- fitness centers
- discount programs
- paid leave models
- work transition
- tuition reimbursement/continuing education
- retirement plans
- healthcare options and plans

## **5. Financial**

Fiscally responsible practices influence an organization’s ability to operate under a sustainable business model. Financial stability is integral to ensuring the reliability of the transit services an agency offers to its customers. Individual agencies operating in financially sustainable ways throughout the nation will help to ensure the sustainability of transit as a whole, ultimately supporting all the sustainable benefits transit offers. The APTA Sustainability Commitment also recognizes reductions in operating expenses to be a component of transit agency sustainability.

The guidelines are captured in three key concepts: fiscal responsibility, sustainable investments and procurement strategies. They provide guidance on various elements that can lead to a financially stable agency, such as dedicated revenues, maintaining a state of good repair, sound asset management and innovative approaches to procurement. The guidelines in this section include strategies for long-term financial viability supportive of sustainable operating practices, as well as recommended indicators an organization could track in order to assess its financial sustainability.

## 5.1 Fiscal responsibility

Fiscal responsibility addresses the ability of an organization to identify, obtain and sustain dedicated financial resources that best support, through strategic allocation of operating and capital funds, the ability to provide service in the most fiscally and sustainable manner possible.

**5.1.1** Develop operating revenue and expense strategies to manage agency cash flow.

**5.1.1.1** Define and prioritize operating revenue sources per an annual and multiyear basis.

**5.1.1.2** Define and prioritize operating expenditure sources per an annual and multiyear basis.

**5.1.1.3** Adopt financial policies that are supportive of strategic and sustainability goals and objectives.

**5.1.1.4** Maintain a conservative and affordable cost structure and debt ratio.

**5.1.2** Develop a capital improvement plan and process that defines revenue and investment or expense management strategies to maintain the value of assets and infrastructure.

**5.1.2.1** Sustain formula and competitive grant funds and revenue sources for capital allocation.

**5.1.2.2** Develop and implement asset management and state of good repair strategy.

**5.1.2.3** Define and implement capital improvement plan to prioritize sustainability initiatives.

**5.1.2.4** Integrate climate resiliency into capital planning, state of good repair and asset management systems in the form of developing an agency resiliency plan, completing climate risk assessments, and developing design standards for climate resiliency for all capital projects.

**5.1.2.5** Engage staff on the value of asset management, state of good repair and resiliency to the agency's performance.

**5.1.3** Manage and measure metrics to evaluate fiscal performance.

**5.1.3.1** Manage and measure metrics around farebox recovery rate, passenger fares, government-assisted funding/subsidies or reimbursable expenditures.

**5.1.3.2** Manage and measure metrics for compensation and remuneration, healthcare and fringe benefits, operating ratio, debt service, or organizational bond ratings.

**5.1.3.3** Manage and measure metrics to track percentage share of state or federal grant dollars needing local dollar match in capital program and budget.

## 5.2 Sustainable investments

An organization focused on sustainable investments ensures responsible use and allocation of human and financial resources to effect environmental and social change and policy beyond the organization's standard operating boundaries.

**5.2.1** Establish agency policies that have direct and indirect economic impact.

**5.2.1.1** Influence or encourage transit-oriented development (TOD).

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**5.2.1.2** Invest in sustainable capital projects similar but not limited to alternatively fueled fleets, energy-efficient facility design and upgrades, energy-generating systems, renewable energy systems, nonrevenue fleet improvements, and efficiency changes to service.

**5.2.1.3** Plan capital improvement projects that target access to jobs and education.

**5.2.2** Implement policies and strategies to improve the financial position and market presence of the organization.

**5.2.2.1** Define and track the impact of potential regional mobility competitors and partners.

**5.2.2.2** Communicate to current and potential riders or customers the financial viability of multimodal services.

**5.2.2.3** Evaluate cost to operate service types, modes and operating facilities.

**5.2.3** Define and implement creative, viable financing strategies supportive of community development and infrastructure investments.

**5.2.3.1** Explore and issue green bonds where feasible.

**5.2.3.2** Implement and manage group or aggregate purchasing agreements.

**5.2.3.3** Obtain innovative competitive grant dollars.

**5.2.4** Develop workforce wage and compensation practices.

**5.2.4.1** Implement policy and processes to address salary spread or gaps across all workforce segments, and ultimately how the gaps are mitigated.

**5.2.4.2** Establish a policy to regularly report or communicate remuneration policies and performance.

### **5.3 Procurement strategies**

Organizations should define and implement sustainable procurement strategies that balance strategic financial objectives, maintaining relationships with suppliers and partners and ensuring responsible and ethical procurement of materials and services to reduce use of or impact on human and natural resources.

**5.3.1** Establish green procurement strategies based on supplier and partner data.

**5.3.1.1** Define supplier and partner geographic operation locations to determine source of materials or services within sustainable distances.

**5.3.1.2** Determine supplier and partner categories (raw materials, finished goods, equipment, repair, consulting, etc.) that align with financial management objectives.

**5.3.1.3** Establish financial reporting mechanisms by supplier or partner category to align with financial operating and capital objectives.

**5.3.2** Define and implement supplier performance evaluations to influence environmental impact reductions of contracted or procured goods and services.



**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**5.3.2.1** Establish policies and tools to baseline supplier and partner cost reductions.

**5.3.2.2** Implement procurement practices that improve the quality of goods or services delivered.

**5.3.2.3** Define environmental criteria in supplier and partner evaluation process (e.g., natural resource consumption and risk mitigation processes and policies).

**5.3.3** Include life-cycle cost and total cost of ownership as part of procurement bids (as demonstrated by Sound Transit and LACMTA, for example).

**5.3.3.1** Establish policy and process to complete cost benefit analyses informing capital and operating investment strategies.

**5.3.3.2** Develop tools to define return on investment by project and supplier or partner category.

**5.3.3.3** Establish policies with criteria addressing potential climate change implications of projects in procurement documentation.

## **6. Mobility and accessibility**

Mobility and accessibility often go hand in hand in terms of sustainable transit planning. Mobility typically addresses one's ability to physically move about the community, while accessibility typically addresses one's ability to reach destinations. It is important for transit providers to be conscious of the various facets of mobility and accessibility, including financial accessibility, barriers to physical mobility (e.g., universal design, proximity to transit), connections to employment and services, and connectivity to other transportation modes. Promoting mobility and accessibility has clear social, economic and environmental benefits that make it easier for people of all abilities to affordably and reasonably access different goods and services to meet their daily needs.

This section provides guidelines to inform transit agencies' policy and service decisions regarding housing and transportation affordability; universal design; access to jobs, education, healthcare, services and goods; and multimodal connectivity.

Aspects of mobility and accessibility overlap with the "Community building and engagement" section since agencies need to conduct public outreach to better understand the kinds of destinations different target populations need to access. Aspects of the "Safety and emergency preparedness" section overlap since unsafe conditions pose significant mobility and accessibility barriers. Aspects of the "Economic impact" section overlap in terms of accessing employment and retail services and goods. APTA's Universal Design Standards provides additional guidance on addressing mobility.

### **6.1 Affordability (housing and transportation)**

Affordability means working to improve affordability of housing and transportation costs combined, while also working to ensure transit access does not drive out housing affordability.

**6.1.1** Develop communication plans that express the combined cost of housing and transit.

**6.1.2** Work with local jurisdictions/states to include public and active transportation into housing and commercial infrastructure investments.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**6.1.3** Shift attention from TOD to TOCs and transit-rich communities (i.e., transit that attracts development, as well as development that attracts transit).

**6.1.4** Maintain or increase affordable housing units, especially legally binding affordable housing, within current or planned transit station areas.

**6.1.4.1** Establish affordable housing policy for transit agency-owned property.

**6.1.4.2** Work with local government agencies to assess impacts of planned transit improvements or expansions on affordable housing stock in transit station areas.

**6.1.4.3** Enact joint development for siting affordable housing around station areas.

**6.1.4.4** Place covenants on land sold by agencies to developers with housing affordability requirements.

**6.1.4.5** Work with affordable housing developers to consider transportation costs as part of affordability, and encourage them to locate developments in areas with high levels of transit service.

**6.1.5** Ensure affordability of transit fares.

**6.1.5.1** Evaluate fare policies and fare structure to ensure that they match community-based goals.

**6.1.5.2** Consider the following:

- extending transfer times during off-peak hours
- implementing inter-operability with other transportation providers
- implementing discounted fare programs for students
- implementing discounted fare programs for young adults who are not in school but who are entering the workforce
- implementing income-based fare programs

**6.1.5.3** Mitigate or minimize impacts of fare increases by evaluating the types of fare instruments most commonly used by low-income riders and designing the fare structure or mitigation program accordingly.

**6.1.5.4** Partner with community and nonprofit organizations (especially affordable housing providers) on education and information on access/availability of discounted fares.

**6.1.5.5** Partner with tourism boards and community and nonprofit organizations to encourage tourists to donate farecards before leaving for distribution to those who would benefit from free/discounted passes.

**6.1.5.6** Remove barriers to access to discount fare programs by partnering with nonprofit organizations and other partners that are already involved in providing income verified services, mobile registration to move to job sites, etc.

## **6.2 Access**

Provide and support access to jobs, education, healthcare, services, cultural and recreational facilities, and goods.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**6.2.1** Increase the number of family-wage jobs accessible by transit.

**6.2.1.1** Work with employers to establish and grow employer pass programs.

**6.2.1.2** Work through the metropolitan planning long-range planning process to increase access to employment opportunities.

**6.2.1.3** Enact joint development to increase the number of family-wage jobs in transit station areas.

**6.2.1.4** Engage community residents when planning transit extensions or station-area improvements to identify employers to attract to the area that would provide employment opportunities.

**6.2.1.5** Encourage local governments on zoning code incentives for developing job and activity centers (e.g., schools, libraries, community centers, parks, entertainment, shopping, housing) near transit.

**6.2.1.6** Work with employers to site near transit.

**6.2.1.7** Use data (e.g., from LEHD) to identify live/work location patterns when planning or modifying routes.

**6.2.2** Work to address the connectivity and mobility needs for the low-wage/low-income workforce, as well as riders who use off-peak services.

**6.2.2.1** Incorporate job accessibility as a major consideration in determining frequency and span (hours) of service for routes.

**6.2.2.2** Consider impacts of travel times for low/medium wage employment opportunities/centers in equity analysis and evaluate benefits of transit service changes to lower wage earners and workers of color.

**6.2.2.3** Partner with alternative transportation providers or services (private shuttles, TNCs, bikeshare, etc.) to address gaps in transit system.

**6.2.2.4** Encourage pricing of rights-of-way to reflect value of space used (e.g., parking, SOV) so that priority for transit is given (e.g., transit dedicated lanes).

**6.2.2.5** Provide training for riders with disabilities, limited English proficiency or other barriers to navigating the transit system on how to use fixed-route transit.

**6.2.2.6** Provide training for operators/staff on how to assist riders with disabilities, limited English proficiency or other barriers to navigating the transit system.

**6.2.3** Coordinate service planning with schools, community colleges, colleges and universities to provide service that meets the needs of students and faculty.

**6.2.4** Encourage and support community goals related to food access.

**6.2.4.1** Identify fresh food resources and develop communication materials and communication strategies to inform transit riders about fresh food resources, including how to access them via transit.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**6.2.4.2** Partner with key community groups (e.g., farmers' market organizers, municipal health services, policy groups, university organizations/programs) to identify viable transit hubs/stations, vacant parcels, or other transit-adjacent parcels to house potential fresh food resources.

**6.2.4.3** Partner with the aforementioned community groups to identify opportunities that incorporate fresh food access as part of service planning.

**6.2.5** Encourage and support community goals related to healthcare access and healthy communities.

**6.2.5.1** Identify local hospitals, medical clinics (including school-based), doctor's offices, community health centers, and other medical providers, and incorporate access to them as part of service planning.

**6.2.5.2** Alert riders of upcoming screening services, health fairs and other related events with directions on how to access them via transit.

### **6.3 Multimodal connectivity**

Address first- and last-mile challenges in access to transit by facilitating seamless and smooth connections to/from other transportation modes.

**6.3.1** Partner with local jurisdictions to identify and prioritize access to transit projects for biking and walking improvements, including the following:

- pedestrian infrastructure improvements
- new and/or enhanced pedestrian crossings
- ADA ramps (Universal Design)
- bikeway improvements
- bike parking upgrades and expansions
- bike repair stands and other amenities
- right-size bike infrastructure
- secure bike parking (e.g., bike lockers)
- bike racks on buses

**6.3.2** Remove barriers to access to help bike-sharing stations locate proximate to transit stations and hubs.

**6.3.3** Conduct a bicycle- and pedestrian-shed analysis in siting of transit access and stops.

**6.3.4** Communicate the use of bicycles to transit and bicycle riders as a potential option for increasing job access.

**6.3.5** Establish a program to redistribute bikes that are collected in a lost and found or impounded (e.g., as highlighted by MBTA's Roll It Forward program).

**6.3.6** Reduce barriers to bicycle parking, such as removing charges for bicycle parking if there are no charges for automobile parking.

**6.3.7** Partner with local jurisdictions to ensure that safe, accessible, well-lit and pedestrian-friendly sidewalk access is available from stations into neighborhoods.

**6.3.8** Establish a clear bikes-on-board policy and improve associated education and outreach efforts to bicycle riders.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**6.3.9** Integrate plans and policies to ensure smooth connections among various modes of transit: either alternative services by the transit agency or via partnerships with providers of other mobility options (including bike share, car share and private shuttles) to closely coordinate service.

**6.3.10** Examine policies around right-sizing parking at transit facilities per the *Recommended Practice* “Transit Parking 101” (APTA SUDS-UD-RP-008-15).

**6.3.11** Support mobile applications that integrate multiple transportation options.

**6.3.12** Provide clear, accessible signage for wayfinding and as a piece of placemaking.

**7. Safety and emergency preparedness**

Safety and emergency preparedness helps agencies promote long-term safety, security and resilience of transit systems. Due to the unique nature of transit, in that it necessarily requires the use of heavy duty vehicles and machinery, operates in the public sphere, and facilitates the flow of commerce and people, safety and security are of paramount importance. Public transit agencies work toward ensuring that operations are safe and do not compromise the well-being of their riders, staff and the general public. Unmitigated risk can also prove costly when deferred until crises arise, and can cause severe and sometimes long-term disruptions in service that affect regional economies. Initiatives addressing these issues support larger sustainability goals by allowing agencies to be resilient in the face of unforeseen events, to remain viable and safe in the public eye, and to maintain a commitment to the health, safety and welfare of all employees and riders.

Agencies are already required to follow laws and regulations that dictate how to operate safely and securely. Given this operating environment, the guidelines listed here are meant only to highlight the importance of safety and emergency preparedness in transit operations, to communicate their vital role in realizing long-term public transportation sustainability, and to provide a grounding for transit agencies to receive recognition in the APTA Sustainability Commitment for accomplishments in this realm. They should not be used as the basis for establishing and deciding upon agency safety, security and emergency preparedness policy. While these guidelines are based upon recognized industry best practices defined in published APTA standards, TCRP research, and FTA programs, agencies should directly reference these and other resources, and consult the appropriate staff at agencies on this topic, when implementing safety and emergency preparedness programs, and defer to any laws and regulations that could supersede any guidelines listed here.

This section categorizes risk in three ways: safety, security and emergency preparedness. Safety refers to those measures taken to protect against hazards, negligence and accidents. Security refers to those measures taken to protect against malicious intent. Emergency preparedness refers to those measures taken to respond to and recover from the impacts of disasters and other unplanned disruptions to service. These aspects relate to the “Community building and engagement” recommendations on informing riders about safety and security, and creating effective mechanisms for responding to rider safety and security reports and complaints. Aspects of these guidelines also relate in principle to the “Financial recommendations” section on state of good repair and asset management, as safety, security and emergency preparedness have potential to dramatically affect these elements.

**7.1 Safety**

Develop a safety culture to safeguard from harmful but unintentional unsafe acts or conditions.

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**7.1.1** Develop a safety culture through training for transit staff and employees to protect against hazards, accidents and negligence.

**7.1.1.1** Develop effective safety communication in a variety of media that help transit staff understand the hazards inherent to their work, as recommended in TCRP Report 174.

**7.1.1.2** Adopt work zone safety practices, as outlined in APTA RT-OP-S-004-03, Rev. 2.

**7.1.1.3** Implement awareness training for interaction with all hazardous materials/toxics, heavy equipment (rail crossings, vehicles, mechanical equipment, etc.), and other infrastructure and incidents as outlined in APTA SS-SRM-RP-005-12.

**7.1.1.4** Develop and adopt an agency SMS, as outlined by the FTA's SMS Framework.

## **7.2 Security**

Security awareness is communicated to staff to identify and protect against malicious intent.

**7.2.1** Create opportunities to advance security awareness among staff.

**7.2.1.1** Develop multiple simple, easy, nonpunitive communications platforms for staff to report and receive safety and security related information, as demonstrated through the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics initiative with WMATA on the Confidential Close Call Reporting Program.

**7.2.1.2** Hold frequent security awareness trainings for transit employees, as outlined in APTA SS-SRM-RP-005-12.

**7.2.1.3** Implement a program of systemwide security risk assessment, as outlined in APTA SS-SIS-S-010-13.

**7.2.1.4** Implement an organization-wide security plan and planning process, as outlined in APTA SS-SIS-S-010-13, APTA SS-SRM-RP-001-09, Rev. 1, and APTA SS-SIS-RP-011-13.

## **7.3 Emergency preparedness**

Enable staff, passengers and the general public to respond to and recover from the impacts of emergencies and unplanned disruptions to service.

**7.3.1** Assist transit staff with emergency preparedness.

**7.3.1.1** Develop an agency Safety and Emergency Preparedness Plan, as outlined in APTA SS-SRM-RP-001-09, Rev. 1.

**7.3.1.2** Obtain, distribute and make staff aware of safety and first aid kits, as outlined in APTA SS-SRM-RP-001-09, Rev. 1, APTA RT-OP-S-004-03 Rev. 2, and APTA RT-RMT-RP-001-10.

**7.3.1.3** Consider adopting recommendations from the FTA's Immediate Actions for Transit Employees: Protecting Against Life-Threatening Emergencies (e.g., training all staff on procedures to evacuate a train).

**7.3.1.4** Identify and address any physical obstacles that could impede safe and secure emergency plan implementation (e.g., trip and fall hazards).

## **APTA SUDS-CC-RP-005-18**

### **Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

**7.3.1.5** Suggest and help plan for backup modes of transportation for times when normal rapid transit or bus routes are delayed or entirely unavailable through a mutual-aid program, as outlined in APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09.

**7.3.1.6** Incorporate climate resiliency actions into existing emergency preparedness plans at the local, community and regional levels to prepare for the effects of climate change, as recommended in APTA SUDS-CC-RP-002-11.

**7.3.2** Assist passengers and the general public with emergency preparedness.

**7.3.2.1** Ensure community outreach around emergency planning and preparedness, explicitly addressing vulnerable populations (elderly people, passengers who don't speak English well, passengers with disabilities, etc.), as outlined in TCRP Report 150.

**7.3.2.2** Participate in mutual-aid agreements to aid transit providers in effectively responding to emergency situations, as outlined in APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09.

## Related APTA standards

APTA SUDS-CC-RP-004-11, “Transit Sustainability Guidelines”  
APTA SUDS-UD-RP-003-11, “Why Design Matters for Transit”  
APTA SUDS-UD-RP-003-13, “Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects”  
APTA SUDS-UD-RP-008-15, “Transit Parking 101”  
APTA RT-OP-S-004-03, Rev. 2, “Work Zone Safety Practices”  
APTA SS-SRM-RP-005-12, “Security Awareness Training for Transit Employees”  
APTA SS-SIS-S-010-13, “Security Program Considerations for Public Transit”  
APTA SS-SRM-RP-001-09, Rev. 1, “Development and Implementation of a Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan (SEPP)”  
APTA SS-SIS-RP-011-13, “Security Planning for Public Transit”  
APTA RT-RMT-RP-001-10, “Rail Vehicles Maintenance Training Standards”  
APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09, “Participating in Mutual Aid”  
APTA SUDS-CC-RP-002-11, “Guidelines for Climate Action Planning”

## References

Federal Transit Administration, “Immediate Actions for Transit Employees: Protecting Against Life-Threatening Emergencies,” October 2011.

[www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/IA\\_Update\\_Final%281%29.pdf](http://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/IA_Update_Final%281%29.pdf)

Federal Transit Administration, “SMS Framework,” August 2015. [www.fta.dot.gov/tso\\_15176.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/tso_15176.html)

Transportation Research Board, TCRP Report 174, “Safety Culture in Public Transportation,” and TCRP Report 150, “Communication with Vulnerable Populations: A Transportation and Emergency Management Toolkit.”

## Definitions

**community:** A group of people living in a specific locality (urban, suburban or rural area) where there are common destinations for households such as workplaces, schools, medical facilities, shops, commercial and cultural establishments. Also, a group of people having a particular characteristic in common (e.g., ethnic/racial background, cultural heritage, professional interest, sexual orientation). A community may bridge across governmental jurisdictions.

**mutual aid:** An agreement that establishes procedures and protocols for providing materials supplies and services to or from neighboring transit agencies or other organizations in the event of a community or regional emergency or other large-scale event that can overwhelm the ability of a single agency to respond effectively.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>CBO</b>	community-based organization
<b>DBE</b>	disadvantaged business enterprise
<b>ETC</b>	employee transportation coordinator
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>IAP2</b>	International Association for Public Participation
<b>LACMTA</b>	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (also referred to as LA Metro_
<b>LEHD</b>	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
<b>MBTA</b>	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
<b>LEED</b>	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (a program of the U.S. Green Building Council)



**APTA SUDS-CC-RP-005-18**

**Social and Economic Sustainability for Transit Agencies**

- NTI** National Transit Institute
- POETS** Public Outreach and Engagement Team Strategy
- SEPTA** Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
- SFMTA** San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority
- SMS** safety management system
- SOV** single-occupancy vehicle
- TCRP** Transit Cooperative Research Program
- TOC** transit-oriented community
- TOD** transit-oriented development
- TriMet** Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon
- TNC** transportation network company
- WMATA** Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
- WTS** Women’s Transportation Seminar (commonly referred to as WTS International)

**Document history**

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