

# MEETING THE MOMENT Delivering a Bright Future for Public Transportation

APTA Strategic Plan FY2026-2028



**American  
Public Transportation  
Association**

# Adapting to a Changed Mobility Landscape

**T**HE WORLD WAS FOREVER ALTERED BY THE PANDEMIC. YET, IN THE face of the increasing fast pace of technological innovation, a scarcity of resources (natural, human and financial), and more focused attention on equity and sustainability, the public transportation industry is meeting the moment with creativity and resilience.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA), as the authoritative voice for public transportation in North America, is committed to ensuring its members are well-equipped to advance the growth of the industry.

The APTA Strategic Plan for FY2026-2028 reflects member priorities and industry needs for the next three years. It will guide APTA's annual business planning, the development and delivery of APTA advocacy, services and products, from July 1 2025 through June 30 2028.



# APTA's Purpose and Priorities

## APTA Leads Public Transportation in a New Mobility Era, Advocating to Connect and Build Thriving Communities

### Strategic Priorities

To successfully fulfil its mission and have the greatest impact on our members' success, APTA will dedicate resources to the following strategic priorities for the next three years:



**Aggressive Advocacy for Sustained Investment in Public Transportation**



**Elevating Transit as a Career and the Transit Workforce**



**Harnessing Innovations in Mobility and Technology**



**Enhancing Safety, Security, Resilience and Sustainability**



**An Evolution in Procurement, Project and Service Delivery Models and Practices**



**Strengthening APTA's Reach, Impact and Influence**

### Each Word in the Purpose Statement is Intentional

#### APTA LEADS

As the voice for the industry, proactively and assertively shaping actions that impact public transportation

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Supporting the needs of public transportation agencies acting in the public good

#### NEW MOBILITY ERA

Helping members anticipate, prepare for and understand the changes that are shaping our industry

#### ADVOCATING

Fervently promoting the interests of the public transportation industry

#### THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Public transportation provides access to opportunities that improve quality of life and sustain communities



# Aggressive Advocacy for Sustained Investment in Public Transportation

- Ensuring the viability of the industry post-IIJA
- Powerfully conveying public transportation's importance with a focus on economic value
- Streamlining regulatory and administrative requirements
- New partnerships that enhance political impact and regional coordination

## Actions

- Provide new and refreshed advocacy tools that speak to public transportation's economic value and the return on investment of public transportation locally in terms of jobs and economic return, positioning public transportation as a community resource and revitalizer.
- Identifying and developing solutions to streamline DOT regulatory and administrative requirements.
- Position public transportation to be competitive for alternative funding sources, such as FHWA, DOT, EPA, and DOE.
- Offer effective models for regional coordination and how to build stronger partnerships with city and state DOTs to advance public transportation.
- Develop new partnerships to enhance political impact including with non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organizations and business and industry councils.
- Focus on the nexus between public transportation and affordable housing/housing access.

### EVERY \$1 INVESTED

in public transportation generates approximately \$5 in economic returns.

Public transportation is a \$79 billion industry that

**DIRECTLY EMPLOYS  
430,000 WORKERS**





# Harnessing Innovations in Mobility and Technology

- Adapting to a digital world
- Developing a feasible pathway to zero-emissions

## Actions

- Assist members in developing, implementing and integrating AI tools and creating effective policies and governance models as well as digital integration.
- Support better data governance and standardization.
- Explore how to leverage new technologies for additional transit revenue opportunities and operational and financial efficiencies.
- Guide a move toward predictive maintenance.
- Enhance customer experience tools and techniques.
- Assist transit agencies in their transition to no- and low-emission bus and rail vehicle and infrastructure technologies.
- Develop zero emission technology related standards, as appropriate, to address industry needs and concerns.
- Focus on the infrastructure required for ZEBs and collaboration with DOE and the energy sector.

Pre-pandemic trends favoring on-demand transit have continued, with the

**74% RECOVERY OF DEMAND**

response transit showing the strongest recovery of all transit modes.

The amount of zero-emission transit buses in use rose

**78%**

from 2020 to 2022.





# An Evolution in Procurement, Project and Service Delivery Models and Practices

- Decreasing project costs and time of delivery
- Ensuring the health of bus and rail manufacturers and suppliers
- Modernizing service delivery models post-pandemic

## Actions

- Lead intra-industry efforts to reformulate procurement and contracting terms and models to promote risk-sharing, increased competition, reduction in costs, and a more financially stable transit supply economy.
- Inform and educate industry procurement officers on evolving procurement models and guidelines.
- Advocate for changes in the regulatory environment for bus/rail OEMs to accelerate innovation and increase manufacturing capacity and delivery speed.
- Help members adapt to serving more diverse customers who use the system less consistently.

Just a decade ago, there were 10 major bus manufacturers in the U.S.  
As a result of mergers and several companies leaving the market, today

**ONLY TWO MAJOR MANUFACTURERS REMAIN.**





# Elevating Transit as a Career and the Transit Workforce

- Sustained support to the industry for recruiting, hiring and retention

## Actions

- Increase engagement of young transit professionals in APTA and the industry.
- Continue the focus on innovative recruiting and hiring practices, especially for front line but also back office.
- Launch national media/social media campaign to improve the perception of transit careers, changing how transit jobs and careers are described.
- Organize national career days/fairs.
- Amplify transit career stories, including the leadership of women in the industry.
- Foster partnerships with academia (i.e., universities and community colleges) and with community organizations.
- Develop tools for adapting the workforce to a zero-emission future.
- Focus on organizational culture and the transit employee experience.
- Strengthen partnerships with labor to positively impact employee recruitment and retention.

Agencies report that retirees make up

**24%** of all quitting workers and at rural agencies, **34%** of departures are retirements, according to an APTA 2022 survey.

## 43% OF PUBLIC TRANSIT WORKERS

are over 55, nearly double the percentage of the broader transportation sector, according to an APTA 2022 survey.





# Enhancing Safety, Security, Resilience and Sustainability

- Navigating societal and environmental challenges and an expanded scope for transit

## Actions

- Develop resources for effective community partnerships to combat societal issues beyond traditional agency scope.
- Explore the public transit and public health nexus.
- Build climate resiliency, vulnerability assessment and risk mitigation skills.
- Stay sharp on cyber-security.
- Address public perceptions of safety and obtain training support for safety and security requirements.



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's recent Annual Homeless Assessment Report found that

**MORE THAN 326,000 PEOPLE** experienced sheltered homelessness in the United States on a single given night in 2021.

According to Security magazine: "cybercriminals exposed

**2.8 BILLION CONSUMER RECORDS** in 2018, costing more than \$654 billion to U.S. organizations."



# Strengthening APTA's Reach, Impact and Influence

- Maximizing access to APTA services and resources
- Leveraging committee and staff expertise
- Broadening membership and increasing engagement

## Actions

- Facilitate knowledge of and access to existing resources and services to more members and more individuals within member organizations.
- Promote cross-committee and cross-departmental collaboration to operationalize strategic priorities.
- Increase structured and unstructured member networking opportunities, both in-person and virtual.
- Advance data collection to finetune member services and engagement.
- Implement recruitment and retention initiatives to expand and diversify APTA membership.



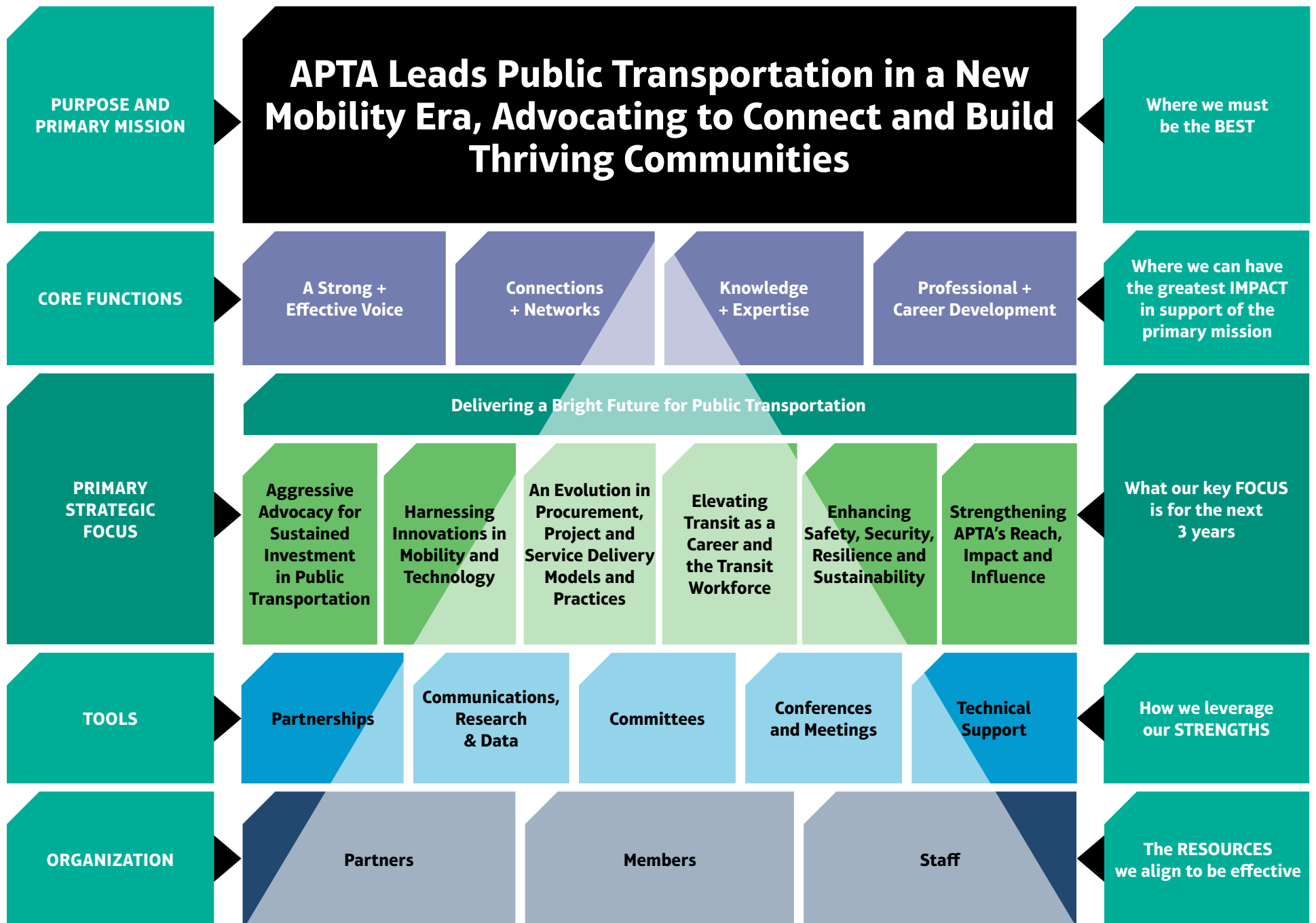
In fiscal year 2024, APTA hosted

**16 CONFERENCES,**  
which brought together

**NEARLY 19,000 ATTENDEES.**

APTA's total membership reached  
a record-high in fiscal year 2024 with

**1,600 MEMBER  
ORGANIZATIONS.**



# Aligning APTA Activities - Implementing and Operationalizing the Strategic Plan

**F**OR APTA TO ACHIEVE THE STRATEGIES DETAILED in the Plan and maximize its ability to lead the industry, all APTA members must be fully engaged. Fortunately, APTA can leverage member resources to focus on these priorities and operationalize the Strategic Plan, notably through:

## Committees and Working Groups

Much of APTA's impact on the industry results from the work of its 130-plus committees, subcommittees and working groups, which represent every constituency across the public transportation industry. The priorities detailed in the Strategic Plan should be incorporated into the annual workplans of each committee as appropriate, thereby mobilizing the power of thousands of experts and practitioners to address the industry's most pressing needs.

## Conferences & Meetings

Some 8,000-plus APTA members and stakeholders attend the association's major annual conferences and smaller meetings, seminars and workshops. The programming of these meetings presents a powerful opportunity to focus attendees on the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan, including assessment and management of the changes most likely to impact public transportation customers and agencies.

## Partnerships

There are many influential organizations seeking common outcomes focused on cities, the environment and using transportation to build, connect and enhance communities. APTA can more successfully leverage the power of these organizations by speaking with one voice.

## Annual Business Plan

APTA must ensure that its considerable internal expertise and resources are fully focused on addressing our strategic priorities. This requires that the association align its core functions with the specific priorities articulated in the Strategic Plan. This will take place through the annual business planning process, which requires quantifiable outcomes and metrics by which to assess the association's success in implementing the Plan.