

# Memorandum

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**To:** Todd Muck, Deputy Executive Director  
**From:** Christina Watson, Principal Transportation Planner  
**Meeting Date:** June 23, 2021  
**Subject:** **2021 APTA Legislative Conference**

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On May 18, 2021, I participated in the virtual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Legislative Conference. Sessions I attended included the following:

- **Fireside chat with US DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg:** public transit is a priority for the Biden Administration, part of his “Build Back Better”, as demonstrated in the American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan. Strategic priorities for the Administration: climate change and equity; public transit can help meet both objectives. He noted that growing transit’s share of travel is key to climate, equity, and strong economy.
- **The Year Ahead in Transit – Update from the Federal Transit Administration:**
  - Nuria Fernandez, Deputy Administrator, Federal Transit Administration
  - Henrika Buchanan, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight; Chief Safety Officer, Federal Transit Administration
  - Selene Dalton-Kumins, Associate Administrator for Civil Rights, Federal Transit Administration
  - Subash Iyer, Chief Counsel, Federal Transit Administration
- **Opportunities to Address Race and Equity through Infrastructure Investment:**
  - Alva Carrasco, Latinos In Transit President of the Board of Directors; Transit and Rail Region Market Lead for Northern California and Zero Emission Bus Projects, WSP USA
  - Subash Iyer, Chief Counsel, Federal Transit Administration
  - Calvin Gladney, LEED AP, President and CEO of Smart Growth America
  - Seantae Byers, Senior Executive and Director, Member and Partner Engagement, National League of Cities
- **Infrastructure and Fast Act Authorization – A View from the Hill:**
  - Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives
  - Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate

- Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO), Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives
- Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate – as Sen. Cantwell was unavailable, Transportation and Safety Minority Senior Counsel Kara Fischer spoke on her behalf.
- **Public Transportation Funding, Infrastructure, and FAST Act Reauthorization:**
  - Jackie Schmitz, Majority Senior Professional Staff Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives
  - Cheryle Tucker, Republican Senior Professional Staff Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives
  - Homer Carlisle, Majority Professional Staff Member, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate

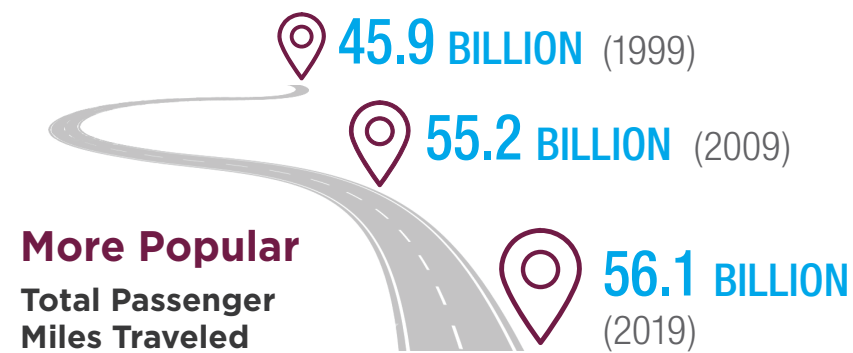
The final program of the conference is available on the website,  
<https://legislative.aptaconferences.com/conference-program/>

On May 19, APTA arranged “virtual fly-in” meetings with elected officials for participants in the APTA Legislative conference. I attended the following meetings:

- Rep. Jimmy Panetta: staff Hillary Marston, Legislative Assistant
  - This was an intimate meeting with Hillary, Alex Clifford (SC Metro CEO), Aaron Quigley (VTA Govt Affairs), and me.
  - We thanked Hillary for her help in submitting our projects for the transportation authorization bill (all 3 agencies’ requests were meant for appropriations, but Rep. Panetta submitted them all for authorization instead, due to the amounts requested).
  - We asked her to extend our gratitude to Rep. Panetta for the COVID relief funding for transit operations.
  - I spoke about the FTA small starts grant application for the MST SURF! Project and mentioned we may be seeking federal funds for the next phases of the rail program. Hillary said Rep. Panetta would be happy to send support letters for both projects.
  - Aaron spoke about the BART extension to San Jose project, which is in the Federal Transit Administration’s expedited pilot program for a federal share of \$1.7 billion of the total project cost estimate of \$6.9 billion.
  - Aaron also mentioned that VTA is seeking federal funds for an express bus to Gilroy.
  - Alex noted that thanks to the COVID relief funds, SC Metro managed to avoid layoffs and used creative strategies to keep everyone employed.

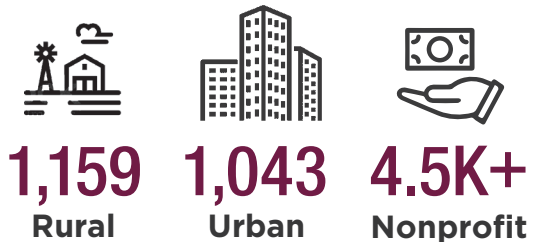
- Alex noted the zero-emission bus implementation needs to be phased in as tech evolves and ranges increase – SC Metro still needs CNG buses to meet the clean air mandate, and has a federally-funded CNG facility that hasn't reached the end of its life. He noted Panetta's green bus tax credit bill (HR 583) would help.
- SC Metro will apply for bus and bus facilities grant for paratransit facility and for a RAISE grant for a south county bus division in Watsonville.
- Sen. Alejandro (Alex) Padilla: staff Zac Commins, Policy Advisor
  - This was the largest meeting with 37 participants. APTA-designated leads were Diana Kotler (Anaheim transit), Joel Young (AC Transit) and Alva Carrasco (Latinos in Transit).
  - Key topics were focused on transit jobs; COVID funds for operations critical to keep buses on streets transporting essential workers; transit now needs capital funds for state of good repair projects and to implement 2040 electric bus mandate.
  - Zac: Sen. Padilla is committed to transit and supports innovative transportation tech; he noted that the Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW) committee wants to move "full steam ahead" on the reauthorization bill next week.
- Sen. Dianne Feinstein: staff Rishi Sahgal, Legislative Assistant
  - As this meeting was rescheduled, only 20 of the original 60 registrants attended. APTA-designated leads on the discussion were Derek Maunus (Gillig) and Charles Stone (SamTrans).
  - Similar points made as in Padilla mtg, focused on jobs, climate, and equity. Charles thanked the Senator for her work in ensuring Caltrain electrification got its new starts funds during the Trump administration.
  - Rishi: Sen. Feinstein met with President Biden and Senator Schumer an hour ago to discuss reauthorization; Sen. Feinstein supports Sen. Padilla's efforts for electric bus funds.

# TODAY, PUBLIC TRANSIT IN AMERICA IS...



## More Widespread

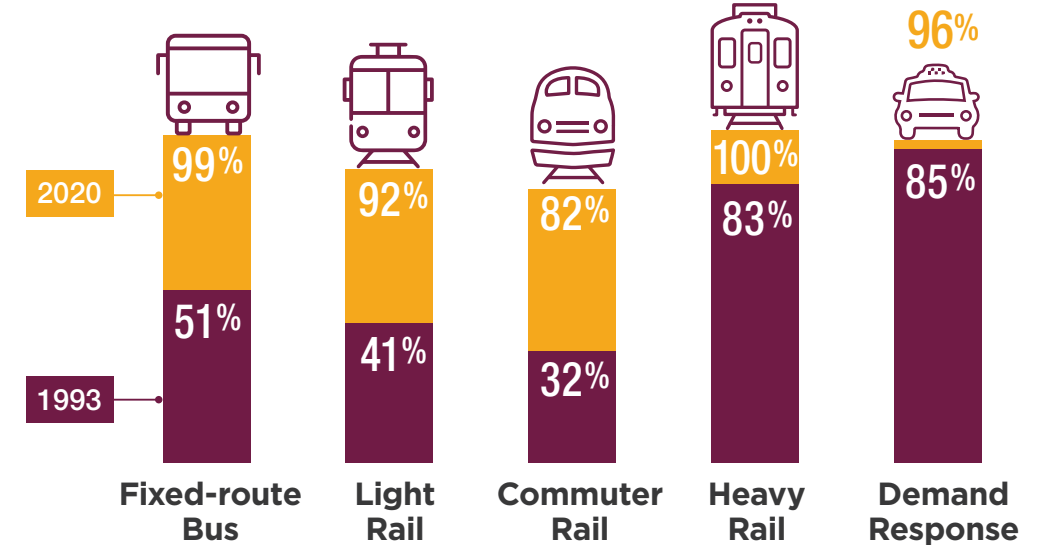
Public transit systems are...



## More Accessible\*

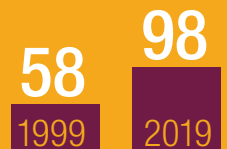
Share of Accessible Public Transit Vehicles

\*transit system accessibility is also affected by station accessibility



## EXPANDING

Total Number of Rail Systems

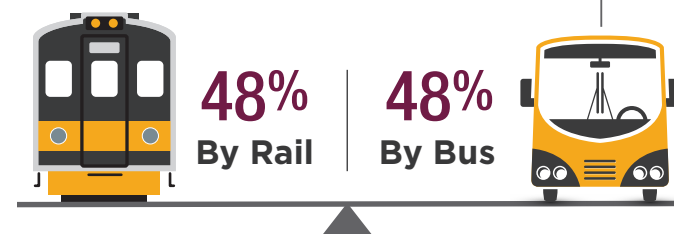


>52%

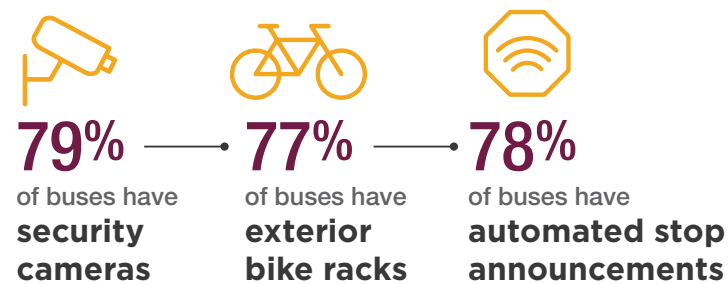
Increase in Rail Ridership Since 1999

## More Balanced

Public transit trips are...

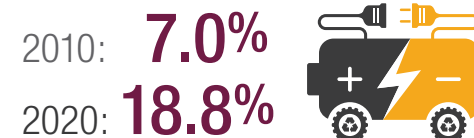


## More Accessorized



## Leading in Clean Technology

Share of Hybrid Electric Buses



(According to APTA's 2020 Vehicle Database)

## Lowering Carbon Emissions

84% less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by using the subway rather than a car

(According to TCRP "Report 226: An Update on Public Transportation's Impacts on Greenhouse Gas Emissions")

## Reducing Gasoline Consumption

6.0 BILLION

Gallons of Gas Saved each year by using public transportation

(According to TCRP "Report 226: An Update on Public Transportation's Impacts on Greenhouse Gas Emissions")

## Driving the Economy

87% of trips on transit directly benefit the local economy

50% of trips are to and from work  
37% of trips are to shopping and recreational spending

(According to APTA's "Who Rides Public Transportation")

## Creating Jobs

448K+ people directly work for public transportation agencies

Long-term investment in public transit supports 50,000 jobs and \$382 million in tax revenue per \$1 billion invested

(According to APTA's "Economic Impact of Public Transportation Investment: 2020 Update")

## Growing

From 1995 – 2019

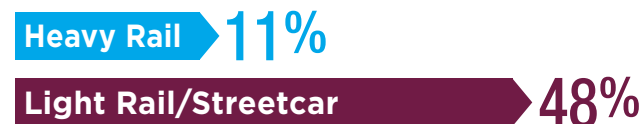
23% Increase in Population Growth

28%

Increase in Public Transit Ridership

## More Efficient

Increase in Vehicle Miles Operated per Kilowatt-Hour over the Past 30 Years



## Receiving More Investment

Transit Spending in the Private Sector



\$ Billions