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Office of Planning & Environment
Federal Transit Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
United States

Phone: 202-366-4033
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Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Initiative

Background

On April 22, 2021, President Biden announced an ambitious goal: for the United States to achieve a 50–52 percent reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net GHG pollution in 2030.

On June 15, 2021, FTA launched the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Initiative to encourage transit agencies to take bold action to further reduce GHG emissions from public transportation to support President Biden's GHG reduction goal. The initiative calls on transit agencies to develop climate, sustainability, or electrification or zero-emission transition plans that include strategies with measurable goals to achieve GHG emission targets.

Over the course of three years, more than 230 transit agencies have signed up to participate in the FTA Climate Initiative and over 100 climate action plans have been submitted. View the list of agencies who have signed up and the climate/sustainability plans submitted.

Earth Day 2024

On Earth Day 2024, FTA recognized three transit agencies as Champions of the Challenge awardees. The awards celebrate their development of robust climate action or sustainability plans that include strategies to significantly cut GHG emissions, implement resilience measures, or increase the sustainability of transit systems. The 2024 awardees are:

- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, San Jose, California
- Maryland Transit Administration, Maryland
- Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, Colorado

A recording of the event is available for viewing.

Earth Day 2023

On Earth Day 2023, FTA recognized the exemplary efforts of four transit agencies to combat climate change through the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet initiative. FTA presented awards to celebrate agencies that are reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with unique strategies that work for their systems and their communities:

- **Most Transformative**: Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, Burnsville, MN developed a comprehensive framework outline key sustainability priorities and strategies to achieve GHG emission reductions across all agency departments. Read the press release.

- **Champions of the Challenge**: This award is given to agencies that developed comprehensive zero-emission fleet transition plans that include elements to explicitly promote equity or detailed workforce development strategies. Read the press releases below.
  - Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York, NY
  - Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago, IL
  - Everett Transit, Everett, WA

A recording of the event is available for viewing (passcode: tMs3$.A^).

Earth Day 2022

On Earth Day 2022, FTA recognized the exemplary efforts of 10 transit agencies to combat climate change through the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet initiative. FTA presented awards to celebrate agencies that are reducing greenhouse gas emissions with unique strategies that work for their systems and their communities:

Learn more about FTA's Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet initiative and how transit agencies are taking bold actions to tackle climate change.

- **Most Accomplished**: Antelope Valley Transit Authority in Lancaster, CA. met its 100 percent electric fleet goal, the first agency to achieve this feat in North America.
- **Most Ambitious**: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority set a goal that exceeded the President's goals of a 50 percent reduction in GHG emissions.
- **Most Collaborative**: Iowa City Transit successfully leveraged state, local, and private partnerships to advance its climate action strategies.
- **Most Equitable**: King County Metro in Seattle, WA. developed a plan focused on addressing climate change impacts and transportation access in underserved communities.
- **Most Innovative**: Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit in Urbana, IL, demonstrated the use of creative solutions to implement its climate action strategy.
- **Most Transformative**: Sound Transit in Seattle, WA, developed a plan demonstrating sustainability throughout the agency, including fleets, facilities and operations.
- **First to the Finish**: Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County in Houston, TX, was the first to submit its new climate action plan, delivered on February 4, 2022.
- **Champions of the Challenge**: This award was bestowed on small, medium, and large transit agencies that developed plans that include achievable, ambitious strategies for reaching their GHG emission reduction goals:
  - Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Austin, TX (large)
  - Central Ohio Transit Authority, Columbus, OH (medium)
  - Rockford Mass Transit District, Rockford, IL (small)

A recording of the Earth Day event is available for viewing.

Resources

- **Compendium of Best Practices in Transit Climate Action Plans**: FTA developed this compendium using participants' submitted climate action, sustainability, energy action, and electrification or zero-emission fleet transition plans. The compendium includes examples of best practices in climate action planning for various categories, such as by scale of agency size or special emphasis areas like workforce development or equity.

- **Transit Resilience Guidebook**: FTA created this Transit Resilience Guidebook to assist transit agencies, local government officials, metropolitan planning organizations, and other entities responsible for planning, funding, operating, or coordinating with transit agencies

to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from service disruptions caused by extreme weather events, natural disasters, and climate change impacts. The guidebook presents recommendations and examples of how to identify and address climate vulnerabilities and risks and build resilience into transit assets throughout the life-cycle process, while ensuring priority is given to protecting vulnerable populations.

- **Technical Assistance and Resources for Transit Agencies**: Entities currently receiving Low or No Emission (Low-No) funds, planning to apply for Low-No funds, or using other FTA program funds for clean buses can contact the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation for technical assistance to plan for and deploy clean transit buses. The Joint Office's website Rideelectric.gov includes additional resources to help transit fleets plan for and deploy clean transit buses.

- **FTA Dear Colleague Letter: Fleet Transition Plan**: This letter provides an update about FTA's implementation of the Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program and the Low or No Emission Program. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law amended the statutory provisions for these programs to include the requirement that any application for projects related to zero-emission vehicles include a Zero-Emission Transition Plan.

- **Climate Action Plan Template**: The template provides a sample structure that an agency can follow to document its climate action plan.

- **APTA's Guidelines for Climate Action Planning**: The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Guidelines lay out a framework for approaching climate action planning and discuss considerations to keep in mind as an agency goes through the planning process.

- **The Climate Registry**: The Climate Registry offers online resources to support organizations with inventorying and reporting GHG emissions.

- **Webinar Recordings**:
  - **The Role of Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses in a Zero-Emission Future**: On Wednesday, March 20, 2024 FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar with insight from transit agencies on using hydrogen fuel cells as a power source for zero emission transit bus operations. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Power Up: Working with Electric Utilities in Public Transportation's Zero-Emission Transition**: On Wednesday, November 29, 2023 FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar with tips for transit agencies to work with public electric utilities as they transition to zero-emission vehicles. Attendees learned about reviewing the physical infrastructure and power-supply required to charge multiple battery electric buses at a time, and ways to work out the most favorable rates. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Next Practices for Addressing Climate Resiliency in Public Transportation**: On February 7, 2023, FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar focused on planning, designing, and building resilient transit systems. Panelists shared their forward-looking planning and practices to address system vulnerabilities associated with the increased frequency of extreme heat, rising sea levels, storm surge, high winds, flooding, earthquakes, tornados, and hurricanes. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Kaleidoscope: Transit, Climate Change, and Communities: Impact and Equity**: On December 14, 2022, FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar to raise awareness of the disproportionate impact that climate change effects can have on transit users. In the webinar speakers highlighted actions taken by transit agencies around the country to mitigate impacts in an equitable manner. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Building the Business Case for Low-Carbon Public Transportation Service Webinar**: On April 6, 2022, FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar that featured transit organization leaders discussing ways that adoption of low-carbon and sustainability practices has led to reduced costs and contributed to a healthy triple bottom line. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Best Practices in Developing Climate Action Plans Webinar**: On September 9, 2021, FTA and APTA hosted a second joint webinar on how transit agencies play a critical role in creating regions that are safer, stronger, cleaner, and more equitable. Attendees learned how a Climate Action Plan can guide operations in the era of climate change and learned about new APTA guidelines and FTA's climate action plan template. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **Measuring Reductions of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Webinar**: On July 27, 2021, FTA and APTA hosted a joint webinar on tools and resources for measuring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through public transportation. Practitioners discussed strategies to measure their agencies' GHG emissions, and how they quantify results and outcomes. This webinar is part of a series of events that support agencies in developing climate action plans and other strategies to reduce GHG emissions. A recording of the webinar can be accessed via registration through the APTA website.
  - **FTA Transit Leaders Climate Change Roundtable**: On June 15, 2021, FTA held a roundtable with transit agency leaders on the industry's role in achieving GHG emissions reduction targets. FTA and the Office of the Secretary provided information on the Biden-Harris Administration's GHG goals and program opportunities while representatives from the Antelope Valley Transit Authority, the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Park City Transit provided information on their agency's climate change initiatives and discussed associated best practices and challenges.

Contact

Submit questions on the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Initiative to FTAClimateInitiative@dot.gov.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

1200 NEW JERSEY AVENUE, SE

WASHINGTON, DC 20590

202-366-4043

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