

Originally distributed via APTA Business Member Newsletter

The Business of Transit Newsletter April 2026 Volume 15



The Business of Transit



Welcome to the fifteenth edition of *The Business of Transit* – the [APTA](#) Business Members' newsletter.

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Note from the Chair

Dear APTA Business Members,

There's a lot happening in our industry right now — and I mean that in the best possible way.

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of representing our business member community at APTA's Virtual Reporter Briefing on the release of its 2025 Economic Impact of Public Transportation Investment Report. Alongside APTA President Paul Skoutelas and APTA Chair Leanne Redden, I spoke directly to members of the press about what sustained federal



investment in public transportation means — not just in policy terms, but in real economic terms, for real American businesses and workers.

The headline number is striking: every \$1 billion invested in public transportation generates \$5 billion in total economic value, supports more than 41,000 jobs, and produces \$251 million in annual tax revenue. But what I most wanted reporters — and the policymakers who will read their coverage — to understand is what those numbers look like at ground level in our manufacturing facilities, in our supply chains, in the hiring decisions we make, or defer, based on the certainty or uncertainty of federal funding. Seventy-seven cents of every federal transit dollar flows to the private sector. That means when Congress invests in transit, it is investing in us — in our members, our workers, and our communities.

This briefing comes at a pivotal moment. With the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act winding down, the conversation in Washington is shifting to what comes next. APTA is calling for \$138 billion for public transit and \$130 billion for passenger rail over the next five years in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act. I want to be direct with you: the path to that outcome is not guaranteed. The fiscal environment is challenging, competing priorities are real, and the case for transit investment must be made clearly, credibly, and persistently. What gives me confidence is that we are making that case together, with a unified voice, backed by rigorous data — and that our business member community is a critical part of that story.

On that note, I want to share an update on the important work being led by our Bus Manufacturing Task Force 2.0. The task force has made meaningful progress on an issue that has long created friction across our industry: the tension between agency-driven customization and the operational and financial discipline of configuration-based procurement. We are making real headway in shifting the conversation — helping agencies understand that embracing standard configurations is not a concession; it is a strategy that accelerates delivery, reduces cost, and ultimately serves their riders better. This is not an easy cultural shift, but the dialogue is maturing, and I am proud of the constructive, solution-oriented approach our members are bringing to it.

Equally important is the work underway to build shared understanding around the costing implications of standard terms and conditions. For too long, non-standard contractual requirements have introduced variability and risk that drives up costs for everyone — agencies and suppliers alike — without adding meaningful value to the outcome. Our goal is not to resist accountability; it is to establish a framework where expectations are clear, consistent, and grounded in what actually drives cost. Progress here will benefit the entire procurement ecosystem, and I believe we are closer to a genuine shared perspective than we have been in some time.

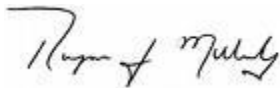
I won't minimize the headwinds our industry is navigating. Agencies are managing tight operating budgets while facing capital demands that haven't eased. Supply chain pressures, workforce challenges, and the uncertainty around federal funding timelines are real factors that affect planning across every segment of our membership. And as we head into a reauthorization cycle, there is risk that the gains of the past several years — in manufacturing investment, in workforce development, in fleet modernization — could stall if Congress does not act with the clarity and commitment this industry needs.

But I remain genuinely optimistic — not as a matter of disposition, but as a matter of evidence. The economic case for transit investment has never been stronger or better documented. The relationships between APTA's business member community and transit agencies are deepening into real partnerships. And the work we are doing together — on task forces, in Washington, and on the floor of every trade show and working session — is the kind of sustained, professional advocacy that moves the needle.

We are not passengers in this process. We are in the driver's seat.

Thank you for the trust you place in this organization, and in me, to represent your interests. I don't take that lightly — and I promise to keep earning it.

[Raymond Melleady](#)



President, Ster Seating
Chair, APTA Business Member Board of Governors (BMBG)

APTA Business Member Spotlight: In Transit with... Mark Magaldi

This series highlights the people behind the companies driving innovation, strategy, and service in public transportation. Through short-form profiles, we'll explore the career journeys, leadership lessons, and personal perspectives of APTA's business members — sharing inspiration and insight from those shaping the future of mobility.

Mark Magaldi, III

General Manager, Transit Marketing Group



1. How long have you been in the public transportation industry / How did you get started in transit?

Technically, I've been in the industry for about 24 years—but in reality, it's been part of my life much longer, going back to when I was 10 or 12 years old. I'm a second-generation transit professional - a transit enthusiast, or even addict. My father has been in public transportation since the early 1980s, and I was fortunate to grow up immersed in the industry.

I spent my early years hearing about bus and rail OEMs, transit authorities, and industry leaders. That exposure gave me a unique foundation and ultimately the opportunity to join the family business. I've worked hard to build my own reputation, but I recognize how fortunate I was to be raised in and around this industry.

2. What's one moment in your career you still think about regularly—and why?

There are many, but one stands out from early in my career. I was trying to break into a specific transit agency and couldn't get a meeting—no returned calls, no responses. At one point, I waited in the parking lot before work hours just to catch the key contact walking in. I got maybe 30 seconds with them.

From there, I kept following up. The next meeting was only a couple of minutes. Each time, I was given more to follow up on—and I made sure to deliver. By the fifth meeting or so, we started building a rapport. Over time, that turned into a strong relationship and years of successful business together.

I think about that often because it reinforces a core belief: success in this industry—and in business overall—requires persistence, resilience, and the willingness to keep showing up even when it's difficult- Doing the things you don't want to do, and success will follow.

3. What's one lesson you learned the hard way but are glad you did?

Learning who to trust—and who not to—was a hard-earned lesson. You can't succeed alone; you need to surround yourself with the right people, build a strong team, and create something meaningful together.

Early on, I was burned a few times by people I thought I could rely on. It taught me that integrity and follow-through are everything. Being someone who truly stands by their word is harder than it sounds.

That said, the transit industry is full of great people. I've been fortunate to build lasting business relationships and even lifelong friendships. Learning how to identify and invest in those relationships has been invaluable.

4. What's something you believed early in your career that you no longer believe today?

Early in my career, I believed that if you had the best product or solution, it would naturally win. Over time, I've learned that while quality matters, relationships, trust, and consistency matter just as much—if not more.

Success isn't just about what you offer; it's about how you show up, how you support your customers, and whether people trust you to deliver over the long term.

5. When you think about the next generation of transit leaders, what gives you hope?

What gives me hope is the level of resources and education available today. Transit is evolving faster than it ever has before. There are now strong educational pathways in transportation—from technical fields to planning and management.

Workforce development is also gaining real momentum, with increased outreach and awareness around careers in transit. People are starting to better understand the complexity behind delivering reliable, on-time service every day, it's an impressive and often underappreciated operation.

Younger generations also recognize the broader impact of public transportation—reducing congestion, improving mobility, and supporting environmental goals. They're more globally aware and well-traveled, which gives them perspective on how transit systems can function at a higher level.

All that makes me very optimistic about the future of the industry.

6. What's a moment that reminded you why this work matters?

One of the most meaningful reminders comes from seeing transit in action—watching people rely on it every single day. Whether it's someone getting to work, a student getting to school, or a person accessing essential services, transit plays a critical role in people's lives.

There have been many moments visiting agencies and seeing firsthand how much communities depend on reliable transportation. It reinforces that what we do isn't just about equipment or sales, it's about enabling mobility and supporting communities. That's something I never lose sight of.

7. If you weren't in transit, what would you be doing instead?

Honestly, I'm not sure—, I started in tech, moved into the RV business and I've been in this industry so long I don't know. Maybe I'd be a rock star, a radio DJ, a realtor, or even a

professional athlete—mountain biking or skiing. I've also thought about creative paths like being an artist or a podcaster.

The one thing I always knew for certain is that I wanted to be a dad. Beyond that, my path wasn't always clear—but I'm incredibly glad it led me here.

I'm passionate about the Transit Marketing Group, the industry we serve, and the customers we support. I truly can't imagine doing anything else.

Committee Spotlight

Spotlight on: Programs and Communications Committee

If there's one thing this industry keeps proving, it's that we don't just weather uncertainty. We organize around it, show up stronger, and move forward together.

The Business Member Programs & Communications Committee has been doing exactly that. Under the leadership of BMBG Chair Ray Melleady, Vice Chair Raquel Olivier, and Second Vice Chair Bill Fay, our committee has stayed focused on what matters most in 2026: amplifying the voice and impact of APTA's 900 business members, advancing long-term transit funding advocacy, and delivering programming that keeps our community informed, connected, and positioned to lead.

BMAM 2026 in Savannah: Strong Showing Despite the Elements

Heading into Savannah, we were on track for another record year. Then Mother Nature had other plans, twice. Weather-related disruptions affected attendance on both the original and rescheduled dates, somewhat tempering what would have otherwise been a milestone turnout. Even so, our members showed up and showed out. The sessions were substantive, the conversations were high-value, and the commitment of those who made the trip was evident throughout.

Programming centered on the issues defining the industry moment: supply chain pressure and tariff volatility, procurement reform and the push to modernize contract terms, Bus Manufacturing Task Force 2.0 implementation, workforce development, AI governance, and the federal policy landscape ahead of surface transportation reauthorization. The breadth and quality of dialogue reinforced why BMAM remains one of the most important gatherings in the business member calendar.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Priorities in Motion

Our committee's 2026 work plan is well underway. We are working to confirm keynote speakers across all major APTA conferences (Mobility, Rail, Legislative, and Transform) by the

end of Q1, and we are planning at least two business-oriented panel sessions aligned with strategic priorities around funding, procurement, innovation, and member value.

On the communications front, we continue expanding cross-functional outreach to spotlight the work of business member committees across APTA and communicate pathways to involvement and mentorship within the business member space. We are also supporting the BMBG's brand and messaging refresh to ensure business members' advocacy voice is as strong and unified as ever.

Leadership Transition

Following the Business Members Annual Meeting, our Committee Chair Lindy Norris passes the reins to Christina Belmont, who will bring fresh perspective and decades of industry experience into the chair role, with Emily Guill as vice chair. This committee, and APTA's business member community, is in excellent hands. Thank you for your continued engagement. We look forward to an outstanding year ahead.

Lindy Norris, Immediate Past Chair (Managing Director, Parkline Public Affairs LLC)

Christina Belmont, Chair (Vice President of Marketing, SDI Presence LLC)

Emily Guill, Vice Chair (Director, Business Development, Transdev)

Upcoming In-Person Business Member Board of Governors (BMBG) Meetings

Business Members Board of Governors (BMBG) meetings are open to all Business Members! Here are the next meeting dates:

- [APTA Legislative Conference](#): **Sunday, April 12, 1:30 - 2:45 pm ET**. The meeting will take place in Independence A at the Grand Hyatt in Washington DC.
- [APTA Rail Conference](#): June 28, 2026, Baltimore, MD

Upcoming Events

For a list of all the upcoming 2026 events already open for registration, [click here](#). Below are the key events for business members during April and May.

[APTA Legislative Conference](#)

April 12-14, 2026, Washington, DC

Make Your Voice Heard in Washington! The Legislative Conference is an opportunity for public transportation industry professionals across the nation to make our presence felt and our voices heard in Washington, DC. The Conference helps educate APTA members on important federal legislation and policy initiatives and affords an unparalleled opportunity to shape the industry's positions and federal advocacy agenda.

[Register here.](#)

[APTA Mobility Conference](#)

May 17-20, 2026, Salt Lake City, UT

The Mobility Conference addresses the critical priorities and challenges facing bus and paratransit systems and explores the changing environment in which systems operate in today's mobility landscape. Participate in specialty workshops, technical tours and APTA's combined Bus Display & Products and Services Showcase.

Who should attend: bus and paratransit system employees and managers, planners, board members, contractors, suppliers, manufacturers, and consultants.

Registration and hotel reservations can be made [here](#).



How to Get Involved as a Business Member

Business Members Board of Governors Strategic Plan: 2026-2028

APTA's Business Members Board of Governors is proud to share our 2026–2028 strategic plan, developed with input from more than 850 companies that power, advise, and advance public transportation nationwide.

This plan reflects the priorities our members raised and charts a focused path to strengthen our collective impact. Organized around four strategic priorities, it guides how we will advocate, modernize, innovate, and elevate business member leadership in the years ahead.

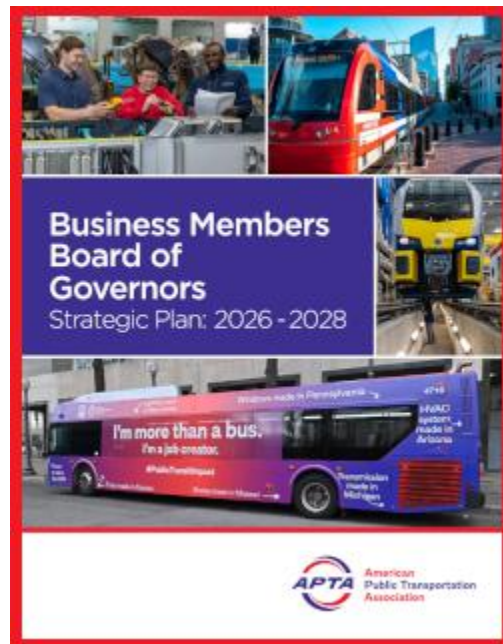
[Click here to read the Strategic Plan.](#)

Join a Business Member Committee

Join a committee to help move the industry forward! Except for committees listed as “by appointment only,” Business Members may join **any committee or subcommittee** by using APTA's "Join a Committee" page (you must be logged in to access the page). There will be Committee meetings at most upcoming APTA conferences in 2026.

Feel free to reach out directly to the Committee Chairs or Vice Chairs if you want to get involved – all committees can use some assistance during the year. Keep in mind that help might be only a few minutes of your time a month!

To view all current committees, visit apta.com/membership/committees-subcommittees/.



Share Your Feedback

Have ideas or questions on *The Business of Transit*?

We want to hear from you! Contact the Business Members Programs and Communications Committee leads to share your thoughts.

Lindy Norris, Immediate Past Chair at lindy@parklinepublicaffairs.com

Christina Belmont, Chair at cbelmont@sdipresence.com

Emily Guill, Vice Chair & Newsletter Lead at Emily.Guill@transdev.com

Petra Mollet, APTA Liaison to the Committee at PMollet@apta.com

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Sent to you by the [American Public Transportation Association](#)

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