

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & PANDEMIC RESPONSE

“From a global pandemic to natural disasters and terrorist attacks, public transportation works hand-in-hand with emergency responders and government agencies to keep essential personnel and emergency rescue and relief teams in motion. During the pandemic, agencies across the nation worked tirelessly to ensure that no one was left behind needing transportation. In times of crisis, public transportation employees continue to prove their abilities to adapt to the swiftly changing needs of their communities.”

- APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Public transit agencies historically have served a critical role during emergency response by providing mobility and evacuation before, during, and after disasters.
- To help those in harm's way, public transportation often maintains service during crises when it is safe to operate; helps with mass evacuations people from threatened areas; rescues vulnerable populations and people with disabilities; and transports emergency personnel during times of fires, floods, hurricanes, windstorms, and winter storms.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and FTA have emergency preparedness resources for public transit agencies in the event of a major accident, terrorist attack, or manmade or natural disaster.

RELIEF AND REBUILDING

- Following disasters such as hurricanes, public transit systems often face difficult hurdles to resume full service due to power outages, extreme temperatures, fuel shortages, closed roads, and limited phone service.
- With affordable housing and vehicles often destroyed following disasters, the role of public transportation is essential to maintain access to essential needs and jobs.
- Robust public transit helps neighborhoods recover faster from disasters as people still can get around despite potentially not having electricity, gas or losing a vehicle.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- Public transit agencies felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic immediately as ridership dropped due to dramatic increases in telecommuting and many people staying home. At the onset of COVID-19, some agencies reported ridership decreases in excess of 70%.
- APTA created a COVID-19 Resource Hub with the latest official guidance, tools, and global best practices, in addition to creating a Health & Safety Commitments program to help transit systems protect workers and passengers and restore public confidence in using transit.
- Many agencies worked to redeploy services to critical routes for essential travel to jobs, grocery stores, medical facilities, among other locations, eliminated fares and split shifts to provide social distancing for employees. Some agencies also shifted vehicles and employees to drive meals and groceries to members of the community unable to travel.
- Agencies worked to provide protection for employees and riders. While the federal government began requiring riders to wear masks on transit in January 2021, more than 85% of agencies already were requiring masks by July 2020. Agencies implemented new procedures for cleaning and disinfecting (APTA produced the preeminent white paper on this topic), purchased personal protective equipment (PPE), and explored advances in sterilization products and air filtration systems designed to disinfect air and surfaces. More than half also developed a recovery plan that included new safety precautions for riders and employees (APTA also published a white paper on this topic of a recovery & restoration checklist).
- Transit agencies stepped up to support the vaccine rollout, with many offering free rides to vaccination sites and coordinating with hospitals and medical centers to offer transport to vulnerable individuals. Some agencies also turned their facilities into mass vaccination sites.
- As of September 2021, public transit agencies have obligated 98 percent of CARES Act funding. Transit agencies have also obligated more than one-half of CRRSAA funds and one-quarter of ARP funds. According to a recent APTA survey, one-half of responding agencies (51 percent) expect to exhaust all their COVID-19 relief funds by January 2023 and the vast majority of agencies (82 percent) expect to expend all their funds within the following year.



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