



2025

YEAR IN REVIEW

ADVOCACY. RESEARCH. EDUCATION.



ADVOCACY. RESEARCH. EDUCATION.

Transit Matters to Missouri. It connects lives, builds communities and drives Missouri's economy. Across the state, transit is more than just a ride — it's a lifeline. It gets thousands of Missourians to work, school and healthcare, while fueling billions in economic activity each year. From Kansas City to Cape Girardeau, on rural roads and city streets, transit keeps our communities moving.



This has fueled the mission of the Missouri Public Transit Association (MPTA) for almost 45 years. We serve as a unified voice for transit providers, stakeholders, vendors and other partners from across the state. This diverse membership collectively works to raise awareness about the role of public transit and why it needs to be an investment priority.



Fiscal Year 2025 proved to be a roller coaster of highs and lows. State support saw a 42 percent reduction in transit funding along with many other industries across Missouri. In addition, proposals at the federal level were floated to eliminate support for transit. The MPTA's second study to quantify transit needs across the state was completed, while work continued to underscore the impact of transit to the state's bottom line. The association succeeded at elevating the value of transit in Missouri, building new coalitions to expand its advocacy base. It also furthered educational efforts and secured additional operating assistance.

Moving forward, MPTA will be focused on the restoration of state investment in transit, while building awareness around the fact that transit is critical for this state — whether you ride it or not. We will also be mindful of the fact that challenges remain, especially as it relates to federal funds, mechanic shortages and broadening of the coalition base. The MPTA will be working tirelessly to support transit providers and expand the state's support for public transit by engaging additional community organizations, employers and stakeholders.

Public transit is delivering for Missouri. As we move into our 45th year, get on board in 2026 and help us keep transit on track.

Matt Caffl
President

Kimberly McCella
Executive Director



\$5M

✂️
= fewer rides,
fewer jobs,
fewer opportunities



LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

State Funding Reduced, Opposition to CCW Succeeded

The MPTA has a legislative advocacy program that monitors legislation affecting public transit and works to ensure the best interests of transit providers as it relates to funding, safety and more.

In State Fiscal Year 2026 (SFY2026), Missouri's State Transit Assistance funding was cut by 42% from \$11.7 million to \$6.7 million, reducing General Revenue by \$5 million. Governor Mike Kehoe signed the SFY2026 operating and capital improvement budget bills on June 30, 2025. Per capita spending has now dropped from \$1.89 to \$1.08.

In addition to limiting rides, these cuts threaten jobs, economic growth and federal funds that require local matches. There is one year remaining in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which authorized up to \$108 billion for transportation from 2022 to 2026 and marked the largest federal investment in public transportation in the nation's history. The ability to secure this type of federal funding requires transit providers to come up with a 50:50 match for transit operations and an 80:20 match for capital programming, making financial support for transit at the state level absolutely crucial.

Missouri ranks among the lowest in the nation for state investment. Transit providers are forced to fill in the gaps by identifying other funding sources through sales tax and private contracts, so they don't miss out on the opportunity to draw down the maximum amount of federal dollars available through IIJA and other sources. If Missouri transit providers are to succeed, the state must continue to make public transit investment a

priority. In addition, the federal government must continue to invest in transit.

Federal investment in 2025 included the following:

- Formula-based grant programs that fund transit systems in both urbanized and rural areas, buses and bus facilities, transit designed for seniors and people with disabilities, and planning and support to improve the condition of transit assets. Urbanized area formula funding secured in Missouri was \$19.2 million in Kansas City, MO-KS; \$49.58 million in St. Louis, MO-IL; and \$4.65 million in Springfield.
- Rural area formulized funding totaled \$30,974,667.
- In total, Missouri federal program funds topped \$132.9 million.
- Missouri continues to win on competitive federal grant front. The City of Jefferson City this year was awarded a Low/No Emissions Grant for \$2,024,860 for new hybrid buses.

Through a contract with Michael Winter, LLC, the MPTA was able to have representation at the State Capitol each day of the 2025 legislative session. Positive results included the continuation of \$5 million in Missouri Elderly and Handicapped Transportation Assistance Program (MEHTAP) funding and successful opposition to all efforts to allow Concealed Carry Weapons (CCW) on public transit vehicles in Missouri.

The MPTA has also put together a comprehensive legislative advocacy package for the 2026 Legislative session.



"Vital services are only as good as they are accessible. When we talk to our over 700,000 members across the state, we hear about how important reliable public transportation is to access services, community and family. It is imperative that people can get where they need to go in Missouri, and transit is a critical component of that system."

– Jay Hardenbrook, Associate State Director for Advocacy for AARP Missouri and MPTA Board Member



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Transit Needs in State Underscored in 2025

Public transit yields an overall economic impact in Missouri of \$4.05 billion annually, including \$481 million in spending by transit riders. It gets thousands of Missourians to and from their places of employment every day. It also directly employs more than 3,800 individuals — with an annual average salary of \$86,400 — and indirectly adds more than 22,000 jobs to the state each year. With these impacts in mind, MPTA commissioned the 2025 Transit Needs Assessment Study for Missouri to determine where transit is falling short. This report built on the results of the 2022 Statewide Transit Needs Assessment study. This study identified service gaps and operational needs, prioritized investments, created policies to better deliver transit

service to customers and communities, and established short-term (one to five years), mid-term (six to 10 years) and long-term (10+ years) recommendations.

The 2025 study focused on the service gaps, operational needs and costs of doing business in the transit industry. Results demonstrated an increase in unmet demand of 55 percent, while the cost of delivering those rides has escalated by more than 119 percent. The report found demand is especially acute for rural transit providers, as they are only meeting 17 percent of the demand. This leaves 83 percent of the demand unmet, equating to 8.9 million needed trips per year going unfulfilled.

Addressing the value of public transit and the impacts of unmet demand remained a top priority for the MPTA and its membership base this year. As such, the association created an online resource to highlight the faces of public transit from riders to operators to employers across the state. Each transit trip in Missouri has a direct impact on citizens across Missouri. Pairing research with personal stories underscores the critical importance of transit across the state. This work will continue into 2026.

Transit providers did see a win in operator numbers with many agencies employing full teams. The focus has since shifted to the need for mechanics.

55%

Unmet demand for transit

Due to service gaps, operational needs, and cost of doing business in the transit industry.

17%

Rural transit providers only meeting 17% of demand.

This leaves 83% of demand unmet, equating to 8.9 million needed trips per year unfulfilled.

MO per capita spending on transit compared to surrounding states



* Reflects 42% reduction in 2025 for transit operating investment.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Built Awareness at State and Local Levels



The MPTA provided its members, partners and the community at-large with educational and networking opportunities and kept them informed about the issues influencing public transit in Missouri.

The association increased the number of "Education Series" and "Peer Round Table Discussion" events hosted in 2025, targeting members, elected officials, stakeholders, transit riders and others. These online events featured industry and subject matter experts, guest speakers, Federal Transit Administration staff, and panelists who addressed the state of transit in Missouri, provided transit agency updates and discussed how transit impacts the economy, rural access, cost conscious marketing and transit advocacy training.

This year, the MPTA hosted the three-state Midwest Transit Conference in Kansas City in early September in conjunction with host providers Kansas City Area Transportation Authority and the Kansas City Streetcar Authority. Three hundred individuals attended mobile workshops and planning sessions and listened to several keynote addresses over the two-day period. The event also served as a platform for MPTA, and peer associations in Iowa and Nebraska, to recognize the 2025 Transit Operator Champions. Each of the 40 honorees were nominated by their respective transit agencies for going above and beyond the call of duty and serving as frontline heroes. The 2026 Missouri Transit Conference is set for September 2-3 in Columbia, Mo., at The Broadway Hotel.



Other education and outreach efforts included securing media coverage across the state in the form of articles, photos and captions, and letters-to-the-editor that highlighted the work of the MPTA, honored transit operators and raised awareness about the issues impacting transit accessibility. Earned media through October 2025 topped \$445,000. The MPTA also issued monthly eblasts and a year-end report, hosted bi-monthly statewide calls with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), made regular website updates and continually shared content with social media followers on Facebook, X and LinkedIn, resulting in increased engagement and awareness of transit related information.

SMTS' Groundbreaking

The MPTA's work also highlighted the exciting transit-related efforts underway across the state including:

The Kansas City Streetcar extension opening in October.

Joplin's restoration of fixed-route service and launch of a regional transit study.

SMTS' groundbreaking on its new facility in Park Hills, Mo.

Cape Girardeau Transit Authority's 25th anniversary celebration and expanded service through a partnership with Southeast Missouri State University.

Kansas City Regional Transit Alliance (KCRTA) polling demonstrating support in four counties in Kansas City area for a transit funding referendum.

KCATA's restoration of local funding and plans for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

City Utilities of Springfield implementation of ConnectSGF Study.

Bi-State Development pivot to Bus Rapid Transit study in Northside-Southside corridor.



STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP

New Leaders Looking to Future of Transit in Missouri



Fiscal year 2025 underscored the importance of transit leaders in Missouri. MPTA named **Matt Crawford**, Director of Transit at City Utilities of Springfield, as the President of its Board during MPTA's 2025 Annual Meeting in September in Kansas City. **Jay Hardenbrook**, Associate State Director for Advocacy for AARP Missouri, was also named MPTA's newest board member.

During the annual meeting, the MPTA extended the appointment of several board members for an additional two-year term. This included **Janine Clampitt** of Ray County Transit, **Chance Gallagher** of the City of St. Joseph, **Shannon Hemenway** of GoCOMO, **David Knaut** of Ozark Transportation Organization, **Rachel Pawlak** of East-West Gateway Council of Governments, **Ginny Smith** of Cape Girardeau County Transit Authority and **Frank White, III**, of KCATA.

Officers were also appointed for a one-year term, including: Vice-President – **Cindy Baker** of KCATA, Secretary – **Chance Gallagher** of the City of St. Joseph, Treasurer – **Tracy Jones** of SMTS, Past President – **Taulby Roach** of Bi-State Development and At-Large – **Dorothy Yeager** of OATS Transit.

MPTA member SERVE, Inc., appointed **Marilyn Bartley** its new Executive Director, while Metro Transit announced the selection of **Ronald Forrest** as the Chief Operating Officer of Metro Transit in St. Louis. On the national front, the United States Senate confirmed Marc Molinaro as the 16th administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

As it relates to membership, MPTA also saw an increase in membership revenues in 2025.

"The strength of the MPTA relies greatly on the dedication and vision of our leadership. This mix of leaders brings both experience and passion to the table, well-positioning us to champion public transit and drive progress for communities across Missouri. This is especially important as we work to secure additional state funding for transit providers."

– Kim Cella, Executive Director of the MPTA





NEXT STEPS

Forging into 2026 with a Mission

The MPTA will remain on mission in 2026, urging members, providers, the state legislature, transit riders and the community at-large to support the following priorities:

- Ensuring federal support of transit in reauthorization bill
- Restoration of \$5 million in core state operational assistance for public transit providers
- Identifying additional collaborations/partnerships
- Continuing to oppose Concealed Carry Weapons on Transit



701 Market, Ste. 275 • St. Louis, MO 63101
314.231.7272 • www.mopublictransit.org

The MPTA, through its network of members, stakeholders and constituents is committed to improving transit for all in Missouri.

