



# 5-Year Strategic Plan for the Association for Commuter Transportation

## Executive Summary

Adopted December 9, 2019



The Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) is the leading global voice and advocate for transportation demand management (TDM)– fostering economic growth, better commutes, environmental preservation, and community health. In recent years, ACT has experienced rapid growth in membership and programming as the TDM industry has gone through a resurgence as communities and employers look for cost-effective, innovative and impactful strategies to address their transportation and mobility challenges.

Our members reflect the diversity of those with a stake in this effort – corporations and institutions, local and state agencies, service and solution providers. ACT’s commitment is to advocate for thoughtful planning, programming, and policy that increases the efficiency of our transportation system – decreasing single-occupancy vehicle trips, advancing professionals and practice in the field, and building strong public and private support for TDM strategies.

## Introduction

The field of TDM has been changing rapidly as facilities, roads and transit are increasingly incorporating TDM principles into their design, and employers and employees are shifting practices and behavior with the rise of TDM strategies and infrastructure. The field has expanded from its early focus on air quality to broader issues of congestion and livability, employee attraction, retention and productivity, health and safety, road infrastructure, utilization and efficiency, and racial and socioeconomic equity.

In 2019, ACT undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process. Our Board designated a Task Force, along with outside consultants, to build a robust fact base and recommend strategic priorities and a roadmap for ACT. The group carried out interviews and focus groups with over 35 members as well as an in-depth member survey, along with extensive sector and comparables research. This plan will serve as a guiding document for ACT’s areas of focus, investments, and desired outcomes over the next 5 years.

This planning effort began with several strategic questions to be addressed:

- What will be the critical areas of evolution in TDM over the next 5 years, and what are the priorities and goals of ACT’s members? How can ACT uniquely shape the field and advance these goals?
- How can ACT leverage its scale and expertise to amplify and accelerate thoughtful policy and funding strategies?
- What do ACT’s members want and need to be most effective, and where can ACT add the greatest value in service of its members?

This strategic plan would not have been possible without the dedication, leadership, support and participation of countless individuals from within and outside of the membership. ACT would like to specifically call out and thank the members of the Board and individuals that participated in interviews and focus groups for their time and insights.

Below are the results of this work, including key findings, the resulting strategic imperatives, and ACT’s roadmap to execute and track impact.

## Key Findings

Our research highlighted several important dynamics and areas of priority. ACT has dramatically diversified its membership (Figure 1) over the last four years across organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors with a stake in TDM growth.

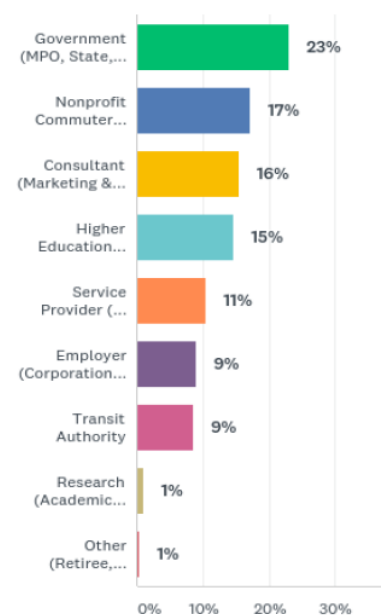


Figure 1: Type of Organization

These members share many priorities – but also have distinct interests and needs based on their organization type and geography. Individual member professionals look to ACT for education and leadership development, and for a community of peers with expertise and experience that they value.

Across segments, ACT is perceived by its members as occupying a unique position at the intersection of transportation design, regional planning, and institutional programs. Members overwhelmingly expressed that they are proud to be associated with ACT (Figure 2).

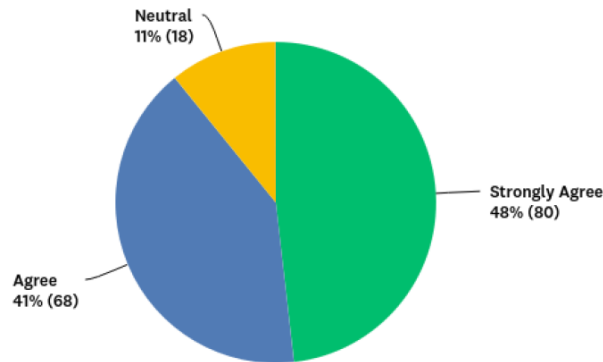


Figure 2: Proud of Membership

Beneath these broad observations were several key findings that have served to inform ACT’s strategic plan:

**Members want direct support but also look to ACT for thought leadership and collective efforts sector-wide.** ACT is most valued for its advancement of the practice and people of the sector, including TDM knowledge development and dissemination, member networks, events and programming, and awareness-building and advocacy.

Looking to the future, members envision ACT playing an even greater role in thought leadership and the expansion of TDM investment and policies. Examples include influencing the design of next-generation multi-modal transportation systems and appropriate long-term use of emerging technologies; shaping the public’s understanding of the economic and environmental impact of TDM, including impacts on climate, and support for greater activism at the local level in addition to continued focus nationally.

Nevertheless, members want to see ACT balance long-range future issues such as autonomous vehicles with efforts that can yield near-term results such as employer shuttle solutions and intelligent planning of emerging mobility.

**Desire for data and guidance for themselves and policymakers.** As part of ACT’s role in thought leadership, there is a strong appetite for continued aggregation and sharing of best practices and case studies along with the design of new research with potential to shape future standards of practice and policy.

There is untapped opportunity to work closely with others in adjacent sectors to link ACT’s distinctive role in TDM with those who work on both broader transportation and planning issues, as well as advocates in sectors such as health and the environment who have shared interests and goals. There is also a strong desire for ACT to take public positions on matters with membership-wide agreement, but to remain neutral on issues that divide member segments.

**Desire for greater attention to programming and engagement locally and regionally.** In recent years, ACT has invested in its national programs, which are now well-attended and highly regarded, but members are also seeking opportunities to for themselves and their colleagues to engage more frequently, directly, and affordably at the local level. This has long been a challenge for members in recent years because of the often-large chapter footprints along with the high

expectations of but limited support for volunteers. Strong local engagement, evidenced by several comparable organizations outside transportation, requires staff support and strong volunteer leadership, but when executed effectively offers significant member value.

**Appetite for continued expansion of professional development opportunities at all career stages.**

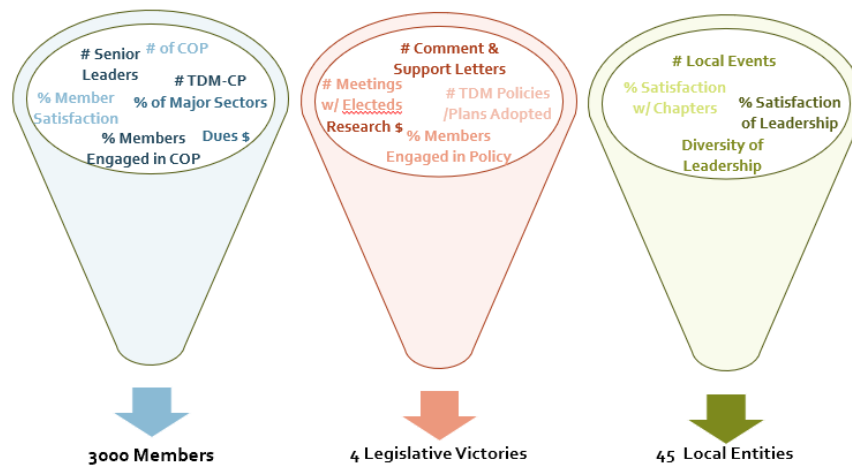
Members have appreciated the range of offerings for early-career professionals on their teams, including ImpACT Leadership, educational programs, and awards and recognition. There is a desire for ACT to codify and serve as the arbiter of TDM-related content and quality, with certification serving as a core process for building and promulgating these standards. Senior professionals are also seeking greater opportunity to be recognized as leaders in the industry, engage with their peers and remain abreast of developments in the field.

**Goals for 2025**

The strategic plan lays out two sets of goals for the organization. Primary among these are our guiding goals, which establish aggressive targets to accelerate the organization’s growth, engagement, and impact through 2025. These guiding goals are:

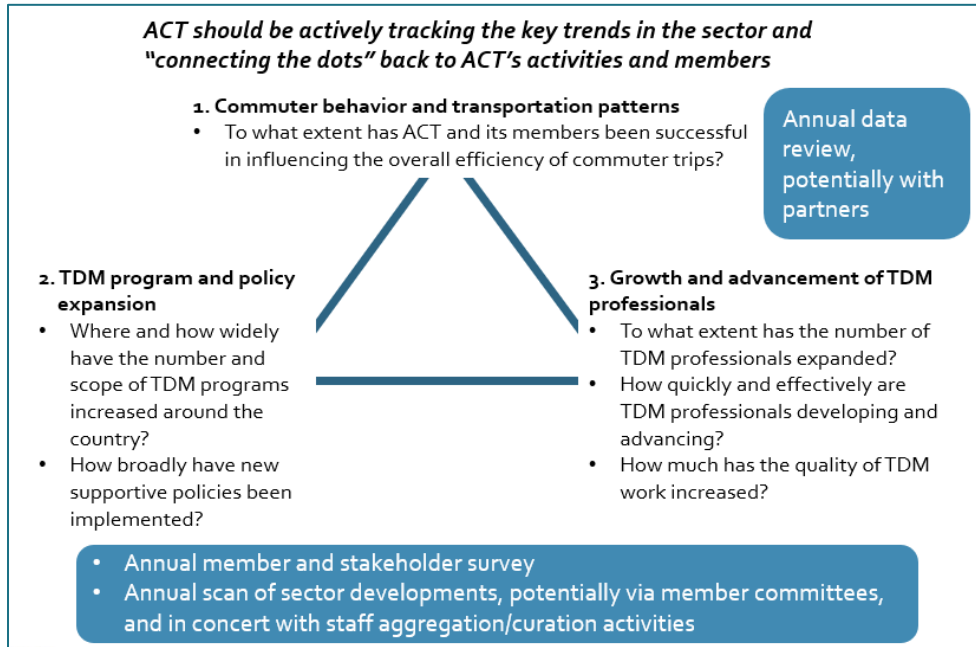
1. Grow membership to 3,000
2. Achieve four legislative victories
3. Establish 45 local entities/chapters

As detailed in the graphic below, ACT will utilize a mix of qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure progress towards these guiding goals.



ACT will also strive for long-term impact in the sector as well as tangible near- and medium-term outcomes for members. Metrics that track long-term impact will answer the questions: “Are we having the desired impact for our members and the sector?” and will be captured each year through a mix of quantitative and qualitative research and collaboration with partner organizations and members. As presented in the graphic below, ACT aspires to impact the sector in three primary areas:

1. **Commuter behavior and transportation patterns.** ACT and its members will contribute – through knowledge building, dissemination, and influence, to the increased understanding and greater efficiency of commuter trips.
2. **TDM program and policy expansion.** ACT will expand the number and scope of TDM programs around the country and accelerate the adoption of supportive policies and practices.
3. **Growth and advancement of TDM professionals.** ACT will foster the attraction, cultivation, and advancement of TDM professionals across settings and sectors, and set the standards for professional excellence in the field.



ACT will focus on its delivery of effectiveness and value over time, with metrics answering the questions: “How effectively are we executing our plan? How effectively are we building and optimizing our resources and investments?” These will be collected and utilized regularly by staff and reported to the Board and more broadly to the membership.

## Strategic Imperatives

In response to these internal and external findings; and to achieve the goals established for 2025; ACT has committed to pursue several strategic imperatives over the next five years:

### 1. **Build, communicate, and sustain a strong value proposition to grow ACT’s membership.**

ACT will develop a portfolio of programs and services that offer distinct insights, tools, and networks that meet the needs of a range of member segments, including those defined by:

- Organization type: Corporations, institutions, agencies, service providers, researchers
- Career stage: Early career, mid-career, and senior professionals
- Geography: Urban, suburban, and rural geographies

Members will have access to a robust knowledge center with research, case studies, best practices, tools, and other resources curated by ACT staff and volunteer leaders. ACT will also launch communication platforms including dedicated listservs in response to member interest.

These resources will be built in part around communities of practice, which will serve as virtual gathering places for ACT’s members and offer both on-demand access to content as well as the opportunity for members to communicate and collaborate with peers. ACT’s sector Councils will be restructured in this model to provide greater flexibility and increased staff support in response to interest from members.

In addition to a broad set of resources, ACT will also invest in targeted programming and content that relates to particular segments over time. Initially this will include development of a network and summit for senior leaders and



practitioners, and over time may also extend to commissioned research, convening and professional exchanges, and policy work.

## **2. Deepen and broaden ACT's influence**

Members working in concert through ACT can accelerate and increase the success of TDM solutions at the local, regional and national level. ACT will invest in efforts to inform, support and selectively drive policy and standards of practice that enable effective TDM strategies. At a foundational level, ACT will gather and disseminate policy analysis and advocacy tools for members and serve as a subject matter expert on legislative and regulatory matters both locally and nationally. ACT will also sustain its activity in its federal advocacy efforts, ensuring that the TDM community's voice is heard on high-impact bills, and curate case studies and tools for action at the state and local level.

Working in close partnership with Center for TDM, ACT will inform priorities and opportunities for new research and enable ACT's members to serve as a testing ground for emerging strategies.

ACT will also broaden its efforts to build coalitions with others in areas of shared interest. This will include working closely with associations focused on overlapping issues such as regional planning and transit strategy, as well as collaborating with advocates in fields such as the environment, health, and equity where TDM can provide shared solutions and mutual benefits.

## **3. Localize and support member engagement**

ACT will foster strong local TDM communities that encourage face-to-face activities and collaborative work, while providing greater support to volunteer leaders and opportunities for increased leadership roles for all members.

ACT will undertake an effort to review its existing chapter structure and put forward a plan to establish new local entities that allow for travel distances that support increased opportunities for member engagement in local programs, and that better align with planning regions and legislative and regulatory jurisdictions. Volunteer leadership at the local level will remain a critical role but will be supported more fully by staff. Members outside an active local area will be represented through potential new regional structures that support the formation of affiliate groups or virtual clusters to share information and coordinate efforts in the region. Local programming will benefit from new investment in a robust "menu" of successful programs and off-the-shelf resources and tools. Leaders and members can choose the programs and topics that are most relevant for them.

## ***ACT's Roadmap***

Pursuing the three imperatives will require intentional and sequenced investment in staff capacity, program development and expansion, and technology and operational infrastructure. Over the next five years, ACT aspires to grow its membership, engagement, and organizational capacity – investing in new and broader initiatives, expanding membership and diversifying sources of funding. At the same time, ACT will prepare financially and programmatically for potential shifts in the economy and the resulting changes in member needs and priorities.

Based on this plan, ACT envisions hiring two additional staff members in 2020 focused on member services and policy. This new capacity brings ACT closer to parity with comparable organizations and will enable ACT's expanded resources and programming, chapter and volunteer support, and advocacy at both the federal and chapter level. There will also be near-term investments in IT infrastructure to strengthen searchable access to resources and support listservs and other collaboration platforms.

Revenue will grow both through continued membership expansion and event attendance and sponsorship, as well as new programs including TDM certification, senior leader and other segment-specific programming, and grants for research. While near-term revenues may not cover the full cost of investments in new staff and technology, the organization has built significant reserves that can be used to offset these expenses.

In parallel with external efforts, ACT will initiate several enhancements to its governance model that will align with the strategic direction, including:

- Continue the shift in Board composition to include a hybrid of elected and recruited seats in areas such as public policy, academic research, and governance, and to ensure representation across sectors, access to specific skill sets and increased diversity
- Expand member participation in Board committees to increase the proportion of members involved and increase the engagement of those with relevant expertise
- Form a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force to spearhead strategy development and coordinate execution across ACT's programs and activities
- Invest in Board development to enhance Board member capacity and engagement