PULSE INSIGHTS

CT Transit Hartford

A digital experience review.

CUSTOMIZED FOR CT TRANSIT HARTFORD

PREPARED FOR

Garrett T. Eucalitto

Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation

SPRING 2026

Garrett,

We made this booklet for you.

Over the past few weeks we've studied CT Transit Hartford's digital experience as part of the 2026 Transit Digital Experience Review, our systematic study of rider digital friction across sixty U.S. transit agencies. What follows is what the Review found about CT Transit Hartford specifically, drawn from the public record alongside the cohort observations the work surfaced.

You'll see CT Transit Hartford's own rider voice placed alongside voices from peer agencies in the same friction cluster, three peers wrestling with the pattern at adjacent scales, three observations the cross-agency review made about CT Transit Hartford paired with what some cohort agencies have begun doing in response, and a short summary of what the cohort itself looks like with CT Transit Hartford placed in the broader picture.

The invitation is on the back cover.

Jeremy Dalnes

Co-founder, Pulse Insights

SPRING 2026

U.S. transit ridership has plateaued at roughly eighty-five percent of pre-pandemic levels, federal emergency funding has lapsed, and every rider interaction is more valuable than it was in 2019. Agencies have invested heavily in physical experience over the same window — buses, fare systems, BRT corridors, comprehensive network redesigns — and the rider-facing digital layer is the part of the work most agencies are still figuring out how to fund and own.

A FINDING FROM THE COHORT

Three of every four U.S. transit agencies we studied are losing rider trust in real-time arrivals.

CT Transit Hartford is among them. Three workstreams converge in the 2026 window. The website redesign, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet, the CT DOT CX Action Plan.

Across the sixty agencies in the Review, approximately forty-five show documented rider distrust of real-time arrival data. Nearly all publish GTFS-RT feeds; the friction lives downstream of the feed, in app-layer rendering that breaks rider confidence at the moment of decision.

CT Transit Hartford sits at an unusual cohort intersection: three concurrent modernization workstreams converging in a single 2026 window. The website redesign procurement opened in August 2024 with explicit user-experience objectives; the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion is funding 46 battery-electric buses; the CTDOT Customer Experience Action Plan sets the state-level framing all three sit inside. What the Review couldn't find a clear public owner for, here or elsewhere in the cohort, is the project of measuring rider trust as the three workstreams move from procurement and planning into deployment.

THE PATTERN, IN THE PUBLIC RECORD. YOURS AND THE COHORT'S.

Three workstreams in motion: the website redesign procurement, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion, and the CT DOT Customer Experience Action Plan. CT Transit Hartford sits inside a concurrent modernization window where three architectural changes land on the rider-facing surface together. The rider voices below come from peer agencies inside the same window.

COHORT PATTERN · CONCURRENT MODERNIZATION WINDOW

THREE VOICES FROM THE COHORT'S ACCESSIBILITY AND REDESIGN CLUSTER

"live bus tracking is frequently down, even for major routes"

CDTA RIDER · BBB · 2024–2025

"Delays are bad, but the poor passenger information — ghost trains, no service announcements — makes it even worse."

CLEVELAND RTA RIDER · REDDIT R/TRANSIT · 2024

"Reimagine DART rolls out routes; the website redesign RFP makes WCAG 2.1 AA non-negotiable."

DES MOINES DART PROCUREMENT · RFP FY26-R-001 · 2025

The pattern that matters here is concurrent modernization.

CT Transit Hartford sits in the cohort's most concentrated modernization-window position: three architectural workstreams — the website redesign procurement, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion, and the CT DOT Customer Experience Action Plan — converging in a single 2026 deployment window. The peer voices on the facing page come from adjacent agencies whose own modernization windows are converging in parallel. The pattern they describe is the same shape this window will surface here: the moment the architectural change reaches the rider-facing surface is the moment the rider-trust surface has to do its hardest work.

The shape of the rider-trust gap matters as much as the rider-trust gap itself. Three rider experiences keep showing up across the cohort: information that is wrong (ghost buses, fallback predictions), information that misleads (apps that show buses that have already passed), and information that is simply absent (blank screen, app crash). The Hartford Division's concurrent modernization window surfaces all three categories on different timelines — data that lags during the website redesign deployment, payment surfaces that lag during the fleet conversion, and accessibility work running against the April 2027 WCAG 2.1 AA deadline.

That kind of modernization alignment is durable. It outlives the immediate technical milestone. The website redesign procurement opened in August 2024; the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion is funding 46 battery-electric buses; the CTDOT Customer Experience Action Plan progress report published in June 2024. The cohort review found this kind of alignment elsewhere: rider digital expectations concentrate in the windows when the agency's architectural surface is being rebuilt. The agencies most likely to recover fastest treat the trust gap as its own measurable project, alongside the architectural work, on the surfaces where decisions are made.

THREE OF THE SIXTY

In the same friction cluster.

Three of the sixty agencies where the same pattern shows up alongside CT Transit Hartford's.

Des Moines DART

Des Moines, Iowa

> *"Reimagine DART rolls out routes; the website redesign RFP makes WCAG 2.1 AA non-negotiable."*
>
> RFP FY26-R-001 · REIMAGINE DART JUNE 14, 2026

Midwestern midsize peer running a parallel modernization window: the Reimagine DART redesign, a website-redesign procurement, and the digital-accessibility deadline all in concurrent flight. DART pushed compliance into the procurement spec itself — the same architectural choice visible in the Hartford Division's window.

GRTC

Richmond, Virginia

> *"Website redesign 'Change Request' approved early 2025 alongside RAISE grant-driven service expansion."*
>
> GRTC PROCUREMENT · 2025 · RAISE GRANT EXPANSION

Southeastern small-system peer running the same concurrent-modernization shape: a website redesign, the RAISE-funded capital expansion, and the accessibility-deadline work all converging in 2026. The cohort's clearest small-system version of the convergence pattern.

PSTA

St. Petersburg, Florida

> *"Website redesign launched December 11, 2025; SunRunner BRT ridership reached 2M riders in 2 years."*
>
> PSTA · LAUNCHED DEC 2025 · BRT DIGITAL ADOPTION

Florida small-system peer that already moved through a similar modernization window — a completed redesigned website plus a documented BRT rider-adoption track record. PSTA shows what the post-convergence rider-facing surface can look like once the workstreams land.

CDTA, Cleveland RTA, NFTA Buffalo, Spokane Transit, and Madison Metro are in the same cluster, with verbatims of equal weight. The three above are closest to the Hartford Division on three different dimensions of the convergence pattern: parallel modernization window, concurrent redesign-plus-capital window, completed window with documented rider-adoption record.

FROM THE COHORT

Three patterns the Review surfaced about CT Transit Hartford.

Each is a place where the Review noticed the Hartford Division sitting inside a larger pattern visible across the sixty. Each closes with how some cohort agencies have begun responding.

3 of 4

AGENCIES WITH DOCUMENTED REAL-TIME TRUST FRICTION

The Hartford Division sits inside the cohort's largest friction pattern.

What distinguishes the Hartford Division's instance is the architectural surface that's currently being rebuilt. The rider-facing real-time layer runs through cttransit.com and the Token Transit ticketing partnership; the website redesign, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion, and the CT DOT Customer Experience Action Plan together represent the cohort's clearest convergence of modernization workstreams in a single window. The trust gap and the data gap run on different timelines, with the redesign deployment as the closest lever.

HOW SOME AGENCIES ARE RESPONDING

Cleveland RTA's Bridging Possibilities study treats real-time reliability as its own measurable surface with a public Customer Listening Posts mandate; PSTA's December 2025 website launch documented BRT digital adoption as the rider-trust signal worth tracking.

35 of 60

AGENCIES IN AN ACTIVE SERVICE-CHANGE WINDOW

The CTfastrak fleet conversion lands inside one of the cohort's concentrated capital windows.

Major restructures and capital programs underway or imminent across the cohort: SEPTA's Bus Revolution, MARTA's NextGen, Pace's ReVision, TriMet's August 2026 reduction, Des Moines's Reimagine DART, MTA-NYCT's Queens Bus Network Redesign. The CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion to 46 battery-electric buses sits in the same window. Across the cohort, the public communication of capital construction and the public measurement of rider response are running on different timelines.

HOW SOME AGENCIES ARE RESPONDING

SEPTA's Bus Revolution outreach documented approximately 1,200 touchpoints and 580 public comments in board minutes; AC Transit's Realign published comparable engagement totals as the rollout moved.

1 in 6

AGENCIES WITH DOCUMENTED MULTI-MODE HANDOFF FRICTION

The multi-mode handoff is a quiet pattern across the cohort.

The Hartford Division operates fixed-route bus only, but the rider journey routinely crosses modes through Token Transit ticketing, the CTfastrak BRT corridor, and connections to Hartford Line rail and Greater Hartford Transit District paratransit. Trip plans that cross modes — even when the agency operates only one of them — show different rider behavior at the handoff than single-mode plans do. The website-redesign surface is where the seam friction concentrates for the rider planning across systems.

HOW SOME AGENCIES ARE RESPONDING

MBTA consolidated 167 application licenses through a 2025 procurement exercise and now operates a single official app rated 4.4 of 5; KCATA's 2025 website consolidation RFP explicitly named reducing fragmentation as the procurement goal.

A NOTE ABOUT VOICE

The three observations above are what the Review could surface from outside-in. Each gets sharper when an agency's own people sit down to react to them. That's the conversation, if it happens, on the back cover.

THE SHAPE OF THE COHORT

What sixty agencies look like, in summary.

8 of 60	0 of 60	~80%
AT THE INTEGRATED TIER	AT THE LEADING TIER	HAVE RIDERS NAVIGATING TWO OR MORE SEPARATE APPS

The three figures above place the cohort on a maturity arc. Eight of the sixty agencies are at what the Review categorizes as *Integrated*: multi-modal trip planning, single-app architectures, documented real-time fallback handling, structured rider feedback. The Hartford Division sits one tier below, in the *Operational* cluster alongside roughly forty-eight others — functional rider tooling (cttransit.com, GTFS open-data feed, Token Transit ticketing), three concurrent modernization workstreams in motion (the website redesign, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion, the CT DOT Customer Experience Action Plan), and the cohort's clearest convergence of workstreams in a single 2026 deployment window.

The remaining count fills out the distribution. Two agencies sit at *Foundational*. Zero have reached *Leading*, the tier where rider experience is treated as continuously measured and operationally actionable in real time. The maturity counts are firm; the eighty-percent app-fragmentation figure is approximate, since the cohort had data gaps. **Together, the three describe an industry at an inflection point** — digital tooling is operationally present nearly everywhere, the maturity ceiling is unreached, and the agencies most affected are the ones running redesign procurements and fleet conversions simultaneously.

The horizon between Integrated and Leading is the question this study is most interested in. The climb begins, for most of the Operational cluster, with closing the real-time and multi-app gaps the rider voice is documenting. The Hartford Division is one of the agencies in the cluster where the modernization workstreams are visibly converging — the website redesign, the CTfastrak Low-No fleet conversion, the CT DOT CX Action Plan — for the climb to be a near-term project rather than a long horizon.

The cohort pattern: the move from Operational toward Integrated tends to come from agencies that treat rider trust as its own measurable project, alongside the redesigns and the data fixes, on the surfaces where decisions are made.

ONE OF THE SIXTY, IN MOTION

What it looked like when one agency treated the trust gap as its own project.

NJ Transit's data was accurate. The alerts were timely and complete. The friction the Review describes, riders unaware at the moment of decision, was nonetheless live on njtransit.com.

NJ Transit instrumented the trip planner with a single question that surfaces only when a rider's searched route has an active alert: *"Did you know there is a travel advisory for your trip?"*

The agent now runs in production on njtransit.com across rail, bus, and multi-modal trips. It matches each rider's searched route against the agency's live advisory feed and surfaces only when the route is affected. It scales automatically during disruptions. The technical surface is one tag in the page header; everything else runs server-side.

7 in 10

Trip planners the agent reaches discover an alert they didn't know existed, and choose to see it, in context, at the moment they're planning the affected trip.

On the page

Riders resolve their own questions before reaching for the phone or abandoning their trip.

A new pathway

Engaged riders join NJ Transit's notification system through the agent, a pathway most riders never find.

In the first weeks of full production the agent guided **tens of thousands** of riders to alerts they would otherwise have missed.

What this tells the Review's cohort: the trust-gap measurement can run independently of the data fix, on the surface where decisions happen, in the same window the agency is improving the data underneath. *The agencies most likely to recover fastest run both projects at the same time.*

NJ Transit's response is documented here because Pulse Insights operates the contextual layer. The other fifty-nine responses in the cohort are documented from the public record alone.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS REVIEW

Four steps. Sixty agencies.

01 ***Source.***

Open record only. Strategic plans, board minutes, app store reviews, public rider forums, news coverage, federal grants, performance reports. No proprietary data, no agency interviews.

02 ***Code.***

Each agency coded across eight rider-facing dimensions: real-time reliability, app fragmentation, service-change communications, capital-program readiness, CX maturity, multi-modal planning, accessibility, overall digital maturity.

03 ***Tally.***

For each dimension, a count of agencies showing the pattern. For each agency, the strongest verbatim rider voice we found, attributed by platform and date.

04 ***Synthesize.***

Cross-agency patterns named. Pattern clusters identified. Per-agency coding compiled into the document that becomes the spine of these booklets and of the early 2027 cross-agency report.

Where frequencies are cited, they are descriptive, not statistical estimates.

AN INVITATION

In early 2027, Pulse Insights publishes the first cross-agency report on rider digital experience in U.S. transit. We've studied sixty agencies. **The booklet in your hands is one of them.**

The report will draw on structured conversations with the leaders shaping where this work is going. **CT Transit Hartford is on our shortlist.** We'd like thirty minutes of your time.

Participating agencies receive the report ahead of public release, along with a deeper readout on what we found about CT Transit Hartford specifically. The conversation is structured around the three observations on pages 8 and 9, and produces a working view of where the patterns at the Hartford Division would respond to the kind of contextual layer we built at NJ Transit. At NJ Transit, modeled against the conservative case, the pilot-window value cleared the cost of the program on its own.

Your full CT Transit Hartford review, online.
pulseinsights.com/ct-transit-hartford-ccf2

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Pulse Insights is a customer-experience research and intervention platform. Its AI-powered Experience Agents detect digital friction at the moment of decision and deliver in-context responses in real-time. The 2026 Transit Digital Experience Review is the firm's first cross-agency observational study of U.S. transit. The Experience Agent referenced in this booklet runs in production at NJ Transit on njtransit.com.