

Supporting the needs of Texas' public transportation systems through statewide advocacy and education.

The TTA is now Taking Nominations for the 2020 Awards!

Nominations may be made by any individual employed by a transit agency, an official of a transit agency, a regular or an associate member of Texas Transit Association, any TxDOT employee who works with the public transportation industry, any elected official or employee of local, city, or county governments. An organization may also self nominate. Not only can you make a nomination in more than one category, it is encouraged.

Categories include Outstanding Metropolitan, Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems along with many other classifications recognizing the outstanding individuals and accomplishments in our industry. See the link below for a full listing of categories.

The last day for nominations will be February 28, 2020. For more information, please contact: Allen Hunter at allen@txtransit.org.

https://txtransit.org/awards

Submit your nominations today!

Early Bird Registration is now OPEN for the 2020 State Roadeo, Conference and Expo!



Registration is now open for the 2020 State Roadeo, Conference and Expo.

An Early Bird Discount will be available through February 15th.

Scholarships are available! Email: info@transit.org for details.

To Register go to: <u>https://txtransit.org/</u>

FTA Region 6 Regional Administrator, Robert "Bob" Patrick shares a little insight about his journey in public transportation and the FTA.

Just before completing his last day with the FTA, Robert "Buffalo Bob" Patrick was kind enough to share a little insight and a few stories about his journey in public transportation and the FTA.

Bob was drafted into the Navy pilot program while still in college in 1967. In 1972 he was discharged from the Navy and went to Oregon where his parents lived at the time. He then went to work in the Marketing Department for Tri-Met in Portland, Oregon. He also went on to work for transit agencies in Tennessee, Oklahoma, and California. When I asked Bob why he chose transit, he said: "Well, it was kind of the job at the time. I couldn't be very selective. I didn't know how we were going to subside, and then I got this job as the Assistant Director of Marketing with Tri-met, and it just grew on me. It was a big transition going from flying jets at 650mph and then coming to an abrupt halt behind a desk, but one I have since enjoyed a great deal."

When I asked Bob what was most challenging about this transition, he stated: "It's like one minute you're driving a corvette with no restrictions and then all of a sudden you're riding a bus and having to do things that you normally didn't have to do before." It was also a significant change in lifestyle, and Bob went from making around \$1,400 a month in the Navy to \$800 a month with Tri-Met. Bob stated: "These were the times that I look back on and say, how did we do it?"



Pictured from left to right Gary Thomas of DART, Norma Zamora of Brownsville Metro, John Hendrickson of HTG, Bob Patrick, Region 6 Regional Administrator of FTA and Allen E. Hunter of TTA.

Bob shared with me that just after he had interviewed with the FTA, he had

undergone emergency open-heart surgery, which had caused him to lose some of his vision. As a result, he has always tried to take advantage of public transportation when possible. Bob said that he remembered getting the call from FTA while he was still in the hospital. He had explained to them what had happened, and they said, "Not a problem, we will make accommodations." Bob stated: "They could have very easily backed out of the deal, but they didn't. They upheld their promise, and I think I've upheld mine."

Bob moved from California to an apartment a block away from his office after being cleared by his Doctor. Bob recalled his first day with FTA. He got up on Oct. 9th, got dressed, and proceeded to work. Once he arrived, the guard asked, "What are you doing working overtime?" Bob said, "What do you mean?" The guard then said, "It's a holiday." A confused Bob responded, "What holiday?" The guard replied that it was Columbus Day. Bob had never had Columbus Day off in his life. So, he politely turned around and went back to bed, thinking to himself, "What a great place to work." His first day of work was a holiday and a paid one at that. Bob shared that it's been a fun place to work ever since.

Bob also said that he believed that he was the first FTA Regional Administrator that came from the transit industry. He went on to say that he has enjoyed this job better than anything that he had ever done. Bob stated: "We have a fantastic team here. Everyone works very hard and gets along well together. Our grantees all seem to be a cut above the rest. We have very, very few issues with anybody. Generally, if there is an issue, it gets resolved very quickly. I think it's because of the work ethic that people here in the southwest have. They have always gone above and beyond and give a hundred percent. As a result, we have some of the best transit operators I think in the whole US. We don't have any that are in financial difficulties. I mean, I don't want to tell stories out of school, but all of our projects come in on time and on budget if not under budget. We haven't had anybody go over budget, and we have had some very large projects. I seem to be surrounded by some exceptional people, both our grantees and my team here at headquarters."

When Bob reflected on some of the more challenging times throughout his career, he recalled just how difficult it was after Hurricane Katrina. Bob stated: "Katrina certainly gave us some challenges. I mean, I don't think I understood just how devastating this storm was to such a vast area. Not only New Orleans but to Baton Rouge and Mississippi and parts of Alabama. That storm negatively impacted a lot of these folks, and it has taken a long time to rebuild. Also, I was born in Houston, and sometimes I forget just how easy it floods there. In the past few years, they have experienced some monumental flooding. We are fortunate that there are a lot of professionals in that area that have dealt with the flooding to ensure very little loss in terms of equipment and facilities. I just can't thank all those guys enough for all of the excellent work they did."

Continued on Page 3



Pictured from left to right Fred Gilliam and Bob Patrick, during Bob's retirement celebration at the Reata Restaurant in Ft. Worth.

FTA Region 6 Regional Administrator, Robert "Bob" Patrick shares a little insight about his journey in public transportation and the FTA. *Continued from Page 2*

Bob stated that his approach as the Region 6 Regional Administrator was to try and make people's lives as easy as possible. He said: "Some government folks can get carried away with the word no. But we have always tried to reach win-win solutions with our grantees here in the region. Of course, there were times that we had to say no, but it was said in such a way that it didn't come across as no. We tried to find another way to get the project that they wanted to have done. Sometimes it just took some creative thinking. Fortunately, I have a staff here that is very creative. Our attorney is equally creative in trying to find win-win solutions. We're not afraid to say no if it needs to be said, but we would rather try to find solutions where everybody wins."

When I asked Bob what advice he would give to someone just starting, he said, "Learn as much as you can. Meet people, and don't be too quick to judge. It's a great industry, filled with some great people." Bob went on to say that, "This job is more demanding for the managers than most people would ever believe. Most CEOs face the difficulty of people not understanding what transit can and can't do and how much it cost. CEOs face the dilemma of making a system perform well, yet with all the political expectations placed on them. It's a tough job, and I don't think people realize how tough it is."

When I asked Bob what he thought about autonomous vehicles, he stated, "When it comes to self-driving vehicles, I'm kind of old school. Maybe that's one of the reasons that I'm retiring. If you were to ask me to get in an airplane without a pilot, I don't think I would. I don't know, I just like those hands on the controls up there in the front."

When Bob isn't at work, he enjoys spending time with his wife, art, and playing his electric guitar. He also enjoys some light gardening, reading action thrillers, and mystery books. Some of his favorite authors are Coulter and John Sanford. I asked Bob to describe what a perfect day would look like after retirement. He simply stated, "A nice long walk in the morning, some time at my art easel, maybe a little bit of time playing guitar and, most importantly, some nice conversations with my wife."

Lastly, Bob shared that he was very proud of his region and all of his grantees. He stated: "I don't think that they get enough credit for the outstanding work that they do. It's truly been a pleasure to have been this region's RA for the past 19 plus years. I have met some exceptional people here in Region 6, and I will have many fond memories of meeting as many people as I have. I just can't say enough about how truly great most of our transit properties are and the great job that they do providing service to the public. It has been my honor and pleasure to have worked for the region."

On Dec. 4th, after 19 years of service, Robert "Bob" Patrick, the Region 6 Regional Administrator with FTA, celebrated his retirement ceremony. The event drew family, friends, co-workers, and associates from all over the region with people sharing stories, gifts, and recognitions. Bob was also presented with an honorary lifetime membership to the Texas Transit Association by several TTA board members.

Bob, on behalf of all of the Texas Transit Association members and the entire Region 6 Area, we thank you for all of your support over the last 19 years. Best wishes on your retirement!

If anyone would like to reach out to Bob Patrick directly, his email address is: <u>Boompy@me.com</u>

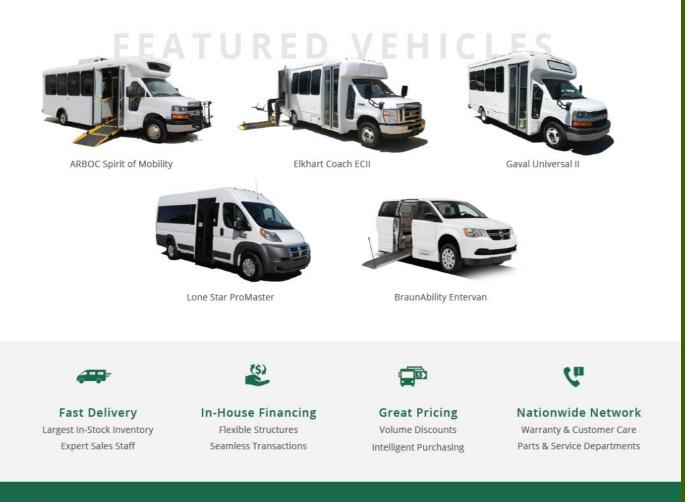


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TTA Legislative Workshop, All Member Meeting and Reception on Tuesday January 21, 2020!

In conjunction with the next day's TxDOT-PTN Semi-annual Transit Operators Business Meeting, TTA will be hosting a Legislative Workshop with our Lobbyist Wade Long, along with an all member meeting and evening reception at the Driskill Hotel in Downtown Austin open to all members.

This workshop will provide you with an opportunity for an informal round-table discussion with Wade Long in hopes of better understanding where we ended last session. He will also discuss where we currently are in today's political climate and what's on the horizon. There will be an opportunity for members to ask Wade questions at the event but members are also encouraged to submit any questions in advance via email to info@txtransit.org.

If you are not currently a member, information about joining TTA can be found at: <u>https://txtransit.org/join/</u>

Please RSVP to the Workshop or Reception by

sending an email to: info@txtransit.org

Meeting Schedule:

- 1:30 -2:30 PM TTA Board of Directors Meeting
- 3:30 5:00 PM Legislative Workshop (Sponsored by HTG)
- 5:00 5:30 PM TTA All Member Meeting
- 5:30 -7:30 PM TTA Evening Reception and After Hours (Title Sponsor The Goodman Corporation)

TTA Evening Reception Sponsored by:





Event







Legislative Workshop Sponsored by

TxDOT Semi-annual Transit Operators Business Meetings, Austin

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Discussion items to include: FTA Section 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities Grant New TxDOT-PTN Technical Services Program New TxDOT-PTN Comprehensive Training Program Texas SmartBuy Program Current Calls for Projects (see below) 2020 Census – Anticipated Impacts to Transit



Next meeting date: Wednesday, July 15, 2020

TxDOT's Open Call for Projects:

2020 Coordinated Call for Projects

- Planning Assistance (49 U.S.C. 5304)
- Rural Transit Assistance Program (49 U.S.C 5311(b)(3))
- Rural Discretionary (49 U.S.C. 5311)
- Intercity Bus (49 U.S.C. 5311(f))
- Urban and Rural Fleet Replacement Flexed Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (49 U.S.C. § 5307 and § 5311)

Applications became available in eGrants on November 15, 2019. Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. CST on February 14, 2020.

2020 FTA Section 5304 Call for Projects – Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan

This grant is open exclusively to designated lead agencies specifically for updating regional coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans. The application became available in eGrants on January 3, 2020. Applications must be received no later than 5 p.m. CST on March 27, 2020.

The Public Transportation Division offers webinars covering the applications and will post responses to written questions concerning these calls on the TxDOT website at https://www.txdot.gov/inside https://www.txdot.gov/inside https://www.txdot.gov/inside https://www.txdot.gov/inside"/>https://www.txdot.gov/inside

College Students Enrolled for Spring Semester to Enjoy Unlimited VIA Service

VIA's U-Pass program offers college students, faculty, and staff free trip options

SAN ANTONIO (Dec. 19, 2019) – Students, faculty and staff at participating local colleges and universities can enjoy a major perk for their spring schedules—free, unlimited access to



bus service anywhere in the VIA service area with the VIA U-Pass.

Through their schools' partnerships with the VIA U-Pass program, over 90,000 students, faculty, and staff members at the University of Texas at San Antonio and all Alamo Colleges, as well as students enrolled at Our Lady of the Lake University and the University of the Incarnate Word, have free access to unlimited trips on regular bus service throughout the school year, including spring, summer, and fall sessions. Local tech incubator Code Up has also signed up to provide U-Pass benefits, signaling a program expansion and even more users who can ride fare-free.

The VIA U-Pass is designed to provide convenient access to public transportation and help address the challenges of growing student populations with limited and often expensive parking options on or near campus. VIA offers efficient, affordable travel options and provides modern passenger perks like free 4G LTE Wi-Fi on all its buses, instant access to the Bexar BiblioTech e-library for all riders, and several frequent and direct routes.

For more information about the U-Pass, or VIA's Semester Pass, visit VIAinfo.net.



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CCRTA to Receive \$7.2M Federal Grant for Transportation System

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – The Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (CCRTA) was awarded a \$7,231,023 federal grant, Grant 5339(b), to improve their buses and bus facilities, announced U.S. Senator John Cornyn's office.

The competitive grant submitted by the CCRTA will fund the Port Ayers Transfer Station, two (2) transit stops at Del Mar College Southside's campus, and the re-



construction of the CCRTA Operations Center's parking lots.

This is the first competitive grant that the organization has ever received. "This grant will not only change the landscape of Corpus Christi, but will significantly impact the quality of public transportation for our veterans, individuals with disabilities, and students, for generations to come," stated Jorge Cruz-Aedo, CCRTA Chief Executive officer.

"This was a critical step moving forward to improving transit mobility in the region and bringing our infrastructure up to date. We want to thank the work that our regional and national political leaders did to advance our application for these projects with the Federal Transit Administration, including: U.S. Senator John Cornyn, U.S. Representative Michael Cloud, U.S. Representative Henry Cuellar, U.S. Representative Vicente Gonzalez, U.S. Representative Filemon Vela, and Texas Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa. We are also grateful for the support from our regional community leaders and South Texas delegates," said Eddie Martinez, CCRTA Board of Directors Chair.

The state of Texas received \$21 million dollars, with the Texas Department of Transportation receiving the remaining \$13.8 million dollars on behalf of rural transit.

DART Re-Ups Tailor-Made Program with College District

DART has signed a three-year contract that makes it easier for more than 100,000 students in the Dallas County Community College District to take the next step in their education. The contract went into effect Jan. 1.

The agency's Higher Education Pass Program provides low-cost transit passes to colleges, universities, trade and technical schools, as well as to high schools and middle schools. The passes are typically valid for a semester and cover all DART services.



Passengers boarding at North Lake College Station

DART partnered with DCCCD to create a unique pilot program that began in January 2017. At that time, the college district had identified transportation challenges as a top barrier to enrollment. The downtown Dallas campus, El Centro, already participated in the general program. DART crafted a custom-made solution that would allow DCCCD to issue free passes to students at all its campuses. The contract combined all seven of the district's colleges into a single contract, streamlining administration and simplifying the process for students.

Since then, DCCCD has seen a seven percent enrollment increase – along with a more than 260 percent increase in DART passes issued. Currently, about 24,000 students are enrolled in the program, which was set to expire in January 2020; the new contract extends it another three years.

The college district pays DART for the passes, which are then delivered to students through GoPass®. DART's award-winning mobile ticketing app also provides trip-planning, real-time train and bus tracking, and other useful features.

TTA's January 2020 Newsletter



The Texas Transit Association welcomes John Hendrickson of HTG as our newest Associate Board Member.

John Hendrickson was appointed to the TTA board by the TTA board of directors on November 14th, 2019.

His company, HTG, is American owned and is headquartered in Central Texas with a focus mainly within the central part of the United States. HTG specializes in the management and oversight of both small urban and rural public transportation systems, helping communities develop efficient and accessible transit services.

HTG has over 25 years of experience developing, managing, and operating public transportation systems within the United States. HTG has extensive experience in grant administration, feasibility studies, route planning, equipment specifications, and facility construction oversight. john.hendrickson@trusthtg.com



Hogg Foundation to Award \$2.1 Million in Grants for 2020 Census

REAL and SWART are two transit systems that will receive funding from the Hogg Foundation to assist with the Hard to Count Populations. Their efforts will support the Hogg Foundation's initiative in their regions to ensure that every person in Texas is counted.





The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health announced that it had awarded \$2.1 million for the Texas Communities Count initiative. The initiative will support complete count efforts in Texas for the 2020 U.S. Census. The primary focus is to aid collaborative approaches that will reach hard-to-count (HTC) populations, communities, and geographic areas throughout the state. The goal is to encourage participation in the 2020 Census so that every person in Texas is counted.

SWART Participates in Veterans Job Fair

The Southwest Area Regional Transit District (SWART) supported Veterans Services in the Middle Rio Grande Region by taking part in the annual Red, White, & You Veterans Job Fair. The statewide coordinated event targeted Veterans seeking employment, training, education, and supported veteran's services. Veterans also received resume writing technical assistance and mock interview training. SWART Assistant General Manager Cynthia Rodriguez, Chief Operations Manager Carlos Mallen, and Safety & Training Technician Frank Villalobos participated in the event, held on November 7th in Del Rio. Over 100 veterans participated in the event, which was according her the Middle Rig Crande Development (



which was organized by the Middle Rio Grande Development Council.

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Real-time fleet management

Dispatchers and supervisors are provided with real-time information about the traffic and their vehicles, so they can make decisions about services based on what's happening in real-time.

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The smart headway management system provides dispatch and operators with the spacing indicator, automatically adjust departure times at timing point to avoid bunching.



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The Texas Transit Association welcomes SafeStart as a new Associate Member

As leaders in human factors management, SafeStart incorporates communication, awareness, and 24/7



safety into a company's culture. SafeStart fosters positive and meaningful change, personal safety awareness skills, coping strategies, and a playbook for managers to gain employee buy-in while improving the overall culture. And since SafeStart is relevant to every industry, it is both applicable and essential to keeping employees and their families safer.

Being a family-run company, SafeStart is passionate about ensuring that every person returns home at the end of the day. With an overall goal of promoting people's safety, free content is made publicly available to help educate employees and organizations. From informative articles (safestart.com/articles) to guides (safestart.com/guides), on-demand webinars (safestart.com/ webinars), and regularly updated news posts (safestart.com/news), SafeStart will change the way you view safety, for the better.

SafeStart partners to help companies meet many of the outlined Federal Transportation Administration's Safety Management System requirements and complement existing safety management programs. For 20 years, our clients have shared their improvements with regards to hazard awareness & recognition, employee engagement, culture change, and better communication.

Contact: Amy Hutchinson to discuss your questions and current safety challenges: 800-267-7482 ext. 346 or amy.h@safestart.com



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Longview Transit



After 3.5 years of planning, designing, and construction, the City of Longview and Longview Transit celebrated the Official Grand

Pictured from left to right: Allen E. Hunter, Executive Director of TTA and Scott Lewis, General Manager of Longview Transit System

Opening of their new Transfer Center. The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony took place on Monday, November 4th, 2019, just before the buses pulled out for their 11 am routes.



Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) updates from Federal Transit Administration

The PTASP Roles and Responsibilities Fact Sheet spells out the roles and responsibilities for MPOs.

This <u>Safety Performance Measures Excerpt</u> from FTA's National Public Transportation Safety Plan (NSP) provides the SPMs to monitor the safety performance for all modes of public transportation.

The Safety Performance Targets Guide provides information to help transit providers develop SPTs based on the SPMs in FTA's NSP.

Introduction to Safety Performance Indicators and Targets helps transit agencies develop safety performance indicators (SPIs) and SPTs as part of ongoing safety performance monitoring and measurement activities for Safety Assurance.

External Resource: The <u>Management and Use of Data for Transportation Performance Management Guide for Practitioners</u> provides practical guidance to transportation agencies to improve their use of data in meeting their safety objectives.

Updated Resource! A fillable, Microsoft Word version of the PTASP Template for Bus Transit is now available.

Access the entire library by visiting FTA's PTASP Technical Assistance Center website.

PTASP Q & A's

Question 1:

I saw the following in the Safety Performance Targets Guide: "As described in the NSP (National Public Transportation Safety Plan), transit providers must establish, by mode, seven SPTs in four categories." For clarification, is seven the minimum number?

FTA Response:

The PTASP regulation requires agencies to develop targets based on the measures established in the NSP (§ 673.11(a)(3)). As described in the NSP, transit agencies must establish, by mode, seven SPTs in four categories:

- Fatalities: (1) Total number of fatalities reported to NTD and (2) rate per total vehicle revenue miles (VRM) by mode;
- Injuries: (3) Total number of injuries reported to NTD and (4) rate per total VRM by mode; Safety
- Events: (5) Total number of safety events reported to NTD and (6) rate per total VRM by mode;
- System Reliability: (7) Mean distance between major mechanical failures by mode. (See pages 32–33 of the NSP.)

Question 2:

The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) receives the Federal funding for this agency, but the local MPO provides the transit planning guidance. Which entity would be the Board of Directors or equivalent to approve the plan?

FTA Response:

The BoCC is responsible for approving the ASP, not the MPO. Per 49 CFR § 673.11(a)(1), the ASP and subsequent updates must be signed by the Accountable Executive and approved by the agency's Board of Directors, or an Equivalent Authority. The FTA defines Equivalent Authority in § 673.5 as an entity that carries out duties similar to that of a Board of Directors.

Question 3:

The NSP only mentions vehicles when describing the system reliability performance measure. Are transit agencies only required to include vehicle reliability in their system reliability performance measure?

FTA Response:

Yes. FTA is using mean distance between major mechanical failures (as defined by the National Transit Database (NTD)) for the reliability safety performance measure. The NTD defines a major mechanical failure as "a failure of some mechanical element of the revenue vehicle that prevents the vehicle from completing a scheduled revenue trip or from starting the next scheduled revenue trip because actual movement is limited or because of safety concerns."

Upcoming Event2020 FTA PTASP Bus Workshops

When: Tuesday, January 28 or Wednesday, January 29, 8:30 to 5 pm Eastern (registration begins at 8 am) Where: Washington, DC

The workshops will focus on the PTASP rule requirements and provide SMS implementation strategies. Additionally, the workshops will discuss how to begin creating ASPs, including the identification of key stakeholders to coordinate ASP development. These one-day bus workshops are open to the staff and contractors of recipients or subrecipients of Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program funds who are responsible for developing or implementing an ASP, and State DOT staff that are responsible for drafting ASPs for the small public transportation providers within their States. Stay tuned for additional workshop dates!

Registration: https://ftawebprod.fta.dot.gov/FTAEventRegistration/FTAEventRegistration



Texas Transit Association

100 Congress Ave, Suite 2000 Austin, Texas 78701 Phone: (512) 900-0550 Email: info@txtransit.org

https://txtransit.org/

TTA's Mission is to support the needs of Texas' public transportation systems through statewide advocacy and education.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE, EXPO AND STATE ROADEO

Remember the last day for early bird registration is February 15, 2020

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Allen E. Hunter Executive Director Texas Transit Association 512-900-0550 254-405-4212 cell allen@txtransit.org

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