



March 2020

NEWSLETTER

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

Senate passes stimulus bill that includes \$25 billion in relief funding for transit agencies



The \$25 billion allocated to mass transit is part of the \$2 trillion package approved by the Senate to address the wide ranging impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The funding is broken out as follows:

5307 Urbanized Formula Grants:	\$13.9 billion
5311 Rural Area Formula Grants:	\$1.8 billion
5337 State of Good Repair:	\$7.6 billion
5340 Fast-Growth & High Density:	\$1.7 billion

In an effort, to identify the needs across Texas, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute is conducting a brief survey for the Texas Transit Association (TTA) and the South West Transit Association (SWTA) about how transit agencies are currently being impacted by and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This information is expected to be useful in disseminating ideas and identifying needed resources to address COVID-19 impacts.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is available at [Survey of COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Transit Agencies](https://tti.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cYu0ct81j2LRmR) or https://tti.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cYu0ct81j2LRmR. Your feedback is important, please respond no later than April 5, 2020.

In addition, TxDOT is also working on identifying and addressing issues of statewide significance. They need to hear from you on the challenges and issues that you are facing in your respective service areas so that they can begin to understand and formulate responses to these statewide issues.

TxDOT has also established a website showing what others are doing in their respective agencies, and where to find up-to-date COVID – 19 information.

<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/covid-19-response-information.html>

The 2020 State Rodeo, Conference and Expo has now been canceled due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

After careful consideration and many discussions with TTA's Executive Committee, we have unfortunately decided to cancel the TTA State Rodeo, Conference and Expo that was scheduled to take place in McAllen Tx. You will be contacted in the very near future to discuss registration fees and sponsorships.

Please remember that you will need to make the necessary adjustments to your travel arrangements. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Also, please remember to cancel your hotel reservation as soon as possible. You **MUST** contact your hotel directly.



METRO Expands Public Safety Efforts, Adjusts Some Service, Encourages Social Distancing on System

METRO is continuing to expand its [public service efforts](#) to protect against the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. Later this week, the Authority will begin adjusting some services to encourage responsible social distancing on its local bus routes, light rail and Park & Rides.

During morning and evening rush hours, more buses will now be put in service on heavily traveled local routes in order to lessen crowding. To that end, seating will be reduced by approximately 50 percent to allow more space between passengers. As buses fill, operators will turn on the electronic destination signs advising patrons waiting at stops to "please take the next bus."

Those utilizing METRO Rail, Park & Rides and METRO Lift should also expect reduced capacity to mitigate close contact among riders.



These additional safety measures may result in delays on certain routes and riders should plan accordingly, including adjusting travel schedules. Also, METRO's TRIP app and Next Bus Arrival Texting may not be accurate. Customers should stay informed by subscribing to real-time, route information through METRO's service alert system and monitoring the agency's social media accounts, Twitter, Facebook. Customer service can be reached at 713-635-4000.

METRO understands the critical role public transportation provides for the region. The Authority is committed to continuing to provide service and will do so safely.

For those who are symptom-free and not part of a high-risk group, these are additional safeguards to consider when using public transportation:

- Consider commuting during off-peak hours
- Where available, take a seat instead of holding onto poles and handles
- When you get to your destination, wash hands or use sanitizer

The Authority is also:

- Putting an even greater emphasis on disinfecting surfaces frequently touched by the public during our daily bus and rail cleaning
- Displaying posters along the system reminding riders of public health officials' recommendations to stop the spread of germs
- Communicating safety messages on service alerts
- Remaining in close and continuous communication with local public health and emergency management officials to monitor developments

Protecting the health and safety of patrons, employees and the community is METRO's number one priority.

While METRO uses an antibacterial disinfectant to clean vehicles and facilities, self care is still the best protection. It is important that the public relies on credible sources for information and follows the guidance of health officials who encourage:

- Proper hygiene
- Frequent hand washing
- Stay home if you're sick





CDC recommendations for how to protect yourself from Coronavirus Virus (COVID-19)

Know How it Spreads



- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Take steps to protect yourself



Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick
- Put **distance between yourself and other people** if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Take steps to protect others



Stay home if you're sick

- **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn what to do if you are sick.



Cover coughs and sneezes

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

For more information go to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

CCRTA Introduces Autonomous Shuttle at A&M-Corpus Christi VIP Event

The Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (CCRTA) introduced the first autonomous shuttle in the region during a VIP event at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. The shuttle service is one of the first in the nation to operate on a complex route, exposed to vehicular and pedestrian foot-traffic. The shuttle's model is the EZ 10 generation III, which is the first to be operated in North America, and like its predecessors, is a zero-carbon emissions vehicle.

The shuttle was manufactured by driverless technology company, EasyMile, and will be operated by CCRTA contractor, MV Transportation, Inc. The vehicle arrived in mid-November to map and test the route, while employees and first responders conducted emergency operations training.



Representative from the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority, EasyMile, MV Transportation A&M University-Corpus Christi and local officials revealed the SURGE, the first autonomous shuttle in the region during a VIP event held on campus.

“Our number one priority with all of our transportation services is safety. We want to ensure our riders and community that riding the autonomous shuttle is safe,” stated Jorge Cruz-Aedo, CCRTA Chief Executive Officer.



The shuttle service is one of the first in the nation to operate on a complex route, exposed to vehicular and pedestrian foot-traffic.

The vehicle and route will not be on any public streets and were developed to service a growing university facing the challenges of limited parking and traffic congestion. Individuals can use CCRTA transportation to arrive on campus before connecting to the shuttle. The innovative service can hold up to twelve riders and has a built-in access ramp for those with disabilities.

“This new shuttle is one more way the Island University continues to lead in cutting edge innovation and the use of new technology,” said Dr. Kelly M. Miller, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi President. “We are excited to partner with CCRTA on this project that will enhance campus life and show how research turns into usable innovations.”

The Autonomous Shuttle was open to the Public on Tuesday, January 21, 2020

The autonomous shuttle operates fare-free, and is available from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



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2020 Certifications and Assurances

FTA annually publishes a consolidated list of all Certifications and Assurances that apply to its financial assistance programs. Applicants for financial assistance typically must execute current Certifications and Assurances in any year in which they apply for an award or an amendment to an existing award.

The 2020 Certifications and Assurances, instructions for executing the Certifications and Assurances and a summary of changes made between 2019 and 2020 have been posted on FTA's [website](#). Of special note is the new public transportation agency safety plan (PTASP) certification. In 2020, an affected applicant may make the PTASP certification at any time after, but not before, it has completed its requirements under the PTASP rule. After July 20, 2020, FTA will not process an application from an entity that is required to make the PTASP certification and has not done so.

If an applicant is making its fiscal year 2020 certifications prior to completing PTASP requirements, it may make all other applicable certifications except the PTASP certification, and may add the PTASP certification after completing its PTASP requirements. Any questions regarding the Certifications and Assurances should be directed to the FTA Region 6 office by calling (817)978-0550.

Execution is accomplished in FTA's [Transit Award Management System \(TrAMS\)](#). Your Agency Official and Agency Attorney will both need to PIN your Agency's Certifications and Assurances prior to May 31, 2020, or prior to the award of any grant after February 28, 2020, whichever comes first.

Please note FY 2020 funding has been made available and loaded into TrAMS. These [full-year apportionments](#) are now available for award and obligation of grants. In order to advance grants through award prior to end of fiscal year in September, FTA Region 6 is asking that you transmit your grant application by July 1, following initial review by your pre-award grant manager. If you're unsure who your pre-award manager is, please contact our office.

Links:

[Fiscal Year 2020 Annual List of Certifications and Assurances for FTA Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)

[The Transit Award Management System \(TrAMS\)](#)

[FY20 Apportionments](#)

Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Q: Is funding available under FTA's Emergency Relief Program for public transportation expenses related to COVID-19?

A: Capital and operating activities undertaken in response to COVID-19 are eligible for reimbursement under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. 5307) and Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (49 U.S.C. 5311). FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams has issued a Notice of Concurrence with declarations of emergency issued by Governors that relate to COVID-19. Accordingly, for recipients in states in which the Governor has declared such an emergency (49 U.S.C. 5324), FTA will permit Urbanized Area Formula Program or Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program funding to be used for COVID-19-related public transportation capital or operating expenses at an 80 percent federal share, regardless of whether operating expenses generally are an eligible expense for a recipient.

Pursuant to FTA's Emergency Relief rule at 49 CFR part 602, eligible activities include emergency protective measures to eliminate or lessen threats to public health and safety, such as performing enhanced cleaning/sanitizing of rolling stock, stations, bus shelters, etc.; placing hand sanitizer dispensers in high traffic areas; and providing personal protective equipment as appropriate.

More frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

DART Lends a Hand to Riders in Need

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) has launched a program that makes transit services more accessible to all.



The agency now offers half-price fare to participants in any of eight support assistance programs – ranging from state initiatives such as TANF (Texas Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) to federal benefits including Medicaid and Medicare.

Eligible riders purchase the new Discount GoPass® Tap Card for an initial loaded value of \$6. The card deducts 50 percent from the payment each time a user taps the card at one of DART’s electronic readers. As with other GoPass products, riders automatically receive the “best fare” through daily and monthly fare capping. Cards are valid on all DART bus and light rail services, as well as the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) commuter rail up to the fare zone boundary near Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.

The two-year pilot program was launched on Jan. 1, 2020 and has been supported with media and printed materials. In partnership with DART, the assistance programs also promote the program to eligible riders.

With the Discount GoPass Tap Card, DART helps to address economic inequality by extending mobility solutions to those who need them most.

Learn more at dart.org/tapforhalf/



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VIA announces Smart Transit Milestone: 1 Million Tickets Sold on goMobileApp

VIA riders have purchased over 1 million tickets using the VIA goMobile app, in less than three years since the free ticketing and trip-planning application launched. VIA goMobile debuted in June 2017 as part of VIA's efforts to incorporate technology and deliver innovative solutions for a better customer experience. The one-millionth ticket was sold Monday, Feb. 3, 2020.



“The VIA goMobile app is an early example of VIA’s ongoing investment in innovation, and part of several recent initiatives to transform the rider experience,” VIA President/CEO Jeffrey C. Arndt said. “Our world is increasingly digital. And while we continue to offer cash, retail and other fare options, we know that people are using their smartphones for almost everything—including transit. Finding ways to reach more customers using technology is part of our VIA Reimagined Plan that includes Smart Transit solutions—making it easier to choose and use transit.”

VIA Reimagined is a 10-year roadmap designed to offer more service, more choices and help people connect to more opportunity through mobility. The plan includes projects designed to create a better bus system, build an advanced rapid transit network, and develop smart transit options. Learn more at VIAReimagined.com.

The VIA goMobile app offers bus and VIAtrans riders the convenience of purchasing fares using their smartphones and activating them when they are ready to ride. Riders can use goMobile to purchase passes, VIAtrans tickets, and special event service fares, paying for multiple fares at one time. They can also use the app to plan their trips using real-time bus information. The app is free to download for Apple and Android devices customers can purchase tickets on the app using a debit or credit card, or PayPal.

TxDOT's Call for Projects:

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

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.

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Texas Transportation Commission Actions

February 2020

- Rural Asset Replacement Program: The Commission awarded federal Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program funds, Section 5311 Rural Area Program funds, and state funds to various Rural Transit Districts for the replacement of transit vehicles as well as facility development and rehabilitation. TxDOT contributed additional Section 5311 and state funds to ensure a state of good repair through 2021.
- 2020 TTA Rodeo and Conference Support: The Commission allocated Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) funds to support training activities at the 2020 Texas Transit Association Safety Rodeo and Conference. Scholarships available for documented, eligible activities.

March 2020

- Federal Formula Program Funding: The Commission will consider FY 20 Section 5311 Rural Program formula allocations totaling \$20.1 million and Section 5339 FY 19 and 20 Rural Area Bus and Bus Facility Program formula allocations totaling \$7.1 million.

New! Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP)

TxDOT's new Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP) provides focused technical assistance to Rural Transit Districts* in three areas:

- Financial Management and Analysis
- Capital Project Development
- Operational and Service Analysis

TTSP assistance is short-term in duration, expected to take between one and four months. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. The division will review requests several times throughout the year for coordination and scheduling purposes (generally in April, August and December).

The TTSP application is posted at <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/technical-services-program.html> along with instructions. The application also includes more information on eligible project types.

* This program is currently open exclusively to Rural Transit Districts. TxDOT may open the program up later to other transit providers as resources become available.

TTA and McAllen Metro Hosted a Bus Rodeo Workshop in McAllen while laying out the 2020 State Course



A Special Thanks to Tony Austin from The HOP for leading the Workshop and all those that assisted.



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Next All member meeting and reception is still scheduled for July 14th, 2020



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



Jorge Cruz-Aedo, President-Elect for TTA and CEO of CCRTA and Allen E. Hunter, Executive Director of the Texas Transit Association were invited to testify at the Public Health committee hearing in Austin on March 10, 2020. The purpose of the hearing was to discuss the state's preparedness on the coronavirus.

Newsletter Sponsorship Opportunities

Sponsoring the TTA newsletter, by purchasing ad space, can be a powerful way to reach decision makers at member agencies across the state. It will also help to increase exposure in a receptive environment (your customers inbox) and can subtly promote your brand whilst gaining goodwill throughout the entire association. TTA newsletters are a particularly useful tool for communicating with customers, building engagement, and directing customers to key content.

Please be aware, there is a limited number of space available so be sure to lock yours in today. There are sponsorship levels available for any budget. You are able to sponsor a single issue or the entire year (6 issues).

For information on pricing or to start your ad please contact:

Allen E. Hunter
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Texas Transit Association
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