

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



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Greetings TTA Members,

First and foremost, my thoughts are with everyone during this pandemic. I hope that you are well, and that your families, both personal and professional, are healthy and safe. Although we are facing perilous challenges in our state, we will work toward solutions together through our partnerships.



I am appreciative of the support and the opportunity to lead the Texas Transit Association (TTA) as President for the current term. I am looking forward to working with all of my peers from across the state of Texas, political leadership, and all TTA sponsors. The success of public transportation in the upcoming year, will be built on the foundation of our collective communication, legislation, and effort.

Together, I hope that we can work towards TTA's mission and vision by pursuing greater resources for our transit organizations, focusing on transportation education and equitability for all communities, and building collective support for public transportation throughout our great state.

Sincerely,

Jorge Cruz-Aedo

TTA President



Free
Webinar

TEXAS TRANSIT'S PATH FORWARD

CEOs from Texas' metropolitan transit agencies share how they've been affected by the pandemic.

Tomorrow:

July 14 | 12-1 PM
Online Webinar

[Register Here:](#)



Featuring Randy Clarke, Capital Metro; Jorge Cruz-Aedo, Corpus Christi Regional Transit Authority; Gary C. Thomas, Dallas Area Rapid Transit; Thomas C. Lambert, Houston Metro; Jeffrey C. Arndt, VIA Metropolitan Transit

Items of Interest from TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (TxDOT-PTN)

Transit Technical Services Program

TxDOT's recently-launched Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP) provides rural transit agencies with technical services through a non-competitive application process. The program has engaged transit consulting firm KFH Group to assist with

- Financial management and analysis
- Capital project development
- Operational and service analysis

The TTSP was first introduced at TxDOT's January 2020 Transit Operators Business Meeting. Its initial application cycle yielded operational analysis projects for two agencies, capital project development assistance for two agencies, and a combination financial/operational project for one agency.

The application is posted at <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/technical-services-program.html>. Applications can be submitted any time, and are evaluated in April, August and December. Cycle 2 applications are due by 7/31/2020 for the August review.

For more information: Nancy.Hoehn@txdot.gov or 903-799-1387.

Cloth Mask Distribution

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), recently provided TxDOT-PTN with nearly 20,000 cloth face masks, to be distributed to Texas transit providers with fewer than 40 employees (and/or contractors). Each transit organization received approximately 18 masks per employee. FTA provided the list of organizations.

PTN staff volunteers inventoried and repacked the masks, which have now been redistributed to 53 transit organizations across the state.



TxDOT-PTN's Adam Bailey and Theo Kosub on the first day of Mask Distribution.

TxDOT Semiannual Transit Operators Business Meeting to be Conducted Virtually on July 15

Meeting Begins 8:30am and will end by noon.

Link to join

(no password needed):
<https://txdot.webex.com/txdot/onstage/g.php?MTID=e234d3a595bf97c2c0a4b5f2687e7b20a>

Texas Transportation Commission Actions

May 2020 - CARES Act funding

These awards, totaling \$74,581,554, reflect the allocation of FTA §5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program funds to rural transit districts and intercity bus carriers. The funds were allocated to the state based on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to help transit providers prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.

June 2020 – State and Federal Transit Funding

These awards, totaling \$76,119,986, reflect the allocation of fiscal year 2021 state funds to large urban, small urban, and rural transit districts; the allocation of second-year awards to various entities for the biennial Section 5310 call for projects; the allocation of funds to various entities that responded to the biennial Coordinated Call for Projects; and the allocation of Section 5311 funds to rural transit districts based on vehicle miles.

These awards include:

- FY 2021 state funds to large urban, small urban, and rural transit districts
- Second-year awards to various entities for Section 5310 projects selected in 2019.
- Funding to various entities that responded to the biennial Coordinated Call for Projects
- Section 5311 funds to rural transit districts based on vehicle miles

Federal Transit Administration's updates from Region 6 office:

FTA End of Fiscal Year Grant Award Timeline

FTA's grant making and grant management system, TrAMS, will close for fiscal year end processing at 7:00 pm Central time on Friday, September 25, 2020. TrAMS will not be available to accept obligations, de-obligations, scope transfers, fund substitutions or funding adjustments after Friday, September 25, 2020. In order to ensure sufficient time for grant applications to complete the process for award prior to that deadline, Region 6 asks that grantees have all applications complete in TrAMS and ready for sending to the Department of Labor (DOL) for certification (if applicable) by Monday, July 20, 2020 for funding to be awarded prior to fiscal year end. Certification referrals to DOL need to be sent by Monday, August 3, 2020. After that date, FTA cannot ensure that an application will be able to be awarded prior to fiscal year close.

FTA anticipates that TrAMS will re-open for new obligations in late October or early November.

CARES Act Funding Obligations in Texas

As of Monday, July 13, 2020, FTA had awarded 34 CARES Act grant awards to Texas recipients, totaling \$1,002,575,369. Region 6 encourages eligible recipients who've not yet applied for their CARES Act allocations to apply as soon as possible to help respond to their communities' needs.

Thank You to Dedicated Transit Professionals

Region 6 echoes Acting FTA Administrator Jane Williams' message of appreciation to the dedicated professionals for their service during the COVID-19 public health emergency: [video](#)

TGIF - Thank God For Transit Operators

Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church gives TGIF a new meaning! Every Friday through the end of summer, the church is giving back to the community. [Click here](#) to see how church leadership surprised Houston METRO's Purple Line rail operators with gift cards to Pappas restaurants.



City of El Paso Appoints New Director for Sun Metro

The Texas Transit Association would like to welcome Ellen Smyth as the new Director for Sun Metro.

Effective on April 20th, longtime Director of Environmental Services Ellen Smyth has been appointed to oversee Sun Metro. Smyth will serve as Managing Director over Sun Metro and Environmental Services.

Since 2007, the City has contracted with First Transit to manage Sun Metro operations. The contract has expired and services are currently being provided under a month-to-month agreement.



Ellen Smyth, Sun Metro's New Managing Director

"Ellen Smyth is a proven leader who transformed the Environmental Services Department, a department struggling to stay afloat and facing a multi-million deficit, into a high-performing organization considered a leader in the solid waste industry," Deputy City Manager Cary Westin said. "Her experience with routing systems, customer service and managing a large workforce makes her an easy and excellent choice for managing Sun Metro."

The City is changing its approach to managing transit services as Sun Metro, like other communities across the nation, is facing decreased revenues as a result of decreased ridership; a trend that was seen before the pandemic. While Sun Metro has reduced expenses, the financial stresses are even more challenging now due to the global health and economic crisis plaguing the El Paso region.

During her time with the City and through a shared contract, Smyth also took on the role of Chief Administrator for the County of El Paso. Her career includes leading the South Central Solid Waste Authority for the City of Las Cruces and Doña County, and serving as Senior Environmental Engineer for Waste Management of Texas.

She has a Master of Public Administration from New Mexico State University and a Master of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Texas A&M.



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Rotating Hinge Design

Vehicle Type: Single-Cab Door Cutaways with Front Passenger Entry
Chassis: E-Series, F-Series



Sliding Hinge Design

Vehicle Type: Dual-Cab Door Cutaways
Chassis: E-Series, F-Series



Textile Design

Vehicle Type: Minivans, Full-Size Vans, Dual-Cab Door Cutaways
Chassis: Ford Transit, Dodge ProMaster, E-Series, F-Series

[Explore Kits and Components](#)



A Legislative Update

By Wade Long

The Texas State Capitol remains closed to the general public due to the COVID-19 virus. Only state legislators and staff are allowed entrance into the building. All House and Senate Committee interim hearings are in limbo until the State Preservation Board reopens the Capitol.

On July 2, 2020, Governor Abbott issued two executive orders concerning COVID-19.

1. <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-extends-disaster-declaration-4> - this executive order limits outdoor gatherings to 10 people unless approved by a mayor or county judge.
2. <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-establishes-statewide-face-covering-requirement-issues-proclamation-to-limit-gatherings-2> - this executive order requires face coverings in commercial entities, public spaces and buildings, and outdoor public spaces when social distancing is not feasible. The mask requirement applies to counties with 20 or more COVID-19 cases, with few exceptions.

A lawsuit was filed soon after the governor issued the order requiring masks. The lawsuit was filed in the Travis County District Court, and the suit questions the governor's constitutional powers. Some members of the legislature have asked the governor to call a special session to address COVID-19 issues.

On July 7 the Texas Education Agency compiled a Public Health Planning Document <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid19-SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf> to be used by school districts in planning for the reopening of classrooms. The TEA also released a guidance document <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid19-SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf> concerning remote learning classes.

STATE FINANCE/BUDGET:

In May, Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick and Speaker Bonnen sent a letter to state agencies and institutions of higher education asking them to submit plans to reduce their spending by 5%. Agencies and divisions that help with COVID-19 response and most health agencies are exempt from the reduction.

In June, the State collected \$2.67 billion in sales taxes. That is a 6.5% drop compared to last year. June's sales tax collections were a significant improvement from May 2020 collections. The May sales tax collection was down 13.2% from the previous year. The most significant declines in sales tax collections were in the oil and gas, construction, and amusement services sectors. Detailed information on June tax collections can be found by clicking this link: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/about/media-center/news/2020/200701-sales-tax.php>

The large decrease in tax revenue due to the COVID-19 virus and the reduction of oil and gas prices most likely will result in further state budget reductions and a search for additional revenue. The bright spot is the State's Economic Stabilization Fund (rainy day fund). In October 2019, the fund had a balance of almost \$10 billion.

DART Receives Grants Amid COVID-19 Crisis

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has allocated \$229 million to Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). The funds are part of the FTA's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, enacted on March 27. The grant will reimburse expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020.

Sales-tax revenue – the agency's primary funding source – has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and funding from the CARES Act provides critical resources in DART's ongoing response to COVID-19. The agency has continued to provide a full complement of transit services, ensuring public access to essential jobs and medical facilities. Additionally, DART has assisted local food banks and school districts in delivering food to North Texans in need. On June 23, the DART Board of Directors unanimously approved \$4.3 million in Hero Pay to as many as 2,900 front-line workers who have been indispensable to these initiatives.

In a separate grant under the aegis of the Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning, the FTA awarded DART \$1 million toward TOD planning. The agency will explore development opportunities at five stations along a planned two-mile subway in Dallas' central business district. The new alignment includes four new stations, and a fifth will be relocated, making a total of three underground and two at-grade stations. The project – dubbed D2 – will enhance the light rail system's operational nimbleness systemwide.

ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

by [Ashlee Landes](#)

Ecolane 

No one should have to worry where their next meal is coming from. It is an understatement to say COVID-19 changed the way the world functions, especially in creating uncertainty. Today more than 37 million people in the US- including 11 million children and 5.5 million seniors are facing food insecurity (Feeding America, 2020). The transportation industry was required to make profound changes in a very short period of time. As the COVID-19 crisis evolves, our transit partners in Oregon at Tillamook County Transportation District/NW Rides and Sunset Empire Transit are responding to the need to help seniors and disabled persons who are unable to receive food and essential items in their usual ways due to the barriers COVID-19 created. With food banks and the services they provided becoming non-essential, it's imperative that agencies continue to deliver meals to those in need.

"There was an elderly couple eating leaves off their garden plants for two days before their meal box delivery arrived," said Jennifer Geisler, Paratransit Supervisor for Sunset Empire Transit in response to a story she was told about a couple who was unable to receive their usual meal delivery services. "It was devastating to hear," continued Geisler.

Geisler wanted to be proactive but she was unsure of how to proceed. She saw an email from Ecolane on using existing customer resources and software to set-up food and essential item deliveries in her community. Upon viewing the webinar, she knew how she could make a difference in Clatsop County. After some training from Ecolane's Technical Trainers, the agency was ready to have the meal delivery service set-up and running. "I'm so grateful to Ecolane for coming up with this and it's so easy to use, it just fell together," commented Geisler.



For more information, or to enact one of these measures simply reach out by calling 844-ECO-LANE

[Read Entire Article:](#)



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Gulf Coast Center, Brazoria and Galveston County announce new Gulf Coast Transit District

In May, the Gulf Coast Center (GCC), Galveston County, and Brazoria County took action to create the Gulf Coast Transit District, a new Bi-County Transit District. The GCTD was formed to provide public transit services within Galveston and Brazoria counties and will be the successor to the GCC as the organization responsible for Connect Transit. The action comes after a study confirmed that the GCC and Connect Transit would benefit from a separation that would allow each organization to better focus on their missions.

Melissa Tucker, Chief Executive Officer of the GCC, stated that “the Connect program has, over the years, outgrown the capacity of the GCC to devote the time, energy and resources necessary to address the demand for public transit services within the two counties. . . . The core mission of the GCC is to assist individuals with mental health, developmental, and substance abuse challenges (the need for our mental health services) is also growing and remains our primary focus”.

Both counties passed resolutions, in accordance with Chapter 458 of the Texas Transportation Code, to form a new small urban and rural transit district. Commissioner Dude Payne, Brazoria County Precinct #1, indicated that the new Gulf Coast Transit District “would help to expand existing transit services to areas within the county not yet served.” Commissioner Stephen Holmes, Galveston County Precinct #2, who is also on the GCC Board of Trustees, stated that “it is time the two counties work together to achieve better connectivity between the counties and the greater Houston region”. The transition from the GCC to the GCTD is being facilitated by The Goodman Corporation.

The counties also sent invitations to the cities of Texas City, La Marque, Dickinson, Lake Jackson, Angleton, Clute, and Freeport to become members of the new Gulf Coast Transit District and appoint members to the new Board of Directors. The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), which has been the primary supporter of the commuter service between League City and Galveston, will also become a Board member, along with the GCC.

The current schedule for the transition of all Connect Transit personnel, operations, assets, and grants is January 1, 2021. The new GCTD Board is anticipated to hold its first meeting in July. Meetings are open to the public, and a notice of the meetings will be posted to the Connect Transit website: <https://gulfcoastcenter.org/connect-transit/>

TTA welcomes John Haenftling as the New Interim General Manager at Tyler Transit



John Haenftling is a General Manager with RATP Dev and is currently the Interim General Manager for Tyler Transit.

John is a Graduate of Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana with a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Affairs. He has over thirty years of transit experience and specializes in Urban Planning & Transportation

John began his career with Dallas Transit System, predecessor of DART (Dallas Area Rapid Transit). He has held numerous positions including positions in para-transit, service planning and scheduling (fixed route) & route planning. He also has experience in operations and maintenance finance and budget, capital planning. He completed his career with DART as Assistant Vice President of Technical Services, managing \$857 Million Light Rail Starter System Budget/schedule and \$1.1 Billion Build out phase one budget/schedule.

John brings a vast amount of knowledge and experience to Tyler and we know that he will do very well.

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CapMetro to Resume Fares on June 1, Introduces Workforce Aid Pass and New Safety Shields

AUSTIN, Texas - CapMetro's free fare period extends through May 31, after which fare collection will resume on June 1 for all CapMetro services. The agency will also introduce its Workforce Aid Pass, valid for the month of June. Through this program, CapMetro will offer fare-free service to community members who are experiencing unemployment.

Plexiglass shields will be installed on all CapMetro vehicles by the end of the month to offer further protection to operators and customers. With fares returning on June 1, customers will be able to board through the front door. CapMetro implemented fare-free service on April 1 in order to protect both customers and operators. The agency also required all passengers to use rear door boarding in order to further promote social distancing and slow the spread of COVID-19.

In order to offer relief during the pandemic, the transit agency will continue fare-free service through the end of June for customers experiencing unemployment. Anyone who is currently unemployed and has been approved with the Texas Workforce Commission for unemployment benefits is eligible for the Workforce Aid Pass.

"We're really proud of the way our CapMetro team has adjusted these past few months to care for our community," said CapMetro President and CEO Randy Clarke. "We want to further extend our support for members of the community who are experiencing unemployment and are maybe even using CapMetro services to find their next job."

To receive the Workforce Aid Pass, customers must submit acknowledgement of their unemployment status from the Texas Workforce Commission. They will then need to forward that documentation to workforce@capmetro.org, submit it at CapMetro.org/Workforce or present the documentation at CapMetro's Transit Store, located at 209 W. 9th St. Customers can receive their pass electronically through the CapMetro App, pick up a physical pass at the Transit Store or have a physical pass mailed to them.

"Many of Austin's residents are now unemployed and seeking work again, and Workforce Solutions Capital Area, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, is the connection to help them accomplish that," said Tamara Atkinson, Chief Executive Officer for Workforce Solutions Capital Area, the local workforce development board for Travis County and a private, publicly-funded nonprofit organization. "We have assisted many people in Austin to apply for unemployment benefits with TWC. Now as we connect Austinites with new employment and training opportunities, the new Workforce Aid Pass will help them get around town to work and learn."

To learn more about the Workforce Aid Pass, visit CapMetro.org/Workforce.

The following health and safety measures will remain in place across all CapMetro services until further notice:

Enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures will continue on CapMetro vehicles throughout the day.

Skip-a-seat signage is still present on CapMetro vehicles to promote social distancing.

All customers are required to wear a facial covering while using CapMetro services. CapMetro operators are provided facial coverings to wear during their shifts.

Customers are asked to practice good hygiene practices and not ride transit if feeling sick.

CapMetro will continue to monitor developments, along with recommendations from local, state and federal health officials. To learn more about what CapMetro is doing to promote a safe and healthy environment, visit CapMetro.org/COVID19.

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VIA Offers Workforce Assistance Pass for Unemployed Riders Complimentary 31-day passes available beginning June 1



SAN ANTONIO (June 1, 2020) — While our community recovers from the social and economic effects of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, VIA Metropolitan Transit is providing safe, reliable transit options to help people get back on their feet, including a new fare assistance program for unemployed customers.

When fare collection resumes on Monday, June 1—after a 10-week fare-relief period—persons who are unemployed can request VIA's new Workforce Assistance Pass. The complimentary pass is good for 31 days from activation and is available for any VIA customer who presents a copy of their unemployment benefit statement (dated May 15 or after) and a current photo ID at a VIA ticket window during normal business hours

The program will continue through August 2020. Customers are required to follow social distancing and safety guidelines in place at all VIA facilities and Code of Conduct guidelines while riding, including requirements for non-exempt passengers wearing face coverings and rules against joyriding.

Upon review of the customer's statement of benefits and ID card, a pass will be issued using the free VIA goMobile app or on a VIA goCard. One per customer. Customers with extended unemployment benefits can request a subsequent 31-day pass by following the same process: presenting their updated statement of unemployment benefits and ID card with photo at a VIA ticket window.

VIAtrans customers requesting Workforce Assistance Passes can contact VIA's goLine at (210) 362-2020 for more information and instructions on how to apply for a pass via email.

"VIA's Workforce Assistance Pass helps put opportunity within reach for people who rely on us to provide safe, reliable transportation to get to training and look for work" VIA President/CEO Jeffrey C. Arndt said. "The services VIA provides are a lifeline for many in our community—every day and perhaps especially during a crisis. We are in this together."

METRO Frontline Transit Workers Among Those Saluted Nationwide



METRO's frontline workers along with transit professionals across the nation are being celebrated for their unwavering commitment to provide essential transit services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From bus and rail operators who transport essential workers to their jobs, to METROLift personnel who deliver groceries to our neighbors, to cleaning crews who tirelessly sanitize vehicles and public facilities, METRO's frontline workers continue to help keep our region moving.

Nationally, these professionals continue to provide approximately five million trips a day to lifeline services.



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



Upcoming Webinars:

July 14th, 12:00-1:00 PM

[A Round-table Discussion with 5 Texas Transit CEOs](#)

July 15th, 8:30AM -12:00 PM

TXDOT Semiannual Virtual Meeting

July 17th, 1:30 — 2:30 PM

Decontamination and Disinfection systems to consider during COVID-19 (including UV lighting)

July 31st, 1:30 — 2:30 PM

Uber, how they have responded to COVID-19 and ways they are working with large and small transit systems around the country

[For More Information](#)

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.

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