

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

Registration is Now Open for TTA's 2024 State Conference, Expo and Rodeo!



We're thrilled to share some exciting news with you! **Registration** is now open for TTA's highly anticipated 2024 State Conference, Expo, and Rodeo to be held March 15-20, 2024 in San Antonio.

Highlights include:

- Full Expo featuring vendors & vehicles
- Texas State Rodeo competition
- Multiple General Sessions, breakout workshops & training sessions
- TTA's Annual Awards presentation
- Multiple networking & socializing opportunities, including a Welcome Reception and Big Night Out!

Sponsorship Opportunities

Don't miss out on featured sponsorship levels! If you would like to discuss becoming a Sponsor at this year's Conference, Expo, and Rodeo or have other creative ideas not listed, please contact:

[Allen Hunter](#) or [Laura Herrera](#)

Deadline to submit presentation abstracts is December 30th. If you have a topic or presentation you would like to share at this year's conference, please select the link.

[Link to submit abstracts](#)



TTA Award Nomination Deadline Extended due to Holidays

Due to the upcoming holidays the deadline for all TTA Award Nominations has been extended to **December 30th**.

[Award criteria](#)

[Submit your nomination today!](#)

February Walking Challenge! Get ready to lace up your sneakers to embark on a journey to a healthier, more active lifestyle!

Starting February 1st, TTA and CapMetro invite all transit agencies in Texas to join our exciting Walk Across Texas Team Walking Challenge. All employees from any transit agency in Texas are encouraged to participate! Texas is a big state – over 800 miles across, in fact. Can your team of 6 walk a total of 800 miles in 1 month? (Average 3 miles or 6,000 steps per day).

How to Participate:

- Members from each agency can begin by forming your Team or Teams: Gather your colleagues and form a team of enthusiastic walkers. Don't worry if you don't have a team – we'll help you find like-minded participants!

(Note: feel free to promote this within your agency so that everyone can participate)

- Select a Team Captain and Team Name: Your Team Captain will collect the weekly miles from all participants and submit them using a very simple online form.

Be on the lookout for more information to follow.



All-Members Meeting and Reception

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TTA invites you to a Panel Discussion/All-Member Meeting and Evening Reception at the Lone Star Court, in Austin located in the Domain January 23, 2024

4:00 PM Panel Discussion on the triumphs and hurdles faced by some of our Pioneering Texas Agencies on the transition toward clean energy buses.

Description: Join us for an insightful panel discussion regarding considerations that are crucial for small to medium-sized transit agencies contemplating the shift toward electric and clean-energy buses and vans. Texas' pioneering agencies, renowned for their substantial investments in clean energy buses, will share their invaluable experiences, highlighting both triumphs and hurdles faced in this transition. Don't miss this opportunity to learn and navigate the path toward a greener, more efficient future in public transit.

5:00 PM All-Member Meeting

Reception Immediately Following: 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

RSVP Here!

**Lone Star Court, by Valencia Hotel Group,
10901 Domain Drive, Austin, Texas 78758**



Sponsorship opportunities are still available

RSVP so that we can plan for your arrival.

Tom Lambert honored by Board of Directors for 45 years of service

The METRO Board of Directors honored retiring President & CEO Tom Lambert on Thursday for his remarkable 45 years of service to the Authority.

During its regular meeting, the Board recognized Lambert with a proclamation that highlighted his advocacy for enhanced customer experience, his commitment to public safety and his contributions that improved public transit throughout the Houston region.

"Mr. Lambert, it's been an absolute honor working with you," said METRO Board Chair Sanjay Ramabhadran. "What you've done for Houston, the region and the transit industry — we appreciate it today, and we will appreciate it even more 10, 20, 30 years from now."

THANK YOU, TOM

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/48favpl>



Sarah Hidalgo-Cook Inducted into 2023 RTAP Transit Hall of Fame

In a prestigious ceremony held at the 5th Annual RTAP Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Sarah Hidalgo-Cook, General Manager of SWART (Southwest Area Regional Transit District), was honored for her outstanding contributions to the rural public transit industry. The event took place on December 3rd, where Hidalgo-Cook and fellow honorees from across the United States were recognized for their unwavering dedication to rural transit. The Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) is funded by the Federal Transit Administration that aims to address the training and technical assistance needs of rural, and tribal transit operators across the nation, and to support the state RTAP programs.

With an illustrious career spanning over 33 years, Sarah has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of rural public transit not only regionally but across Texas. Her commitment to providing mobility solutions in communities where resources are scarce has earned her a well-deserved place in the Transit Hall of Fame. Hidalgo-Cook expressed her gratitude, stating, "I am extremely honored that I was selected for this recognition along with an impressive group of transit leaders from across the nation."

Sarah's journey in transit began in 1990 as a dispatcher, quickly ascending to a leadership role as the Transit Director for a local community action agency. In May 2012, she spearheaded the transition of the Southwest Transit Operations Program (STOP) to a stand-alone transit system, now known as SWART. Despite facing financial challenges inherited from the previous agency, SWART achieved success with regional, state, and national accolades under Sarah's leadership.



One of Hidalgo-Cook's notable achievements was the creation of the non-profit organization Partners In Transit, Inc. The organization, established in June 2023, operates under the SWART umbrella as a 501(c)3 dedicated to promoting and supporting mobility solutions throughout the Middle Rio Grande Region. This initiative highlights Sarah's commitment to making a difference in the lives of people in rural communities. She is the Rural Vice President of the Texas Transit Association and was selected by her peers in 2008 and 2014 as the Texas Transit General Manager of the Year.

Reflecting on her motivation, Hidalgo-Cook emphasized the impact that even small efforts can have on people's lives. She commended the dedicated SWART staff, acknowledging their tireless work in ensuring that riders are provided with safe and affordable services.

Sarah's induction into the RTAP Transit Hall of Fame is not just a personal triumph but a recognition of her profound impact on the rural public transit landscape. Her legacy continues to inspire others to contribute to the betterment of transit services and mobility solutions in communities across the nation. Her forward-thinking and innovative initiatives have established a precedent not only for SWART but also for other rural transit systems across Texas.

Hidalgo-Cook adds, "the triumphs at SWART and the milestones in my career are the result of a collaborative effort involving numerous individuals. The dedicated SWART staff, with their deep compassion for our riders, has played a pivotal role. The unwavering support of the SWART Board of Directors has been instrumental in driving our success, demonstrating their belief in SWART's ability to fulfill our vision and mission. Gratitude is extended to our funding sources, whose continued faith and trust in SWART have been essential to our achievements. Their support has allowed us to carry out our goals and make a positive impact in the communities we serve. My colleagues in the transit community, an exceptionally dedicated group of leaders, serve as my anchor—providing support, encouragement, and bolstering my confidence in my role as a transit leader when needed. Finally, a heartfelt acknowledgment goes to my family, whose encouragement and unwavering support have been a constant throughout my journey. Regardless of the challenges faced, they have stood by me, encouraging the goals I've set for myself and the transit industry that holds a special place in my heart".

Sarah, a native of Uvalde, completed her high school education at UHS in 1987. She earned a master's degree in Community Development from Kansas State University and a bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership from Sul Ross State University. Married to Kevin Cook, she is a mother to two daughters, Sierah and Gabi, and a stepson, Tommy, along with his wife Tamar. Adding to the family joy, Sarah is also a grandmother to two sassy granddaughters, McKenzie Cook and Juliet Cook. Her parents are Francisco Hidalgo, Sr. and the late Norma Menchaca Hidalgo.

TxDOT's Semi-Annual Transit Operators Business Meeting

The Semi-Annual Transit Operators Business meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 24, 2024 from 8:30 am-3:30 pm at the Commons Conference Center, Austin Tx. TxDOT has provided a Draft Key Agenda Topics and is subject to change.

Key Agenda Topics will include:

- So, You Want to go Electric...Lessons to date from EV Pilot
- Texas Transit Dashboard
- SAG Transit Educational Videos
- TTSP Service Evaluations (Operator Panel)
- Statewide Multi-modal Transit Plan (SMTP): Status Presentation



TxDOT's Highlight: It's A Wonderful Time of Year

This holiday season is a wonderful time of year for giving and sharing with not only our family and friends but also with our community. And TxDOT's Public Transportation Division subrecipient, Fort Bend Transit/Fort Bend County, is doing just that with their year-round Ambassador Service Program. The program provides personalized service to assist with the safe passage for those unable to travel unescorted or alone and those who need additional help. As an added bonus, the program's ambassadors provide a special flair of kindness, sprinkled with generosity, to all in need of extra care when traveling.

Daniel Flores, senior ambassador, stated that he loves his job and has had the opportunity to help senior adults who often want him to hold their hand and walk them to and from the bus, or assisting passengers with special needs. One such passenger is 94-year-old Donna Bartsch. Her daughter, Barbara Jones, said, "My mother, Donna, appreciates the good mornings and smiles she gets from the ambassadors. She uses the lift and I feel more comfortable knowing she's in good hands with people that help her on and off with kindness and smiles."

"Our passengers sometimes require some extra assistance to travel safely and independently, and our ambassadors are trained to provide that," Transit Director Perri D'Armond said. "As the holiday season approaches, people are in a hurry to reach their destinations, but our ambassadors remain patient to ensure the safety of our passengers. Safety first, people always."

So remember as you're traveling during this holiday season, take the time to be grateful for everything and be like an ambassador: smile, hold someone's hand and be kind!



Names, from left to right are:

Daniel Flores – Senior Ambassador
Michael Flores – Ambassador General Manager
Perri D'Armond – Transit Director
Sarah Coulter – Assistant Director
Alisha Lessey-Stallworth – Operations Manager

The Federal Transit Program Turns 60

The idea for the federal transit program was born with a [message](#) to Congress by President John F. Kennedy in 1962 and launched in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the [Urban Mass Transportation Act](#).

Over its nearly six decades, the federal transit program has helped transform transit in America from scattered bus systems and a small number of high-capacity systems to a diverse set of transit providers in thousands of communities. Today, FTA administers a \$20 billion annual program with the historic funding provided by the 2021 [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#).

As they approach to their 60th anniversary of the federal transit program on July 9, 2024, FTA will highlight milestone programs and initiatives that have fulfilled the FTA's mission to improve America's communities through public transportation.

Bus rapid transit is the fastest-growing mode of public transportation. In this [video](#), learn about how this transit newcomer became such a popular way to travel and FTA's role in setting it up for success.



Nationwide Step to Address Assaults on Transit Workers

FTA is calling on the nation's transit agencies to take steps to protect transit frontline workers who, despite being hailed as heroes during the pandemic, endure verbal and physical attacks.

FTA's proposed general directive, published today and open for public comment, is in response to the ongoing incidents of assaults on transit workers. It includes strategies to help FTA and transit agencies address the risks frontline workers face and begins a process that may result in a final directive in late 2024. Comment by February 20. bit.ly/484IOjM

Waco Transit System Sleighed at the Waco Wonderland Parade

Waco Transit System sleighed the holidays in style at the Waco Wonderland Christmas Parade! A heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined their festivities, and a special shoutout to the elves who sprinkled holiday magic on their trolley!



Island Metro Spreading Holiday Cheer

They had so much fun at the SPI Christmas Parade! They jingled all the way to the City of Port Isabel Christmas Parade, spreading holiday cheer and joined in the festive fun! The parade started at the Laguna Madre Youth Center and ended at Port Isabel Event Center.



TTA Statewide Training Initiative

These courses are offered at **no cost**, but space is limited, so make sure that you and your staff don't miss out. This training opportunity is made possible with a grant through TxDOT.

January 2024

Cares Emergency Management Certification

Two Day In-Person
January 11-12, 2024
AACOG
San Antonio, TX
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CST

[Register Here](#)

Cares Dispatcher & Call Center Certification

Two Day In-Person
January 23-24, 2024
Austin, TX
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CST

[Register Here](#)

Minimizing Personal Distractions

(Online Webinar)
January 30, 2024
2:00 p.m.. – 3:30 p.m. CST

[Register Here](#)

February 2024

ADA & Disability Awareness Training

Two Day In-Person
February 7-8, 2024
El Metro
Laredo, TX
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. CST

[Register Here](#)

Leadership Development: Silver Bullet

Two Day In-Person
February 20-21, 2024
Waco Transit System
Waco, TX
8:00 a.m.. – 5:00 p.m. CST

[Register Here](#)

[Click here for Training Calendar](#)



Managing the Homeless with Crowdsourced Incident Reporting

Join us Wednesday, January 17th at 1:30 CST as we host a webinar featuring Ed English, CEO of ELERTS, and transit agency partners utilizing the ELERTS See Say incident reporting platform. Together we'll explore effective strategies for engaging riders to help manage and assist homeless / vulnerable populations. Your takeaways will include stronger communication practices, better allocation of resources, and a safer environment for all. See you there.



ONBOARD CONNECTIVITY is a story we can tell.

LISTEN UP.

passenger wi-fi video surveillance + analytics onboard entertainment
accessible wayfinding passenger feedback passenger counting
journey information at-seat ordering industrial design



Texas Representative: John Busskohl | Business Development Manager | john.busskohl@icomera.com | 310.421.6804



Via Commemorates Civil Rights Icon



VIA Metropolitan Transit offered fare-free service on **Friday, Dec. 1**, in observance of Rosa Parks Day.

VIA joined transit agencies and cities nationwide in designating a day of remembrance for Parks, who on Dec. 1, 1955, was arrested when she refused to give up her bus seat to make room for a white passenger. Her bravery inspired Civil Rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to organize a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which lasted several months and was successful in efforts to desegregate U.S. public transportation.

Metro Celebrates Autonomous Shuttle and Growing Fleet

Take a look! The METRO FutureLink Autonomous Shuttle took center stage at a press event this month. Community leaders and the media joined METRO for a special preview of the Authority's next-generation transportation solutions, including METRO FutureLink, an all-new autonomous shuttle and a growing fleet of zero-emission electric buses.



Watch: [METRO Celebrates Autonomous Shuttle and Growing Fleet of Zero-Emission Electric Buses](#)

Senator John Cornyn met with CCRTA



U.S. Senator [John Cornyn](#) met with CCRTA leadership and discussed the services CCRTA provides to the Coastal Bend region and the importance of fuel sources like liquefied natural gas (LNG) and hydrogen. Earlier this year, Sen. Cornyn introduced a package of four bills that would support hydrogen technologies and reduce emissions.

Membership Announcement

December 2023

Time for Membership Renewal

Remember, the TTA Membership year is September 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024

Joining the Texas Transit Association as a member is the first step in showing your commitment to improving public transportation. Membership gives you access to valuable resources, networking opportunities, and a platform to influence policy decisions. We want to emphasize that your involvement with TTA is vital.

Not a Member?

Join Today!

Texas Transit Association

Contact us (512) 900-0550

laura@txtransit.org or allen@txtransit.org

Transit and Associate Members Form and Payment

Please download this [form](#), for Transit Agency

Please download this [form](#), for Associate Member

Completed form, along with a check, to
501 Congress Ave, Suite 150,
Austin, Texas 78701.

Contact laura@txtransit.org if you would like to pay using a credit card.

Membership Directory

Help us update your membership profile today!

Directory

Coming soon! Our online directory.



Upcoming Dates of Interest:

**TTA 2024 Conference, Expo
and Rodeo
March 15-20, 2024**

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