TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2021-2022 EDUCATIONAL SERIES
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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TxDOT RESOURCE LINKS
Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or click on the resource link buttons located here and at the bottom of every page of this document to direct you to additional resources and more details on the information provided in this document.

TxDOT’s public website for agency information and resources focused on meeting the needs of drivers, businesses, government officials, and those who want to learn more about TxDOT.

TxDOT’s complete 2021-2022 Educational Series that focuses on a range of transportation issues affecting TxDOT and the state of Texas.

TxDOT’s Visual Dictionary is designed to provide better understanding of transportation elements, words, and concepts.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

OVERVIEW
Federal and state law requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to support and promote public transportation by working with local governments, nonprofit entities, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Funding for public transportation in Texas consists of state, federal, and local funds. Local funds may include a dedicated sales tax, in the case of transportation authorities, or a local decision to use their own revenue sources and revenues from partnerships with employers or educational institutions.

Metropolitan Transit Authorities and Coordinated County Transportation Authorities receive federal funds directly from the Federal Transit Administration and are not eligible for state funding.

Federal law authorizes federal funds for a variety of transit programs, including the Urbanized Area Formula Grants program (Section 5307), the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Formula program (Section 5310), the Rural Formula program (Section 5311), the Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grant program (Section 5339), and the Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning program (Section 5304).

TxDOT administers all federal funds distributed to the state for rural areas with a population of less than 50,000. Urbanized areas with populations that exceed 50,000 receive federal funding through the Urbanized Area Formula Grants program and Bus Facilities Formula Grant program directly from the Federal Transit Administration, in coordination with TxDOT. TxDOT administers other federal public transportation programs for the benefit of urban areas between 50,000 and 200,000 in population. TxDOT also administers the state public transportation grant programs for Rural Transit Districts and Urban Transit Districts.

PRIMARY TxDOT ACTIVITIES
TxDOT’s focus is to support networks of mobility options for people who use alternatives to driving alone. Goals to accomplish this focus include:

- Distribute grant funds to support mobility and congestion-relief programs—TxDOT administers federal and state transit grants, develops and processes grant applications, and coordinates the project selection and development of bicycle and pedestrian projects statewide;

- Ensure compliance with funding program requirements—TxDOT implements a comprehensive and transparent compliance program that emphasizes technical assistance to meet federal and state requirements and that provides drug and alcohol safety oversight to transit providers;

- Promote training, coordinated planning, partnerships and best practices—TxDOT offers a comprehensive agency training program, funds and facilitates statewide public transportation planning efforts, provides technical assistance to grant program recipients, and monitors and sponsors research and development activities to enhance public transportation development; and

- Perform required Federal Transit Administration Transit Safety Program functions—TxDOT implements and makes continuous improvement to the State Safety Oversight program on existing and developing rail passenger systems and oversees the development of both rail and urbanized area transit agency safety plans.
STATE TRANSIT GRANTS
The Texas Transportation Commission, by rule, established the formula that TxDOT uses to allocate state public transportation grant funds to rural transit districts and urban transit districts. Recipient transit districts may use these funds for any approved public transportation projects. State law prohibits the distribution of state funds to the seven Metropolitan Transit Authorities and one Coordinated County Transportation Authority in the larger metropolitan areas of the state. Metropolitan Transit Authorities and Coordinated County Transportation Authorities can levy taxes to help fund their programs and operations. These entities also receive federal funds directly from the Federal Transit Administration.

FEDERAL TRANSIT GRANTS AVAILABLE THROUGH TxDOT

FORMULA GRANTS FOR RURAL AREAS PROGRAM (SECTION 5311)
This program provides capital, planning, operating, and administrative grants to support public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000 where residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations. Furthermore, this program helps people in rural areas with access to healthcare, employment, education, religious services, shopping, and recreation. Currently, 36 transit districts provide public transportation in rural areas and small non-urbanized area cities throughout the state.

STATEWIDE AND NONMETROPOLITAN (POPULATIONS LESS THAN 200,000) TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAMS (SECTION 5304)
This program provides funding and sets the procedural requirements to ensure that multimodal transportation planning in each state is cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive, resulting in long-range plans and short-range programs of transportation investment priorities. This program provides financial assistance to states for statewide transportation planning and other technical assistance activities, including supplementing the technical assistance program and planning support for non-urbanized areas. The Federal Transit Administration provides planning grants directly to states as the designated recipient for the program.

FORMULA GRANTS FOR THE ENHANCED MOBILITY OF SENIORS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM (SECTION 5310)
This program provides funding for programs in rural and urban areas with populations less than 200,000 that serve the special needs of transit-dependent senior citizen and disabled populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 complementary paratransit services.

BUS AND BUS FACILITIES PROGRAM (SECTION 5339)
This capital program provides funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities. Under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), this program replaced portions of other capital programs as well as many of the program’s competitive calls for projects and discretionary earmarks. This program was continued in the current federal highway authorization act, known as the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). TxDOT administers the program for rural transit districts. Any urban transit district serving areas with populations from 50,000 to 199,999 must apply directly to the Federal Transit Administration for these program funds.
METROPOLITAN PLANNING PROGRAM (SECTION 5303)
This program provides funding managed by TxDOT to Metropolitan Planning Organizations and sets the procedural requirements to ensure that multimodal transportation planning in metropolitan areas is cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive, resulting in long-range plans and short-range programs of transportation investment priorities. To help streamline the administration of the metropolitan planning programs, TxDOT has requested that the Federal Transit Administration combine the metropolitan planning program funds with a similar program administered by the Federal Highway Administration and have the Federal Highway Administration administer this program at the federal level. Regardless of funding source, the metropolitan planning process includes public transportation, highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and other modes in considering the transportation needs for metropolitan areas.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM (SECTION 5324)
This program provides funding in case of a declared emergency or natural disaster. Public transit entities may use these emergency funds to reimburse expenses due to the emergency or disaster or to help reduce the negative impacts of future emergencies or disasters. Congress appropriates emergency relief funds after the president makes a formal federal disaster declaration, allowing public transit entities in the declared emergency area eligible for funds.

VARIOUS DISCRETIONARY CAPITAL PROGRAMS
The United States Department of Transportation administers various discretionary capital funding programs that award funds to projects based on a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity. These federal funding opportunities typically have names such as the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program or the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program. Program specifics vary with each funding call; however, typically a state may apply for funds on behalf of rural areas.

CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT
On March 27, 2020, the Corona Virus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law. This act provided more than $25 billion to the Federal Transit Administration for metropolitan, urban, and rural systems transit grants nationwide to offset the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit system revenues. Texas’ urban transit systems received approximately $120 million in Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program funds while TxDOT received more than $143 million in Rural Areas Program funds to be distributed to help meet rural transit districts’ needs. Each of the state’s 36 rural transit districts will receive Corona Virus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funding to address operational expenses, revenue replacement, and asset replacement and upgrading needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to plan for future emergencies.

OTHER FEDERAL TRANSPORT GRANT PROGRAMS
URBANIZED AREA FORMULA GRANT PROGRAM (SECTION 5307)
This program provides grant funding to urbanized areas for public transportation capital, planning, and administration expenses; it also covers operating expenses in small urbanized areas between 50,000 and 199,000 in population. This program provides the federal government’s core investment in the enhancement and revitalization of public transportation systems in the nation’s urbanized areas and helps to improve mobility and reduce congestion. Although TxDOT does not administer this program, TxDOT does authorize the allocation of program funds to eligible small urbanized areas.
REGIONAL PLANNING
Consistent with federal and state requirements, TxDOT facilitates the statewide development of locally-developed, coordinated public transit and human services transportation plans in each of the 24 state planning areas. These plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. The plans provide strategies for meeting those local needs and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation. Plans include the review of current public transportation planning and programming practices within metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas, with a focus on enhancing service delivery, customer satisfaction, efficiency, and effectiveness.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
The governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the House of Representatives appoint the nine members of the Public Transportation Advisory Committee. The Public Transportation Advisory Committee serves to advise the Texas Transportation Commission on the needs of the state’s public transportation providers and the allocation of public transportation funds. The committee also provides comments on Texas Transportation Commission and federal rules involving public transportation.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
For more information about the Public Transportation Advisory Committee.

TxDOT is committed to your safety and to the reliability of the information contained on this site. While road conditions can change rapidly, DriveTexas.org is an industry leader in providing some of the most accurate and up-to-date travel-related information currently available to drivers in Texas. Information presented here is as close to real time as possible. For those who use our roads, please do not use this site while operating a motor vehicle.

Be Safe. Drive Smart. Thank you!

TxDOT's Government Affairs Division works closely with government on both the state and federal levels though the State Legislative Affairs and Federal Affairs sections.

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