



Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan 2050

Executive Summary

December 2025



The Importance of Transit

Each year, Texas transit systems provide nearly **230 million trips** for riders throughout the state, connecting Texans to jobs, healthcare, recreational activities, educational opportunities, and other essential services. Transit helps fuel the Texas economy by spurring economic activity, connecting businesses to qualified workers, and giving Texans a safe, low-cost travel option in response to their mobility needs.

Just like the roadways we rely on, transit connects you to Texas.



Photo Source: Houston METRO

Texas Is Growing, and Texans Want Options

The Texas Demographic Center forecasts a 40% increase in population statewide and a 33% increase in employment between 2020 and 2050 across the state. Most of this anticipated growth is projected to occur within the Texas Triangle megaregion, which includes Houston, the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, Austin, and San Antonio.

The Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan (*Texas SMTP 2050*) provides a framework for developing the improvements Texans want and many others need. The plan recommends a set of near-term initial priority steps along with high-level cost estimates for implementing the transit vision.



Photo Source: Trinity Metro

Transit Supports Economic Growth and Opportunity

Transit provides a safe way to travel and increases people-moving capacity in congested corridors. Transit connects employers and workers, supporting economic growth and opportunity. Texas transit agencies alone employ more than 49,000 Texans throughout the state.



Photo Source: Houston METRO

Transit Provides Mobility and Creates Connections

Texas transit agencies provide an average of 19 million trips each month while managing rising costs and workforce challenges. Continuing to provide these mobility services requires exceptional coordination and a shared focus on needs and priorities. *Texas SMTP 2050* provides that statewide consensus to maintain and expand transit services. Transit provides affordable connections to opportunities and essential services for everyone, including commuters, veterans, people with disabilities, and those who lack reliable access to an automobile.

In the 2023 statewide TxDOT Transportation Visioning Survey,*

86% of respondents said it is important to improve public transit in Texas.

*The statewide statistically valid Transportation Visioning Survey asked a randomly selected representative sample of over 4,500 residents to consider the state's transportation system needs through the year 2050, and it sought to understand attitudes towards various transportation topics. The findings from the survey helped identify Texans' needs, challenges, and priorities and were used to develop *Connecting Texas 2050*.



Coordinated Planning Efforts

Texas SMTF 2050 builds on existing local, regional, and other statewide plans, including the concurrent development of the Statewide Active Transportation Plan.

Connecting Texas 2050

Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan 25-year Outlook

Statewide Active Transportation Plan

A safe, accessible, connected, and fully integrated pedestrian and bicycle network that increases active mobility and supports health, economic vitality, and resiliency within communities and across Texas.

Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan

A safe, universally accessible, and integrated network of transit mobility options that connects people seamlessly, locally, and across the state, supporting an improved quality of life and a resilient and vibrant economy.

Supporting Studies

- Americans with Disabilities Act Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan
- Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment
- TxDOT PTN's Transit Asset Management (TAM)
- Intercity Bus (ICB) Study
- Bus Safety Plan
- Rail Plan



Photo Source: Brownsville Metro

Stakeholder and public outreach efforts yielded a consensus vision for transit in Texas.

Vision for Transit in Texas

A safe, universally accessible, and integrated network of transit mobility options that connects people seamlessly locally and across the state supporting an improved quality of life and a resilient and vibrant economy.

Texas SMTP 2050 identifies needs, gaps, challenges, strategies, and actions necessary to achieve this vision for transit in Texas. The plan provides a description of current services and focuses on key emphasis areas:

- **Urban and Rural Area Transit Services**
- **Intercity Connectivity**
- **Planning and Design**
- **Funding: Maintain and Expand Services**

Timeline and Process

Forming *Texas SMTP 2050* required an integrated effort spanning technical analysis, stakeholder engagement, and interagency coordination.

Texas SMTP 2050 Goals

The *Texas SMTP 2050* goals align with the broader vision of *Connecting Texas 2050*, the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan.

	Safety and Security	Maintain a transit network that is safe and secure, strives toward zero fatalities, and fosters a culture of transportation safety and security in Texas
	Asset Preservation	Maintain and preserve a resilient and high-quality transit system that is financially stable and operates in a state of good repair (SOGR) to meet community needs
	Mobility	Support an integrated transportation system that efficiently and effectively enhances access to work, school, healthcare, essential services, and recreational activities
	Connectivity	Provide local and statewide connectivity for everyone that is coordinated, affordable, accessible, reliable, and easy to use
	Economic Vitality	Ensure the long-term economic competitiveness of Texas by providing access to economic opportunity through a comprehensive and accessible transit system
	Stewardship	Embrace a fiscally responsible multimodal approach to preserve natural, cultural, and human resources by reducing impacts for a sustainable and resilient transit network

2023

- Project Kickoff Fall Outreach
- Public Survey and Engagement
- Technical Analysis
- Interagency Coordination
- Steering Committee Meetings

2024

- Draft Plan Development
- Steering Committee Meetings
- Working Group Meetings
- Interagency Coordination
- Public Engagement

2025

- Implementation Plan Development
- Steering Committee Meetings
- Public Engagement
- Identify Next Steps
- Final Plan

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Public engagement has been crucial to the development of *Texas SMTP 2050*. Through a series of robust outreach campaigns, TxDOT engaged Texans across the state to help shape *Texas SMTP 2050* through a **data-driven**, **collaborative**, and **stakeholder-informed** process, combining a rigorous analysis of transit usage, costs, and trends with qualitative research into the attitudes, desires, and needs of Texas residents.

TxDOT's outreach efforts focused first on understanding the public's transit priorities and needs and then on collecting input about the plan's needs, gaps, challenges, and potential strategies. **Reaching over 100,000 Texans**, these efforts engaged current transit users and non-transit users, transit industry professionals, economic development groups, businesses, and other stakeholders.

Who We Engaged

- *Texas SMTP 2050* Steering Committee
- Economic Development and Innovation Groups
- Municipalities
- TxDOT Districts and Divisions
- Public Stakeholders
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Transit Operators
- Public Transportation Advisory Committee
- Emphasis Area Working Groups

Highlights from Public Engagement

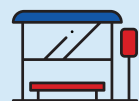
- **Nearly 200,000** views of *Texas SMTP 2050* social media posts and more than 1,500 likes, shares, and comments
- **4,000+** surveys completed about feedback on transit priorities and draft *Texas SMTP 2050* challenges and strategies
- **5,000+** visits to the *Texas SMTP 2050* project and public engagement web pages in 2024 and 2025
- **Almost 2,200** people reached in pop-up events at libraries, community centers, fairs, festivals, farmers markets, athletic events, and other locations across Texas

What We Heard from Stakeholders



Service and Connectivity

Like transit operators and planning officials, the Texans we engaged want more service hours and locations, as well as greater connectivity between cities and towns.



Facilities and Physical Assets

Improved vehicles and waiting areas were key desires mentioned by transit agencies as well as the transit riders we engaged.



Funding and Resources

Many providers of all sizes noted difficulties in navigating institutional and legal frameworks to meet funding needs, financing upgrades to facilities and other assets, and finding and retaining a trained workforce.



Photo Source: *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement at the Texas State Fair

Transit in Texas Today

The vast majority of transit services in Texas are provided by 77 statutorily defined transit districts or authorities. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, these public transit providers reported carrying nearly 230 million passengers, operating more than 252 million miles of service, and expending over \$4 billion.

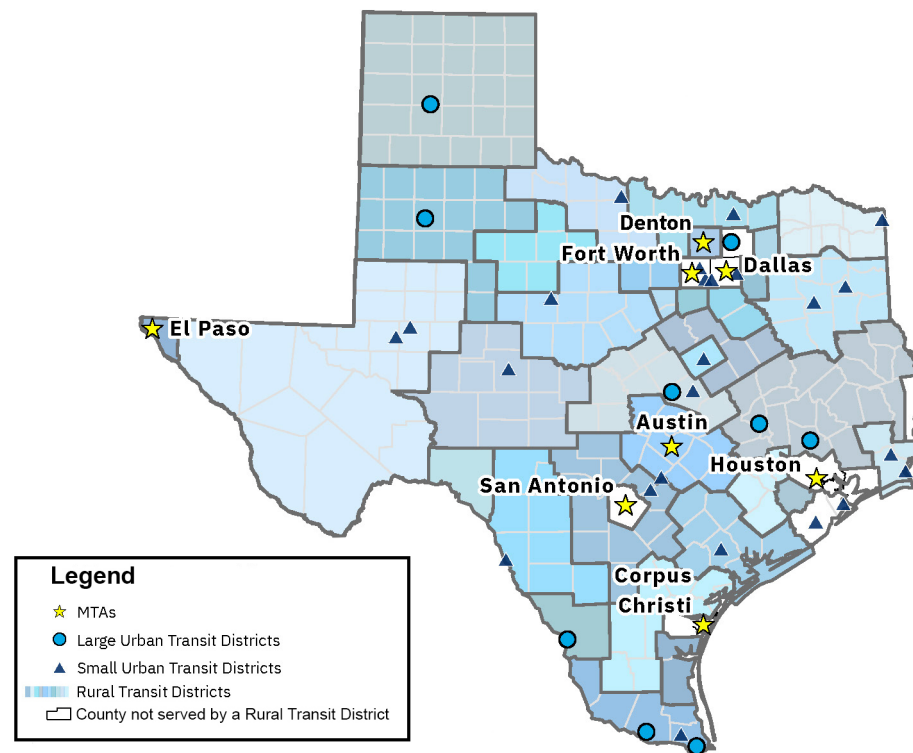
Transit Agencies

Texas transit agencies, as reflected in **Figure 1**, include:

- **8 Metropolitan Transit Authorities (MTAs)** serve areas with populations of more than 200,000 and are supported with a state-authorized, locally approved sales tax.
- **9 Large Urban Transit Districts (UTDs)** serve areas with populations of more than 200,000 and are eligible to become MTAs with local voters' approval of transit sales tax measures; becoming an MTA would make a UTD ineligible for state funding.
- **24 Small Urban Transit Districts (UTDs)** serve urban areas with populations between 50,000 and 199,999.
- **36 Rural Transit Districts (RTDs)** serve areas of the state with populations under 50,000.

Collectively, these providers offer a large variety of transit modes including commuter rail, light rail, streetcar, bus rapid transit (BRT), traditional fixed route and fixed schedule bus, demand response, on demand (e.g., microtransit), and vanpool services.

Figure 1. MTAs and State-Funded Urban and Rural Transit Districts (January 2024)



Source: 2024 TxDOT Public Transportation Division.



What We Heard During *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement

- 1 in 4 rural Texans we surveyed highlighted aging infrastructure and a need to maintain current assets as a priority challenge.
- More than 1 in 3 Texans we surveyed emphasized maintaining a SOGR as a priority strategy for *Texas SMTP 2050*.

Intercity Passenger Rail Service

The National Railroad Passenger Corporation, also known as Amtrak, is the sole intercity passenger rail operator in Texas. Amtrak operates the *Heartland Flyer*, *Texas Eagle*, and *Sunset Limited* trains, which each provide long-distance, intercity connections. The *Heartland Flyer*, a daily regional train, operates between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City. The *Texas Eagle* travels daily between Chicago and San Antonio. In San Antonio, riders can connect to the *Sunset Limited* and its triweekly service between Los Angeles and New Orleans.



Photo Source: Amtrak

Intercity Bus Service

Longer-distance service connections among rural, urban, and metropolitan areas of Texas are provided by private, independently operated ICB carriers with their own schedules, fare structures, and passenger facilities. TxDOT subsidizes critical rural area connections to the national ICB network and other regional destinations using federal rural area formula funding (5311 (f)).

The largest carriers in the state include Greyhound Lines Incorporated (with some routes branded as FlixBus) and Tornado Bus (with some routes branded as El Expresso). Other carriers include Vonlane, Omnibus Express, and All Aboard America. Collectively, these carriers offer an uncoordinated combination of corridor express, limited stop, cross-border, and interstate service connections.

Ferries

TxDOT operates two ferries: Galveston-Port Bolivar and Corpus Christi-Port Aransas. The Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry operates between Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula. The Corpus Christi-Port Aransas Ferry System navigates a route connecting State Highway 361 across the Corpus Christi Channel between Aransas Pass on the mainland and Port Aransas on Mustang Island.

Two additional ferry lines operating in Texas, the Lynchburg and the Los Ebanos, are not operated by TxDOT.



Photo Source: TxDOT

Needs, Gaps, and Challenges

Technical analysis and feedback from public and stakeholder engagement efforts were used to identify the needs, gaps, and challenges described below.

Urban and Rural Area Transit Services

Shifts in population density will create new transit needs. In metropolitan and urban areas, transit can increase people moving capacity in congested roadway corridors. In rural areas, there is the potential for an even greater need for transit to connect rural residents with resources and jobs in growing urban areas. All these trends indicate that, to thrive, Texas will not only need to sustain current transit service but also expand services statewide. Key to this effort is training, attracting, and retaining, an adequate transit workforce.

Intercity Connectivity

Intercity transit connectivity is currently provided through rail and bus networks. Unfortunately, there is not enough coverage to meet the demands of Texas' growing population and thriving economy. Additionally, current transit options do not provide a robust intercity network across the state's distinct geographic areas. While this gap is most evident within the Texas Triangle, intercity and interregional connectivity challenges can be experienced throughout the state, limiting access to future economic development opportunities. Increased coordination between the State, local transit agencies, and private intercity bus carriers is needed to address the intercity needs documented in this plan. Furthermore, statutory updates are needed for the formation, organization, and governance of public transportation providers to address statewide connectivity.



What We Heard During *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement

- Population growth, urbanization, and congestion are among the most mentioned challenges Texas faces when looking at the future of public transit in the state.
- 1 in 3 of the Texans we surveyed said there is a need to expand rural and urban transit service areas and hours of operation across the state.
- 1 in 3 of the Texans we surveyed ranked expanding existing urban transit and connectivity as a top five priority strategy for *Texas SMTP 2050*.



What We Heard During *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement

- 63% of Texans we surveyed said expanding passenger rail was a top transit improvement priority.
- More than 1 in 3 respondents across urban, rural, and suburban areas said that the lack of statewide transit network and connectivity is a major challenge.
- Strengthening intercity and regional connectivity was prioritized as a top strategy by 41% of survey respondents.

Planning and Design

Texas' continued growth and urbanization means that mobility options provided by transit will be an increasingly important part of the multimodal transportation network. This will require transit to be more consistently considered throughout the land use and highway planning and design phases of project development as well as in resiliency planning efforts.

In addition, telling the story of transit's value to all Texans will help remove misconceptions around transit and build a better foundation of understanding for ongoing collaboration between the public, lawmakers and agencies. For this reason, planners, designers, and policymakers should measure success based on the movement of people as well as transit's benefit to the Texas economy.



What We Heard During *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement

More than one-third of respondents surveyed identified insufficient consideration of transit in the transportation planning and design process as one of the top five transit challenges in Texas.

Funding: Maintain and Expand Services

Texans rely on transit every day to get to work, access healthcare, and connect to opportunities. Throughout stakeholder engagement, additional funding for public transit was consistently the most-cited need for transit agencies. Texas transit providers face significant challenges to maintaining current service levels, especially in small urban and rural areas of the state. The funding outlook for these small urban and rural districts projects a shortfall of current funding sources to cover the increasing cost of existing service levels, let alone any expansion of services.

Another key issue for funding public transit in Texas is the inability for RTDs and UTDs to generate dedicated local funding, meaning these agencies do not have local matching funds to leverage federal funds. While MTAs, UTDs, and RTDs each face their own unique issues, RTDs and UTDs face the greatest difficulties in sustaining their services and needed capital investment without the ability to generate additional local funding. Identifying opportunities to create more flexibility in sustainable and predictable funding sources will help enhance investment in the future of Texas public transit.



What We Heard During *Texas SMTP 2050* Engagement

- Increasing funding for transit was the most important strategy identified by the Texans we surveyed.
- 1 in 3 of the respondents we surveyed acknowledged the funding gap as a critical challenge to improving public transit.



Photo Source: Sun Metro

Strategies

Needs, gaps, and challenges were addressed with corresponding strategies. The strategies outlined here emerged from a prior list of more than 250 ideas and have been crafted with stakeholder feedback.



Urban and Rural Area Transit Services	Intercity Connectivity	Planning and Design	Funding: Maintain and Expand Services
- Identify priority corridors and estimate minimum levels of service - Integrate all transit modes and mobility options with other transportation modes - Establish institutional and organizational partnerships to promote comprehensive workforce development	- Identify a statewide route and hub network - Develop a governance framework for statewide and regional intercity services - Implement technology to enable seamless travel statewide	- Research and document statewide transit benefits - Integrate transit through local, regional, and statewide planning - Incorporate transportation technology - Prioritize safety and resiliency - Enhance research, reporting, and knowledge sharing	- Maximize use of existing funding - Expand sources, flexibility, and levels of funding - Tie funding to growth and performance



Photo Source: Trinity Metro



Photo Source: Capital Area Rural Transportation System

Implementing the Plan: Initial Priority Steps

Delivering a world-class transit system requires moving the *Texas SMTP 2050* vision and strategies from concept to reality. Building on the strategies and potential initial actions, six Initial Priority Steps are identified to begin implementation and build a strong foundation for realizing *Texas SMTP 2050*.

These Initial Priority Steps are intended to continue the momentum developed during the creation of *Texas SMTP 2050* and address a single strategy or bridge multiple strategies identified in the plan.

The Initial Priority Steps will be implemented collaboratively as follows:

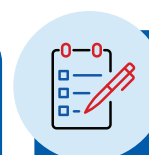
- **TxDOT-led** steps will be led and organized by TxDOT.
- **TxDOT-facilitated** steps will be led by other agencies or organizations, with TxDOT facilitating by assisting in the progress of identified goals and action items, and at times providing limited resources.
- **TxDOT-supported** steps are also led by others, with TxDOT supporting by providing limited resources.



1. Establish a community of practice (CoP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges.
TxDOT-led



2. Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan.
TxDOT-led and -facilitated



3. Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines.
TxDOT facilitated



4. Develop success metrics, enhance and broaden data collection, and develop consistent reporting.
TxDOT facilitated



5. Identify options to increase flexibility of funding sources and identify new and innovative funding sources to maintain and expand transit.
TxDOT-supported



6. Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on the benefits of transit.
TxDOT-led and -facilitated

The Future of Transit in Texas

Each emphasis area includes a summary of identified needs, gaps, and challenges, along with detailed strategies to address them (**Table 1**). The matrix in **Table 1** also outlines initial implementation steps.

Table 1. *Texas SMTP 2050 Structure*

	Needs, Gaps, and Challenges	Strategies	Steps for Implementation
Urban and Rural Area Transit Services	▪ Growing urban areas ▪ Transit access to economic opportunities ▪ Congestion driven by growth ▪ Rural and small urban area general mobility networks ▪ Workforce recruitment, training, and retention	▪ Identify priority corridors and estimate minimum levels of service ▪ Integrate all transit modes and mobility options with other transportation modes ▪ Establish institutional and organizational partnerships to promote comprehensive workforce development	Initial Priority Steps 1. Establish a community of practice (CoP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges (<i>TxDOT-led</i>) 2. Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan (<i>TxDOT-led and -facilitated</i>) 3. Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines (<i>TxDOT-facilitated</i>) 4. Develop success metrics, enhance and broaden data collection, and develop consistent reporting (<i>TxDOT-facilitated</i>) 5. Identify options to increase flexibility of funding sources and identify new and innovative funding sources to maintain and expand transit (<i>TxDOT-supported</i>) 6. Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on the benefits of transit (<i>TxDOT-led and -facilitated</i>)
Intercity Connectivity	▪ Statewide transit service network and connectivity ▪ Intercity connectivity ▪ Governance	▪ Identify a statewide route and hub network ▪ Develop a governance framework for statewide and regional intercity services ▪ Implement technology to enable seamless travel statewide	
Planning and Design	▪ Transit and the transportation planning and design process ▪ Transit resilience ▪ Public awareness of the importance of transit ▪ Inconsistent consideration of transit in economic development ▪ Aligning transit with development and transit-supportive land uses	▪ Research and document statewide transit benefits ▪ Integrate transit through local, regional, and statewide planning ▪ Incorporate transportation technology ▪ Prioritize safety and resiliency ▪ Enhance research, reporting, and knowledge sharing	
Funding: Maintain and Expand Services	▪ Maintain critical assets ▪ Need to maintain and expand service levels ▪ Funding for new and improved service ▪ Funding challenges and constraints	▪ Maximize use of existing funding ▪ Expand sources, flexibility, and levels of funding ▪ Tie funding to growth and performance	

