

TEXAS TIM

4th Quarter, 2025 // Traffic Safety Division - TxDOT

"Everybody Goes Home"

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// TIM NEWS //

- ▶ A new quarterly meeting schedule is set for TxDOT Statewide TIM meeting beginning in 2026. The next meeting set for January 21 at 11am at Houston TranStar.
- ▶ An innovation airbag NextGEN 911 alert system is to debut at the January 2026 Consumer Electronic Show. [Read more about real-time electronic signals.](#)
- ▶ First responders can use Live TxDOT Traffic Cameras now on [DriveTexas website](#) for situational awareness of traffic incidents.
- ▶ Upcoming TIM Training: Denton TX, February 17-18. [Visit website for training details.](#)

Round Rock Police Department (RRPD) Innovative Support Program

In an era marked by officer shortages, rising overtime costs, and stretched budgets, the RRPD has implemented a **Law Enforcement Support Technician (LEST)** program staffed by civilians that can be a game-changer for traffic management and low-priority responses in the city.

This article explores the program's origins, operations, and future, as shared by Joshua Sanchez, the civilian supervisor of the program who presented on the subject at the October 22, 2025, TxDOT statewide TIM team meeting. Sanchez's journey leading to the LEST program is anything but conventional. With roots as a volunteer firefighter and experience in retail management, Sanchez transitioned into public service during the COVID layoffs. His previous work involved being a HERO operator and trainer for the Austin District's safety service patrol program which led him to RRPD in 2022. "When I heard about a civilian unit handling real traffic work without requiring sworn officers, I was sold," Sanchez recalls.



*RRPD Law Enforcement
Support Technician
Supervisor, Joshua
Sanchez*

LESTs are on the streets from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week, patrolling in marked ½ ton pickup trucks equipped with light bars, sirens, and arrow boards. Their responsibilities include:

- ▶ **Crash Response:** Managing traffic control, motorist assistance, and hazard mitigation for major and minor incidents.
- ▶ **Citizen Complaints:** Addressing abandoned vehicles, illegal parking, and fire hydrant violations—52 complaints processed in just two days in one week.
- ▶ **Crime Scene Processing:** Fingerprinting and handling minor burglaries to free up the Crime Scene Investigation Unit.
- ▶ **Traffic Management:** Deploying radar trailers and traffic-data collectors.
- ▶ **Community Support:** Event and church traffic control, parade routes, and assistance with the Citizens Police Academy.
- ▶ **Miscellaneous Tasks:** Graffiti removal, debris cleanup, and other quality-of-life services.

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His vision for the program—more traffic control, more community support, and less burden on patrol officers—has driven its expansion from two positions in 2010 to five authorized personnel today to include one supervisor.

For the cost of one sworn officer (including salary, benefits, vehicle, and training), Round Rock can field three LESTs. Their 15-week in-house training program adds minimal expense, making the program a budget-friendly solution for the city. Off-duty officer traffic control can cost \$135 an hour, while LEST coverage offers services at a fraction of the cost. Churches and event organizers benefit from affordable, professional traffic management provided by uniformed, marked units.

The program's impact extends far beyond financial savings by providing:

- ▶ **Faster Response Times:** LESTs often resolve quality-of-life calls—like abandoned vehicles or illegal parking—within minutes rather than hours.
- ▶ **Improved Citizen Interaction:** As civilians, LESTs de-escalate situations through conversation, fostering trust and cooperation. Sanchez emphasizes, “Our primary tool is the voice. Sometimes people just need to talk.”
- ▶ **Enhanced Community Support:** Civilian uniformed, marked units managing daily issues at a lower cost have become a source of pride for Round Rock residents.

LEST hiring requirements are realistic yet rigorous including one year of public service experience or 30 hours of higher education, a clean background and a passion for community service. New hires undergo 15 weeks of training, including: defensive tactics, oleoresin capicum (OC) exposure; traffic incident management, crime-scene log procedures and evidence handling and extensive ride-alongs for real-world experience.

Each member wears body armor daily and operates on the same radio channels as sworn officers, ensuring reliable communication and safety.

Sanchez's next goal is 24-hour coverage. While night operations pose additional risks for unsworn personnel, he believes proper lighting, training, and tools can make it safe and effective. Plans are also underway to expand truck toolkits with better scene lighting, cleanup gear, and potentially drones—ensuring patrol officers can stay focused on higher-priority calls.

If other departments are interested in developing a similar program, Sanchez offers these practical tips:

- 1. Hire Passionate People:** Retirees who miss the action or young adults seeking a law enforcement career are ideal candidates.
- 2. Equip and Train Well:** Provide comprehensive training and the right tools to empower civilians for real responsibilities.
- 3. Engage the Community:** Build support by demonstrating how non-sworn uniformed, marked units can solve daily problems at a fraction of the cost.

“When citizens see us solving their headaches affordably, they become our biggest advocates,” Sanchez said.

In summary, the Round Rock LEST program is a shining example of how civilian units can transform public safety. By reducing the burden on sworn officers, cutting costs, and improving response times, LESTs are setting a new standard for traffic management and community support. Under Joshua Sanchez's leadership, the program continues to grow, innovate, and inspire agencies across Texas.



For more information, please contact Joshua Sanchez at RRPD at joshua.sanchez@roundrocktexas.gov.

Texas Responder Readiness for Autonomous Vehicles in 2026

Texas is accelerating into an autonomous future. With TxDOT's Connected & Autonomous Vehicle (CAV) Task Force mapping deployments statewide, 2026 projections show a 25% to 30% rise in autonomous vehicles (AVs) testing and commercial operations. This has been accelerated by Texas Senate Bill 2807 effective September /2025 which addresses autonomous vehicle registrations, permits, emergency response and safety rule compliance¹. Tesla began unsupervised robotaxi service in Austin in June 2025, while Aurora and Kodiak are operating driverless trucks on several major routes ^{2,3}. Waymo expanded its Austin fleet, while Uber and May-Mobility Robotaxi announced plans to begin operations in Arlington by early 2026. McKinsey & Company, a strategy and management consulting firm, forecasts 13% of U.S. trucks will be autonomous by 2035, with Texas leading via freight hubs⁴.

For TIM teams, AVs mean new crash dynamics: no drivers, and possible tech failures. Responders must adapt to Level 4 AV operations, where vehicles navigate without human intervention.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has developed a free training program for first responders to interact with AVs during roadway incidents. The First Responder Interactions with Driverless Vehicles course includes identifying AVs, accessing documentation, communicating with AV company representatives while at an incident and properly handling disabled AVs.

For information on participating or hosting a class, contact the TxDOT Statewide TIM Coordinators at TIM@txdot.gov.



For more information on autonomous vehicles in Texas:

- ▶ **TxDOT TIM Program:** <https://www.txdot.gov/safety/traffic-incident-management.html>
- ▶ **TxDOT CAV Task Force Map:** <https://www.txdot.gov/about/programs/innovative-transportation/connected-automated-vehicles-task-force.html>
- ▶ **TTI/TEEX AV Incident Guide:** <https://static.tti.tamu.edu/tti.tamu.edu/documents/0-7199-R1.pdf>

Sources:

¹ "Goodbye to self-driving cars as we know — One state changes rules in September." EcoNews, 07 Sept 2025;

<https://www.ecoticias.com/en/goodbye-to-self-driving-cars-as-we-know/19957/>.

² Tesla. "Tesla Aims for fully autonomous driving in Texas and California by 2025." EVXL, 11 Oct. 2024, evxl.co/2024/10/11/tesla-fully-autonomous-driving-texas-california-2025/.

³ Axios. "Driverless trucks are rolling in Texas, ushering in a new era.", 23 Apr. 2025, www.axios.com/2025/04/23/texas-driverless-trucks.

⁴ McKinsey & Company. "Autonomous heavy-duty trucks will account for 13 percent of trucks on U.S. roads in 2035." <https://www.mckinsey.com>, 2025.



National Crash Responder Safety Week Proclaimed in Houston

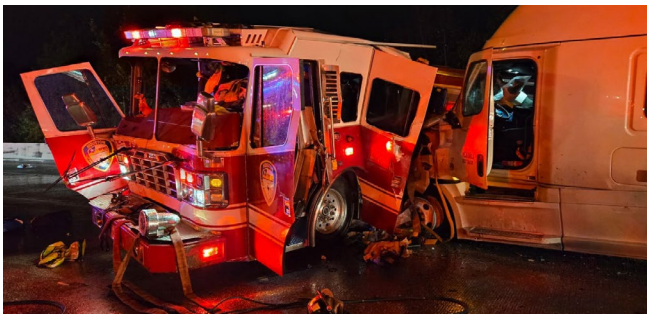
Houston Mayor John Whitmire and Vice-Mayor Pro-Tem Amy Peck present proclamation to Law Enforcement and transportation partner agencies



Houston TranStar, in collaboration with TxDOT, regional partners, and the City of Houston, commemorated the 10th anniversary of **National Crash Responder Safety Week (CRSW)** November 17-21, 2025, during a City Council proclamation event on November 18th. The proclamation, presented by Mayor John Whitmire and Vice-Mayor Pro-Tem Amy Peck, honored the critical contributions of traffic incident responders and emphasized the importance of roadway safety.

CRSW shines a spotlight on the essential and often dangerous work performed by traffic incident responders by a wide group of public safety personnel:

- ▶ Public Works Teams
- ▶ Law Enforcement Officers
- ▶ Firefighters
- ▶ EMS Personnel
- ▶ Tow Operators
- ▶ Transportation Specialists



*Semi-truck slams into Houston fire engine on Interstate 69, November 30, 2025.
Photo Courtesy: ABC News*

Their collective efforts ensure incidents are cleared quickly and safely, minimizing risks to both responders and the public.

This year's theme, **"Safety Starts with You – Slow Down and Move Over,"** underscores the importance of simple, lifesaving actions. Texas law mandates that drivers slow down or move over when approaching responders, a practice that prevents secondary crashes and protects those working on the roadside.

Just a week later, the dangers first responders face was brought into sharp focus in North Houston. An 18-wheeler slammed into HFD Engine 104 that was blocking traffic on Interstate 69 for an earlier crash. Four Houston Fire Department firefighters were hospitalized. While they all are expected to recover, the incident serves as a sobering reminder of the hazards responders face while safeguarding others.

The entire first responder community needs to keep safe and continuously push messages to the driving public promoting what all drivers need to do on our roadways:

1. **Slow down** when approaching stopped vehicles with flashing lights.
2. **Move over** to an adjacent lane when possible.
3. **Remain attentive** and avoid distractions.

These small actions can make a significant difference, in saving lives and reducing the risk of secondary crashes.

Texas TIM Teams and Contacts



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Texas TIM Regional Meetings

Statewide TIM Meeting (Location Varies)

Quarterly - Next Meeting January 21 at Houston TranStar

Austin AIM High TIM Team.....Bi-Monthly

Dallas TIM meeting.....Bi-Monthly

Houston TranStar TIM Team.....Second Thursday
of the Month

Northeast San Antonio (NESA) TIM Team...Quarterly

San Antonio TIM TeamSecond Tuesday
of the Month

El Paso District TIM Meetings

El Paso Metro TIM Team...Quarterly

Big Bend TIM Team.....Quarterly

Presidio TIM TeamQuarterly