



# Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan

Southwest Rail Conference | Hurst, Texas



May 19, 2026

# Today's Agenda



- 1** | Why Transit Matters to Texas?
- 2** | *Texas SMTP 2050: Why Now?*
- 3** | Overview of Transit in Texas
- 4** | SMTP Outreach and Engagement Efforts
- 5** | Texas' Transit Needs, Gaps, and Strategies
- 6** | Statewide Transit Priority Implementation
- 7** | Call to Action



## *Why Multimodal Transit for Texas?*

*Transit helps Texans thrive.*

- By aligning with *Connecting Texas 2050*, the Statewide Active Transportation Plan, and the Rail Plan, *Texas SMTP 2050* will work to ensure that transit is integrated with the multimodal network and provides choices for both individuals and businesses.



## ***Why Multimodal Transit for Texas?***

*Transit supports Texas' economy.*

- DART light rail development made an estimated \$10 billion economic impact from 2016-2018.
- Grapevine, TX increased sales tax revenue by almost 40% for businesses within a 5-minute walk of TEXRail's DFW airport-to-Fort Worth rail line.



## *Why Multimodal Transit for Texas?*

*Transit provides access to jobs.*

- Transit users save about \$1,000 more monthly over those who do not ride transit.
- Austin saw a 62% increase in jobs near CapMetro's Red Line, with a 154% increase in high-paying jobs.
- Transit gives more people access to workplaces, schools, and job training sites.



Photo Source: City of Arlington

## ***Why Multimodal Transit for Texas?***

*Transit provides Texans mobility options.*

- Texans want to be more connected to other towns and cities in the state and want more travel choices.
- Transit provides an alternative to driving and can help mitigate congestion in the face of population growth.
- A recent study shows transit travel has about 1/10 the casualty rate as automobile travel, and as transit travel increases, per capita traffic fatality rates tend to decline.

# Texas' Statewide Transit Vision

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 Goals



## 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 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.

## Why, and why now?

In response to a high level of interest from the public, *Texas SMTP 2050* seeks to make sure transit continues to help Texans thrive – now, and in the future.



**Texans need sustainable basic mobility services.**



**Texas is growing and Texans want options.**



**Transit supports Texas' economy.**

## Texas SMTP 2050: Why and Why Now?

Transit helps Texans thrive.



### 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. In the 2023 statewide TxDOT Transportation Visioning Survey, 86% of respondents said it's important to improve public transit in Texas.



### Transit supports economic growth and opportunity.

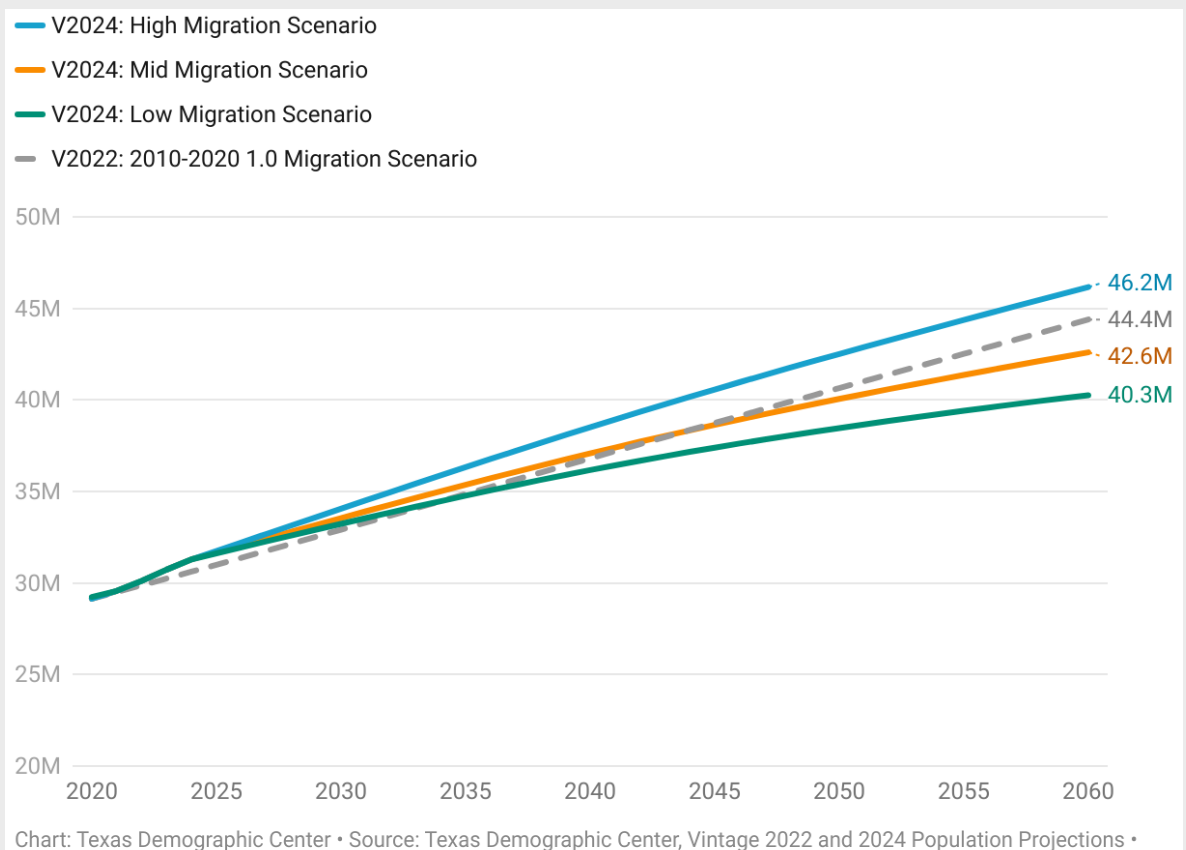
Transit provides a safe way to travel, increases people-moving capacity in congested corridors, and connects employers and workers.



### Transit provides mobility and creates connections.

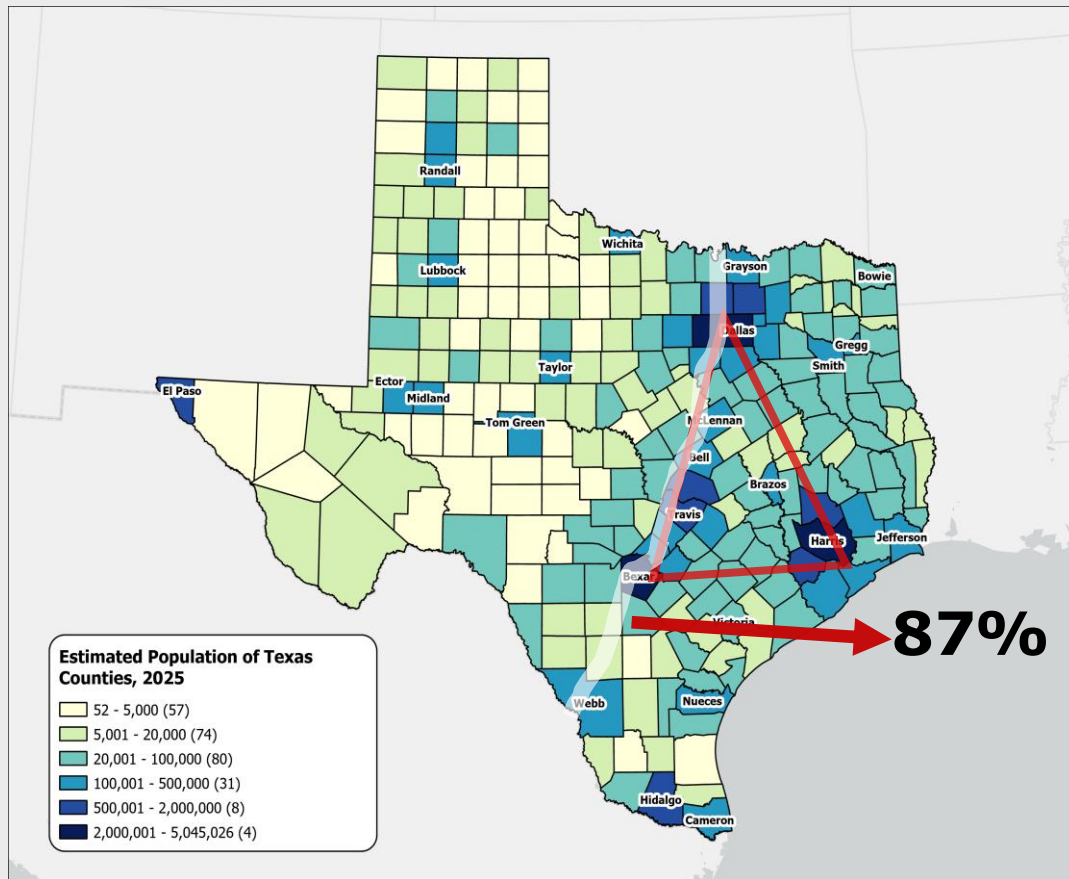
Transit provides affordable connections to opportunities and essential services for everyone, including commuters, veterans, people with disabilities, and those who lack reliable access to an automobile. Continuing to provide these services requires exceptional coordination and a shared focus on needs and priorities.

# Projected Population Growth in Texas with Various Migration Scenarios



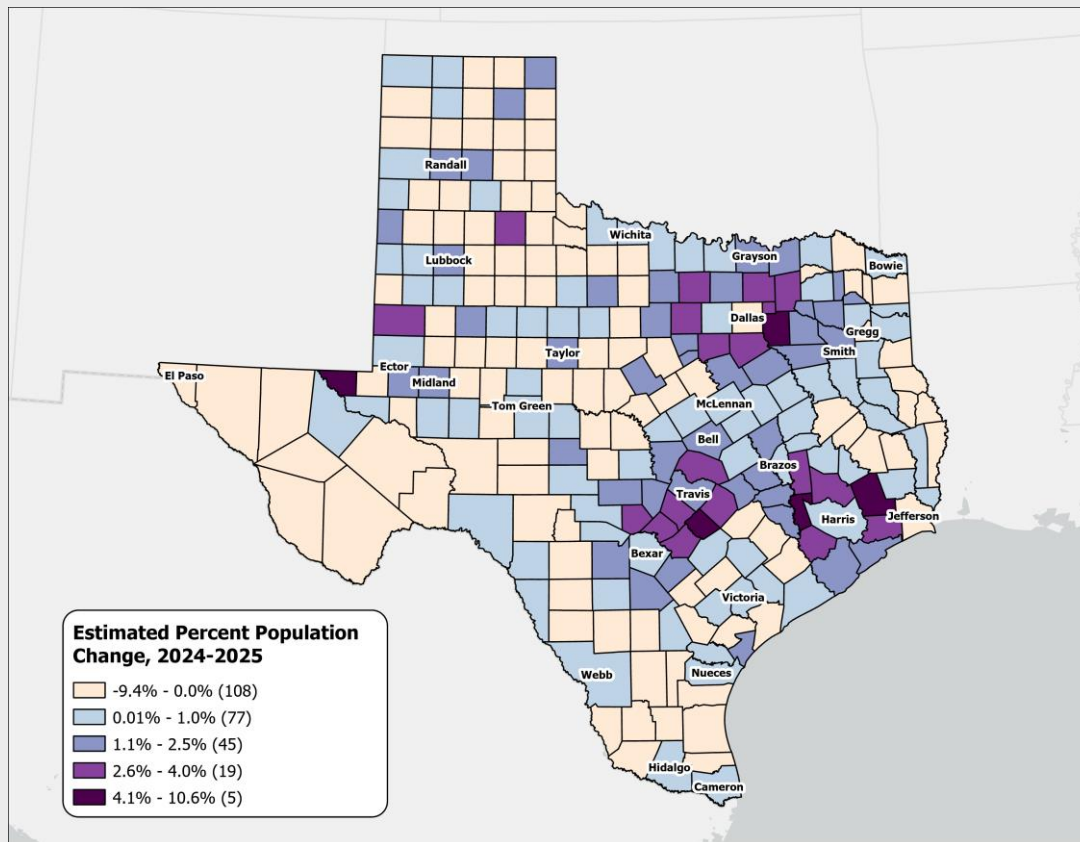
# Estimated Population, Texas Counties, 2025

- Texas population is highly concentrated within the **metropolitan triangle** formed by Dallas–Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston.
- The 120 counties on and east of the **I-35 corridor** are home to 27.3 million residents—approximately **87.3%** of the state’s total population.



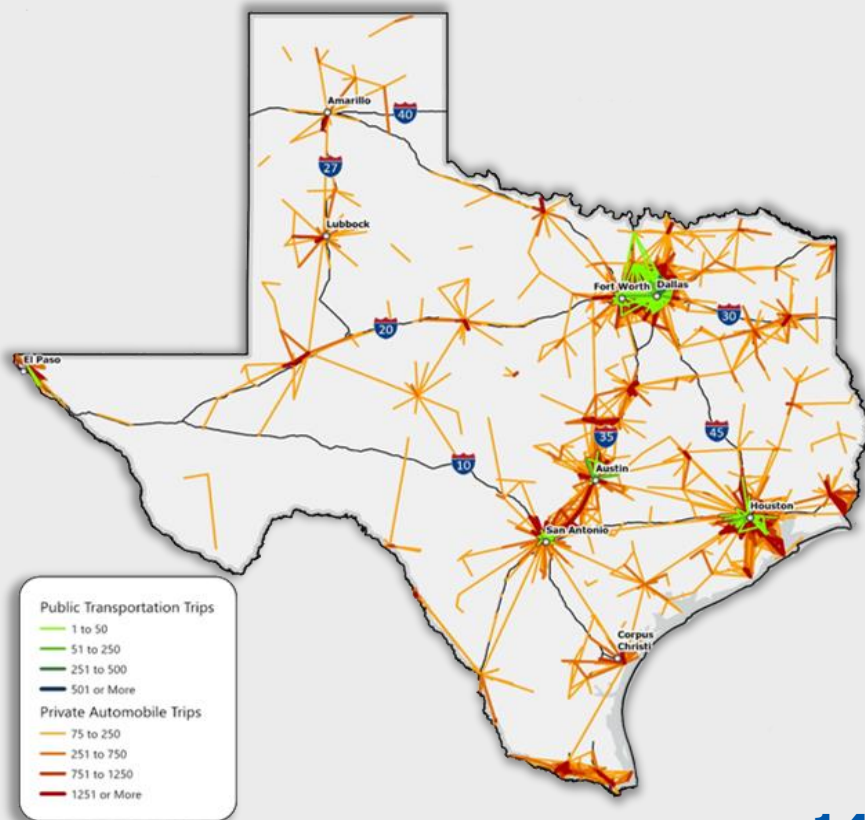
# Estimated Percent Population Change, Texas Counties, 2024-2025

- Rapid growth was concentrated in counties at the suburban and exurban edges of the Texas metropolitan triangle.



## Transit Trips in Texas

- 277 Million transit trips per year
- Concentrated in metro and Urban areas, small communities
- Regional trips concentrated in the Texas Triangle
- DFW region has the highest concentration of Transit usage
- While rural populations are anticipated to decline, rural transit demand will **likely increase** due to an aging population



# Texas' Integrated Multimodal Transit System

In FY 25, public transit providers carried nearly **234 million passengers** over **252 million miles** of service in the state

## Transit Agencies

77 transit districts or authorities

## Intercity Bus Service (ICB)

5 private companies

## Intercity Passenger Rail Service

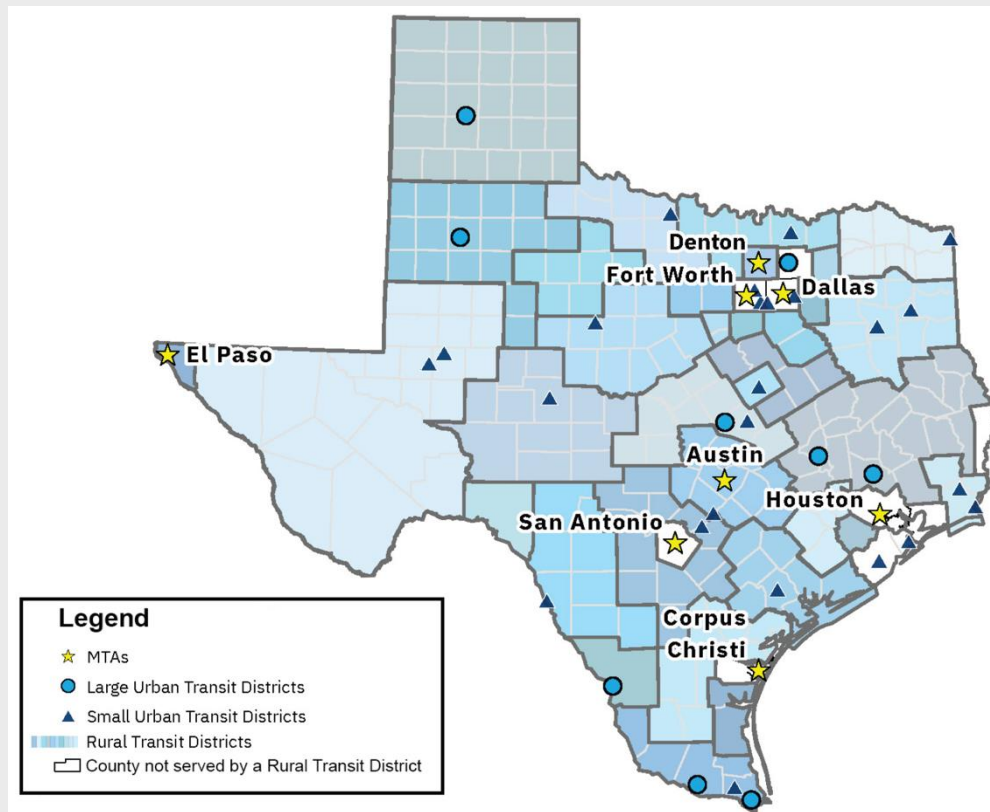
3 Amtrak lines

## Ferries

4 ferries (2 operated by TxDOT)

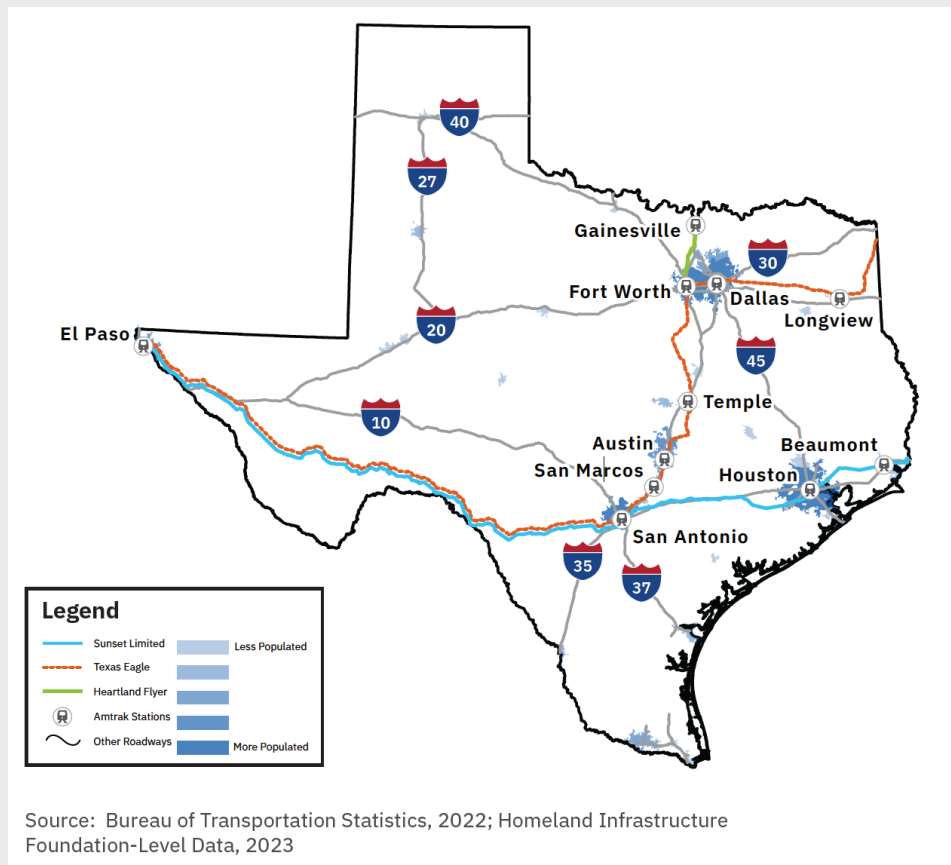


# Texas Transit Agency Landscape



- **8 MTAs**
  - Population > 200k
  - Funded primarily by local sales tax, no state funding
- **9 Large UTDs**
  - Population > 200k
  - Eligible to become MTA with local voter approval, but would become ineligible for state funding
- **24 Small UTDs**
  - Population 50k-199,999
- **36 RTDs**
  - Population < 50k

# Amtrak Routes and Stations

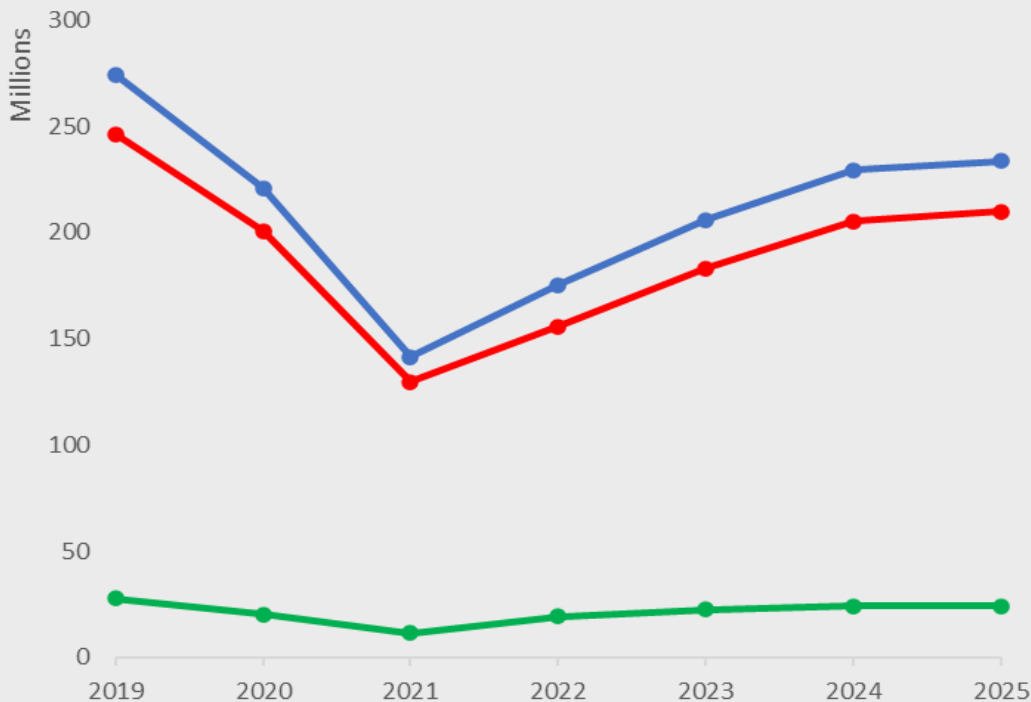


Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2022; Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data, 2023

- **Heartland Flyer**
  - Over 80,000 riders
  - Uncertain funding future
- **Texas Eagle**
  - Long Distance Southwest Route
  - Over 372,000 riders
- **Sunset Limited**
  - Long Distance Southwest Route
  - Over 91,000 riders

What do these routes have in common?  
**Increased ridership**

# Transit Ridership in Texas (2019 – 2025)

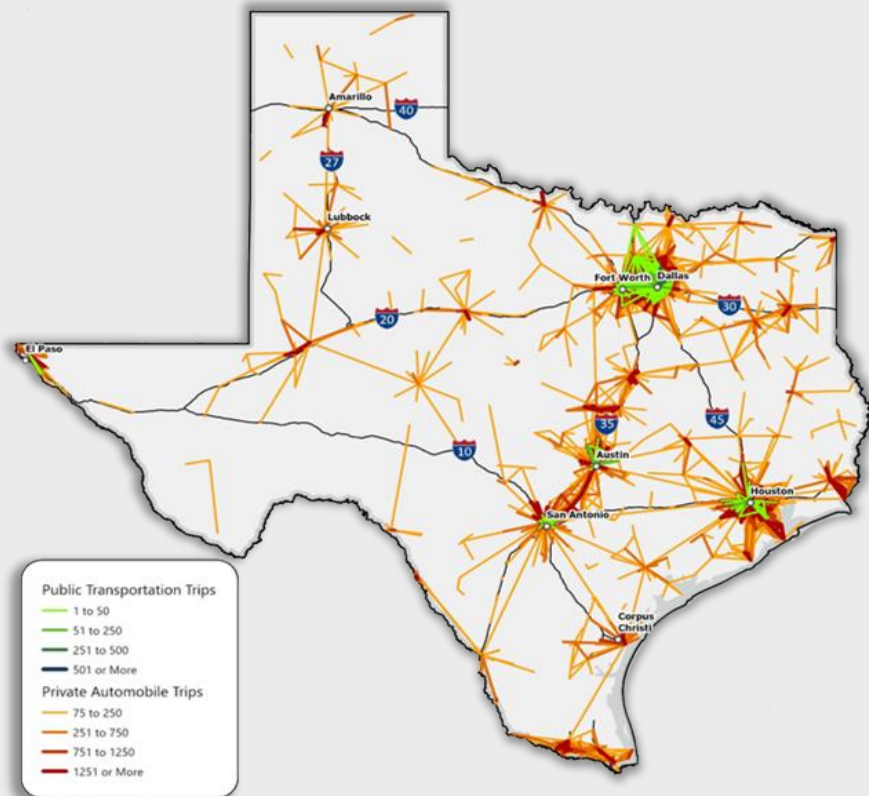


Over 275 million rides/year

Recovery after Pandemic on par with national trends

- Total Passenger Trips
- Metropolitan Trips
- Urban & Rural Trips

# Key Transit Needs in Texas



## Purpose of Transit Trips

- Employment and job-seeking
- Education and training
- Medical and healthcare
- Social and recreational activities
- Tourism
- Personal/business/shopping

## Mobility and accessibility for:

- Veterans
- Adults 65 and older
- Individuals with disabilities
- Choice riders
- Zero-vehicle household

# SMTP Stakeholder and Public Engagement Strategies



## Public Awareness & Outreach

Surveys and in-person “pop-up” outreach to understand public’s transit priorities



## Steering Committee

Policy-focused meetings with experts to define goals and objectives, approve vision, provide direction, and review findings



## Working Groups

Technical-focused meetings with subject-matter experts who can provide input on emphasis areas



## Additional Stakeholder Engagement

Meetings and conversations with stakeholders to gather insights

## SMTP Stakeholder Engagement



**75** attendees provided insights during three rounds of **Emphasis Area Working Group** meetings



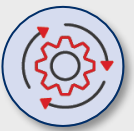
**20** **Steering Committee Members** offered guidance on plan development over 5 meetings



**100+** **industry professionals** gave feedback over the course of 4 TxDOT Semi-Annual Transit Operators meetings



**23** **MPO leaders** were engaged at a 2024 Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations meeting



**60+** representatives from 20 **MPOs** and 4 **economic development groups** attended 15 stakeholder meeting discussions and offered insights on local and regional needs



**10K** **stakeholders** received email updates from TxDOT with info about *Texas SMTP 2050* and links to public surveys

## What We Heard **During SMTP Development**

### Service and Connectivity

Transit operators, planning officials, and the public 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.



# SMTF Public Outreach



Reached over **100,000 Texans** through 4 phases of outreach in fall 2023, spring 2024, fall 2024, and fall 2025



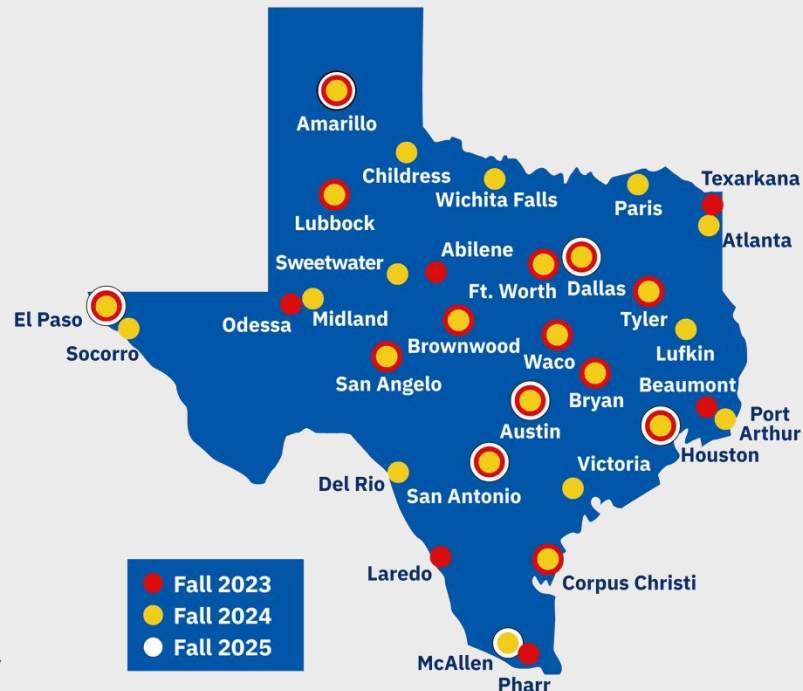
Held in-person events in all **25 TxDOT districts**, interacting with nearly 2,200 people



**Over 4,000 surveys** completed by the public about transit needs, top challenges and potential strategies, and implementation steps



Key themes heard included service development, rural transit needs, improved facilities, intercity connectivity and informing Texans about the value of transit



## Public Response to the Plan

**"I support statewide mass transit.** Texas is a state of freedom and of building. So, let's give the freedom to choose, and let's build more transit options."

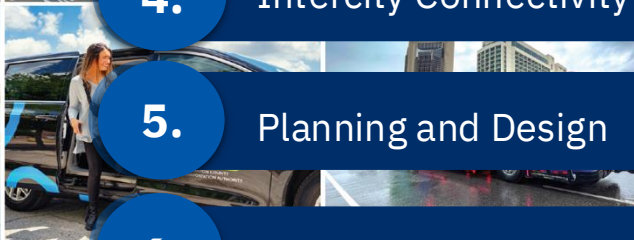
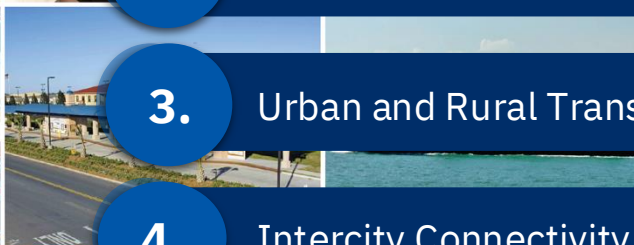
"TxDOT should consider the **emerging modes** in the rapid evolution of multi-modal transit."

"Thank you for acknowledging that **Texas needs more transit options.**"



# Texas Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan 2050

January 2026



1. Introduction

2. Transit in Texas Today

3. Urban and Rural Transit Service

4. Intercity Connectivity

5. Planning and Design

6. Funding: Maintain and Expand Services

7. Texas Transit Forward

# Needs, Gaps, and Challenges

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



<b>Urban and Rural Area Transit Services</b>	<b>Intercity Connections</b>	<b>Planning and Design</b>	<b>Funding: Maintain and Expand Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing urban areas</li> <li>• Transit access to economic opportunities</li> <li>• Congestion driven by growth</li> <li>• Rural and small urban area general mobility networks</li> <li>• Workforce recruitment, training and retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statewide transit service network and connectivity</li> <li>• Intercity connectivity</li> <li>• Governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit and the transportation planning and design process</li> <li>• Transit resilience</li> <li>• Public awareness of the importance of transit</li> <li>• Inconsistent consideration of transit in economic development</li> <li>• Aligning transit with development and transit-supportive land uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain critical assets</li> <li>• Need to maintain and expand service levels</li> <li>• Funding for new and improved service</li> <li>• Funding challenges and constraints</li> </ul>

# Strategies

Needs, gaps, and challenges were aligned with corresponding strategies intended to address the issues. The strategies below emerged from a list of over 250 ideas and have been crafted with stakeholder feedback at top of mind.



<b>Urban and Rural Area Transit Services</b>	<b>Intercity Connections</b>	<b>Planning and Design</b>	<b>Funding: Maintain and Expand Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority corridors and estimate minimum levels of service</li> <li>• Integrate all transit modes and mobility options with other transportation modes</li> <li>• Establish institutional and organizational partnerships to promote comprehensive workforce development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a statewide route and hub network</li> <li>• Develop a governance framework for statewide and regional intercity services</li> <li>• Implement technology to transform seamless travel statewide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and document statewide Texas transit benefits</li> <li>• Integrate transit through local, regional, and statewide planning</li> <li>• Incorporate transportation technology</li> <li>• Prioritize safety and resiliency</li> <li>• Enhanced research, reporting and knowledge sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize use of existing funding</li> <li>• Expand sources, flexibility, and levels of funding</li> <li>• Tie funding to growth and performance</li> </ul>

# Texas SMTP 2050 Structure

	Needs, Gaps, and Challenges	Strategies	Steps for Implementation
<b>Urban and Rural Area Transit Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing urban areas</li> <li>▪ Transit access to economic opportunities</li> <li>▪ Congestion driven by growth</li> <li>▪ Rural and small urban area general mobility networks</li> <li>▪ Workforce recruitment, training, and retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify priority corridors and estimate minimum levels of service</li> <li>▪ Integrate all transit modes and mobility options with other transportation modes</li> <li>▪ Establish institutional and organizational partnerships to promote comprehensive workforce development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Initial Priority Steps</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a community of practice (CoP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges <i>(TxDOT-led)</i></li> <li>2. Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan <i>(TxDOT-led and -facilitated)</i></li> <li>3. Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines <i>(TxDOT-facilitated)</i></li> <li>4. Develop success metrics, enhance and broaden data collection, and develop consistent reporting <i>(TxDOT-facilitated)</i></li> <li>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></li> <li>6. Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on the benefits of transit <i>(TxDOT-led and -facilitated)</i></li> </ol>
<b>Intercity Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statewide transit service network and connectivity</li> <li>▪ Intercity connectivity</li> <li>▪ Governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify a statewide route and hub network</li> <li>▪ Develop a governance framework for statewide and regional intercity services</li> <li>▪ Implement technology to enable seamless travel statewide</li> </ul>	
<b>Planning and Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transit and the transportation planning and design process</li> <li>▪ Transit resilience</li> <li>▪ Public awareness of the importance of transit</li> <li>▪ Inconsistent consideration of transit in economic development</li> <li>▪ Aligning transit with development and transit-supportive land uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research and document statewide transit benefits</li> <li>▪ Integrate transit through local, regional, and statewide planning</li> <li>▪ Incorporate transportation technology</li> <li>▪ Prioritize safety and resiliency</li> <li>▪ Enhance research, reporting, and knowledge sharing</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding: Maintain and Expand Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain critical assets</li> <li>▪ Need to maintain and expand service levels</li> <li>▪ Funding for new and improved service</li> <li>▪ Funding challenges and constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize use of existing funding</li> <li>▪ Expand sources, flexibility, and levels of funding</li> <li>▪ Tie funding to growth and performance</li> </ul>	

## Initial Priority Actions to Address Texas' Transit Needs

Six priority steps are intended to jumpstart the process and build a strong foundation for realizing *Texas SMTP 2050* by identifying plans, policies, or programs necessary for carrying out the strategies.



Establish a Community of Practice (CoP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges

*TxDOT-led*



Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan

*TxDOT-led and -facilitated*



Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines

*TxDOT-facilitated*



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

*TxDOT-facilitated*



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

*TxDOT-supported*



Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on the benefits of transit.

*TxDOT-led and -facilitated*

# Establish a Community of Practice (CoP) to address small urban and rural transit challenges

*TxDOT-led*

**The assembled team focused on this Priority Step would prioritize fostering collaboration and partnerships.**

## **Activities should include:**

- Developing a CoP to support RTDs and small UTDs
  - Sharing best practices
  - Leveraging joint purchasing training, research and development
  - Other strategies to help improve agency operations and fiscal responsibility
- Increasing cross-agency and multi-modal collaboration
- Enhancing TxDOT division and district coordination

## Develop a statewide transit network and hub plan

*TxDOT-led and  
-facilitated*

**TxDOT will work to develop a plan that connects transit regions and provides Texans with an accessible way to travel across Texas without a car. The network and hub plan should identify:**

- Key corridors needed to connect priority transit destinations statewide
- Key hub locations providing local, regional, and first- and last-mile connections
- Transit priority corridors within each region where transit treatments to improve safety, speed, and reliability should be considered in the planning, design, and construction processes

# Develop flexible statewide transit planning and design guidelines

*TxDOT-facilitated*

**This focused engagement will help develop planning process improvements and design guidelines—both of which should incorporate research, best practices, and stakeholder input.**

- While every project location is unique, it is important to set standards for transit design, particularly when projects exist within public rights-of-way
- Creating common language and expectations around transit and land use planning will help facilitate improved safety, security, and traveler comfort

# Develop success metrics, enhance and broaden data collection, and develop consistent reporting

*TxDOT-facilitated*

**Building on current methods, TxDOT—with partner support—will facilitate an effort to streamline the reporting structure, including providing additional information on performance and future needs.**

## **Activities should include:**

- Creating metrics focused on “movement of people” for use in transportation planning projects
- Further developing metrics that focus on the impacts of transit on business, the Texas economy, and community value
- Streamlining the reporting process by using the latest technology and best practices to reduce reporting time while adding additional metrics
- Updating the reporting structure to better convey the importance of transit in Texas

# Identify options to increase flexibility of funding sources and identify new and innovative funding sources to maintain and expand transit

*TxDOT-supported*

**Moving forward, flexible funding would allow agencies to invest in emerging technologies, work across jurisdictional boundaries, and develop new types of transit services. To advance this effort, TxDOT will identify non-TxDOT entities to lead a team that:**

- Works with key agencies to help identify and reduce or remove funding restrictions that prevent transit agencies from leveraging their funding to the highest and best use
- Identifies and develops new sources of funding—including non-traditional sources, innovative partnerships, and local funding—at all levels to diversify the revenue supporting transit

# Formalize a plan for regular outreach and education on the benefits of transit




*TxDOT-led and -facilitated*

**Proactively engaging with Texans on how transit fits into the overall transportation network and addresses critical transportation needs will help build support for long-term investment in transit.**

**Activities TxDOT can use to build upon *Texas SMTP 2050* public awareness campaigns and outreach efforts would include:**

- Continuing to collect rider, operator, and business transit stories, especially those showing how transit expands access to opportunities
- Utilizing existing tools and developing new ways of measuring how transit benefits the statewide economy and local communities
- As part of a regular, ongoing program, sharing information with the public and local governments via newsletters, social media, and partnership building activities

## Implementation Activities

- Transit Peer Exchange (TPE) 
- Value of Transit 
- Transit Network and Hub Plan 

## Call to Action

- Align on priority actions for implementation.
- Strengthen coordination across partners and regions.
- Advance a connected, statewide multimodal network.
- Delivering a truly multimodal Texas requires continued collaboration and commitment. How can we each support the successful implementation of these priorities moving forward?

# Thank you!

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