

**CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS  
AGENDA ITEM  
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S SUMMARY FORM**

**AGENDA DATE:** July 6, 2022

**PUBLIC HEARING DATE:** N/A

**CONTACT PERSON(S) NAME AND PHONE NUMBER:** Ellen A. Smyth, P.E., Chief Transit and Field Operations Officer (915) 212-6000

**DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED:** All

**STRATEGIC GOAL:** Strategic Goal 7 – Enhance and Sustain El Paso's Infrastructure Network  
**SUBGOAL:**

**SUBJECT:**

TxDOT State Safety Oversight Annual Status Report for CY21

**BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:**

Item is for notation only

**PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:**

N/A

**AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

**HAVE ALL AFFECTED DEPARTMENTS BEEN NOTIFIED?** ☒ YES ☐ NO

**PRIMARY DEPARTMENT:** Sun Metro

**SECONDARY DEPARTMENT:**

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\*\*\*\*\*REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION\*\*\*\*\*

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:**



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For Department Head Ellen Smyth, (If Department Head Summary Form is initiated by Purchasing, client department should sign also)



# Calendar Year 2021 State Safety Oversight Program Annual Status Report

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Public Transportation Division

May 2022

## **Purpose**

This report summarizes the activities of the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) State Safety Oversight (SSO) Program to address state and federal safety regulations during Calendar Year (CY) 2021 and includes data from the 2021 Annual Report to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This report is prepared annually to provide the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, the FTA, and the governing body of each rail fixed guideway public transportation system with a status of the safety for the rail fixed guideway public transportation systems TxDOT oversees.

## **Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation Systems in Texas**

Currently, there are six Rail Transit Agencies (RTAs) in Texas under the safety oversight of the State Safety Oversight Program administered by TxDOT.

- Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)
- Dallas Streetcar (DSC)
- El Paso Streetcar (EPSC)
- Galveston Island Trolley (GIT)
- McKinney Avenue Transit Authority (MATA)
- Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro)

A seventh agency, Capital Metro in Austin, is anticipated to enter the TxDOT SSO Program in the next few years. In November 2020, the voters in Austin approved "Project Connect," an expansion plan for public transportation that includes two new light rail lines; the Blue Line (traveling from north Austin through downtown to the airport) and the Orange Line (traveling from north Austin through downtown to south Austin). At the end of CY 2021, Project Connect was in preliminary engineering and environmental review.

On October 1, 2021, Galveston Island Trolley (GIT) restarted operations after ceasing operations in 2008 due to Hurricane Ike. GIT operates a fleet of four vintage diesel-powered trolleys along two primary routes: a downtown loop and a cross island connection route.

## **COVID-19 Impacts on State Safety Oversight**

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the State Safety Oversight Program and the rail transit agencies during 2020. The COVID-19 challenges continued in 2021 and required transit agencies to continue safety measures including passenger masking, social

distancing, enhanced cleaning of vehicles, and vaccination and teleworking for rail agency and TxDOT staff.

By the spring of 2021, the COVID outlook had improved significantly, and coupled with increased ridership, the rail agencies began efforts to return operations to near pre-pandemic levels of service. Most notable, the El Paso Streetcar resumed passenger operations in July 2021 after suspending service in March 2020.

## **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**

On November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law. The IIJA will impact the TxDOT SSO Program and rail agencies in the following areas:

- Increases the SSO FY22 funding apportionment by 70% and provides modest funding increases through FY26.
- Provides TxDOT the authority to collect data from rail agencies and conduct risk-based inspections at rail agencies,
- Requires agency safety plans to be consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health authority guidelines to minimize exposure to infectious diseases,
- Includes transit agency frontline employees in the agency safety plans update process, and
- Requires transit agencies to develop risk reduction programs to reduce accidents, injuries, and operator assaults.

The TxDOT SSO Program will provide technical assistance to ensure rail agencies in Texas implement the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requirements in accordance with FTA requirements.

## **TxDOT State Safety Oversight Program Standard**

The Texas Department of Transportation issued a revised SSO Program Standard in September 2021. The RTAs were provided an opportunity to submit revision suggestions in June 2021, and to review and comment on the Program Standard draft in August 2021. TxDOT's latest Program Standard is posted on the TxDOT website at: <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/state-safety-oversight.html>

## **Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASP) Status**

The Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) describes a rail agency's safety policies, procedures, objectives, and responsibilities. Rail agencies must review and, if necessary, update

their PTASPs annually. TxDOT must approve all revisions made to PTASPs. The following table summarizes the PTASP approval date of each RTA in TxDOT's SSO program.

**Table 1: Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans**

Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation Systems	Date of Approval
Dallas Area Rapid Transit	April 15, 2021
Dallas Streetcar	April 27, 2021
El Paso Streetcar	April 15, 2021
Galveston Island Trolley	January 20, 2021
McKinney Avenue Transit Authority	July 21, 2021
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County	March 4, 2021

## Summary of CY 2021 Rail Transit Agency Annual Safety Report

FTA requires TxDOT to submit an annual report by March 15 that covers safety performance and other information for each RTA overseen by TxDOT. The report is a detailed electronic submission containing data and document attachments as prescribed by FTA. Additionally, TxDOT is required to certify that it has complied with the SSO Program requirements found within 49 CFR Part 674- State Safety Oversight. TxDOT submitted its 2021 Annual Report to FTA on March 4, 2022.

Safety data for CY 2021, as compared to 2020, shows 24% more accidents, which is explained by increased passenger service and increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic as commuters began returning to pre-COVID commuting and travel routines. Additionally, the accident data shows 12 evacuations for life safety reasons occurred in 2021; compared with 4 evacuations for life safety reasons in 2020. Many of the evacuations for life safety reasons were the result of security events occurring on trains or station platforms. Rail agencies continue to coordinate closely with safety and law enforcement personnel to ensure passenger safety.

Corrective action plans for 2021 show an 11% increase over 2020 due to triennial audits of two of the six rail agencies conducted in 2021 revealing deficiencies requiring resolution through the corrective action plan process. Common triennial audit issues include deficiencies due to procedures, documents, or plans that require update.

The following table summarizes the significant safety information and activities provided in the FTA report for CY 2021 and provides a comparison with CY 2020 data.

**Table 2: Safety Activities for January 1 through December 31, 2021**

Safety Activities	2020 Totals	2021 Totals
Accidents <sup>1</sup>	58	72
Reported Hazards <sup>2</sup>	2	1
Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) <sup>3</sup>	62	69

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with TxDOT SSO Program Standard and 49 CFR 674.33, accidents must be reported that meet the following thresholds.

- a) Fatality (occurring at the scene or within 30 days following the accident);
- b) One or more persons suffering serious injury
- c) Property damage resulting from a collision involving a rail transit vehicle; or any derailment of a rail transit vehicle;
- d) A collision between a rail transit vehicle and another rail transit vehicle;
- e) A collision at a grade crossing resulting in serious injury or fatality;
- f) A collision with a person or object resulting in serious injury or fatality;
- g) A runaway train;
- h) Evacuation due to life safety reasons;
- i) Fires resulting in a serious injury or fatality.

<sup>2</sup> Reported Hazards are real or potential conditions that can cause injury, illness, or death; damage to or loss of the facilities, equipment, rolling stock, or infrastructure of a rail fixed guideway public transportation system; or damage to the environment; and that meet the RTA's thresholds in their safety plans for reporting to the TxDOT SSO Program

<sup>3</sup> Corrective action plans (CAPs) are developed by a Rail Transit Agency to describe required actions and associated schedule needed to minimize, control, correct, or eliminate risks and hazards.