



Calendar Year 2020 State Safety Oversight Program Annual Status Report

Public Transportation Division

May 2021

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) 2020, and includes data from the 2020 Annual Report to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The report prepared on an annual basis consistent with state and federal requirements to provide a status report on the safety of the rail fixed guideway public transportation systems that TxDOT oversees to 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 under the oversight of the Texas Department of Transportation.

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 (City of Dallas)
- El Paso Streetcar (City of El Paso)
- Galveston Island Trolley (City of Galveston)
- McKinney Avenue Transit Authority (MATA)
- Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Metro)

In November 2020, the voters in Austin approved "Project Connect," an expansion plan for public transportation that includes additional light rail corridors that will fall under state safety oversight beginning in 2021. At least two new light rail lines are planned. Development of these new rail lines is transitioning from the alternatives analysis phases of development to preliminary engineering and environmental review. TxDOT SSO program staff began coordination with the City of Austin to eventually include this seventh system as an RTA in the TxDOT-administered State Safety Oversight Program.

COVID-19 Impacts on State Safety Oversight

The COVID-19 crisis presented unprecedented challenges for the State Safety Oversight Program during 2020. Throughout 2020, the rail transit agencies under TxDOT safety oversight have shown resilience, flexibility, and commitment to safety in responding to the continued health impacts created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In February 2020, rail agencies began assessing the health and safety risks posed by COVID-19. Shortly thereafter, the agencies began implementing new and enhanced measures to improve the safety of their employees and passengers. These measures included teleworking when possible, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings for both employees and customers, social distancing in offices, facilities and vehicles, service modifications, such as reduced service, and in some cases, short-term or long-term system shutdowns.

As government imposed lockdowns and business shutdowns ease, and Texas begins to recover from COVID-19, rail agencies continue safety measures to ensure the safety of employees and passengers.

All six operating rail systems experienced reductions and changes to service for varied periods of time in 2020. One system, the El Paso Street Car, suspended service from March 23, 2020 through the end of the year. As of the publishing of this report, El Paso has yet to resume street car service. For a variety of reasons including adjusting to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, start-up of rail service in Galveston was delayed until mid-year 2021.

TxDOT State Safety Oversight Program Standard

The Texas Department of Transportation issued a revised SSO Program Standard in October 2020. The RTAs were provided an opportunity to submit revision suggestions in June 2020, and to review and comment on the Program Standard draft in September 2020. TxDOT's 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)

In accordance with federal regulations (43 CFR 673), the RTAs under TxDOT's safety oversight are required to have a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) approved no later than July 20, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FTA issued two Notices of Enforcement Discretion for the PTASP regulations. FTA will refrain from taking enforcement action until July 21, 2021 for agencies unable to certify compliance with the PTASP regulation. The following table summarizes the PTASP approval date of each RTA under TxDOT's SSO program.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan¹

Rail Fixed Guideway Public Transportation Systems	Date of Approval
Dallas Area Rapid Transit	June 9, 2020
Dallas Streetcar	November 2, 2020
El Paso Streetcar	February 6, 2020
Galveston Island Trolley	January 21, 2021 ²
McKinney Avenue Transit Authority	July 7, 2020
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County	March 5, 2020

¹ A Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) describes a rail agency's safety policies, procedures, objectives, and responsibilities.

² Galveston Island Trolley is in the re-development stages of its rail trolley system and anticipates beginning passenger operations by mid-2021.

Summary of CY 2020 Rail Transit Agency Annual Safety Report

FTA requires TxDOT to submit an annual report by March 15 that covers the previous calendar year's safety performance, and other information, for each RTA overseen by TxDOT. That report is a detailed electronic submission complete with attachments as prescribed by FTA and required of all SSOAs. Additionally, TxDOT is required to certify that it has complied with all federal SSO Program requirements. TxDOT submitted its 2020 Annual Report to FTA on March 10, 2021. The following table summarizes the significant safety information and activities provided in the FTA report for CY 2020, and provides a comparison with CY 2019 data.

Safety Activities for January 1 through December 31, 2020

Safety Activities	2019 State-wide Totals	2020 State-wide Totals
Accidents ¹	64	58
Reported Hazards ²	4	2
Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) ³	93	62

¹ 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.
- ² 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
- ³ Corrective action plans (CAPs) are plans developed by a Rail Transit Agency that describe the actions a Rail Transit Agency will take to minimize, control, correct, or eliminate risks and hazards, and the schedule for taking those actions.