Agency	Texas Department of Transportation
Budget recommendation	Fund the full $74.8 million biennial public transportation request and create a dedicated General Revenue grant program through TxDOT to leverage Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 and Section 5311 funds for accessible and rural transportation in every county.

Prepared Testimony

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Lidia Fonseca. I am a lifelong South Texas resident, a parent of children with disabilities, and the daughter of parents with disabilities. I lead a nonprofit in the Rio Grande Valley. I also chair my county Prosperity Task Force's Transportation Committee and the regional transportation advisory panel in the Rio Grande Valley. I am testifying today in my personal capacity. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Texas Department of Transportation's budget as priorities are developed before the Legislature convenes in January 2027.

I am asking the state to increase funding for accessible public transportation so that people in every Texas county have a dependable way to reach health care, employment, education, and essential community services. Where a person lives should not determine whether they have the freedom to participate in their community.

In South Texas, distance is part of daily life. A medical specialist, job opportunity, college class, or government office may be located in another city or county. For a person who does not drive because of disability, age, income, or lack of access to a vehicle, that distance can become a wall. A place may be only 20 or 30 miles away, but without a reliable ride, it might as well be hundreds of miles away.

Through my work and community service, I have seen people plan an entire day around one trip. I have seen people delay health care because a ride was unavailable, spend hours waiting for a return trip, or lose an employment opportunity because transit did not run early enough, late enough, or across county lines. Families often fill the gap, but not everyone has relatives who can leave work, drive long distances, or provide accessible transportation. Dependence on family should not be the transportation policy of the State of Texas.

As a parent of children with disabilities and the daughter of parents with disabilities, I also understand that transportation must be more than present. It must be usable. A vehicle may be labeled accessible, but the full trip can still fail if a lift is out of service, a stop has no accessible path, a reservation system is difficult to navigate, information is not available in accessible formats, or a rider cannot cross a service boundary. Accessibility must be measured from the moment a person plans a trip until that person arrives safely and can return home.

Transportation is the bridge to nearly every other public investment Texas makes. A workforce program cannot succeed if a participant cannot reach training or a job. Health coverage cannot protect someone who cannot reach a doctor. Education funding cannot create opportunity if a student cannot reach class. Home- and community-based services cannot fully support independence if a person is isolated at home. Transportation is not a luxury. It is a condition for health, work, education, and community living.

TxDOT's own budget documents recognize that public transportation funding has not consistently kept pace with population growth, inflation, and increasing demand. They also identify the added pressures facing rural areas and communities near the Texas–Mexico border. Those realities are familiar in the Rio Grande Valley, where service areas are large, destinations are spread across multiple cities and counties, and local providers must stretch limited operating dollars.

TxDOT has proposed three important public transportation investments for the 2028–2029 biennium: $25.8 million to offset higher operating costs for state-funded rural and urban transit districts; $9 million to improve rural fleets and facilities; and $40 million to move toward statewide minimum service levels. Together, those requests total $74.8 million. These investments would help providers keep vehicles on the road, maintain safe and accessible equipment, recruit and retain drivers, and expand service where current schedules or coverage are inadequate.

I urge TxDOT and the Legislative Budget Board to fund the full $74.8 million request. In addition, I ask the state to create a dedicated General Revenue grant program through TxDOT and use those state dollars to leverage Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 and Section 5311 funds for accessible and rural transportation. Section 5310 supports transportation for older adults and people with disabilities, while Section 5311 supports public transportation in rural areas. A dedicated state program would help Texas draw down and make better use of available federal resources, strengthen local matching capacity, and extend accessible service to counties and communities that cannot build reliable transportation systems with federal funds alone.

These investments should be tied to outcomes people can feel in their daily lives: reliable service, accessible vehicles and stops, reasonable hours, shorter waits, cross-county connections, and meaningful coverage in underserved counties. Statewide minimum service levels and the new grant program should include clear accessibility standards rather than treating accessibility as an optional add-on.

Texas should also support stronger coordination among rural and small urban transit providers, local governments, health systems, workforce programs, and organizations led by people with disabilities. Riders should not have to understand multiple funding streams or service boundaries just to get to a medical appointment or job. Planning should include people with disabilities from the beginning, because those who use the system know where it breaks down and what would make it work.

A person should not lose a job because a bus does not cross a county line. A patient should not delay care because there is no return trip. A disabled Texan should not be pushed toward isolation or an institution because transportation is unavailable. Every Texan deserves the freedom to move through their community, regardless of disability, income, ZIP code, or county. I urge you to make accessible transportation a statewide commitment: fully fund the $74.8

million public transportation request, create a dedicated General Revenue grant program through TxDOT, and leverage Section 5310 and Section 5311 funds to expand accessible and rural transportation across Texas. Thank you.

Sources: TxDOT FY 2028–29 Legislative Appropriations Request; FTA Section 5310; FTA Section 5311