

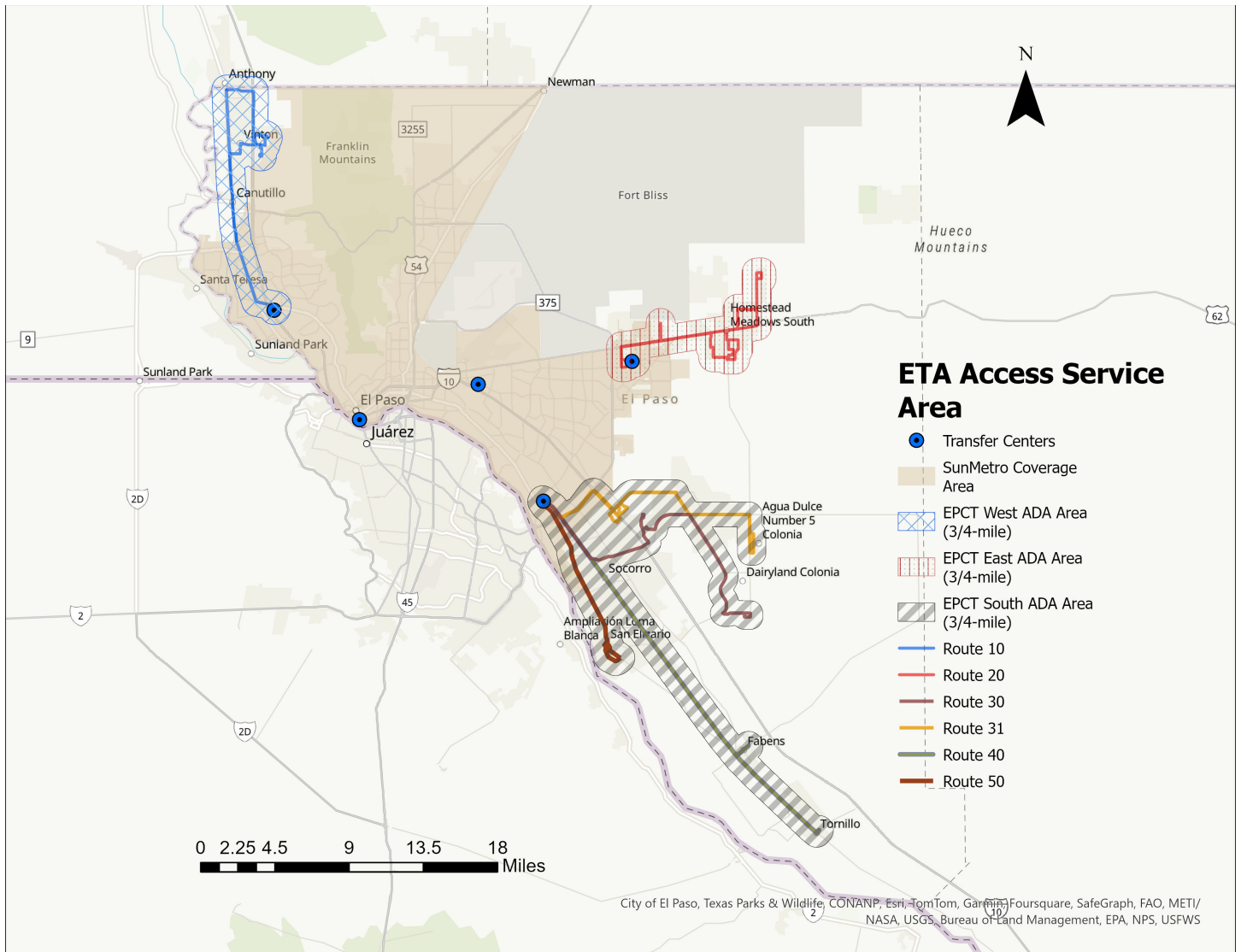


2024

ETA

access

**ADA PARATRANSIT PLAN
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
WORKBOOK**



ADA PARATRANSIT PLAN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK WORKBOOK

Dialogue Focus

- Balance of Service Sustainability
- And Service Performance

Goal: For individuals with disabilities and groups representing individuals with disabilities to provide input on the 7 areas of interest into the development of the ADA paratransit plan

Desired Outcome: Gauge public opinion on the ADA Plan 7 areas of interest, and use the public feedback to inform the ADA paratransit plan.

Your participation to answer the questions in this workbook is **voluntary**. Your answers will be **anonymous** (please do not record your name). Respondents **must be 18 years or older**.

Staff is available if you have a question.

The discussion group will take about 90 minutes. If you need assistance, or if you would like a private space to answer the questions, please tell your group facilitator.

The purpose of the questions in this workbook is to gather community feedback on the El Paso Area Transportation Services, LGC (EPATS) ADA Paratransit Plan.

EPATS is conducting these community workshops. EPATS asked the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to record and summarize the responses to the questions in this workbook.

TTI is responsible for ensuring all responses are anonymous and accurately reported. If you have questions about this workbook please contact:

Reyna Mayorga, El Paso County Planning & Development Department at (915) 273-3330, rmayorga@epcounty.com.

ADA PARATRANSIT PLAN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK WORKBOOK

ETA Access EPATS ADA Paratransit Plan

Small Group Discussion Format

- Each group will have:
 - Facilitator
 - Note Taker
 - Workbooks for all participants
- Facilitators will lead groups through the 7 areas of interest
- TTI staff is on hand as technical resources
- Timer – 10 minutes per topic
- A glossary of terms is listed in the back of the workbook as well as an extra page for additional comments.

**Workbooks with responses will be collected
at the end of the workshop**

Additional workbook copies will be available, upon request, when you leave.

1

Service Area

ADA regulations require transit agencies that operate fixed route transit to also provide complementary ADA paratransit service. At a minimum, the service must operate within the same service area that is within 3/4-mile on either side of fixed routes.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Agencies that operate fixed route service must provide ADA paratransit service *comparable* to the fixed route system.

Transit agencies may choose to offer premium service. Premium means service that extends beyond the minimum ADA requirements.

Transit agencies may charge a higher fare for premium service.

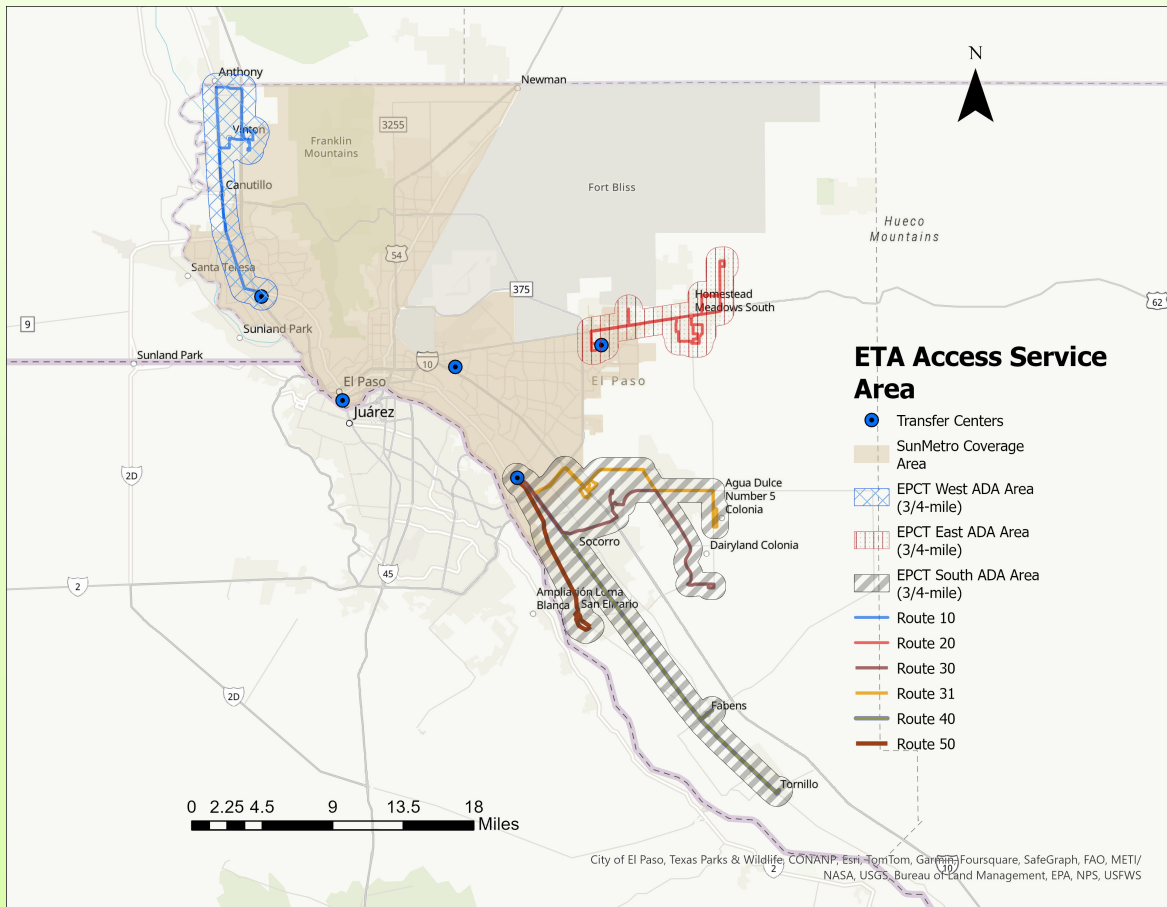
EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

ETA Access will serve three zones— West, East and South within the 3/4-mile corridor of fixed routes (see Map).

ETA Access also proposes to provide premium service to connect to Sun Metro's ADA Paratransit service area— limited to 3/4-mile corridor of Sun Metro's fixed routes.

The premium service trip lengths will be about twice the mileage and will cost EPATS about twice the cost to provide.

Proposed ETA Access Service Area Map



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access should provide premium service to connect to Sun Metro's ADA paratransit service area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

2

Service Days and Hours

ADA regulations require transit agencies that operate fixed route transit to also provide complementary ADA paratransit service. At a minimum, the service must operate within the same days and hours as the fixed routes.

American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Agencies are obligated to provide ADA paratransit on the same days and during the same hours as the fixed route service.

The ADA does not require paratransit service to operate when the fixed route is not in operation.

For example, not all El Paso County fixed routes operate on Sunday and some routes start later than others on weekdays. The ADA does not require that the paratransit system operate when these fixed routes are not operating.

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

ETA Access proposes service to operate seven days a week for all ETA Access zones (exceeding ADA requirements) for ease of use.

ETA Access proposes service to begin when the earliest fixed route begins, and end when the latest fixed route ends (exceeding ADA requirement) for ease of use.

The ETA Access proposed service days and hours are as follows:

Monday through Friday:

5:00 am to 8:20 pm

Saturday/Sunday:

7:00 am to 6:00 pm

Peer Transit Agencies

Some transit agencies strictly provide ADA paratransit service on days and hours when fixed route service starts and ends. Agencies can expand and contract ADA paratransit hours throughout the day to mimic the fixed route.

Many transit agencies opt to set service hours by the first fixed route of the day to the last fixed route of the day offering a higher level of service availability.

Agencies may also provide service seven days a week even when fixed route service is not 7-day service offering a higher level of service availability.

Offering 7-day service with expanded service hours requires more agency resources (higher cost), and at the same time increases access for the customer to jobs, education, and recreation.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access service should operate with the expanded proposed service schedule.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

3

Fares

A transit agency charges the customer a fare to cover a portion of the cost of providing the service.

The average cost of providing ADA paratransit service is three and a half times more expensive than fixed route.

American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Fares for ADA paratransit cannot exceed twice the fare for a similar trip at the same time of day on the fixed route system.

Transit agencies may charge a premium fare for service beyond the minimum required 3/4-mile boundary.

A personal care attendant (someone who provides assistance to the ADA-eligible rider) shall not be charged a fare.

The fare for a companion is the same as for the ADA-eligible paratransit rider.

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

EPATS fixed route bus fare is \$1.50. ETA Access *could* charge a maximum \$3.00 fare.

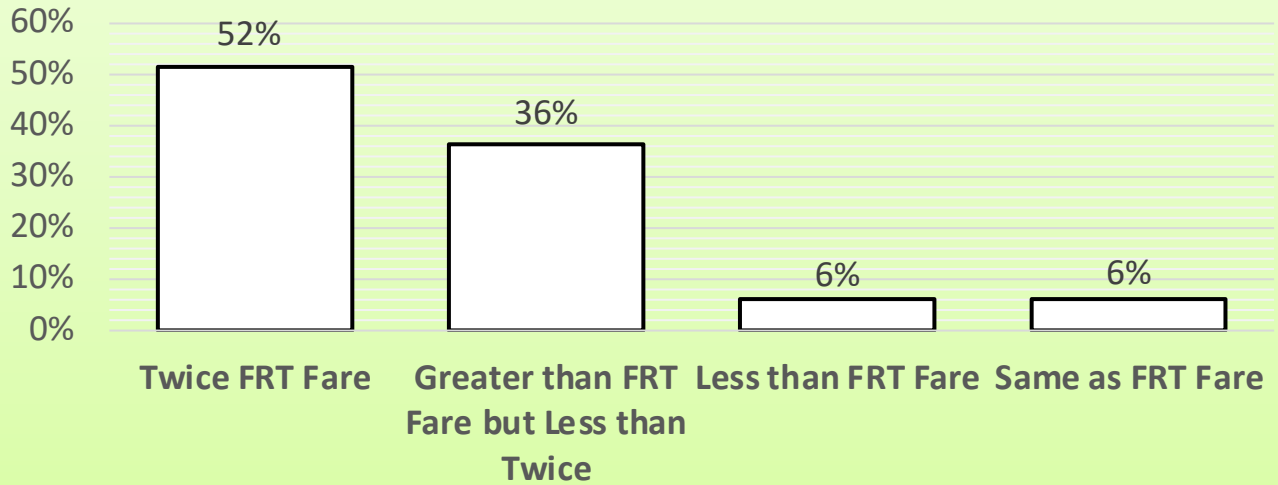
ETA Access proposes a fare of \$2.50 per passenger trip which is the same as Sun Metro's ADA paratransit (LIFT) fare.

For trips connecting to the Sun Metro ADA paratransit service area (premium service), ETA Access proposes to charge a fare of \$5.00 for the longer, more costly trips.

The proposed fare is estimated to cover about 4% of ETA Access operating costs.

Peer Transit Agencies

There are 33 Texas transit agencies that provide ADA paratransit. These include rural, small urban and large urban transit agencies. The below chart provides the **percent of the 33 agencies that have ADA fares greater than or less than the fixed route transit (FRT) fare:**



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access should consider a higher fare than \$2.50 to cover a higher percent of the operating cost.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ETA Access should consider a premium fare of \$5.00 to serve the longer distance, more costly trips into the Sun Metro service area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Comments

4

On-Time Performance

On-time performance (OTP) is the ability to pickup and drop-off customers within a set time window. OTP is a factor of scheduling and dispatch, customer no-shows/late cancellations, driver experience, vehicle reliability, and traffic/weather conditions.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Transit agencies must not have a significant number of pickups and drop-offs outside of the on-time performance windows.

Compliance is a factor of the number of trips within the pickup window and how transit agency practice keeps service on-time.

Agencies should not have practices that cause trips to be late, such as scheduling trips too tightly or not having enough back-up service.

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

ETA Access proposes that a trip is considered on-time if the vehicle arrives:

For Scheduled Pickups. Within 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time (30-minute window)

For Scheduled Drop-offs. Within 30-minutes prior to the drop-off time

ETA Access performance goal is 100% with a 90% OTP standard for assessing contractor incentives and penalties.

Peer Transit Agencies

The industry standard window is 30 minutes. Longer pickup windows can be a burden on the customer, and can cause inefficient scheduling, and more costly service.

Systems should not have policies that cause late trips such as scheduling too tightly or not having enough backup drivers or vehicles. A 90% standard is common especially for agencies with longer trip lengths.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
For trips scheduled by pickup time , ETA Access pick-up window should be 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled time to be considered on-time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For trips scheduled by drop-off time , ETA Access drop-off window should be 0 to 30 before the drop-off to be considered on-time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The ETA Access on-time performance standard should be 90%.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments					

5

Telephone Capacity

Transit agencies must have the ability to answer customer telephone calls to make a trip reservation, and to find out about the location of their vehicle and ride status. This means that the transit agency must have systems and staffing to meet the call volumes.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Agencies should design and implement systems that minimize:

- unduly long hold times,
- "circuits are busy" messages,
- disconnects, and
- placing answered calls on hold after answered (second holds).

FTA has made it clear that establishing standards and monitoring telephone hold times are key elements of ADA compliance.

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

ETA Access proposes to measure hold times by their **maximum** length, and also the **average** hold time for each hour.

Reservations

ETA Access proposes the goal for reservations calls to be answered in less than two minutes on average and within a maximum of 5 minutes.

Ride Status

ETA Access proposes the goal for customer calls into dispatch ("where's my ride", "late ride", and "ride status") to be answered in less than 1 minute on average and within a maximum of 2 minutes. These calls impact service quality in real time.

Peer Transit Agencies

Current practice is to measure average and maximum hold times in hour increments. Good call center practices include:

- Adequate staffing throughout the day to match call volumes to ensure telephone capacity.
- Consistent documentation of trip information to ensure is recorded correctly and communicated to the customer effectively.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access reservations call standard should be calls answered in less than 2 minutes on average and 5 minutes maximum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ETA Access dispatch call standard should be calls answered in less than 1 minute on average and 2 minutes maximum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

6

Eligibility Program

The eligibility process determines who qualifies for paratransit service. A good process determines who is eligible based only on an applicant's inability to use fixed route services. The process ensures ADA paratransit is available to individuals that qualify for the service.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Eligibility for ADA paratransit is for:

1. People whose disability prevents them from using the fixed route service.
2. People with disabilities who *can* use the fixed route but the fixed route vehicle or the bus stop is inaccessible.
3. People whose disability prevents them from traveling to or from the bus stop or train station due to obstacles that impede them.

ADA gives transit agencies flexibility to design their own eligibility procedures— transit agencies typically use variations of a paper application, in-person interview and/or a functional assessment (observation of applicant's ability to navigate the fixed route).

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

- All fixed route buses are lift equipped to provide access for all riders.
- ETA Access proposes to use a paper application and telephone interview to determine eligibility.
- An in-person functional assessment **may** also be requested by ETA Access to get more detailed information about traveler abilities than might be possible using only the paper application form and telephone interview.
- ETA Access proposes that appropriate professionals such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, or orientation and mobility specialists will conduct the functional assessment.

Peer Transit Agencies

Many agencies use functional assessments to better understand the applicant's abilities to use fixed route services.

- Dallas DART staff includes an Eligibility and Training Specialist to assess an applicant's physical, cognitive or visual ability to access the fixed route.
- Easter Seals Project Action recommends using appropriate professionals such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, or orientation and mobility specialists to conduct the functional assessment.

Using an independent third party to determine eligibility reduces a potential conflict of interest.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access should consider contracting with an independent third-party to determine an applicant's eligibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ETA Access should consider including a functional assessment as part of the eligibility process on an as-needed basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

7

Coordination

The FTA states that where coordination exists “citizens benefit from more extensive service, lower costs and easier access to transportation. Coordination can improve overall mobility within a community.”

EPATS, LGC was created for the purpose of encouraging and assisting local units of government to join and cooperate to provide regional multimodal transportation solutions.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

The FTA requires that ADA paratransit plans include efforts to coordinate service with other entities which have overlapping or contiguous service areas or jurisdictions.

Transit providers are encouraged to coordinate **“to prevent political boundaries from becoming barriers to the travel of individuals with disabilities.”**

FTA encourages transit agencies with contiguous service areas or serving a defined region to coordinate **eligibility determinations** to facilitate regional travel.

FTA encourages coordination with other public entities or private property owners for **bus stops and sidewalks.**

EPATS Proposed Policy and Practices

ETA Access proposes to provide premium service outside of the ETA Access service area to provide round trip travel from the ETA Access service area to the Sun Metro ADA paratransit required service area.

ETA Access proposes to provide Sun Metro LIFT customers service from 3 transit centers into the ETA Access service area and back to destinations within Sun Metro ADA paratransit required service area.

ETA Access proposes to recognize Sun Metro LIFT eligibility determinations as automatically eligible for ETA Access services.

Peer Transit Agencies

Examples of peer agency coordination efforts include:

- Cross-area service
- Cost sharing and funding to enhance transportation for people with disabilities
- Eligibility determination program sharing
- Joint vehicle procurement
- Facility sharing
- Travel training program sharing
- Maintenance/ parts sharing programs
- Improvements to fixed route access for individuals with disabilities (e.g., sidewalk construction)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ETA Access should recognize Sun Metro LIFT customers as automatically eligible for ETA Access service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sun Metro should recognize ETA Access customers as automatically eligible for Sun Metro LIFT service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments

We appreciate your responses to the following questions:

Do you ride... (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sun Metro LIFT | <input type="checkbox"/> Vanpool |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sun Metro Bus | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Amistad Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EPATS fixed route | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't use public transit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Please tell us what year you were born. _____

How many family members live in your household? _____

What do you estimate was your combined annual household income in 2023?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below \$15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001-\$80,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000-\$32,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Above \$80,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$32,001-\$50,000 | |

What is your gender? Male Female Other

What preferred language?

- Spanish English Other

What is your zip code? _____

Glossary

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)—is a law that gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities and in particular mandates that public entities that provide fixed route transit service must also operate ADA paratransit service for people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route bus.

ADA Paratransit—is transit service for people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route bus service because of a disability. ADA paratransit is reserved in advance, and the vehicle picks up and drops at specific scheduled addresses throughout a designated service area. The ADA law requires that agencies that operated fixed route transit service must operate ADA paratransit service.

Comparable Service is a term used to describe the ADA requirement to provide *complementary* service or comparable in that it must be offered on the same days and same times as fixed route.

El Paso Area Transportation Service, Local Government Corporation (EPATS) is an organization formed in 2021 for the purpose of encouraging and assisting [and funding] local units of government to join and cooperate with one another to provide and deliver regional multimodal transportation solutions for the residents of the Greater El Paso community. The EPATS is a partnership between the County, Horizon City, the City of San Elizario, and the Village of Vinton.

ETA Access is the El Paso County branded name for the ADA paratransit service

ETA Access Base Service Area serves a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile area on each side of the six (6) FRT bus routes. There are three ADA paratransit zones—West, East, and South.

The West ADA paratransit service area serves the area around Route 10. The boundary includes portions of Anthony Texas and Anthony New Mexico, Westway, the Village of Vinton, and Canutillo and serves Sun Metro’s Westside Transfer Center via the Doniphan Road corridor.

The East ADA paratransit service area serves the area around Route 20. The boundary includes portions of Homestead Meadows North and South and serves Sun Metro’s Upper Eastside Transfer Center via the Montana Avenue Corridor.

The South ADA paratransit service serves the area around four routes (Route 30, 31, 40, and 50). The boundary includes portions of Horizon City, Agua Dulce, Las Colonias, Sparks, Tornillo, Fabens, San Elizario and Socorro, and Mission Del Paso campus of El Paso County Community College. The South ADA paratransit service area connects to Sun Metro’s Mission Valley Transfer Center.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the U.S. Department of Transportation agency responsible for regulations to implement ADA provisions for public transportation.

Fixed Route Transit (FRT)—fixed route transit is bus (or rail) service that operate on set routes, with set schedules, and set stops.

Functional Assessment is an assessment by an appropriate professional (such as an occupational therapist) to assess an individual’s abilities to use the fixed route transit system.

Local Government Corporation (LGC) is a public, non-profit corporation created to aid and act on behalf of one or more local governments to accomplish any governmental purpose of those local governments.

Sun Metro Service Area is the public transit provider that operates local bus, rapid transit routes, and complementary paratransit for individuals with disabilities (LIFT) within the city limits of City of El Paso

Sustainability means providing a system that maximizes cost efficiency within resources available.

Telephone Capacity is the ability of the agency to meet the telephone call demand for ADA paratransit. A telephone capacity concern for ADA paratransit is having enough telephone lines and staffing available to accept calls throughout the day.

