

PRESS RELEASE

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TxDOT Gives El Paso Funding to Start Travel Training

(Austin) Approving a contract award to the Volar Center for Independent Living (CIL), the Texas Department of Transportation Commissioners today approved \$37,000 in funding for a travel training program. Sun Metro and TxDOT's El Paso District Office will partner with the Volar CIL to provide this training.

"It is a win-win for everyone," says Luis Enrique Chew, Volar CIL's Executive Director.

"Riders have to schedule paratransit in advance. However, if a person with a disability knows how and can use a standard bus, the rider can be far more independent, flexible, and spontaneous. With each paratransit trip costing as much as ten times more than a similar ride on the bus, Sun Metro has a strong fiscal interest in supporting travel training that equips passengers to use the bus more often. This public-private partnership is one that benefits the entire community."

Used in several Texas cities and across the nation, **travel training** has been proven to be a successful, innovative approach. Using an agency or organization trusted within the disabilities community, persons with disabilities who are interested in participation and for whom training is appropriate are identified. Trainers work with each individual to develop the array of skills they will need to use a standard bus with supported opportunities to practice their skills. And, because trainers build relationships with graduates, on-going support ensures that all is well.

"Pioneered by Easter Seals' Project Action and the Federal Transit Administration, this program offers an innovative, cost-effective approach to meeting the transportation needs of those residents in El Paso who are most likely to be without reliable access to a car. **I am proud of the Texas Transportation Commission not only for investing in El Paso, but in supporting a promising partnership between VOLAR, TxDOT, and Sun Metro. We are optimistically hopeful that this will be the first of many investments by the Commission in innovative transit programs,**" said Glenn Gadbois, Director of Transportation Programs, Texas Citizen Fund.

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