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TIM News

ITS America on Autonomous Vehicles (AV)

“In any Federal AV safety framework, it is imperative that we consider the needs of first responders and give them the tools necessary to support autonomous vehicle (AV) operations and passengers of robotaxis.

First responders should be able to have reliable and secure communication with AVs, and they should have access to proper training to deal with a variety of vehicle interactions.”

To read the online source

[CLICK HERE](#)

For newsletter comments, contact: TIM@txdot.gov.



Expanding TIM Resources - Big Bend to Beaumont

By Sean Mannix, Statewide TIM Coordinator, TxDOT



Texas is on the move as it relates to expanding Traffic Incident Management resources, capabilities, and adherence to best practices. It is not unusual for our larger metropolitan areas to develop and maintain standing TIM Teams to promote responder safety, quick roadway clearance, and effective communication across disciplines. These teams are vital in working to enhance the safety and effectiveness of our emergency responses to traffic incidents and to better understand how to best utilize available resources, or what additional resources are needed, by debriefing major traffic incidents.

What is less common is the development of these TIM Teams in more rural and suburban areas. In 2024, through the hard work of TxDOT personnel, our contract partners, and local responder agencies, we saw the development of a suburban TIM team in the Beaumont District and a rural TIM team in the Big Bend Region of the El Paso District.

While the Beaumont District was developing plans for a major project surrounding the rehabilitation of the Rainbow Bridge, connecting Port Arthur to Bridge City, they took a deep dive into contingency planning responses to traffic incidents that may occur on the Rainbow Bridge or nearby Veterans Memorial Bridge over the course of the project. These planning sessions brought together the major players from across the responder disciplines in the region, which developed into an organized TIM team that is meeting regularly. I personally witnessed the hard work and energy that Deputy District Engineer Ana Mijares and Gaby Tassin of AU+ Engineering and their respective personnel put into building this team, which is well poised to continue to work to enhance the safety of responders well beyond the rehabilitation project.

Meanwhile, at the extreme opposite side of the state, the El Paso District was hard at work helping the responder community in the Big Bend Region with the creation of their own rural TIM team. Recognizing the unique challenges that come with limited travel routes when traffic incidents occur over this vast area, the responder community came together to build the team. Over the course of the last year, Al Hernandez, the El Paso TIM Coordinator for TxDOT, worked with our contract partners Jim Comfort and Bob Murphy of AECOM to organize a series of development meetings. Chris Gray and I worked with Chief Losoya from the Alpine Police Department and provided two TIM training sessions for regional first responders. These efforts have culminated in the creation of the Big Bend TIM Team, which is meeting regularly with representatives from Alpine, Marfa, Presidio, Dept. of Public Safety (DPS), Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), and Brewster County with an eye toward expansion in the region.

We applaud the efforts of these TxDOT employees, contract partners, local governments, and members of the responder community in creating these partnerships and wish them success well into the future.

Houston TranStar Upgrades to Help Improve Traffic Incident Management

By David Fink, AECOM

Envisioning the next chapter and iteration of its Traffic Control Room, the Houston TranStar Consortium has begun investigating a large-scale remodel effort to modernize ergonomics and technologies in their shared, multi-agency space.

“TranStar’s Transportation Management Center (TMC), our Control Room floor, epitomizes and showcases the strength of our multiple partner agency Consortium,” Josh Shideler, Assistant Director for Houston TranStar said. *“This space has gone through several renovations since TranStar’s building was erected in 1996. As we approach our 30-year anniversary, it is time again to think through what is next for TranStar to ensure we remain an ever-innovative leader in freeway incident management,”* Shideler continued.

In relation to the regions traffic incident management program, installing innovative technologies, assembling more comfortable work environments for partner staff, and revisiting strategic positioning of **workstation placement will help TranStar to improve communication and collaboration, allow for faster decision-making, enhance situational awareness, and ensure that resources are maximized while working critical incidents and during critical moments.** This unique environment will open opportunities for Traffic Incident Management of the region’s freeways and roadways, enhancing traffic flow and safety for motorists.

In December 2024, interviews were held with Control Room staff, Information Technology (IT) personnel, Executive Committee members, and Leadership Team participants. TranStar’s TMC consultant, Diversified Engineering, also reviewed existing floorplan drawings, building conditions and space limitations to help facilitate expansion options.

At present, the consultant is producing design concept deliverables for evaluation and approval. In the first quarter of 2025, TranStar will receive a gap analysis narrative, multiple conceptual designs, a modernization scope, and rough order of magnitude budget documents.

The TranStar Director’s Office, with guidance from its governing body, will review reports upon completion and determine how and on what level to execute them. Following an in-depth review and collaborative discussion, TranStar will work on a timeline for moving forward, which will include plans to secure project funding.



TranStar Statistics for 2024

Freeway Crashes*	16,551
Clearance Time (min:sec)	32:55
Tow & Go Tows	39,663
Clearance Time (min:sec)	16:26

*Number of crashes observed and handled by the TMC out of the total number of 65,931 crashes reported in the TxDOT’s Crash Records Information System (CRIS) by all law enforcement in the Houston District.

Shideler commented on the importance of this study and how it will impact the future of the TranStar control room to improve regional coordination, communications and cooperation among all regional stakeholders.

For more information on Houston TranStar, see their website at <https://www.houstontranstar.org/>

TxDOT's Dale Picha Highlights Crash Responder Safety Week on ITE Podcast

By Jim Comfort, AECOM



The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) is an international association of transportation professionals who work to improve safety and mobility for system users. The organization hosts a podcast called "ITE Talks Transportation," discussing various topics related to the transportation industry. The December podcast featured TxDOT's Dale Picha speaking about National Crash Responder Safety Week (CRSW) that was held the week of November 18-22, 2024. Mr. Picha focused on the importance of traffic incident management and the essential role that engineers play in those programs.

Mr. Picha is the Director of Transportation Operations for the TxDOT San Antonio District and has been in the transportation engineering field for thirty (30) years as a civil engineer. He provided great insight for TIM operations through his many years intimately involved in the field. Mr. Picha said that of the 18,000 members of the ITE, 50% work for public agencies and essentially "own" the roadways. *"It's up to us to provide good management practices on the roadways, good response plans, and working with the first responders and local agencies. There are a lot of things that members (engineers) can do that doesn't involve working on the side of the road as a first responder. We need to recognize that we are a support role in the TIM process that is very important."*

It is up to support personnel, such as engineers and DOT officials, to be the glue that holds TIM local programs together.

(Dale Picha, TxDOT)

The 2024 theme for CRSW was "Responders Ahead! Reduce Your Speed as You Proceed," that calls on drivers to slow down. Mr. Picha said that the CRSW honors the work and commitment of first responders throughout the nation and to raise the awareness of the motoring public to the safety of the first responders at an incident scene.

Mr. Picha said that it is up to support personnel, such as engineers and DOT officials, to be the glue that holds TIM local programs together. He elaborated on the importance of the roles engineers play in traffic incident management. Picha continued, *"It's important for us (TxDOT) to be kind of the quarterback of the local traffic incident management groups to bring the groups (first responder agencies) together, to have regular TIM meetings, to establish good funding programs for things like safety service patrols that run on our highways. Perhaps funding programs for hazmat contracts and training for the TIM members."*

To listen to the podcast [CLICK HERE](#)

Texas TIM Regional Meetings

Statewide TIM Meeting (Location Varies)
Austin Incident Management (AIM) Team
Childress TIM Team
El Paso Metro TIM Team
Big Bend TIM Team (Rural El Paso District)
Houston TranStar TIM Team
Northeast San Antonio (NESA) TIM Team
San Antonio TIM Team

Bi-Monthly - Third Wednesday Beginning in February
Bi-Monthly
Bi-Monthly
Quarterly
Quarterly
Second Thursday of the Month
Quarterly - Fourth Tuesday Beginning in January
Second Tuesday of the Month

For a complete, up-to-date list of TIM Training in Texas, go to the Texas TIM website at:

<https://www.txdot.gov/safety/traffic-incident-management.html>.

The El Paso TxDOT District TIM Programs

The TxDOT El Paso District continues to grow its metropolitan (City of El Paso) and rural (Big Bend) TIM teams. In their recent quarterly TIM meetings held in January 2025, the teams approved new TIM logos for their teams. The logo is an important tool to build cohesion and ownership of the local programs. The El Paso meeting focused on drone technology, featuring ELP FD Battalion Chief Abraham Human and TxDOTs Jose Leos, Jr., with the survey department. Chief Human described the array of drones available for fire rescue, including a drone capable of carrying a sixty (60) pound payload. Mr. Leos had a colleague fly a drone outside the TxDOT District Headquarters building while the attendees watched the video inside. Both presenters informed the attending first responders of the availability of the equipment for emergency use and the procedures for their acquisition.



El Paso HERO Program Manager, Martin Morales, provided an update on local motorist assistance operations and Cristina Gonzalez, from TxDOTs Transvista TMC operations, discussed crashes and incidents in the last quarter that lasted over four hours in duration. Al Hernandez, TransVista s Supervisor and ELP TIM Coordinator discussed the need for more pedestrian awareness due to the recent increase in motorist pedestrian incidents.

The Big Bend TIM meeting was held in Alpine on January 16th, about 220 miles east of El Paso. With a remarkable turnout of thirty-one first responders (in-person and online) from the Alpine PD, DPS; Brewster, Presidio, and Jeff Davis Counties, TxDOT, and the Texas Division of Emergency Management, the meeting focused on TxDOT's goal of establishing a Capability Maturity Model for the vast rural section of the TxDOT District. The process included stakeholder feedback and results from an online questionnaire. Other TIM topics included an incident review and planned tabletop exercise following a December 4th bridge strike on US67/US90 in Alpine that closed the highway for several hours.



For the next quarterly meeting in April, TIM members requested a presentation on the 2025 wildfire season. While recapping the Team's startup last year, Al Hernandez was recognized for all of the hard work he has contributed to building the El Paso TIM program.

FACES OF THE FALLEN – REMEMBERING OUR COMRADES

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family, friends, and colleagues of these fallen responders. Thank you for your selfless service to the people of Texas. May you rest in eternal peace. Stand easy, we have the watch...



Deputy Constable Ruben Garcia
End of Watch: 10/01/2024



Tow Operator David Holz
End of Watch: 9/28/2024