



FTA BUSES & BUS FACILITIES COMPETITIVE PROGRAM APPLICATION | APRIL 2023



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El Metro Transit NEW HEADQUARTERS

Supporting a growing fleet that will benefit the Laredo, TX community and the under served population in a way that is beneficial to the environment and the local economy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

El Metro Transit is an award winning transit system, and the primary public transit system in Laredo, TX and the border community. Laredo is the third most populous city on the United States-Mexico border, the number one inland port along the US-Mexico border, and the third largest Customs District in the Nation. El Metro Transit operates fixed routes and paratransit services with 187 employees, an operating budget of over \$13.4 million dollars and an annual ridership of 2.3 million passengers. El Metro Transit works with a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fleet of over forty-seven (47) fixed route buses, one (1) trolley and fifteen (15) demand-response "El Lift" vans. Our mission is to promote and provide high quality, cost-effective public transportation services that address the needs and demands of the citizens of Laredo, Texas.

A growing portion of El Metro Transit's riders is a predominantly Hispanic/Latino population and is increasingly dependent on public transportation to access jobs, education, healthcare, shopping, and recreation. The percent of households with no vehicle available is higher than 20% for most of the City of Laredo, while 8% is the national average and based on US Census information our growth projections show that the total population of Laredo is projected to reach 450,000 by 2045. El Metro Transit's passenger boardings are twice the national average and three times that of other systems in Texas. Moreover, El Metro's fixed route services are above average in cost effectiveness, productivity, and ridership levels per capita. However, a problem is presented as the current facilities are dated, no longer in a state of good repair, and located in a residential zone in which our high-capacity gas pipeline that feeds the compressed natural gas (CNG) is perceived and real threat to the adjacent residences, school, park, and the Boys and Girls Club of America.

El Metro Transit in an effort to expand and meet the demands of a growing population within the Justice40 disadvantaged tracts is moving its headquarters to a new site that is already prepared for construction. To ensure safety, the City of Laredo has acquired this site in a non-residential area near the Laredo International Airport, only fifteen minutes away from its current location. The new headquarters have been designed

with energy efficiency in mind to make this the most user and environmentally friendly system to connect communities within Laredo. The implementation of El Metro Transit's new headquarters is part of the City of Laredo's plan to renew our transit system and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from public transportation, as well as decrease the number of vehicles on the streets through having a public transportation system that invites drivers to make more environmentally friendly choices.

With Phase 1 of this project already underway we intend for Laredo to become a city based on a multi-modal mobility vision that operates less on single-occupancy motor vehicles and more on low emission mass transportation, intelligent transportation systems, and pedestrian/bicyclist utilization. This paradigm shift will ultimately result in Laredo becoming more sustainable, economically robust, and resilient to potential threats to continued vitality. These goals are reflective of the "Viva Laredo" Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2017 by the City of Laredo, meeting the needs of the City of Laredo's underserved populations and communities. El Metro Transit's new headquarters leverage a necessary upgrade into a project that goes above-and-beyond in meeting the city's (1) transportation and mobility, (2) land use, (3) economic development needs. As a plan shaped by over nine months of public comment, 'Viva Laredo' also demonstrates the community-led values of the Department of Transportation's Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making.



1. Rendering of El Metro Transit new headquarters site after completion of all phases.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To continue moving forward with this plan and ensure reducing greenhouse emissions, as well as ongoing safety while strengthening fleet performance, the City of Laredo and El Metro Transit are jointly seeking \$25,000,000.00 in discretionary funding through the FTA Buses and Bus Facilities Program. This Buses and Bus Facilities grant will fund the design and construction of the second and final phase of El Metro Transit new headquarters. Funds for phase 1, which is currently underway, were secured from multiple local and federal sources further described in section five of this document.

The City of Laredo, fully committed to support El Metro Transit is providing a local match of \$2,627,771. Additionally, an appraisal of the 27.31 acres parcel in which the new headquarters are being developed was performed in 2017 and the land was appraised at \$4,841,000. From that amount, the City utilized a portion to match as local share for the Intergovernmental Grant Application and reserved the remaining \$2,372,229 to be utilized as the local share match for Phase 2 of this project. In total the City of Laredo is providing a local match of \$5,000,000.

Specifically, this funding request will allow for the construction of:

- ▶ 16,800 sq ft Administration & Bus Operations Building
- ▶ 45,800 sq ft Bus Maintenance Facility
- ▶ 71,177 sq ft Commercial Buildings (Includes: office, residential and retail spaces)
- ▶ 70,396.53 sq ft Covered bus parking with photocells for 150 CNG bus fleet
- ▶ Electric Charging station for vehicles and general public

Component	Ex. 1	Proposed	Revised Match
Total Construction Cost	\$8,000,000	\$ 31250000	\$ 25000000
Land Value	\$ 2,372,229	\$ 2,372,229	\$ 2,372,229
Cash Match	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 2,627,771
Total Match	\$3,372,229	\$5,172,229	\$5,000,000
Total Project Cost	\$10,372,229	\$30,172,229	\$25,000,000
Match Percentage	32.5%	17.1%	20%
Grant Request	\$7,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$20,000,000

Phase 2 of this project was master planned alongside Phase 1 in 2022, therefore a schematic site plan and concept is ready to be developed. El Metro Transit has all the capabilities and is ready to oblige the funds for this project within 12 months, if awarded with this grant. Further details on how the project will be implemented is available in section six of this document.

We appreciate your time to review our application. El Metro Transit and the City of Laredo are committed to the completion of this project and with no technical or legal issues, our only concern is the current financial capacity. We firmly believe in renewing our transit system and creating a more sustainable future that benefits everyone in our community.



2. Site Map and renderings of El Metro Transit new headquarters.

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SECTION 1

PROJECT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION



SECTION 1

PROJECT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

El Metro Transit is an award winning transit system that operates fixed routes and paratransit services with 187 employees, an operating budget of over \$13.4 million dollars and an annual ridership of 2.3 million passengers as of 2018. El Metro Transit works with a fleet of over forty-seven (47) fixed route buses, one (1) trolleys and fifteen (15) demand-response “El Lift” vans. Our economical fares and reliable service provides the community of Laredo a **safe and environmentally friendly** alternative for their transportation needs.

Our mission is to promote and provide high quality, cost-effective public transportation services that address the needs and demands of the citizens of Laredo, Texas. Laredo is the county seat of Webb County, as well as the county’s largest city. Established in 1755 the City of Laredo has been considered one of the major ports of entry for international trade and tourism between the United States and Mexico. About 90% of the Webb County population resides in the City of Laredo. The land area for the City of Laredo, which is the existing service area boundary for the El Metro Transit system, is approximately 89 square miles. With a total population of 255,205 according to the 2020 United States Census Bureau with a predominantly Hispanic/Latino population 95% that is dependent on public transportation to access jobs, education, healthcare, shopping, and recreation.

As the population grows, public transportation needs grow with it. El Metro Transit’s current facilities are dated and in a residential location that does not allow for expansion of a growing fleet. Further, the current high capacity gas pipeline that feeds the compressed natural gas (CNG) is perceived and real threat to the adjacent residential land uses, school, park, and the Boys and Girls Club of America.

El Metro Transit’s solution to these issues was to design its new headquarters in a new location to make possible a more efficient, user-friendly, and broad service to connect communities within Laredo. The new facility is part of a larger improvement plan for the City of Laredo’s transportation system to improve travel times, network legibility, as well as reliability.

A detailed design was completed to provide the new facilities in a new location near the Laredo International Airport, as documented in Contract Documents in 2013. This design was completed by the same project team currently working on this project. At the time construction did not advance due to lack of funding. In 2023 El Metro Transit and the City of Laredo, after securing new funds, decided to move forward with updating the designs of these facilities to reflect a different site configuration that is more in line with the adopted City of Laredo Comprehensive Plans, as well as, updating code compliance and facility spacing as generally indicated on a more recent El Metro Mixed-Use Development Study. In addition, the Administration/Operations building will be redesigned and reprogrammed as a multistory building in a new location.

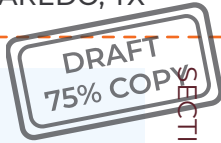
The Maintenance Building and Bus Wash/Fueling Facility design is intended to remain unaltered, with updates only as related and required by current code updates. The project location remains the same at 1801 Jacaman Road near the Laredo International Airport.



3. Original design rendering for the El Metro Transit new headquarters dated of 2013.

The project is comprised of two phases:

PHASE 1 includes the programming, planning, design and construction of a wash bay, gas station, and large parking lot area and both driveways for the new transit facility on a 25-acre site. The new site/facilities were designed to support and house 150 buses, fueled with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). The funds for this phase have already been secured and design is currently in-progress, as shown on the following page.



PENDING GRAPHIC SHOWING PHASE 1 SCHEDULE

PHASE 2 includes the programming, planning, design and construction of a maintenance building, administration building, a commercial building with its parking lots and an electric charging station for vehicles and the general public. We are aiming to secure the funds for this phase with this grant application.

The site is located on previously disturbed, yet undeveloped land. The significance of this project lies in the variety of space and types of structures designed, as well as in the positive impact it will have in the environment and for the City of Laredo's community. The Programming effort defined required space, critical adjacencies, flows, and equipment.

To summarize, the new facilities (Phases 1 + Phase 2) include:

- ▶ 16,800 sq ft Administration & Bus Operations Building
- ▶ 45,800 sq ft Bus Maintenance Facility
- ▶ 71,177 sq ft Commercial Buildings (Includes: office, residential and retail spaces)
- ▶ 6,000 sq ft Bus Fueling & Wash Facilities
- ▶ 2268 sq ft Gas Station
- ▶ 70,396.53 sq ft Covered bus parking with photocells for 150 CNG bus fleet.
- ▶ Electric charging station for vehicles and general public

The implementation of both phases will allow for El Metro Transit to increase operational capacity, improve the state of good repair of rolling-stock and facilities, and complete relocating the existing facility from the residential area where it currently exists. The new headquarters will also allow El Metro Transit to operate and expand for a 20 years vision.

To move forward with this plan in a timely manner and

ensure reducing greenhouse emissions, as well as ongoing safety while strengthening fleet performance, the City of Laredo and El Metro Transit are jointly seeking \$25,000,000.00 in discretionary funding through the FTA Buses and Bus Facilities Program. The reason why El Metro Transit is requesting this amount can be broken down in the following items:

- ▶ Pending = \$
- ▶ Pending = \$
- ▶ Pending = \$
- ▶ Pending = \$
- ▶ Pending = \$

Supporting a growing fleet that will benefit the Laredo, TX community and the under served population in a way that is beneficial to the environment.



5. 2023 Rendering of the new Maintenance Building



6. 2023 Rendering of the new Commercial Buildings



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SECTION 1 | PROJECT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION



7. 2023 Site plan highlighting phase 1 and 2 of the El Metro Transit new headquarters project

SECTION 2

DEMONSTRATION OF NEED



SECTION 2**DEMONSTRATION OF NEED****HOW THE PROPOSED PROJECT ADDRESSES AN UNMET NEED FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

One of the major reasons for transit use is the lack of a personal vehicle. Not owning a car increases the probability of transit use, of course depending on transits' viability and attractiveness for any given trip.

The percent of households with no vehicle available is higher than 20% for most of the City of Laredo, while 8% is the national average.

(Please refer to the Zero-Vehicle Household Map shown on page 13)

There are many reasons for not owning a car, primarily due to the costs of owning and maintaining a car, as well as other reasons such as being unable to drive, or not wanting to drive (e.g., for environmental reasons, hassles regarding parking, etc.). The distribution of zero-vehicle households across Laredo, including census tracts mostly concentrates in the downtown area. These observations suggest that a market does exist for transit services in Laredo beyond commuting trips.

In 2021, the median household income in the City of Laredo was approximately \$55,000, which was below the median income of Texas which was nearly \$67,000
(Please refer to the Median Income Map shown on page 14).

Household incomes are generally lower in Downtown Laredo where households are more likely reliant on public transportation than other neighborhoods. The transit mode share *(Please refer to the Transit Mode Share Map shown on page 15)* and households without vehicles suggest that lower-income households are less likely to own a personal vehicle and are therefore more likely to

depend on public transit.

The population growth of Laredo is outpacing that of the state of Texas and the United States, prompting need for increased transit services. Addressing projected growth in population and jobs. Since 2010, Laredo's population has grown by 12%. Looking ahead, the total population of Laredo is projected to reach 450,000 by 2045. Considering that transit mode share stands at less than 2% presently, with improved service and population growth, the aim is for El Metro to translate that growth into ridership gains.

Much of the employment within Laredo is related to cross-border industrial shipment, and therefore is spread out amongst the city. The high volume of truck traffic creates additional considerations for the transportation network.

Between 20-40% of El Metro Transit's ridership may be using the system to traverse the US-Mexico border.

Transit service should be designed to capture latent ridership which may exist at border crossings.

El Metro Transit's largest existing transportation facility is the five-story Laredo Transit Center and Administration Building located in downtown Laredo at 1301 Farragut Street across from Jarvis Plaza. This facility is across the main post office and within walking distance from the pedestrian bridge crossing where pedestrians cross daily to and from Mexico. The transit center is the transfer hub for: El Metro fixed-routes routes, El Aguila rural routes, and inter-city services like Valley Transit and Greyhound. It also houses a portion of El Metro Transit's administrative offices and a park-and-ride facility. However, this facility does not allow

for all transit-related personnel to work together under the same roof, thus creating inefficiencies in day-to-day operation, communication, and task implementation.

Adjacent to this building, El Metro Transit has a Maintenance and Operations Facility located at 401 Scott Street. The current facility was originally the City's Sanitation Building and was re-purposed into the Operations and Maintenance Facility 28 years ago. The growth of the fleet and the lack of expansion space are impacting the functional efficiency of operations and maintenance of the entire El Metro Transit system.

The existing El Metro Maintenance and Operations Facility was originally built in 1981 and served as the City of Laredo's primary sanitation facility. The facility was then re-purposed for use by El Metro in 1995. The facility is now 42 years old, is in a condition that prevents cost effective repair, and is land-locked and located in a residential neighborhood which prevents context-sensitive expansion on the existing site. Furthermore, the current high-capacity gas pipeline that feeds the compressed natural gas (CNG) is perceived as and real threat to the adjacent residential land uses, school, park, and the Boys and Girls Club.

The existing facility has the following specific deficiencies which need to be remedied in order to allow for the expansion and optimization of El Metro Transit service:

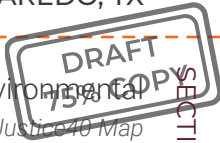
- ▶ Lack of space for additional rolling-stock
- ▶ Lack of room for expanded staff
- ▶ Insufficient maintenance capabilities
- ▶ A CNG fueling station that does not meet best practices for safety controls.

In addition to the transit-dependent population, choice riders have the opportunity to save money, time, and reduce stress from driving which translates in a more comfortable, hassle-free, and reduced-congestion commuting environment.

The Federal Government with its Justice40 Initiative and Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool has identified that most of the census tracts identified by the U.S. Census Bureau in the city of Laredo are highlighted

as a disadvantage by the Council on Environmental Quality of the White House (Please refer to the Justice40 Map shown on page 16).

The primary environmental benefit is related to the decreased number of vehicles on the streets, which results in reduced congestion, more efficient use of trips, and reduced fuel consumption all of which result in improved air quality.

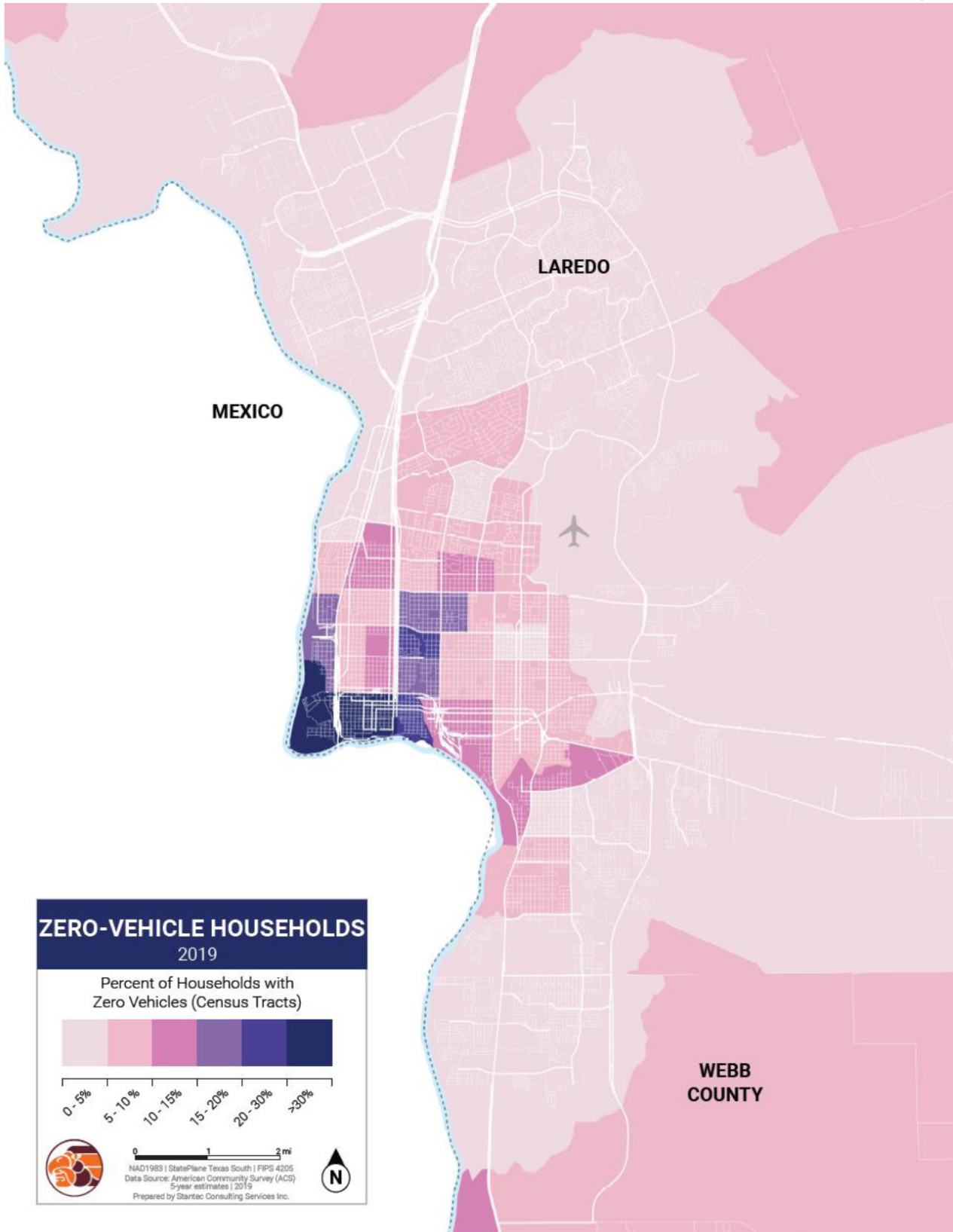




SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE SUPPORTING STATEMENTS IN POINT 1A

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SECTION 2 | DEMONSTRATION OF NEED



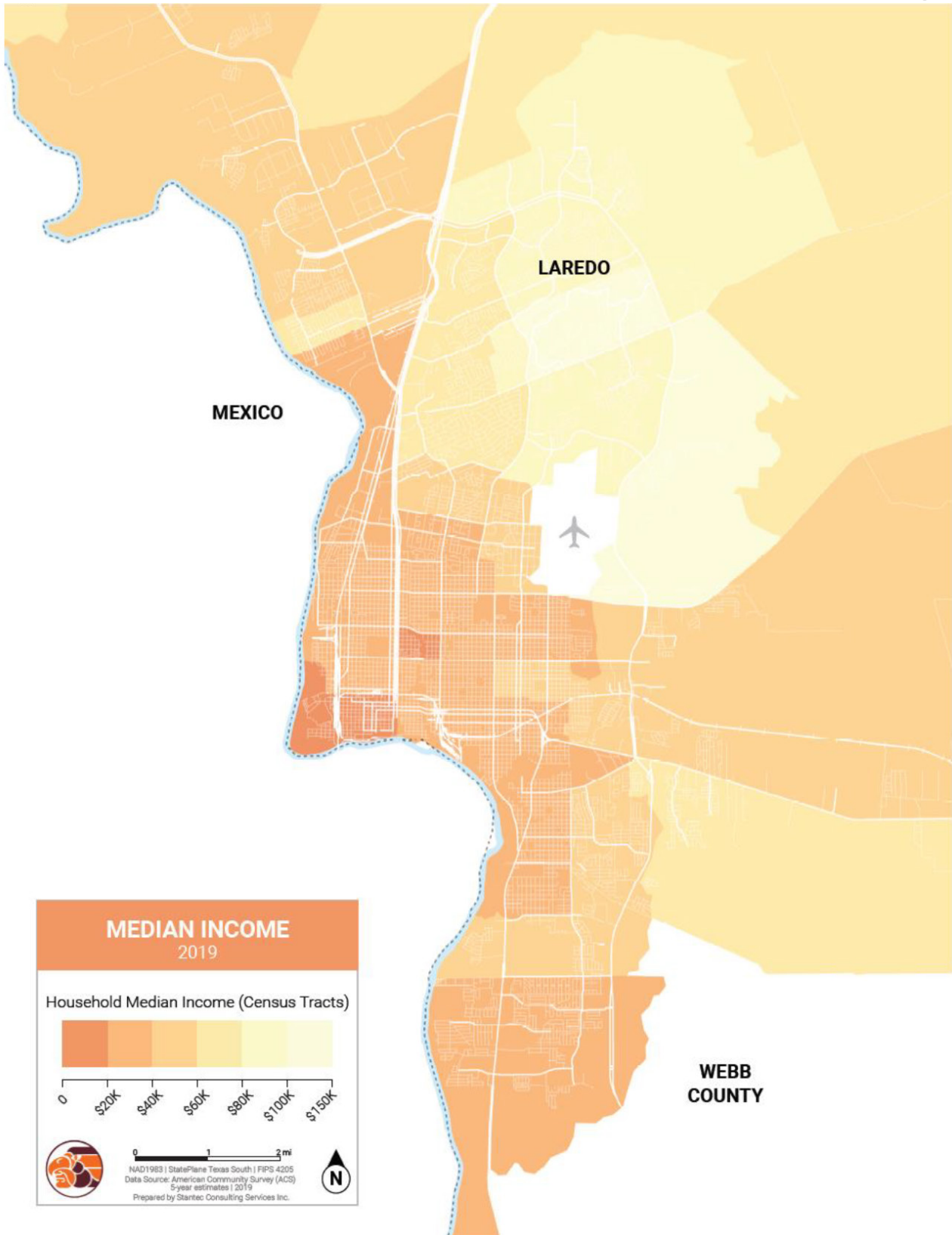
8. Zero-Vehicle Household Map extracted from a 2021 Comprehensive Operational Analysis of El Metro Transit initiated and funded by the Laredo Webb County Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in coordination with Laredo Transit Management, Inc.



SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE SUPPORTING STATEMENTS IN POINT 1A

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SECTION 2 | DEMONSTRATION OF NEED



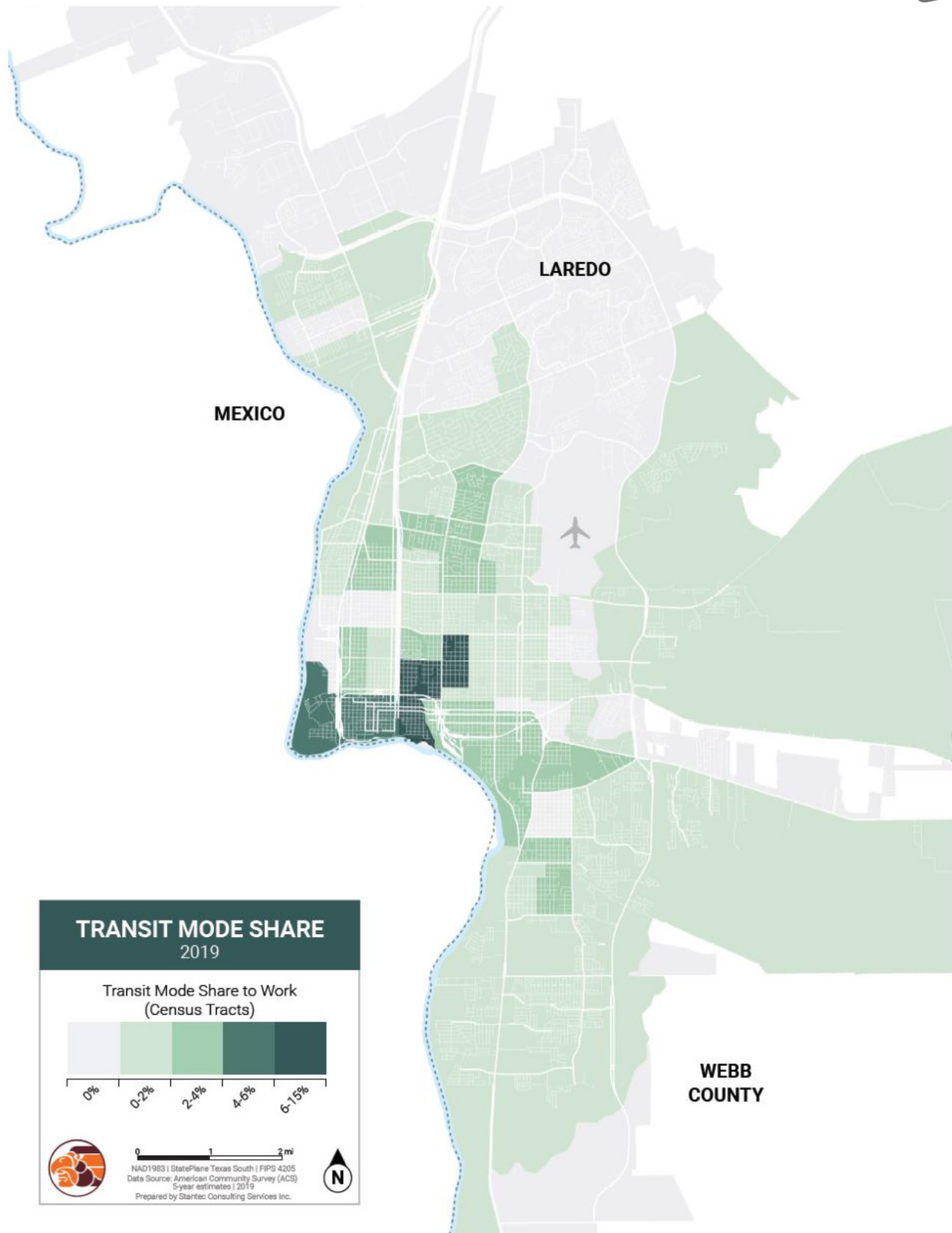
9. Median Income Map extracted from a 2021 Comprehensive Operational Analysis of El Metro Transit initiated and funded by the Laredo Webb County Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in coordination with Laredo Transit Management, Inc.



SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE SUPPORTING STATEMENTS IN POINT 1A

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SECTION 2 | DEMONSTRATION OF NEED



10. **Transit Mode Share Map** extracted from a 2021 Comprehensive Operational Analysis of El Metro Transit initiated and funded by the Laredo Webb County Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in coordination with Laredo Transit Management, Inc.

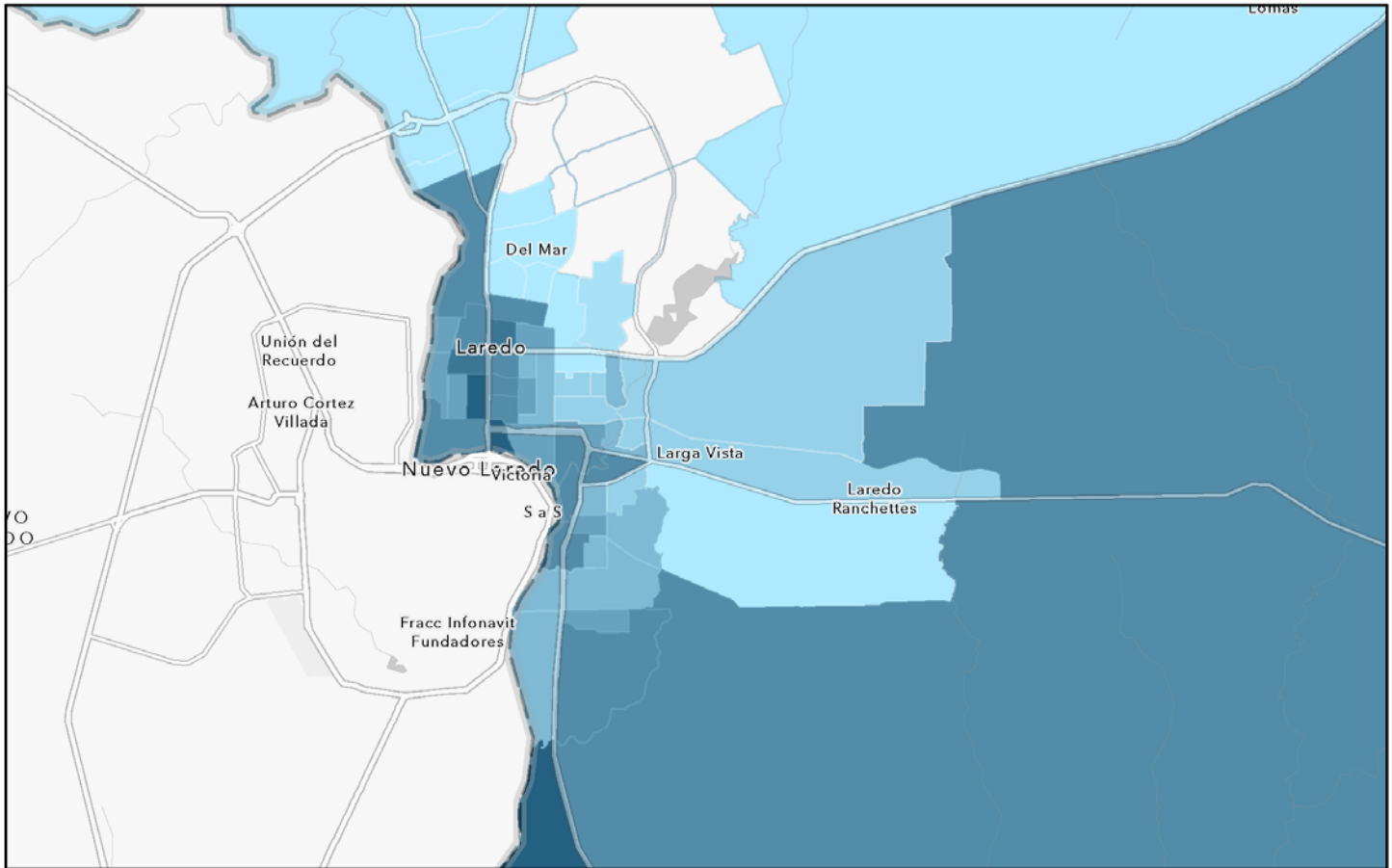


SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE SUPPORTING STATEMENTS IN POINT 1A

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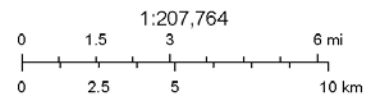
SECTION 2 | DEMONSTRATION OF NEED

Justice40 by Number of Categories Map November 2022



3/21/2023

Justice40 Tracts November 2022 Version 1.0



City of Laredo, TX, Texas Parks & Wildlife, CONANP, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA

11. **Justice40 Map** showing the City of Laredo within the disadvantage tracts, the map shows as well the number of categories that meet the criteria. Map was obtained through the ArcGis website.

SECTION 3

DEMONSTRATION OF BENEFITS



SECTION 3

DEMONSTRATION OF BENEFITS

HOW THE PROPOSED FACILITY IMPROVES SAFETY

The implementation of the new El Metro Transit Headquarters at the intersection of Jacaman Rd & N Bartlett Avenue in Laredo, TX is part of the City of Laredo's plan to renew our transit system and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from public transportation. These new facilities have been designed in a much larger area with the safety of our riders, visitors, and workers in mind.

The new improved design and revitalized concept will provide the necessary space and requirements for operational efficiencies by co-locating all transit related functions under one roof, while supporting a growing fleet. Exclusive dedication of space will result in a more coherent operation and in a stronger working community with an increased sense of belonging and ownership of operations. Also, the site has been designed to accommodate a majority of safer left turn movements for transit vehicles. There is sufficient area for visual safety that is not available at the current site. Additionally, private vehicles were purposely separated from transit vehicles, within the site. The site perimeter is secure with fencing, lights and security surveillance cameras. Both fence and building entries will be protected with security access hardware.

The new facilities will not only provide safety from the new construction perspective, but also from an environmental perspective, as we are designing the most energy efficient facility for our 2.3 million yearly riders, including the addition of a charging station for vehicles and the general public. In 2015 El Metro Transit procured nine new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses (eight with local funding and one with FTA funding) at the cost of \$453,000 each. The use of convenient, cost effective and environmentally responsible CNG as a fuel source resulted in the determination to transition to a predominantly CNG fleet. From 2012 through 2015 the utilization of CNG has resulted in cost savings of approximately 62% compared to the average price of diesel fuel.

In August 2022 El Metro Transit announced receiving \$7.4 million that would go towards purchasing 14 new CNG buses. In July 2022 we acquired seven new CNG powered buses, to replace our aging fleet, providing state-of-the-art public transportation for the City of Laredo community while also protecting the environment.

The placement of the CNG processing and storage facility within the new El Metro Transit headquarters is within the secured fence line but accessible from the perimeter without entering the transit vehicle yard. This will allow for a private vendor to install and service a CNG system without entry or conflict with transit vehicles, while allowing for security to both areas to be maintained.



12. Rendering of El Metro Transit new headquarters site after completion of all phases.



13. Rendering of Wash Bay located within El Metro Transit's new headquarters

CONDITION OF THE TRANSIT SYSTEM

The current facilities for El Metro Transit located at 1301 Farragut Street in Laredo, TX are seriously deteriorating and no longer in a state of good repair, presenting safety and community development concerns at its existing location within a residential neighborhood. The current facilities also present capacity constraints, they have been outgrown and do not support the needs of a growing fleet, preventing expansion of our regional transit service. Due to this El Metro Transit is not able to operate any routes at the common intervals of 15 minutes. The most frequent routes operate at 25 to 35-minute intervals, least frequent routes operate at 100-minute intervals Monday to Saturday and 140 minutes on Sunday, which is not frequent enough to attract potential riders to the system and reduce vehicular transit and its gas emissions.

Regardless of this, the City of Laredo must continue to meet the needs of a growing and transit dependent population. To ensure ongoing safety and quality in service, El Metro continuously maintains and has invested in the performance, safety, comfort and cleanliness of their fleet of vehicles and equipment.



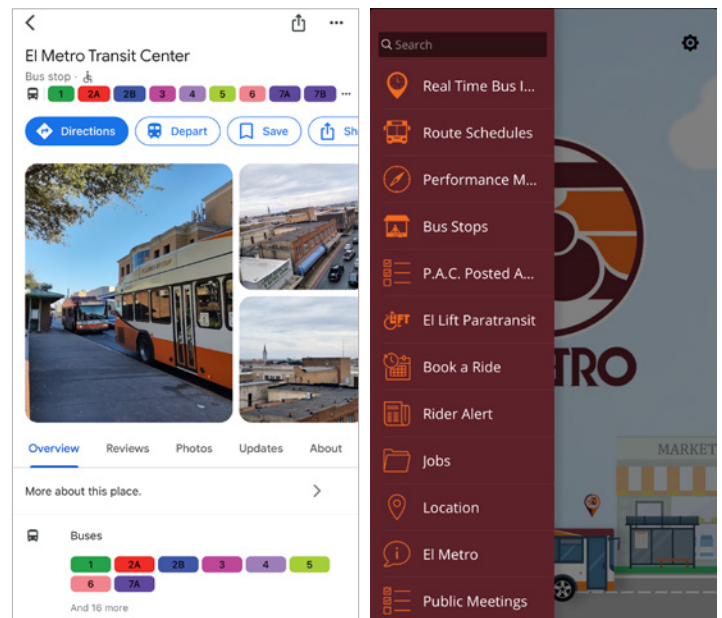
14. Two photos showing the current conditions of the El Metro Transit Facilities

RELIABILITY OF THE TRANSIT SYSTEM

With a total of 21 routes and an average ridership of 2.3 million riders per year El Metro Transit is committed to providing the best service possible to the City of Laredo's growing community. We understand that public transportation is a vital resource for our community and that a large number of residents in Laredo rely on El Metro Transit for every day transportation, and we are committed to being of service to our community.

In 2016 El Metro Transit conducted customer satisfaction surveys and reliability (timeliness) was rated at 8.4% "poor" on weekdays and 18.4% "poor" on weekends. The major reason for timeliness to be a current issue in our routes is due to multiple rail crossings existing throughout our current bus routes. The issue with these is not only that the passing freight trains cause delays, but also that they have variable schedules, making it difficult to plan around these.

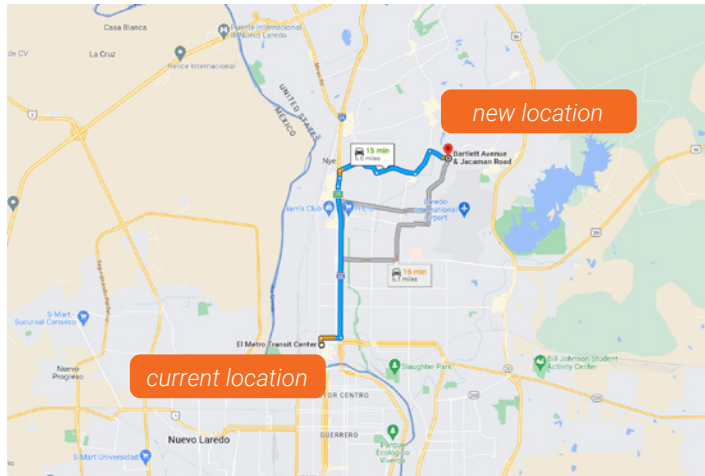
To facilitate real time information to our riders in 2017 El Metro Transit made an effort to include its routes into Google Transit. Real time information, routes and fees are also available through our website (www.elmetrotransit.com), as well as through our mobile app (available for iOS and Android).



15. Left: Screenshot from El Metro Transit locations in Google Transit. Right: Screenshot of El Metro Transit mobile app.



The new location for El Metro Transit headquarters implies the modification of all routes, and the opportunity to design these in the way that best serves our riders.



18. Distance between El Metro Transit current headquarters to the location of the New Headquarters.

HOW THE PROPOSED PROJECT ENHANCES ACCESS AND MOBILITY

El Metro Transit's new headquarters will allow for our fleet to be serviced in a more efficient, safe and prompt way. Improved operations means that more riders will be willing to rely on public transit. Beyond "captive" riders who have limited transportation options, increasingly "choice" riders who have access to their own automobile, will seek transit options as a matter of cost savings, convenience, and most importantly environmental responsibility. This shift will help reduce traffic from single occupancy automobiles on the road, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

Our growing fleet of CNG vehicles in a new and larger area, along with the new charging station will optimize the use of space and maximize the number of vehicles in service, enhancing access and allowing us to meet the demands of a growing population. This will provide efficient and reliable service, which will boost rider's confidence in El Metro and enable regular and efficient access to work and education opportunities.

The new headquarters will serve as the cornerstone for the transformation of Laredo, TX into a community with mobility options, to include bus, bus rapid transit, park and ride, as well as transportation enhancements that

serve these modes of transportation (bike/pedestrian accommodations). These alternatives will serve to reduce air pollution, alleviate congestion, enhance economic development, and improve quality of life for both residents and visitors.

With Phase 1 of this project already underway we intend for Laredo to become a city based on a multi-modal mobility vision that operates less on single-occupancy motor vehicles and more on low emission mass transportation, intelligent transportation systems, and pedestrian/bicyclist utilization. This paradigm shift will ultimately result in Laredo becoming more sustainable, economically robust, and resilient to potential threats to continued vitality.



19. El Metro Transit CNG buses / shuttles.

**Improved
operations for
a more reliable
and sustainable
transit system for
everyone in the
city of Laredo**

SECTION 4

PLANNING AND LOCAL / REGIONAL PRIORITIZATION



SECTION 4**PLANNING AND LOCAL / REGIONAL PRIORITIZATION**

The El Metro Transit new headquarters delivers on goals determined in our city's 'Viva Laredo' Comprehensive Plan, leveraging a necessary upgrade into a project that goes above-and-beyond in meeting the city's (1) transportation and mobility, (2) land use, and (3) economic development needs. As a plan shaped by over nine months of public comment, 'Viva Laredo' also demonstrates the community-led values of the Department of Transportation's Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making.

HOW THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL LONG-RANGE PLANNING DOCUMENTS**USDOT Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making**

The process by which the 'Viva Laredo' comprehensive plan was developed demonstrates firsthand many of the goals and recommendations set forth in the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Promising Practices" guide.

USDOT defines meaningful public involvement as "a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, program, or plan when possible." 'Viva Laredo,' as the culmination of nine months of both face-to-face and virtual community engagement in neighborhoods and communities across Laredo, put these principles of public involvement into practice.

In regards to methodology, 'Viva Laredo' delivered on 1) understanding community demographics through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis; 2) building durable relationships through workshops that moved at 'the speed of trust'; 3) understanding community wants and needs through engagement best practices that were comprised of the types of formats listed by the USDOT guide, including: public meetings, brainstorming, small group discussions, visual preference surveys, charrettes, focus groups, and

interviews; 4) involving broad representation through a multiplicity of communication techniques, including virtual public involvement, social media, and videos; 5) using community-preferred engagement techniques, employing the many aforementioned engagement tools and 6) documenting and sharing the impact through an active website and extensive visual and written documentation of the engagement process.

Underserved populations and community representatives are a major voice of 'Viva Laredo,' and it is therefore not surprising that the plan is so dedicated to transportation, which directly impacts the lives, livelihoods, and opportunities available to these groups in particular. The El Metro Facility is therefore a unique chance to deliver on two of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Promising Practices major components in particular, a) building durable community relationships and b) documenting and sharing community's impact on decisions. In moving forward on and bringing-to-life this facility for the benefit of the transportation available to Laredoans, this project helps build trust and show the community that the extensive engagement in 'Viva Laredo' was not just engagement for the sake of engagement. It will result in the tangible development of the type of city improvements that the community has expressed they need and want most.

**Meeting the
needs of the
City of Laredo's
underserved
populations and
community.**

City of Laredo's "Viva Laredo" Comprehensive Plan

Many of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan have been integrated into the purpose and function of the facility, both in terms of design details (such as the placement of parking) as well as with the multi-use venue and transportation features of the project as a whole. This facility will serve as the center of operations for El Metro, providing administration offices, a maintenance facility, a bus wash and fueling stations. It will accommodate projected growth and allow El Metro to provide a larger number and more diverse options of transportation.

The Comprehensive Plan stresses the importance of the relationship between transportation and overall community health and wellbeing. These are distributed across all the chapters, with particular focus in Chapter 4, the Mobility section. These include Section 14 that states "Transit-oriented development should be encouraged. Planning for transportation, transit stop locations, public spaces, density, and land use should be coordinated." Transportation, land use, and economic development all assist each other, from maximizing the close proximity to the airport (Policy 4.16) to incentivizing key nodes of activity (Policy 4.11).

The intention of the plan is to leverage how these different areas synergize one another. The mixed-use facility will deliver not only on the goal of improving transportation as a service to all Laredoans, but as an economic engine. This is why the plan, in policies like 4.1.1 (incentivize a mix of uses at key nodes of activity, including Downtown, the universities and new development sites) promotes mixed-use, and why this facility goes above-and-beyond in optimizing the many local and long-range benefits of the 'Viva Laredo' plan.

'Viva Laredo' calls for "a coordinated, efficient, and more affordable multimodal transportation system that supports, complements, and meets the needs of different types of places throughout the City." Laredoans, through the community engagement process, offered guidance on what, and where, that investment should go. In developing near the airport (4.16) and also creating more sustainable transportation and thus improving the air quality (4.12) and health outcomes of community members, the multi-use project not only advances the interests of business, trade, and private interests, but

the issues most important to the general public.

In total, 100+ of Viva Laredo's stipulated policies will be served by the proposed El Metro Transit new headquarters. There are few projects that could cross so many of a comprehensive plan's agenda items, delivering maximum benefit in a way that doesn't just listen to community needs, but definitively responds to them.

The Viva Laredo plan stresses the importance of the relationship between transportation and overall community health and wellbeing.



20. Viva Laredo plan sketch via the vivalaredo.org website

The following is an appendix of all the goals and policies from the Viva Laredo Comprehensive Plan that pertain to the El Metro Transit New Headquarters Project.

Chapter 1 • LAND USE PATTERNS

Goal 1.6 Future Land Use Map

A new Future Land Use Map is an integral part of Viva Laredo. This map has been created to assist city officials and private developers in understanding the growth management goals and policies of this plan, particularly as to the form and direction. The designations on this map are subject to change as Laredo grows and Viva Laredo is modified accordingly.

Goal 1.7 Application of Viva Laredo

The City of Laredo will use the principles set forth in Viva Laredo as tools to shape future development, to protect natural resources, to direct capital improvements, and to guide public policy in a coordinated manner for the mutual benefit of Laredo's residents and landowners.

1.7.2 Decisions on rezoning requests will be made in accordance with Viva Laredo and in accordance with all requirements of city and State law. When evaluating whether a proposed rezoning is in accordance with Viva Laredo, the City Council may also consider the following factors:

A. The proposed zoning district's effect on development or redevelopment of the property, particularly whether the rezoning will further or at least not conflict with specific policies listed under other goals of Viva Laredo.

B. Whether the property is in a Regional MixedUse Center or Neighborhood Mixed-Use Center, defined in Viva Laredo For instance, these areas:

- ▶ Are preferred locations for higher density development and redevelopment;
- ▶ Are ideal for a balance of housing, jobs, shopping, recreation, and civic uses;
- ▶ Will be served by walkable thoroughfares; and
- ▶ Are suitable for zoning districts that would orient most buildings toward streets.

C. The proposed zoning district's effect on the property and surrounding property, after evaluating the following factors:

- ▶ The physical context of the property and surrounding properties, including recent or anticipated changes to that context;
- ▶ Any historic district or other special designations that may be applicable;
- ▶ Potential adverse effects that might be caused by approval or denial of the requested rezoning;
- ▶ Anticipated effects on the natural environment;
- ▶ Whether the area is stable (low vacancy rates and units that are not for sale) or in transition; and
- ▶ Any changed social, economic, or physical conditions that make the existing zoning no longer suitable for the property.

Chapter 3 • URBAN DESIGN

Goal 3.1 Urban Design Best Practices

Coordinate land use and transportation policies while making Laredo more walkable, bikable and memorable.

- 3.1.1** Determine desired land use, including a varied mix of uses; then design the transportation infrastructure that supports the desired land use.
- 3.1.2** Enhance the pedestrian environment. In existing neighborhoods, streets can be retrofitted with sidewalk installation, tree planting and interesting building facades.
- 3.1.4** Implement transit connections between major destinations, including downtown, the new mall, the universities and the neighborhoods in South and North Laredo.

Goal 3.2

Update the city's zoning code to implement the plan vision.

- 3.2.1** Adjust zoning ordinances to promote mixed-use development wherever desired.

Goal 3.5 Building Types & Placement

New development should incorporate local building types and public spaces, including the historic plazas found throughout historic Laredo.

- 3.5.1** New buildings should create an interesting street frontage, with parking hidden from view, typically located in the rear of the building or below ground. Setbacks requirements should be changed such that this is encouraged.
- 3.5.2** The relationship between the fronts and the backs of buildings should ensure that public spaces have natural surveillance; the fronts of buildings should face the primary street adjacent to the property.

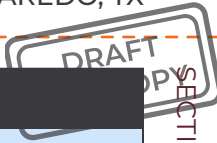
Fronts of buildings should face the fronts of other buildings or the sides where necessary; fronts should never face the backs of other buildings.

Goal 3.6

Incorporate adequate parking into new development while providing infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation, bike parking, transit or trolley access, and comfortable pedestrian access.

Goal 3.7 Street Design Principles

The City of Laredo wishes to create complete networks of multimodal streets with ample shaded sidewalks and frequent on-street parking.



Chapter 4 • MOBILITY

Goal 4.1 Land Use and Transportation Coordination

Create a coordinated, efficient, and more affordable multimodal transportation system that supports, complements, and meets the needs of different types of places throughout the City. Land use patterns and connections among different land uses are key elements defining the form and character of places.

4.1.1 Transportation planning and development, expansion, and investment in transportation facilities should be coordinated with the growth in the region.

4.1.2 New and modified thoroughfares will match the existing or proposed character of land along their paths as well as serving their essential functions in the regional road network.

A. In urban areas, multimodal transportation design will become the norm to enhance neighborhood character, safety, and walkability. Character and function will be more important than capacity, and the street network will be sized to yield smaller blocks with greater “people moving” capacity.

B. Existing Suburban areas are likely to maintain a predominately automobile-dependent development pattern. Thoroughfares will have sidewalks and bike lanes will be provided where travel speeds are higher.

Safe and attractive transportation choices among all modes should be encouraged through street patterns that consider multimodal transportation alternatives and access to and circulation between adjacent neighborhoods, parks, and commercial and employment nodes.

4.1.5 Comprehensive transportation impacts, including parking and impacts on all modes of transportation, should be identified and addressed before a development or redevelopment is implemented. Considerations should not assume that all travel is by personal vehicle.

Goal 4.3 Street Conversions

The City of Laredo will improve its thoroughfares over time as opportunities are found to increase transit service and improve connectivity, walkability, bikeability, and economic benefits to surrounding areas.

Goal 4.11 Transportation Demand Management

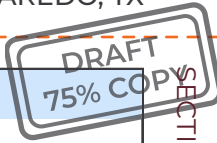
Establish demand management procedures as a cost-effective alternative to increasing capacity. A demand management approach has the potential to improve the natural environment, public health, placemaking, and economic development that also extends the life of transportation infrastructure.

4.11.1 Incentivize a mix of uses at key nodes of activity, including Downtown, the universities and new development sites.

Goal 4.12 Air Quality

Improve the region’s air quality through more sustainable and energy-efficient transportation and land use practices.

4.12.1 Encourage compact land uses and urban design patterns that increase travel choices, reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicle travel, and reduce the overall number of vehicle-miles traveled.



Goal 4.14 Public Transportation

Make a Metro Transit Master Plan and turn it into the most used Citywide transit system in Texas.

- 4.14.1 Review routes and operations to plan for the future and ensure El Metro Transit is meeting the needs of the community in the most efficient way possible.
- 4.14.2 Promote quality transit services that enhance mobility options, meet the needs of City residents and visitors, focus on transit dependent households, and incorporate age friendly elements.
- 4.14.3 Where opportunities exist, right-of-way for future transit should be reserved. New development and redevelopment should provide transit easements for planned alignments, rail stations, and bus stops within existing and planned transit corridors as appropriate.
- 4.14.4 Local and regional bus service along key corridors should be enhanced. Transit efficiency, including improved frequency of routes and transfer time, should be promoted within the El Metro Transit system.
- 4.14.5 Bus shelters, seating, lighting, trash receptacles, and related elements should be provided at transit stop locations. New developments located within planned transit corridors should coordinate with El Metro Transit to provide bus stop facilities at appropriate locations.
- 4.14.6 The use of transit facilities should be encouraged through enhancing the bike and pedestrian network near transit stops and sufficient sidewalk infrastructure should be installed near all transit stops. Where necessary, enhancements to make sidewalks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be prioritized.
- 4.14.7 Features such as traffic signal priority, queue jumps, and exclusive transit lanes to improve transit reliability should be encouraged, where possible.
- 4.14.8 Transit-oriented development should be encouraged. Planning for transportation, transit stop locations, public spaces, density, and land use should be coordinated, and high density, mixed-use development patterns should be encouraged around express bus lines, the transportation center Downtown, and any future transit stations.
- 4.14.9 The possibility of returning the Downtown streetcar to Laredo should be considered.

Goal 4.16 Global Trade and Airport

The Laredo International Airport will increase its role as a welcoming gateway for passengers, as an intermodal hub for incoming and outgoing goods, and as a center for related economic activities that serve the City and the region.

- 4.16.2 The City supports new mixed-use development and redevelopment on and around airport land.

Chapter 6 • SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 6.4 Energy and Atmosphere

Develop Laredo in a way that requires less automobile use for access to daily needs, which will help to reduce the prevalence of greenhouse gasses. Strive to continue to meet the national ambient air quality standards for all pollutants.

- 6.4.1** Promote new development that encourages a sustainable lifestyle such as walking, cycling, the use of public transit, and reducing the dependence on automobiles.
- 6.4.2** Consider the energy efficiency of proposed development when land use and development decisions are made. This would include energy consumed by buildings and their users as well as energy used by commuting and vehicle trips generated due to new development.
- 6.4.3** Emphasize infill and higher density development located in walkable areas, and areas served by public transit, to reduce dependency on automobiles.

Chapter 7 • HEALTH

Goal 7.3 Environmental Risk Factors

Reduce exposure to environmental risk factors.

- 7.3.1** Study existing neighborhoods for deficiencies.
 - A. Determine if residents can easily walk to retail, especially a grocer, where they may obtain daily necessities.
 - B. Determine if residents are less than a five minute walk from public facilities such as schools, parks, libraries, and transit stops.
 - C. Work with communities to increase density, connectivity, and completeness (mixture of uses).
- 7.3.2** Adjust land development regulations and zoning policies in order to make neighborhoods more complete, walkable and connected.

Chapter 9 • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 9.4 Cultivate a Vibrant Community

Strengthen the quality of place and build greater community engagement.

- 9.4.1** Provide greater support for downtown projects, especially those that encourage downtown living, mixed-use development, and “smart growth” ideals.
- 9.4.6** Fund major improvements through “Quality of Life” bonds.
- 9.4.8** Revise development code to incentivize development of mixed-use, walkable, neighborhoods and to encourage rehabilitation of underutilized buildings.

SECTION 5

LOCAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENT



SECTION 5

LOCAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

FUNDS SECUREMENT

At the moment of filing this application the City of Laredo and El Metro Transit have secured the funds up to the completion of Phase 1, and for the expansion of our CNG fleet.

To continue moving forward with this plan and ensure reducing greenhouse emissions, as well as ongoing safety while strengthening fleet performance, the City of Laredo and El Metro Transit are jointly seeking \$25,000,000.00 in discretionary funding through the FTA Buses and Bus Facilities Program. This Buses and Bus Facilities grant will fund the design and construction of the second and final phase of El Metro Transit new headquarters. If awarded this grant we would be ready to commence Phase 2 of this project, alongside with the construction of Phase 1, which is scheduled to be completed by September 2024.

During 2018 and 2019, 22% of El Metro Transit's operating funds came from federal assistance (\$3.466M) and about 10% of capital funds. Due to COVID's impact to transit operators, congress approved two rounds of stimulus and El Metro Transit received \$8.753M in 5307 American Rescue plan funding just under \$10M in 5307 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding and \$1.5M in Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSSA) funding.

The secured funds thus far include:

- ▶ FTA TX-04-0055-00 \$2,215,423.00
- ▶ FTA TX-2018-080-00 \$9,875,083.00
- ▶ 5307 CARES Act \$9,998,345
- ▶ 5307 American Rescue Plan \$8,753,532
- ▶ 5307 \$3,515,783
- ▶ 5307 CRRSAA \$1,529,460
- ▶ 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities \$381,215
- ▶ 5310 Elderly and Disabled \$300,000

The remaining funds have been obligated into the completion of Phase 1 (Wash bay, gas station, large parking lot area and both driveways), the new CNG plant and the purchase of 14 new CNG buses.

SOURCE OF LOCAL SHARE

In 2017 the City of Laredo performed an appraisal of the 27.31 acres parcel in which the new headquarters are being developed and the land was appraised at \$4,841,000. From that amount, the City utilized a portion to match as local share for the Intergovernmental Grant Application and reserved the remaining \$2,372,229 to be utilized as the local share match for Phase 2 of this project. Once Phase 2 is commenced, The City of Laredo plans to perform another appraisal to understand how much the land value may have increased in the past five years.

Additionally, the City of Laredo is matching an extra \$2,627,771. In total the City of Laredo is providing a local match of \$5,000,000.

**At El Metro
Transit we strive
to provide the
best service
and assist the
general public, as
well as Laredo's
low-income
and racialized
communities.**

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SECTION 6

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY



SECTION 6

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT OBLIGATION

Phase 2 of the El Metro Transit Operations, Maintenance and Administration Project was Master Planned alongside Phase 1 in 2022. Therefore a schematic site plan and concept is ready to be developed. If funds are granted, El Metro is able and ready to kick-off the procurement process for plans to be developed as well as for the purchase of additional buses as per the plan and would be able to comply with the requirement of obligating funds within 12 months of the grant award.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Procurement

The City of Laredo has contracted Hedrickson Transportation Group to administer the operation duties of El Metro, Laredo Transit Management, Inc. This includes turnkey procurement services which will expedite the process of procuring the optimal team to develop this facility.

It is anticipated that the team will comprise the following consultants: surveyors, programming specialists, architects, civil, structural and MEP engineers, as well as equipment specialists and technology and security consultants. El Metro has a proven pool of professionals with whom they have worked in the past and do not anticipate difficulties in procuring the right team.

Design Process

Essential for the success of a comprehensive design solution is a complete and thorough investigation, gathering, distributing, and assessing of all the parameters of a project. It is our experience that rigorous pre-design work is the foundation of an effective, efficient, and seamless project. Our approach shall ensure that goals are employed effectively, with an eye toward meeting cost and schedule goals.

The following timeline is estimated for construction of Phase 2 of the El Metro Transit New Headquarters:

Procurement	2 months
Negotiations	2 months
Construction Documents (production)	8 months
Construction	19 months
TOTAL	31 months (2 years, 7 months)

SECTION 7

TECHNICAL, LEGAL & FINANCIAL CAPACITY



SECTION 7**TECHNICAL, LEGAL & FINANCIAL CAPACITY****KNOW-HOW TO CARRY OUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Both phases of El Metro Transit new headquarters are being developed by El Metro Transit with the support of the City of Laredo.

The City of Laredo is a robust entity that has the ability to plan, support, develop and carry out this phase of the project, as well as it has with phase 1, multiple previous El Metro Transit projects and other City of Laredo projects. The City's internal structure is comprised of multiple departments, including Purchasing Division, Airport Department, Community Development, Engineering Department, Environmental Department, Keep Laredo Beautiful, Finance Department, Laredo Transit Management Inc, Planning & Zoning Department, Real Estate Division, Solid Waste Department, and Utilities Department.

El Metro Transit Inc is the department in charge to secure that all bids for El Metro Transit are prepared, released, reviewed and approved in a timely manner.

All bids are posted through City-E-Bid and the City of Laredo's website and are allowed to be responded online through City-E-Bid or by mailing physical copies. The day after a bid closes these are unsealed in public through a video conference, which is uploaded soon after to Youtube, remaining available for the public. Through the meeting minutes available on the City of Laredo's website bidders can see when each RFQ is planned to be reviewed in front of the City Council and may be present in the meeting if desired. Once the bid has been awarded to a vendor this vendor is contacted directly by the City for further steps.

CURRENT TECHNICAL, LEGAL OR FINANCIAL CAPACITY ISSUES

We certify there are no current technical or legal issues, however one critical issue that may affect the timeline and development of this project is our current financial capacity. The project is larger than what the City of Laredo and El Metro Transit can currently afford,

creating a need for requesting additional assistance, such as it is this grant application for \$25,000,000.00 of discretionary funding through the FTA Buses and Bus Facilities Program. The City of Laredo is providing a local match of \$5,000,000.

To confirm, this funding request will allow for the construction of:

- ▶ 16,800 sq ft Administration & Bus Operations Building
- ▶ 45,800 sq ft Bus Maintenance Facility
- ▶ 71,177 sq ft Commercial Buildings (Includes: office, residential and retail spaces)
- ▶ 70,396.53 sq ft Covered bus parking with photocells for 150 CNG bus fleet
- ▶ Electric Charging station for vehicles and general public

It is our belief that this project will result in Laredo becoming a city based on a multi-modal mobility vision that operates less on single-occupancy motor vehicles and more on mass transportation, intelligent transportation systems, and pedestrian/bicyclist utilization. This paradigm shift will ultimately result in Laredo becoming more sustainable, economically robust, and resilient to potential threats to continued vitality.

**We firmly believe
in creating a
more sustainable
future that
benefits
everyone in our
community.**



Our mission is to promote and provide high quality, cost-effective public transportation services that address the needs and demands of the citizens of Laredo, Texas.

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