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PROJECT GOVERNANCE & BEST PRACTICES FOR WHEN STATE DOTS DELIVER TRANSIT PROJECTS

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Notice

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Technical Report Abstract

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16. Abstract <p style="text-align: center;">This research project explores the consequences of Utah H.B.322, passed by the Utah legislature in 2022. The research includes a synopsis of the bill that relates to delivery of fixed guideway projects. It includes national peer agency research to explore if there are similar mandated arrangements around the US. Last, the research conducted one-on-one interviews with key frontline staff, who are directly involved in fixed guideway project delivery.</p>					
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Utah H.B. 322 created a unique partnership for fixed guideway project delivery in the greater Salt Lake region. Historically, the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) has planned, designed, and built fixed guideway projects within its service area. The Utah Department of Transportation had a different agency mission, but H.B. 322 mandated that UDOT lead what used to be UTA's role in project delivery of fixed guideway transit.

This research sought to discover similar relationships created by H.B. 322 and examined where there have been other collaborations between a state department of transportation and a transit agency to ascertain what has been successful and what hasn't.

Research methodology relied on in-person one-on-one interviews with staff from both agencies, internet research of other agencies, and interviews with several other agencies in Florida and California.

The findings showed that Utah's H.B. 322 is unique in terms of a legislative mandate for all fixed guideway projects in a region led by the state department of transportation. However, the research also showed that there are many examples on a smaller scale of different agencies using their historical "strengths" to create efficient processes but more on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, the report includes recommendations for improved agency collaboration that will increase efficiency:

- Both agencies should work to continue to improve communications.
- Continue resource-sharing (training and relationship-building with FTA and other partners).
- Continue UDOT staffing per the recommendations of the Management Plan.
- Each agency should expand their professional networks, i.e., UDOT should be more involved in organizations such as APTA, while UTA should be more involved with organizations such as AASHTO.
- Recognize there is a learning curve for both agencies and continue to utilize facilitation resources to strengthen relationships or resolve issues.

2. INTRODUCTION

A. Research Purpose

Historically, the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) operated separately, with each department responsible for its own plans, designs, and project delivery. In 2022, the Utah State Legislature passed House Bill 322 (H.B. 322), which directed UDOT and UTA to partner on “fixed guideway” projects and identified UDOT as the lead agency for project delivery. This legislation created a working relationship between UDOT and UTA and provided state funds for investment in transit projects.

Now, three years after the passing of H.B. 322, the impact this law has had on UDOT, UTA, and fixed guideway project delivery is largely undocumented. Moreover, while UDOT’s role as the project lead on fixed guideway projects is new in Utah, similar arrangements where state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) work in partnership with transit agencies are not uncommon nationwide. It should be noted that this research did not discover any similar state mandates for across-the-board project delivery.

This project has two purposes. The first is to understand the current state of the UDOT/UTA partnership. The second is to identify challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned for project delivery when state DOTs partner with regional transit agencies. By understanding how agencies in other states cooperate to deliver projects, valuable lessons learned can help UDOT and UTA deliver projects more effectively and avoid potential errors.

B. Study Background

To understand the current state of the partnership between UDOT and UTA, a baseline state of the practice was established. This was achieved by reviewing the legislation that created this partnership and how each agency has implemented it. This research involved conducting select one-on-one interviews with each agency and establishing regional baseline project delivery experiences. Research was then conducted to identify other peer relationships nationwide.

C. Anticipated Outcomes

This report is organized into four main sections. First, the data collection and research methods for this project are discussed. Next, a baseline state of the practice is defined using interviews from agency staff and a review of applicable legislation. Once the relationship between UDOT and UTA is understood and a baseline defined, nationwide research is describing the effectiveness of similar inter-agency relationships in other states. Finally, the findings of this

report are summarized and recommendations given so that UDOT and UTA can use this report to gain additional insights.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology for this project was threefold: 1) review the legislation along with the required “Management Plan,” 2) Identify key agency staff and conduct one-on-one interviews, and 3) Interview staff at other agencies where there may be similar project delivery collaborations.

4. DATA COLLECTION

Source data was not needed or collected as part of this research.

5. BASELINE STATE OF THE PRACTICE

One-on-One Staff Interviews

A total of six staff from UDOT or UTA who are directly affected by H.B. 322 were contacted for this research. A summary of thoughts and opinions from each agency is outlined below.

UDOT:

- Staff recognize that they are playing “catch-up” on transit projects, specifically the double tracking for Frontrunner (FR2X).
- They are learning how to be more aligned with FTA in Denver and at the headquarters. This is a different federal relationship than UDOT is used to, but this is recognized and is a work in progress.
- There was recognition that UTA may not have been involved as much as perhaps they should have been in the development of the Management Plan.
- There is an opportunity for better project outreach coming from both agencies.
- Appropriate UDOT staffing levels and expertise are going slower than expected.
- There is overall optimism that collaboration and efficiency will increase over time once both agencies become more comfortable with each other’s “culture.”

UTA

- Staff recognize that UDOT is trying to learn the new systems and transit “language.”
- The FR2X project is seen as the first major project where the stipulations of H.B. 322 are in effect. It is a large project and there has been significant give and take, and knowledge sharing by both agencies.
- Some staff see redundancy and inefficiencies now due to the learning curve and UDOT’s historical project delivery methods.
- UTA staff know that UDOT carries more clout with the state legislature, and this “trust” can help overall project delivery since the legislature is more willing to fund projects with a strong UDOT presence.
- “Trust” was brought up several times. Right or wrong, UTA knows that the public and lawmakers have more trust in UDOT and this can be leveraged to ensure there is state funding for transit projects in the future.
- UTA kept several key contracts in place during the transition period on the Point of the Mountain transit work, which saved significant time and money instead of re-procuring services.
- UDOT doesn’t have the experience of going to meet with FTA in both their regional office (Denver) or the headquarters (Washington, D.C.). UTA clearly has a long and

successful track record working successfully with their federal partner. UDOT is learning this important part of transit funding.

- Related to this is the different requirements FTA has on recipients such as civil rights and Disadvantaged Business requirements.

Legislation Review

Utah H.B. 322 (2022) created a working relationship between UDOT and UTA in which UDOT was directed to manage and oversee fixed guideway capital development projects in cases where state money is expended, within the UTA service area, and adds capacity to the transit system. Fixed guideway projects are defined as public transit facilities that use and occupy rail for the use of public transit or a separate right-of-way for the use of public transit. This definition includes commuter rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit (BRT). Once projects are complete, operations and maintenance of transit services remain the responsibility of UTA.

Also in 2022, the Utah legislature passed H.B. 03, which adjusted appropriations to provide for the support and operation of the Utah state government for the fiscal years beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 20, 2023. This legislation is notable as it apportioned funds to UDOT for work on transit projects. **Table 1** shows the funds provided to UDOT and UTA for transit projects.

Table 1: UDOT and UTA Transit Funds

Amount	Purpose
\$3,000,000	North Salt Lake for an environmental study for a grade separation at 1100 North
\$250,000	Implement the provisions of Public Transit Capital Development Modifications (House Bill 322, 2022 General Session)
\$3,800,000	Utah Transit Authority for the completion of the Depot District
\$75,000,000	Double-track strategic sections of the Front Runner commuter rail system and may use up to \$5,000,000 of this appropriation for planning and environmental analysis to extend Front Runner to Payson, including station area planning as appropriate.

\$75,000,000	Future transit project at the Point of the Mountain. UDOT will complete the alternative analysis that will include both rail and bus rapid transit options for consideration of the final plan.
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H.B. 322 Management Plan

In Spring 2022, UDOT hired a consultant to develop a management plan for how to best implement the requirements of H.B. 322. This plan, officially titled “H.B. 322 Management Plan,” defined the following goal:

“Produce a plan outlining how UDOT can adjust organizational structure to leverage UDOT and UTA strengths to successfully manage the planning, design, construction, and UTA operation of state-funded fixed guideway transit projects outlined by H.B. 322.”

To achieve this goal, the consultant team conducted interviews with agencies from other states and led meetings with UTA and UDOT. Federal policies, guidelines, and laws were also reviewed to understand what resources would be needed for UDOT to successfully deliver transit projects. The Plan team found that UDOT had limited capacity and expertise required to manage an influx of transit projects.

One of the key limitations of UDOT was its lack of expertise in the transit project funding process. Traditionally, UDOT uses state funding on large projects to reduce regulatory burdens. Alternatively, UTA often utilizes federal funds. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding through competitive grants that require long-term commitment from transit agencies and extensive documentation. Additionally, it was found that UDOT did not have the staff capacity to manage and deliver the influx of transit projects H.B. 322 created for the department. To be successful, UDOT would need more staff with expertise in transit projects.

Based on their findings, the consultant team recommended hiring staff and creating a new organizational structure that would leverage the strengths of both departments. Specifically, they found that to be competitive and eligible for federal funding and provide consistent delivery of transit projects, UDOT should maintain sixteen full-time employees (FTEs) with specific expertise and technical competencies. The positions and associated duties for staff are below:

- Transit Director: Overall responsibility to deliver transit projects and manage the UDOT transit group.
- Transit Administrative Assistant: Provide administrative support to the transit group.
- Transit Project Manager (3 positions): Manage the scope, schedule, and budget for transit projects.

- Transit Public Involvement: Develops and manages public information process for transit projects.
- Transit Grant Manager and Planner: Lead statewide transit planning activities and grant development. Identify transit projects that qualify for federal funding and assist in the development of grant applications.
- Transit Grant Specialist: Complete the federal reimbursement process for grants post-award.
- Transit Compliance Specialist: Develop and oversee the implementation of policies and procedures required to receive federal funds from FTA.
- Transit Civil Rights Specialist: Develop and oversee the implementation of civil rights policies (e.g., Equal Opportunity Employer (EEO), Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), etc.) and procedures required to receive federal funding from FTA.
- Transit Design Engineer: Oversee and approve the design for transit projects.
- Transit Utilities and Railroad Specialist: Develop agreements with railroads and utilities to facilitate the construction of transit projects.
- Transit Environmental Manager: Manage the completion of transit environmental documents.
- Transit Right-of-Way Acquisition Program Manager: Supervise the acquisition of Right-of-Way for all transit projects.
- Transit Construction Engineer: Manage the construction quality, safety programs, change orders, and other construction aspects of transit projects.
- Transit Operations Manager: Oversee the operations for state-funded transit systems.

Figure 1 shows how these proposed UDOT Transit positions will be structured. The matrix organization with orange boxes representing shared employees (within UDOT). Blue boxes represent dedicated UDOT employees.

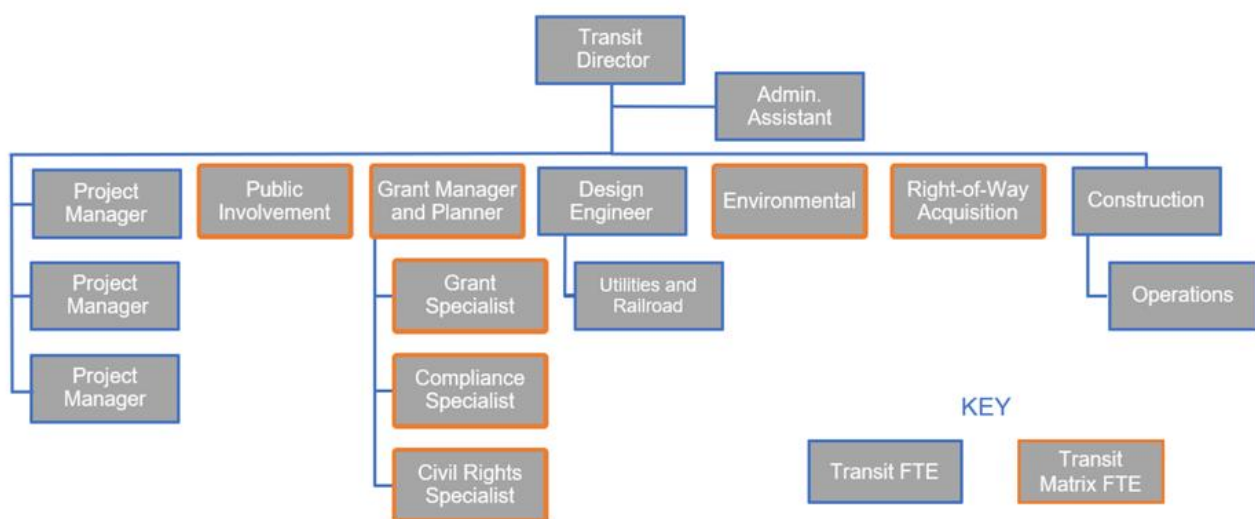


Figure 1: Proposed UDOT Transit Organizational Structure

Status of Management Plan Implementation

The original H.B. 322 management plan was published in 2022. Since then, several transit projects have commenced under the management of UDOT. **Table 2** shows projects that meet the criteria to be managed by UDOT under H.B. 322 and their status as of June 2025.

Table 2: Active UDOT-Managed Capital Transit Projects

Project	Funding	Status
FrontRunner Double Tracking	State Transit Transportation Investment Fund - \$385,000,000 UTA Funds - \$60,000,000	Completed the categorical exclusion environmental documents for eight of the 11 sections and is in the design phase for the eight sections. The environmental documents for the three remaining sections will be completed in later 2025.
FrontRunner Environmental Provo to Payson	State Transportation Investment Fund - \$5,000,852	Under environmental review and preliminary design
Transit at the Point of the Mountain (POM)	Environmental Study: Local Government - \$5,854,768 FEDERAL FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO UTA-\$2,000,000 Transit: Transportation Investment Fund - Active Transportation - \$74,970,000	Environmental Assessment available for review. Estimate completion date of environmental review and permitting 09/27/2025
S-Line	H.B. 433 - \$12,000,000 Transit Transportation Investment Fund - \$9,900,000	Scoping
Midvalley Connector Bus Rapid Transit	FED TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION SEC 5309 - \$80,687,500 Local Government - \$11,000,000 Local In-kind -	Under construction

Project	Funding	Status
	\$4,650,000 State Pavement - Level 2 Funds - \$736 State Transit Transportation Investment Fund - \$22,800,000 FEDERAL FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO UTA - \$2,000,000	
OGX	State - \$4,000,000 Construction: Fed Aid - \$83,322,872 Other - \$28,992,312 Operating Subsidy: \$1,147,382 Charging Infrastructure: \$1,398,450	Opens August 20, 2025
Sharp - Tintic	Fed aid - \$5,594,344 State - \$16,390,000 Other - \$1,782,799	Scoping - UDOT is working to determine timeline for design and construction

Of the new positions within the UDOT transit division that were recommended to be hired, six have been hired by UDOT. **Table 3** shows the list of positions recommended by the H.B. 322 Management Plan, separated by positions that have and have not been hired as of June 2025.

Table 3: Staff Positions Recommended by H.B. 322 Management Plan

Hired by UDOT	Position Unfilled
Transit Director	Administrative Assistant
Transit Civil Rights Specialist	Transit Grants Manager and Planning

Transit Project Manager	Transit Grant Specialist
UDOT Design Engineer	Transit Public Involvement
Transit Construction Engineer	Transit Engineering Manager
Transit ROW Acquisition Manager	Transit Railroad/Utilities Specialist

6. NATIONAL RESEARCH

National Review

Based on a national search, the study team found examples of collaborative relationships between public transit agencies and state departments of transportation. Based on a review of an American Public Transit Association (APTA) database of fixed guideway projects, and in the H.B 322 Management Plan document, the study team conducted a review of the organizational structure along with the roles and responsibilities for transit properties where the state DOT is directly involved in some aspect of transit service delivery, including capital project delivery. The following section summarizes organizational relationships for the following agencies.

- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- San Diego Association of Governments
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Connecticut Department of Transportation
- New Mexico Department of Transportation

Through the study team's research, a wide range of relationships exists from strictly funding third-party providers to taking on full responsibilities of operations and maintenance of commuter rail operations. Both FDOT and the SANDAG relationships parallel with UDOT and UTA relationships. The study team conducted interviews with SANDAG and FDOT staff to better understand the evolving relationships in delivering fixed guideway transit services which are summarized in this section.

MassDOT and MBTA

In June 2009, Governor Patrick signed "An Act Modernizing the Transportation Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," creating a streamlined Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). MassDOT represents a merger of the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOT) with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA), the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV), the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission (MAC), and the Tobin Bridge. In addition, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) are subject to oversight by the new organization. As highlighted in **Figure 2**, the new organization also assumed responsibility for many of the bridges and parkways formerly operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

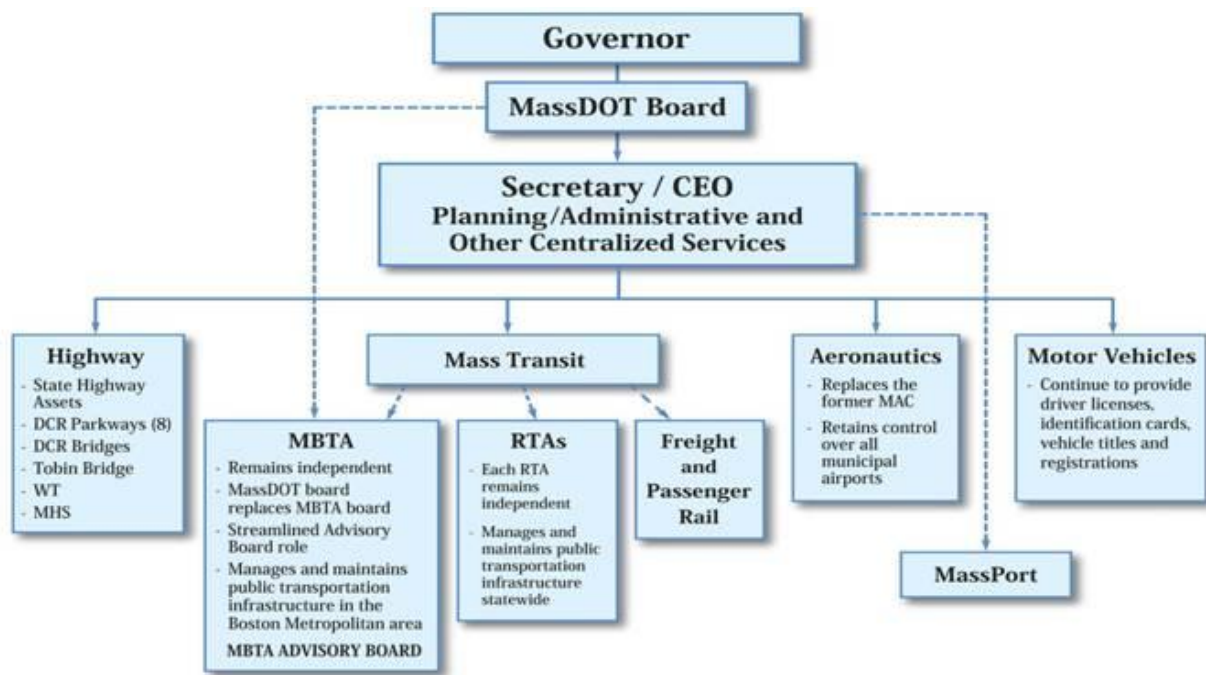


Figure 2: MassDOT Organization

The department is governed by a five-member board and administered by the Secretary of Transportation, appointed by the Governor to serve as Chief Executive Officer of the department. MassDOT is comprised of the following four divisions:

- The Highway Division includes the roadways, bridges, and tunnels of the former Massachusetts Highway Department, Turnpike Authority, Tobin Bridge, and assets of DCR. The Highway Division is responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of the Commonwealth's state highways and bridges. The Division is also responsible for overseeing traffic safety, engineering activities and snow and ice removal to ensure safe road and travel conditions.
- The Rail & Transit Division is responsible for all transit initiatives and oversees the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and all Regional Transit Authorities of the Commonwealth. The MassDOT Board of Directors serves as the governing body of the MBTA, which itself remains a separate organization within MassDOT.
- The Aeronautics Division has authority over the Commonwealth's public-use airports, private-use landing areas, and seaplane bases. It is responsible for airport development and improvements, aviation safety, aircraft accident investigation, navigational aids, and statewide aviation planning. The Division certifies airports and heliports, licenses airport managers, conducts annual airport inspections, and enforces safety and security regulations.

- The Registry of Motor Vehicles Division is responsible for vehicle operator licensing and vehicle and aircraft registration available both online and at branch offices across the Commonwealth. The Registry oversees commercial and non-commercial vehicle inspection stations.

While it has an appointed board, MassDOT continues to be governed by state laws, rules and policies, including the use of the Commonwealth's central accounting system (MMARS), payroll system, and adherence to state fiscal laws. In addition to the operating divisions, MassDOT has a central office, referred to in the Act as the Office of Planning and Programming that will house the administrative functions (finance, human resources, procurement, legal services, and administration) of the organization.

Prior to the reform act, transportation policy, planning, and financing were organized into separate silos of quasi-independent authorities and state agencies. One primary goal of the reform act that is relevant to the conditions within H.B. 322 was to better coordinate transportation efforts finding economies of scale and best practices to reduce costs and manage the transportation network. The Commonwealth's transportation system consists of a vast network of streets and highways, public transit (bus and passenger rail), airports, freight rail facilities, and other services such as bicycle paths and ferries that provide for the mobility of people, goods, and services throughout the state. Within the new streamlined MassDOT, authority over the operations and maintenance of the transportation system is shared among state, regional transit agencies, and local governments.

SANDAG

Under federal law, SANDAG is designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments for the San Diego region. The SANDAG Board of Directors annually reviews the bylaws and policies that govern the agency's work. They are also considered a regional transportation commission with consolidated regional transportation responsibilities (transit, roads, tolling, etc.)

In 1987, San Diego County approved the 20-year TransNet Program, a one-half cent sales tax to fund a wide variety of transportation projects. In 2003, state law (SB 1703) consolidated the roles and responsibilities of SANDAG with transit functions of the Metropolitan Transit Development Board and the North San Diego County Transit Development Board. SB 1703 assigned SANDAG the responsibility for transit planning, funding allocation, project development, and eventually construction in the San Diego region in addition to its preexisting transportation responsibilities and other regional roles.

TransNet continues to fund transportation infrastructure in the San Diego region and is one of the largest transportation improvement programs in California. The initial 20-year

TransNet program generated approximately \$3.8 billion between 1988 and 2008. The TransNet extension has generated \$4.4 billion to date and has been vital in helping secure additional federal, state, and local funds.

As part of the TransNet program, Caltrans (the state department of transportation) and SANDAG developed organizational structures to deliver on the TransNet program without conflicting with independent organizational needs or work programs. Through a series of meetings and work group sessions, Caltrans and SANDAG created a “corridor director” position to lead project development and to direct both Caltrans and SANDAG project offices. The project director reports to Caltrans and SANDAG executive directors along with an Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee (ITOC). The ITOC was organized to provide independent oversight on TransNet-funded projects.

Through a formal master plan agreement, project delivery roles and responsibilities between Caltrans and SANDAG are defined and codified. The agreement identifies SANDAG as taking the lead in design activities and Caltrans leads construction activities. Over the last year SANDAG has been taking on an expanded role by standing up a project management division which is being led by a Caltrans program management veteran. Caltrans and SANDAG will continue to refine roles and responsibilities for program delivery through updating the master plan agreements.

Florida DOT

The FDOT Public Transit Office implements the FDOT vision to serve the people of Florida by providing a well-planned transportation network that supports economic growth of the state.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is designated under state law to receive and administer Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds through the § 5305(d), § 5305(e), § 5310, § 5311 and § 5339 programs. The State of Florida also has established public transit funding programs that FDOT is responsible for managing and administering to eligible recipients. In this role, FDOT is required to manage the fiscal elements of these programs in accordance with its existing procedures, FTA guidelines, and other applicable state and federal regulations. FDOT administered federal and state transit funding programs include SunRail, which is operated by FDOT and Tri-Rail which is operated by South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA). SunRail and Tri-Rail are the only two publicly owned commuter rail lines in Florida.

- The SunRail commuter rail is managed by FDOT. Volusia, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola counties, along with the City of Orlando, also partnered on the project, which was funded by federal, state, and local sources. FDOT purchased CSX right-of-way for the project. Phase 1 of SunRail broke ground in 2012 and completed in 2014. SunRail includes thirty-one miles of trackage and twelve commuter rail stations which FDOT owns and operates. The Central Florida

Commuter Rail Commission is the governing board for SunRail and acts in an advisory capacity to FDOT. The intent is to have the operations and maintenance of SunRail transition to the Commission in a planned and phased transition. The transition is in process but not complete.

- Tri-Rail is operated by the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA) and built by FDOT with service starting in 1989. Tri-Rail right-of-way remains owned by FDOT. The SFRTA is an agency of the State of Florida, created in 2003 as the successor of the Tri-County Commuter Rail Authority. SFRTA.

It is authorized to coordinate and develop a regional transportation system in South Florida. By statutory authority, SFRTA provides Tri-Rail service along seventy-two miles of the South Florida Rail Corridor (SFRC) and eight miles of the Florida East Coast Railway (FECR). SFRTA oversees the dispatching of daily rail activity on the SFRC, hosting Amtrak passenger services and CSXT Freight Rail Operations. Additionally, SFRTA is responsible for providing right-of-way maintenance on the SFRC, which is owned by FDOT.

The Governing Board of SFRTA consists of ten members representing the operating area in south Florida. This governing board structure ensures that SFRTA operates with regional cooperation, effective governance, and strategic planning. Tri-Rail passenger service spans over eighty miles of an urbanized area of approximately six million people, connecting major cities and destinations across Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties, playing a crucial role in regional transportation.

- Brightline is the only privately owned and operated passenger rail in the US. Opened in 2018 with service from Miami to Palm Beach, the line extended in 2023 from West Palm Beach to Orlando. The line continues to grow through the post-pandemic period providing connections with Tri-Rail in Miami. Brightline operates on public right-of-way.

Other Fixed-Guideway Transit Service in Florida

- Metrorail is a rapid transit system servicing Miami and Miami-Dade County operated by Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), a departmental agency of Miami-Dade County. Opened in 1984, it is Florida's only rapid transit metro system and is currently composed of two lines of 23 stations on 24.4 miles of rail. Metrorail serves the urban core of Miami. It connects to Tri-Rail station, as well as Metrobus routes at all stations.
- Florida also has Metromover (people mover run by Department of Transportation and Public Works Miami-Dade County) in Miami, Jacksonville Skyway (people

mover run by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority) in Jacksonville, and the Tampa TECO streetcar line in Tampa (run by the Hillsborough Area Regional Transportation Authority).

Other Examples of Departments of Transportation and Transit Delivery

- Pennsylvania DOT (PennDOT)/Amtrak

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania is the western terminus of Amtrak's Keystone Service connecting Harrisburg to New York City by way of Philadelphia. The tracks and service are owned and operated by Amtrak with PennDOT providing financial assistance. PennDOT relies on Amtrak for all maintenance and operations of the limited service.

- Connecticut DOT (CTDOT)

There are three commuter rail services in Connecticut that are overseen by the CTDOT. CTrail consists of two lines that are operated in partnership with TransitAmerica Services and Alternate Concepts (TASI/ACI), and Amtrak.

- The Hartford Line connects New Haven, CT and Springfield, MA. Rails along this line are owned by Amtrak, while TASI provides operations and maintenance.
- The Shore East Line connects cities along Connecticut's coast from New Haven to New London. Amtrak owns and operates this service in partnership with CTDOT, who provide funding.

Additionally, the New Haven Line runs from New Haven to connections in New York. These tracks are owned by CTDOT and operated by New York's MTA Metro-North Railroad under contract with CTDOT.

- New Mexico DOT (NMDOT)

NMDOT focuses on transit, rail, aviation, and highways. Rail Runner Express commuter rail provides service to the greater Albuquerque, New Mexico area stretching from Belen to Santa Fe. NMDOT owns the rails, train cars, and is responsible for capital projects but does not operate rail service directly. Operation and maintenance of the Rail Runner Express service is provided by Rio Metro Regional Transit District (RMRTD) through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

7. CONCLUSIONS

This research project accomplished its two purposes: understand the current state of the UDOT/UTA partnership and identify challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned for project delivery when state DOTs partner with regional transit agencies. In sum, this research learned that:

1. There is not an identical model in the US whereby the state legislature mandated state DOT management of fixed guideway delivery. There are many examples of cooperation and collaboration in many other states between a DOT and a transit agency, but nothing “top-down.”
2. In these cases, when resources are shared, there is normally a formal agreement.
3. Both the FDOT and SANDAG interviews identified the need to maintain strong and committed partnerships from all parties. Having staff that have experience in both traditional highway and transit delivery is highly desirable.
4. The relationship between UDOT and UTA are evolving. The interview process showed that each agency is working hard to optimize respective project delivery “styles” and to learn from each other.
5. UDOT staffing can be more robust to meet the needs of the anticipated transit program and meet the recommendations of the Management Plan.

There are more projects on the horizon, such as the Orange Line light rail project. The “bumps” of the H.B. 322 process will naturally smooth out as more projects come to fruition.

***Note:** Although not formally part of this research, the Utah State Senate passed SB174 in 2025. This bill expands the breadth of H.B.322 to include all fixed guideway projects regardless of funding sources.*

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research discovered that both agencies are striving to deliver transit projects as efficiently as possible. However, due to institutional history, UDOT is on a learning curve. UTA is working with UDOT to help it over any transit-related hurdles. Based on the national research and local interviews, recommendations include:

- Both agencies should work to continue to improve communications.
- Continue resource-sharing (training, relationship-building with FTA and other partners).
- Continue UDOT staffing per the recommendations of the Management Plan.
- Each agency should expand their professional networks, i.e., UDOT should be more involved in organizations such as APTA, while UTA should be more involved with organizations such as AASHTO.
- Recognize there is a learning curve for both agencies and continue to utilize facilitation resources to strengthen relationships or resolve issues.

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