

Commute with Confidence Webinar Question and Answer Summary

1. What are some of the changes regional agencies have made to their services in response to the pandemic?

Colorado Valley Transit, Inc. continues to operate on a limited basis in order to mitigate and contain the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). They have also increased the cleaning of buses and recommended proper social distancing.

For more information go to: <http://gotransit.org/>

Connect Transit helps to safeguard against the spread of the Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, by putting an even greater emphasis on disinfecting surfaces frequently, touched by the public.

For more information go to: <https://www.facebook.com/Connect-Transit-272512076112331>

Conroe Connection has increased the frequency of bus cleaning and implementing additional measures to ensure the safety of patrons and bus operators.

For more information go to: <https://www.cityofconroe.org/departments/transit/about-contact-us>

Fort Bend Transit has taken specific steps for safer travel; steps include social distancing, requiring operators to wear masks, and requesting that commuters wear masks as well.

For more information go to: <https://www.fortbendcountytexas.gov/government/departments/county-administration/public-transportation>

Harris County Transit provides residents outside of the METRO service area with transportation alternatives. They have temporarily halted fare collection to limit contact, require drivers and passengers to wear face masks, and increased the frequency of bus and vehicle cleaning.

For more information go to: <https://transit.harriscountytexas.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Houston BCycle provides equitable access to bike share that fosters recreation, mobility and personal wellness. To guard against the spread of COVID-19; they have increased cleaning at high traffic stations, require technicians to wear gloves, accept payments via an app, and have closed some stations near overcrowded parks.

For more information go to: <https://www.houstonbicycle.com/covid19>

Island Transit implements social distancing measures on all buses, and bus interiors are cleaned hourly, sometimes more frequently. They have added buses to highly utilized routes and are limiting each bus to (10) ten passengers.

For more information go to: <https://www.galvestontx.gov/393/Transportation>

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has implemented seat reductions by 50% on bus and rail services to enforce social distancing. When buses reach 50% capacity, digital signs will signal patrons to wait for the next bus. Rear boarding is in place where possible. METRO is encouraging patrons to wear a face mask, providing information on how to make a face mask, working to make masks available to people as requested, and providing masks and hand sanitizer to all bus and rail operators.

For more information go to: <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

METRO STAR has put in place a number of programs to assist vanpoolers with options to help avoid additional financial burdens associated with a service that they may not need right now, or for when a vanpool group has fewer participating riders to share the cost. New and returning vanpool participants can expect a sanitized vehicle with carefully thought out physical distancing parameters put in place and has provided tips for vanpool groups to encourage social distancing and frequent cleaning in the van.

For more information go to: <https://www.yourcommutesolution.org/documents/METRO-STAR-flyer.pdf>

Woodlands Transit routes have been consolidated to accommodate service adjustments. Trolleys will resume operations at a later date. Woodlands Transit highly recommends that passengers wear face masks when riding and all drivers wear masks while on duty. All buses are limited to 50% occupancy; and other social distancing and enhanced disinfection protocols are also in place.

For more information go to: <https://thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov/96/Transportation>

2. How do you sanitize cloth seats on the Park & Ride and Train and let it dry in time?

Fogging technology is used to sanitize buses and trains daily. The solution disinfects and dries quickly.

3. Since METRO can't sanitize every time someone gets on and off the bus or rail, how do you know it's really "sanitized"? Maybe it was sanitized last night, but what about when someone gets on during the day? How can you guarantee the vehicles are clean?

METRO, like any entity managing public places, cleans as much as possible. Patrons should follow CDC recommendations, use masks, gloves, wash hands often, use hand sanitizer and avoid touching their face, mouths, and eyes. This is true of any public space. METRO also encourages social distancing by blocking off seats. For more details on how METRO is helping make the ride safer please visit, <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>.

4. How is METRO STAR vanpool going to contribute when re-opening our businesses?

METRO STAR vanpool is supporting active and re-opening businesses in 4 primary ways:

- During the pandemic, we've continued to serve essential workers with their vanpools, including cases where we've provided additional vehicles for social distancing.
- For groups working from home, we've kept their existing vanpools in a ready state to relaunch upon request. Our "Hold My Van" program protects vanpoolers from the financial burden of the vanpool during their stay at home.
- For groups operating or restarting with fewer riders, we are accommodating smaller groups of participants. Our "Save My Seat" program protects those riding from rising costs even as those not riding are no longer paying their shares.
- We offer new vanpool group opportunities for those who may no longer be able to use their original transit options. Initially, this was aimed at essential workers, particularly in healthcare, but it can be accessed by anyone as driving alone is not always an option and not all worksites can accommodate increased parking.

5. What should employers tell their employees about transit and alternative commuting?

The Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) advises that as your worksite and/or community begins to develop plans to return to the workplace, start by assessing the situation based on workplace geography, the specific needs of your commuters, the available infrastructure at your facilities (transit access, parking, bike racks, sidewalks, etc.), and if it is even necessary to return employees to the physical office or continue to allow them to work from home, so you can make the most appropriate decisions when reopening. The Association for Commuter Transportation's guide for employers, "Supporting Commuters Returning to Worksites during COVID-19" provides recommendations on how commuters can select the best commute action plan for their needs.

Go to: <https://www.actweb.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3527>

6. How can companies plan for sustainable transportation?

The Commute Solutions Partners Program helps organizations in the Houston-Galveston region - such as employers, universities, developers and property managers - meet their business and sustainability goals. We provide complimentary travel demand management planning services to incorporate carpool, vanpool, walking, bicycling, public transit, telework, compressed work week, parking management, and more. We work with our area transportation providers to service employers in Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller counties.

For more information go to: <https://www.yourcommutesolution.org/Partners>

7. How will industries adjust to more employees teleworking on a regular basis?

Many industries and employees have adopted teleworking as a new norm. The pandemic forced many employers to implement a telework program at their work sites and as a result, companies are saving overhead cost and cashing in on increased employee productivity. Commute Solutions offers partners complimentary telework planning and compressed work scheduling assistance.

For more information, visit <https://www.yourcommutesolution.org/Partners#Resources>

8. Can your business be sued if Covid-19 spreads at work?

While we can't give legal advice, a recent Houston Business Journal article expressed that if an employer fails to ensure a safe, sanitary office environment for their employees and an employee ends up contracting Covid-19, that employer could be at risk for a lawsuit, according to a local employment and labor attorney.

For more information go to: <https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2020/05/02/can-your-business-be-sued-if-covid-19-spreads-at.html>

9. The Galleria Area is a large employment center with no safe access by bicycle. When can we expect to see a protected bike route between River Oaks and the Galleria?

Houston BCycle discussed bike share for the Galleria area in the past but aren't currently working to install any stations there this year. They know the TIRZ/management district for that area have been working on many ped-bike improvement projects and they've expressed interest in eventually partnering to bring bike share to the Galleria area in the future.

10. When will Metro's 291, Conroe Connection route return to normal? Or at least offer another

time option?

The 291 Conroe Commuter Service will gradually return to its normal operating hours of service. The City of Conroe's Transit Department is working closely with METRO to ensure that services are reinstated as quickly and safely as possible. Once the need arises from riders and there is a decrease in the cases related to the pandemic, we will coordinate and communicate the new/adjusted hours. Everyone's health and safety are a major priority and we will continue to monitor this pandemic and follow the recommendations from the CDC and our Governor and City officials. Those persons who would like to be contacted directly once service is reinstated as normal are more than welcome to send their contact information to Transit Operations Coordinator, De'Andre J. Guin, Sr., at Phone: 936.522.3533 | Mobile Office: 734.945.7527 | guin@cityofconroe.org

11. If there is another quarantine in the future, what have transportation organizations learned to do or not do?

Connect Transit believes that they know so much more of what to expect. The operator's barriers will already be in place. They are now taking steps to stock up on more PPE for operators and customers and will continue the sanitizing. They believe everything that they're doing now will become the new norm for many years to come.

Fort Bend Transit states that public transportation is such an integral part of their community, especially to those who have no other means to get around. They have learned proper cleaning/disinfecting policies and procedures in order to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Fort Bend Transit has adopted these six pillars of operations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Protect our employees
- Protect our customers
- Stay ahead of the demand for service
- Support the needs of our local community
- Earn the trust of our customers
- Effective communication

Precautions

It is a requirement for all drivers to wear masks while operating Fort Bend Transit vehicles and they are encouraging our riders to wear masks. They are offering N95 masks to clients if they would like to have one and will soon provide hand sanitizer aboard all Fort Bend Transit units. Each bus has assigned seating that allows for minimal passenger interaction and each unit can only carry 50% occupancy on any specific trip. They have also identified the correct PPE necessary for all members of their organization in order to reduce the likelihood of an out-break at their transit facility. Policy changes, such as mandatory temperature checks to gain admittance to all Fort Bend County facilities and social distancing mandates are also now in place. These precautions will be in place for the foreseeable future.

12. What special precautions should riders prepare for when taking public transit or any sustainable form of transport now and in the future?

The Commute Solutions [Return to Work Guide for Commuters During COVID-19](#) will help you plan a safer commute as you return to work. Included are tips on what you can do to keep yourself safe during your commute, as well as information on what area transportation providers are doing to make shared commuting as safe as possible.