

Planning for the Future

South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Resources Inventory Report



TRANSPORTATION &
ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES

SETRPC
SOUTH EAST TEXAS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved by Steering Committee: November 30, 2016

Introduction

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) has been charged with updating the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan (*RPTCP 2011*) for the southeast Texas region, consisting of Hardin, Orange, and Jefferson Counties. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that local governments provide more efficient transit services for seniors, persons with a disability, persons living below poverty level, veterans, children, and others. The update of the plan will be completed in February 2017.



This report assembles in one place brief descriptions and background data about investment in transit within the SETRPC region. It will identify the transportation providers and agencies that participate in coordination of regional public transportation services, outline the various characteristics of each participating entity, and resources available that may aid in improving regional accessibility and mobility for all residents of Hardin, Jefferson and Orange Counties.

It is very important to the update of the plan that accurate data is captured as it relates to existing transportation resources available throughout the region. To help accomplish this task SETRPC distributed surveys to an array of entities, which included workforce centers, social service agencies, non-profit disability organizations, local and private transportation service agencies, and state agencies.

To ensure the process of updating the RPTCP considers a broad range of relevant input, SETRPC has vetted the development of the plan through its Stakeholder Committee, a group that includes representatives of:

- Human services providers
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Persons with disabilities
- Seniors (65 years and older)
- Public and private transit providers
- Workforce agencies
- Members of the general public

Throughout the public involvement process SETRPC held three focus group and four public involvement meetings with the majority of all demographics listed above being represented at each meeting. SETRPC also created and distributed a Riders' Survey and an Agency



Survey. Dissemination of the surveys comprised of emailing a link to the surveys on Survey Monkey and providing hardcopies of the survey to the patrons and agencies throughout the region.

SETRPC designed the Riders' survey to assess citizens' transportation concerns around the region. For several days in August 2016, Texas Southern University (TSU) students volunteered their services and distributed surveys to patrons of Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) and Port Arthur Transit (PAT) to help record rider concerns.

Perhaps the most common criticism about the public transportation system is the lack of connectivity between Beaumont and Port Arthur. While public transportation throughout the region does come very close to covering a large area, according to some riders the disconnect between the two transportation systems makes it difficult, if not impossible, for transit dependent persons to seek employment or make medical appointments in neighboring communities. There are also serious concerns about the fact that the transit service does not operate in the late evening. Because of this some citizens do not use the service for fear of not being able to return home from their late evening jobs. In addition to the concern regarding the lack of connectivity between/around Beaumont



and Port Arthur, riders also expressed discontent related to the cleanliness of bus stops, buses not running on time, a lack of marketing/education of public transportation, and a shortage of operators for the demand response service.

An Agency Survey was also developed with slightly different questions. This particular survey was designed to evaluate the need for transportation coordination within the region. This survey did not attempt to determine the root causes of the public transportation problems, though our participants were generous with their comments. The final document will discuss some possible reasons for the problems brought up by the participants.

After data submission, the information was entered into a database using Microsoft Excel. The spreadsheet that was developed helped in the evaluation of the responses. In total, approximately 115 people participated in the surveys.

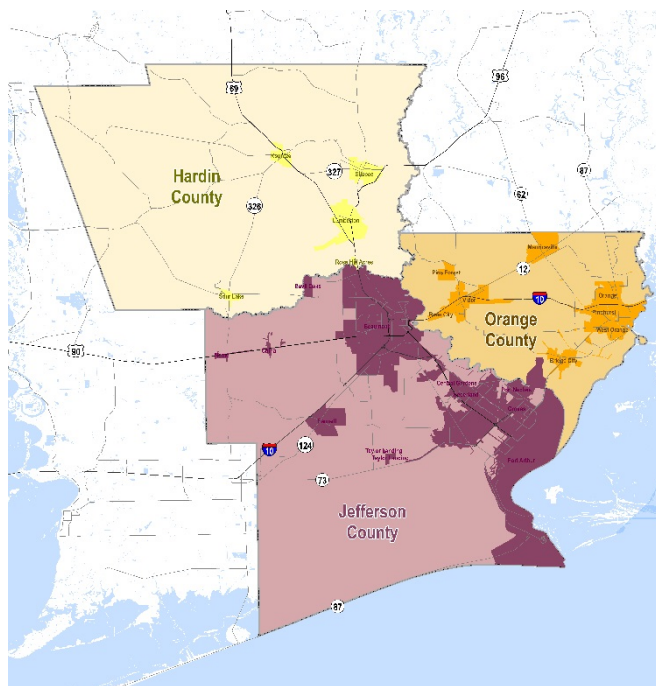
Objective

After examining responses to the two comprehensive surveys, the SETRPC will assess the resources available, specifically looking at service areas, schedules and availability of funding and vehicles, to identify gaps, inefficiencies, and potential areas of coordination to better meet the transportation needs of citizens. Particular awareness has been paid to ensure inclusion of essential stakeholders to represent key demographics, which include: seniors, persons with a disability, persons living below poverty level, veterans, children, and others.

The outcomes found in this Transportation Resources Inventory Report will be a very important factor in updating the 2017 RPTCP. The information gathered will be reviewed and analyzed with results from the Rider Survey. This data will support SETRPC in making recommendations and setting goals for the region to assist in breaking down barriers, therefore, allowing for greater freedom of mobility and independence for all citizens of the southeast Texas region.



CURRENT CONDITIONS



This segment will present a summary of each county demographic breakdown, including population, and available services throughout the county. This document outlines the various characteristics of each participation entity, and resources available that may aid in improving regional accessibility and mobility for all residents of Hardin, Jefferson and Orange Counties. To develop this inventory, information was obtained from the Texas Department of

Transportation, Beaumont Municipal Transit, Port Arthur Transit, and South East Texas Transit. Inventory of transportation providers and responses were summarized from a regional coordination survey.

The types of transportation available include:

Fixed Route Transit – transit service in which vehicles run along an established path at preset times. This type of service is found usually in urban areas.

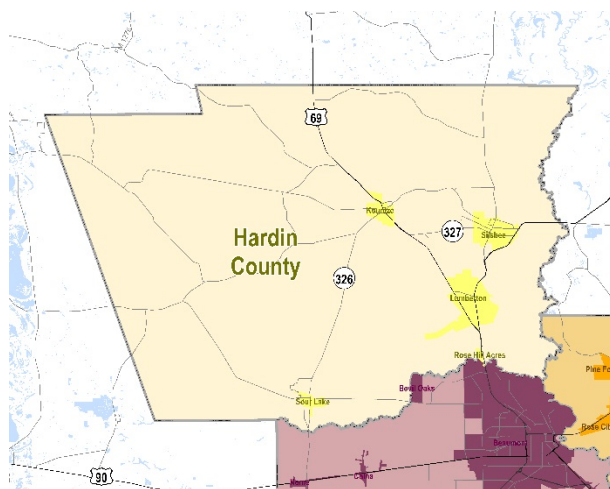
Demand Response Transit – A user oriented form of public transport characterized by flexible routing and scheduling of small/medium vehicles operating in shared-ride mode between pick-up and drop-off locations according to passenger's needs. This type of service usually provides for low passenger demand areas, such as rural areas, where a regular bus service would not be viable.

The participants of regional public transportation coordination can be summarized into two groups: transportation providers and human service provider/agencies. Each group provides a unique perspective to developing strategies, and on-going implementation of regional coordination. Transportation providers operate transportation services for a

variety of agencies and the public. Human service agencies either provide funding for transportation or provide information of how to access services. The data sources are from the United States Census Bureau and the county websites, if available.

The SETRPC region consists of three county areas extending more than 2,388 square miles. Differences in demographics, travel patterns, transportation needs, and economic strengths exist in each county. There are no fixed transit services currently connecting the three counties.

HARDIN COUNTY



Hardin County is bordered by six counties: Tyler on the north, Jasper on the east, Orange on the southeast, Jefferson on the south, Liberty on the southwest, and Polk on the northwest.

Hardin County is the second largest county in the three-county region in square miles (897 sq. miles), and the third largest in population 54,635. Population in

Hardin County has increased by 2 percent since 2010. The population density is 62 persons per square mile.

Table 1

Hardin County Population	
Year	Population
2010	54,635
2014	55,621

The county seat of Hardin County is Kountze and had a population of 2,097 in 2014.

Available resources in Hardin County include:**Fixed Route Transportation Provider(s)**

None

Independent School Districts Providing Transportation

Kountze Independent School District

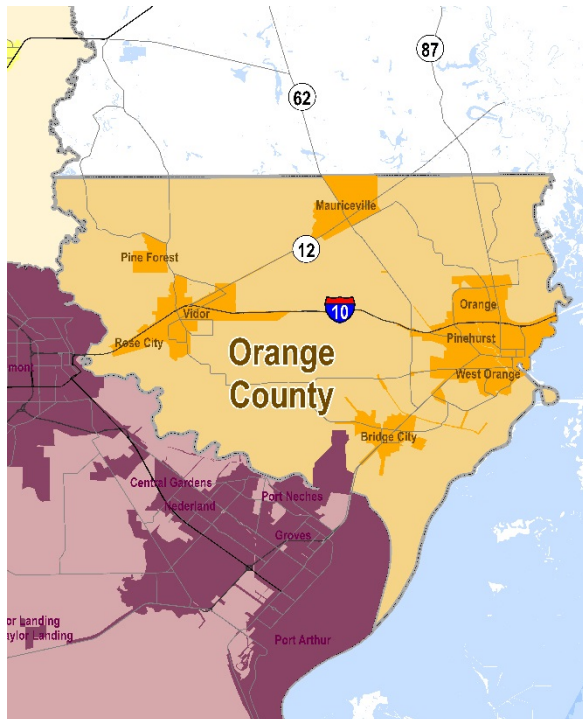
Hardin-Jefferson Independent School District

Lumberton Independent School District

Silsbee Independent School District

Demand Response Transportation Provider(s)

South East Texas Transit – contracted by Nutrition and Services for Seniors

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County is bordered by four counties and two parishes (Louisiana version of counties): Jasper on the north, Newton on the north, Hardin on the northwest, Jefferson on the west, Calcasieu Parish on the east, and Cameron Parish on the southeast.

Orange County is the third largest county in the three-county region in terms of square miles (380 sq. miles) and the second largest in terms of population (Table 2). Population in Orange County has increased by 2 percent since 2010. The population density is 219 persons per square mile.

Table 2

Orange County Population	
Year	Population
2010	81,837
2014	83,433

The county seat of Orange County is Orange, Texas (population 18,595 in 2014).

Available resources in Orange County include:

Fixed Route Transportation Provider(s)

None

Independent School Districts Providing Transportation

Orangefield Independent School District

Vidor Independent School District

Bridge City Independent School District

West Orange-Cove Consolidated Independent School District

Little Cypress-Mauriceville Independent School District

Demand Response Transportation Provider(s)

South East Texas Transit-contracted by Orange County Transportation and

Orange Community Action Association

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County is bordered by five (5) counties: Orange on the northeast, Liberty on the northwest, Hardin on the north, Chambers on the southwest and Cameron Parish (Louisiana) on the east.

Jefferson County is the largest county in the three-county region, in terms of square miles (1,111sq. miles) and population (Table 3). Population in Jefferson County has decreased by 0.055 percent since 2010. The population density is 227 persons per square mile.

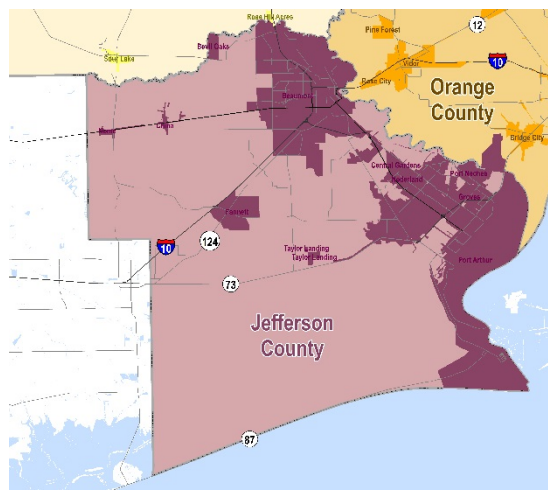


Table 3

Jefferson County Population	
Year	Population
2010	252,373
2014	252,235

The county seat of Jefferson County is Beaumont, Texas (population 117,585 in 2014) and is, by far the largest community in the county.

Available resources in Jefferson County include:

Fixed Route Transportation Provider(s)

Beaumont Municipal Transit

Port Arthur Transit

Independent School Districts Providing Transportation

Nederland Independent School District

Beaumont Independent School District

Hamshire-Fannett Independent School District

Port Arthur Independent School District

Port Neches-Groves Independent School District

Sabine Pass Independent School District

Demand Response Transportation Provider(s)

South East Texas Transit-contracted by

Nutrition and Services for Seniors



TRANSIT PROVIDER SUMMARIES

This segment will provide a summary of the region's transportation providers that are open to the general public on a regular basis. The information gathered included items such as service area, days and times of services, and fares charged.

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission envelops three counties (Jefferson, Hardin, and Orange). Within the three counties there are the following public transit providers:

1. Two fixed route public transit providers:

Beaumont Municipal Transit

Port Arthur Transit

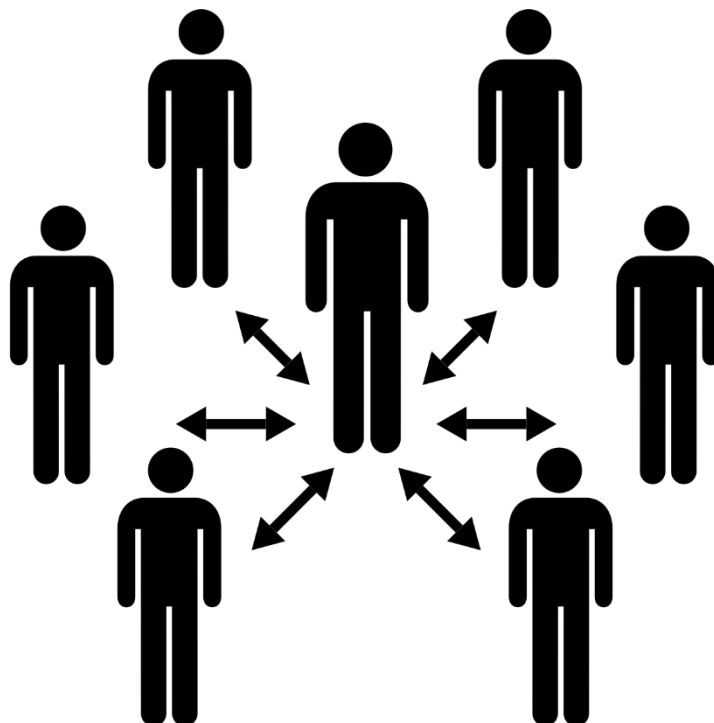
2. One rural demand response public service provider:

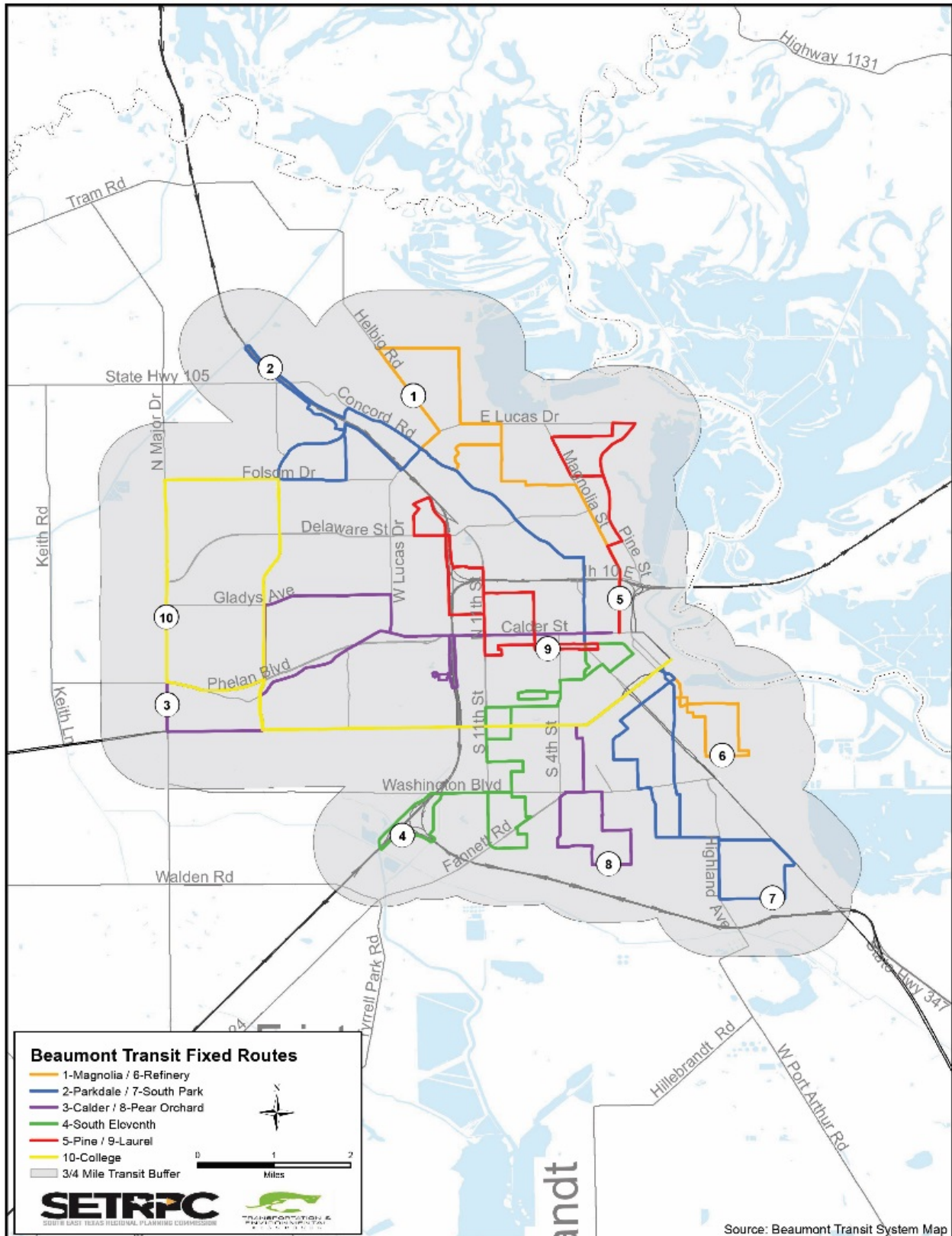
South East Texas Transit

The City of Beaumont is the largest city and is also one of the main economic centers of the region, with Port Arthur also being an important economic player in the area. Both cities are major destinations of most inter-county rural transit trips. Beaumont Municipal Transit and Port Arthur Transit provide the largest amount of public transit service in the region. South East Texas Transit provides rural on demand services to all three counties.

BEAUMONT MUNICIPAL TRANSIT (BMT)

Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) is a publicly funded transit agency. BMT owns 17 fixed-route buses and eight paratransit vans. All of BMT's 17 fixed route buses are equipped with wheelchair ramps. BMT operates nine routes during the week, seven fixed-routes on Saturday, and a paratransit service called Special Transit Services, in the urban area of Beaumont, six days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. BMT provides paratransit services to those residents who are disabled, and unable to access the fixed route service. Residents must apply to qualify for its paratransit service. According to the 2014 National Transit Database, BMT provided 651,637 passenger trips in 2009 and 588,439 passenger trips in 2014. BMT projects its ridership for 2016 to be 408,576 for fixed routes and 23,155 for paratransit. Its annual cost to provide transit is \$5,292,647.





BEAUMONT TRANSIT FIXED ROUTE SERVICE AREA MAP

BMT's fare structure is listed in **Table 4**.

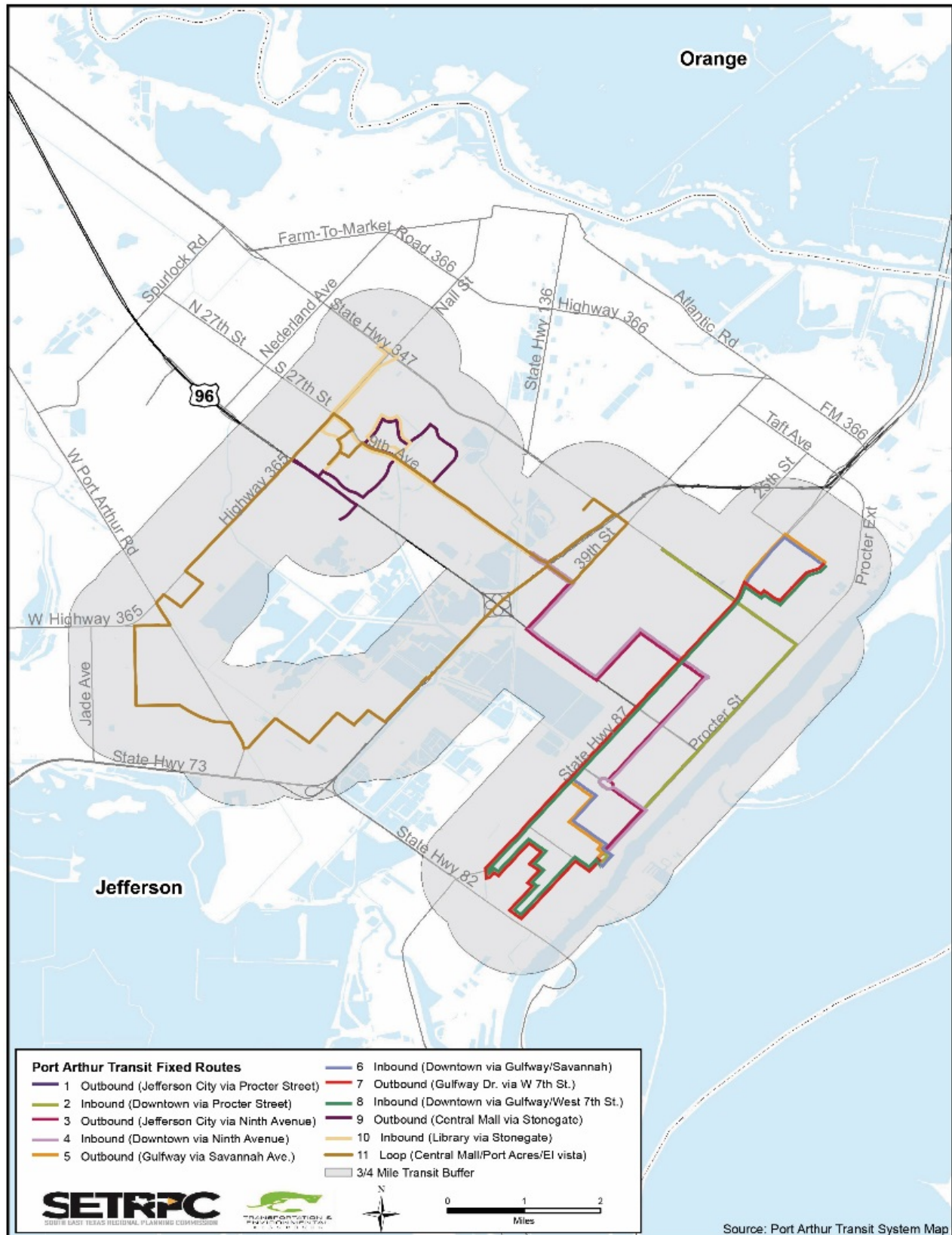
Table 4

Beaumont Municipal Transit – Fare Structure	
FIXED ROUTE	AMOUNT
Adults Cash	\$1.50
Reduced Cash Fare (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$0.75
Adult Monthly Pass	\$40.00
Reduced Monthly Pass (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$30.00
Weekly Adult Pass	\$12.00
Weekly Reduced Pass (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$9.00
Daily Pass (Adult)	\$3.00
Reduced Daily Pass (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$2.25
Transfers	\$0.25
Adult Tickets (Transfer Included)	\$1.25
Reduced Tickets (Transfer included)	\$1.00
PARATRANSIT	AMOUNT
Cash One-way Ride	\$2.50
Monthly Pass	\$80.00
STS Tickets (book of 10)	\$25.00

PORT ARTHUR TRANSIT (PAT)



Port Arthur Transit (PAT) is a publicly funded transit agency that currently leases ten (10) fixed-route buses and fifteen paratransit vans. PAT operates 11 fixed routes and a paratransit service in the urban area of Port Arthur, Texas, five days a week from 6:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. (except on designated City holidays). All vehicles are equipped with lifts for wheelchair ramps. PAT provides paratransit services to those residents who are disabled, and unable to access the fixed route service. In 2009 PAT provided 148,689 passenger trips and 124,716 passenger trips in 2014 - 2015. Its annual cost to provide transit is approximately \$2,178,527.



PORT ARTHUR TRANSIT FIXED ROUTE MAP

PAT's fare structure is provided in **Table 5**.

Table 5

Port Arthur Transit – Fare Structure	
FIXED ROUTE	AMOUNT
Adults Cash	\$1.50
Reduced Cash Fare (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$0.75
Day Pass	\$1.75
Weekly Pass	\$8.25
Monthly Pass	\$22.00
Children (ages 5-12)	\$0.50
Route Transfers	Free
Children Under 5 years of age	Free
PARATRANSIT	AMOUNT
Cash One-way Ride	\$2.00
Book of 20 Tickets	\$50.00
Monthly Pass	\$80.00
Out of Service Area	\$2.25

SOUTH EAST TEXAS TRANSIT (SETT)



South East Texas Transit (SETT) is administered by the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission and currently contracts with the local transportation providers – Orange County Transportation (OCT); Orange Community Action Association (OCAA); and Nutrition and Services for Seniors (NSS) to perform services in Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties. SETT is a rural transit curb-to-curb demand response system designed to serve persons residing in non-urbanized areas for healthcare, shopping, social services, employment, education, and recreational transportation needs. There are three defined service areas:

RURAL HARDIN AND JEFFERSON COUNTIES

SETT offers curb-to-curb service providing public transportation to residents of Hardin County and rural Western Jefferson County.

Operated by:

Nutrition and Services for Seniors

Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\$1.00 for traveling within the county

\$1.50 for traveling outside the county

MID-JEFFERSON COUNTY

SETT offers curb-to-curb service for individuals over 60 years of age and individuals with disabilities residing within the Mid-County service region of Groves, Port Neches, and Nederland.

Operated by:

Nutrition and Services for Seniors

Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\$1.00 for traveling within Mid-County (Groves, Port Neches, Nederland)

\$2.50 for traveling to Beaumont or Port Arthur

ORANGE COUNTY

SETT offers curb-to-curb service providing public transportation to residents of Orange County.

Operated by:

Orange County Transportation

Monday thru Friday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\$1.00 for traveling within the county

\$2.50 for traveling to Beaumont or Port Arthur

Orange Community Action Association

Monday thru Friday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

\$1.00 for traveling within the county

SETT coordinates trips between the three providers to create seamless travel for residents. It performed 59,544 trips in 2010. It had an annual budget of \$1,313,740 in FY 2010. Services are provided to all residents of Orange County, rural Hardin County, rural western Jefferson County, and the mid-county area of Jefferson County (defined as Groves, Port Neches, and Nederland). Residents are requested to call 24 hours in advance to schedule a trip, and service is based on vehicle availability and capacity. SETT's fare structure is provided in **Table 6** below.



Table 6

South East Texas Transit – Fare Structure	
Rural Hardin and Jefferson Counties	AMOUNT
Travel within county	\$1.00
Travel from County to County	\$1.50
Mid-Jefferson County	AMOUNT
Travel within Mid-County (Groves, Port Neches, Nederland)	\$1.00
Travel to Beaumont or Port Arthur	\$2.50
Orange County	AMOUNT
Travel within county	\$1.00
Travel to Beaumont or Port Arthur	\$2.50

Source: South East Texas Transit Informational brochures

Below is a summary of the Transportation Providers:

Table 7

Provider	Type of Service	Annual Ridership	Fleet Size	Fare Structure	Geographic Area
Beaumont Municipal Transit	Fixed Service Paratransit	588,439 (2014)	17 fixed route 8 paratransit	See table 4	Beaumont urban area
Port Arthur Transit	Fixed Service Paratransit	124,716 (2014 – 2015)	10 fixed route 15 paratransit	See Table 5	Port Arthur urban area
South East Texas Transit – Orange County Transportation, Orange Community Action Association, and Nutrition and Services for Seniors	Demand Response	60,417 (2016)	19 vehicles	See table 6	Rural Hardin and Rural Western Jefferson County, Mid-Jefferson County, Orange County

Social Service agencies that provide transportation information, funding, or transportation services to their clients are listed in **Table 8**.



Table 8

Social Service Agencies	
Beaumont – Workforce Solutions 304 Pearl Street Beaumont, Texas 77701	Provides oversight for employment and training programs in the north Jefferson County area. Provides transportation information and funding.
Orange – Workforce Solutions 2415 N 16th Street Orange, Texas 77630	Provides oversight for employment and training programs in the Orange County area. Provides transportation information and funding.
Port Arthur – Workforce Solutions 3901 North Twin City Highway Port Arthur, Texas 77624	Provides oversight for employment and training programs in Hardin, Orange, and Jefferson Counties. Provides transportation information and funding.
Hardin County Solutions Center Silsbee Public Library 295 N 4th Street Silsbee, Texas 77656	Provides oversight for employment and training programs in Hardin County.
RISE – Resource Information Support and Empowerment 755 South 11th Street, Suite 101 Beaumont, Texas 77701	The center for independent living, which provides four core services: advocacy, peer support, information and referral, and independent living skills training for persons with a disability in Hardin, Orange, and Jefferson Counties. Provides transportation information.
Spindletop Center 655 South 8th Street Beaumont, Texas 77701	Provides a variety of behavioral health care services to people with mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities and chemical dependency in Hardin, Chambers, Orange, and Jefferson Counties. Provides transportation information.

Texas Department of Health and Human Services 3105 Executive Boulevard Beaumont, Texas 77705	Oversees the operations of the health and human services system, provides administrative oversight of Texas health and human services programs, and provides direct administration of some programs. Also provides transportation services, income assistance counseling, and social services in Hardin, Orange, and Jefferson Counties.
Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas 2780 Eastex Freeway Beaumont, Texas 77703	The main charitable arm of the Diocese of Beaumont and helps all in need with counseling, relief services and others in the Diocese of Beaumont area. Provides transportation information.
ARC of Greater Beaumont 700 North Street Beaumont, Texas 77701	Works to ensure the Americans with IDD have services and supports they need to grow, develop and live in communities in the Beaumont area. Provides transportation information.
Goodwill Industries of Southeast Texas 1180 South Eleventh Street Beaumont, Texas 77701	Provides critical human services such as job training, placement, retention and other community-based services to individuals with disabilities throughout southeast Texas.
Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) 5550 Eastex Freeway, STE. D Beaumont, TX 77708	Provides a variety of services that assist eligible people with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, retaining or advancing in competitive integrated employment.