

South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan

Task 1-11: Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan Update - FINAL

Approved by Steering Committee: August 23, 2011



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Section 1.0: Introduction

1.1 – OVERVIEW OF COORDINATION

The ability to access goods, services, and social interaction is essential to an individual's high quality of life. Some people may take their transportation options for granted, rarely considering *how* they are able get to a doctor's appointment, the grocery store, place of employment, or a friend's house. Others, however, do not have the luxury of indifference to transportation concerns. Persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with low incomes can be particularly impacted by a lack of transportation options available to assist them, significantly impacting their mobility. Fortunately South East Texas, like all other regions in Texas, has established a coordinated transportation system that plans and provides transportation services to those who are transportation disadvantaged, improving efficiencies and increasing mobility options. To supplement past coordination, and to better understand and match resident needs with transportation resources, the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) has developed this plan to provide an update of its regional coordination efforts for the South East Texas Region, which is comprised of Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin Counties.

This coordination plan presents strategies that are rooted in the dynamic of access via mobility. Understanding the contexts this dynamic creates helps form the foundation of the coordination purpose and strategies.

1.1.1 Accessibility via Mobility

Accessibility is a quality of how easily an individual obtains, reaches, or uses transportation options or alternatives. In context of transit, knowing that a bus stop is located two blocks away creates access. Most individuals with transportation choices tend to weigh the benefits of various options with the level of effort required to access them. In contrast, individuals with limited or no transportation options have no access to critical services and employment.

Mobility is the capability of moving or of being moved from one place to another. Like accessibility, mobility is a process-oriented quality of a person's life. True mobility consists of an individual's ability to freely and effortlessly move from one place to another whenever and however the individual wants to move. A low-mobility individual is someone who cannot move effortlessly from one place to another whenever he/she wants to move. If a person is not very mobile (different mobility options are not available or come with a high cost) many items or services will not be very accessible to that person. For coordination, this means an individual's ability to access work and services is directly determined by their mobility. The concept of coordination increases a person's transportation choices, which increases mobility and access.

It is important to understand these dynamics when defining coordination strategies. Each strategy should seek to either increase individuals' access and/or mobility. Regional human service and public transportation coordination strategies will differ from traditional transit service strategies in the following ways:

- Coordination disaggregates service planning and markets in order to better serve individuals and the community. Traditional transit service planning aggregates demand on centralized, highly traveled routes of a transit system. The idea is to match specific travel needs with the most efficient service;
- Coordination focuses on service diversity and a “family of transportation services” to reach a wide range of customers versus traditional transit systems that are built on the principle of unified regional service coverage. A “family of transportation services” is a wide range of travel options, services, and modes that are matched to community demographics and needs;
- Coordination uses multiple stakeholders, partners and transportation providers to offer the most efficient and effective service to all individuals. Traditional transit service typically uses a single operator to deliver a specific service; and
- Coordination underscores the importance of service advocacy as a way to improve public transportation management and delivery. Especially staff dedicated to coordination that act as travel agents/service coordinators to seek the most effective means for meeting an individual’s transportation needs. Transit agencies generally focus on the direct provision of services.

1.2 – THE PLAN PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 Purpose

This plan has been developed on behalf of the SETRPC and its local stakeholders with an interest in human service and public transportation programs. The plan fulfills a federal requirement enacted in 2005 through the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which stipulates that starting in Fiscal Year 2007, projects funded through three programs included in SAFETEA-LU, including the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC, Section 5316), New Freedom (Section 5317) and the Formula Program for Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) are required to be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. SAFETEA-LU guidance issued by the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) indicates that the plan should be a “unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, laying out strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizing services.”

While primarily a planning policy document, this coordination plan will also be used as an implementation tool and as a framework for the prioritization and selection of projects to utilize federal funding assistance through the three FTA programs mentioned above. An overarching goal of this planning effort is to provide clear strategies for how future funding and partnership opportunities can be applied. The plan also provides an opportunity for a diverse range of stakeholders with a common interest in human service and public transportation to convene and collaborate on how best to provide transportation services for these targeted populations. Specifically, the stakeholders are called upon to identify service gaps and/or barriers, identify the

solutions most appropriate to meet these needs based on local circumstances, and prioritize these solutions for inclusion in the plan.

1.2.2 Methodology

This coordination plan update is based on several steps that results in an understanding of opportunities, needs and strategies for human service and public transportation coordination. The SETRPC advisory committee, the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee (RPTCSC), provided guidance to the consultant team throughout the project. The steering committee is made up of representatives of key stakeholders in the South East Texas region. Their focus was to work together to assess options and to identify specific coordination strategies for implementation. The methodology to develop this plan is centered on the following concepts:

- Conducting extensive stakeholder involvement and public outreach;
- Preparing a demographic profile;
- Documenting existing transportation conditions;
- Conducting a needs assessment;
- Identifying and prioritizing strategies to address the unmet needs;
- Identifying a preferred organizational model to promote coordination; and
- Developing an implementation plan for specific strategies

Below is a highlight of the steps taken to support the key findings emerging from this plan. Subsequent sections of the report and its appendices document the findings in more detail.

Public Involvement

A major focus of developing a coordinated transportation plan is public input and stakeholders' input. The primary objective of this plan is to encourage coordination and thus, encourage agencies with opportunities to coordinate to work interactively with each other. A plan review committee was created to oversee the creation of this plan and initiate discussions about coordination opportunities. This committee was representative of transit providers, human service organizations, Workforce Centers, transit funding providers and governing bodies. Workshops were held throughout the region to gather the public input on transportation needs and comments on the proposed strategies.

Needs Assessment of Gap Analysis

After an inventory of current conditions was completed, an analysis of the existing service to assess the region's needs, gaps and redundancies was conducted. Needs come in the form of areas needing transit service, areas needing better coordination, areas where redundancy can be eliminated, and other forms as established. The needs assessment is the primary tool used to define recommended strategies and actions toward better human services transportation. Needs were determined from demographic trends and existing survey data and include input from the review committee. The needs draw from data included in the inventory section.

Strategies and Actions

The needs assessment identifies areas poised for improvement and areas where Federal funding could improve transportation coordination. Strategies for addressing the region's needs were established by drawing from the current needs, current practices in the state, and best practices across the country. These strategies are formed around three main concepts of communications, resources, and connectivity. Short and long term goals are provided.

1.3 OUTREACH AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The purpose of this section is to report on the public outreach activities employed for the two rounds of public meetings and the focus group sessions for the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan (SETRPTCP) update.

The Public Input section presents a summary of input received. The Integration of Public Feedback section describes how this input is integrated into the ongoing planning process. A comprehensive approach to securing public input was undertaken to ensure that the perspective of stakeholder groups throughout the region was secured. Thus, members of under-served populations, as well as members of the general population, were engaged in the public outreach process.



1.3.1 First Round of Public Workshops

Pursuant to development of the updated plan that incorporates public input, the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission sponsored an inclusive public outreach process. The first phase of this process was implemented in January 2011 and engaged 113 citizens of the three-county region. Phase One of the public outreach process is the subject of this section.

The process featured interactive sessions with groups of citizens, including public meetings and focus group sessions. All meetings were open to the public. In addition, surveys were conducted with human services providers and Economic Development Corporation directors. Lastly, in-person surveys were conducted with persons who were clients of a human services agency.



1.3.2 First Round of Public Workshops - Publicity and Logistics

Public meetings and focus group sessions were publicized through various means. Both traditional and non-traditional methods of publicizing public agency meetings were employed. Following are the methods that were used to publicize meetings.

- Public service announcements were distributed to media in the three-county region.
- Posters were displayed in public libraries.
- Flyers were delivered to public libraries, places of worship, Fletcher School, public gathering places, and religious organizations.
- Posters were displayed in Port Arthur Transit vehicles and at the Beaumont Municipal Transit central transfer center.
- Flyers were sent via electronic mail to economic development organizations, human service agencies, and religious organizations.
- The public meeting schedule was published on the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission website.

In addition, meeting notices were mailed to 71 leaders of neighborhood associations and other non-government organizations. In many instances, leaders of neighborhood associations and other non-governmental organizations were also contacted by telephone. Posters and flyers, which contained identical text, were translated into Spanish. Flyers with Spanish language text on one side of the page and English language text on the opposite side of the page were provided to Fletcher Elementary School staff for distribution to parents of Fletcher Elementary students, as well as to the Hispanic Ministry of the Beaumont Diocese. (Fletcher School has a high Hispanic census.)

Technical Memorandum "Task 1-5: Public Outreach" provides examples of the English and Spanish versions of the aforementioned flyer/poster. A list of poster and flyer distribution sites, a list of media that received public service announcements, and a list of neighborhood associations and non-governmental organizations that received notices via United States mail is provided as well.



Focus group sessions were publicized via various means. For the Regional Coordination Steering Committee focus group session, the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission contacted Steering Committee members twice via electronic mail. The RISE agency distributed flyers via electronic mail to potential attendees of the meeting held there for disabled persons and providers of services to disabled persons. The Beaumont Housing Authority (BHA) contacted potential attendees of the Beaumont Housing Authority focus group session for clients of the BHA via telephone.

Public Meetings

One public meeting was held in Orange County and one public meeting was held in Hardin County. Three public meetings were held in Jefferson County, which contains the two largest cities in the region. One of these meetings focused on the region's Hispanic population; it was held in a neighborhood where there is a concentration of Hispanic persons and a translator was present to accommodate potential translation needs. All of the public meetings were convened in public facilities, i.e. public libraries, a city hall, and an elementary school.

Three focus group sessions were held; two at nonprofit agencies and one at a public library. These sessions were held at Resource Information Support Empowerment (RISE), a human services agency that addresses the needs of disabled citizens; the Beaumont Housing Authority, which addresses the housing and social services needs of low-moderate income residents; and the Port Arthur Public Library, where a focus group session for the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan Steering Committee was convened to give members an opportunity to provide input. Table 1 contains detailed information regarding the Phase One public meetings and focus groups.



The total attendance at the public meetings and focus group sessions was 72 persons (this number reflects an unduplicated number; persons who attended more than one meeting are only counted once).

Meeting packets containing an agenda, a list of Planning Coordination Steering Committee members, a "comment form," a "welcome" sheet containing an overview of both the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan and the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission, and a public meeting flyer, were distributed at all of the meetings. An executive summary of the 2006 plan and a complete copy of the 2006 plan were made available for review. The order of proceedings for the public meetings and the focus group sessions was virtually the same. A facilitated group discussion followed opening remarks by a SETRPC representative. The aforementioned "comment form" provided an additional opportunity for participants to make their views known, but its primary purpose was to build a database for the second round of meetings and to determine which public notification methods were the most effective in spurring attendance at the first round of public meetings. A review of data from the forms reveals that the majority of participants found out about the meetings via flyers and posters, calls from Beaumont Housing Authority staff, and informal networking.

Table 1 – First Round of Public Meetings

Type of Meeting	Date and Time	Location	Attendance
Jefferson County Public Meeting	Tuesday, January 11, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Theodore Johns Sr Library 4255 Fannett Beaumont, Texas	6
Focus Group	Wednesday, January 12, 2011 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	RISE Center 755 S. 11th Street, Suite 101 Beaumont, Texas	12*
Jefferson County Public Meeting	Wednesday, January 12, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Fletcher School 1055 Avenue F Beaumont, Texas	4
Focus Group (Steering Committee)	Thursday, January 13, 2011 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Port Arthur Public Library 4615 9th Avenue Port Arthur, Texas	14
Jefferson County Public Meeting	Thursday, January 13, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Port Arthur Public Library 4615 9th Avenue Port Arthur, Texas	10
Hardin County Public Meeting	Tuesday, January 18, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Lumberton City Hall 836 Main Street Lumberton, Texas	5
Focus Group	Thursday, January 20, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Beaumont Housing Authority 1890 Laurel Street Beaumont, Texas	18
Orange County Public Meeting	Tuesday, January 25, 2011 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Orange County Public Library 220 North 5th Street Orange, TX	6

** Several latecomers did not sign-in, so the sign-in sheet for this meeting does not reflect the actual number of participants.*

Interviews and Surveys

Since they have regular contact with under-served populations, a survey instrument was developed to gather input from human services providers in the region. A similar survey instrument was developed for economic development corporations since they address workforce issues. During the period beginning December 2010 and ending February 1, 2011, 19 agencies completed these surveys, either via telephone or by completing the survey form and transmitting it via electronic mail.

Because the available list of Orange County contacts was relatively slim, to ensure adequate input from Orange County stakeholders, on-site surveys were conducted with clients of the Orange Christian Services (OCS) agency, which distributes food and clothing to needy persons. Twenty-two persons completed these surveys.

The survey instrument that was utilized at OCS is a slightly modified version of the questions that guided the discussion at the public meetings and focus group sessions. The survey questions were modified to forestall redundant responses, given the amount of time OCS clients had to complete it, and also because there was no facilitated discussion – employing a facilitated discussion format would have been disruptive to OCS operations.

1.3.3 First Round of Public Workshops - Public Input

The summary of public input that follows reflects input from the public meetings, focus group sessions, and surveys. (See Technical Memorandum Task 1-5 Public Outreach for detailed notes from the first round of public outreach sessions.)

Needs and Desired Improvements

Although the intent was to separate the discussion of needs and desired improvements, these topics are similar enough that comments related to these two discussion items overlapped a great deal. Thus, the summary in this section represents a synthesis of the input related to both needs **and** desired improvements. Though an abundance of input was gathered, only the most prevalent issues that surfaced are presented here.

Hours of Service

The well-reported funding constraints faced by publicly-funded transportation agencies in the region likely resulted in “extended hours of service for bus transportation” being the most frequently cited need/improvement. Participants stated that extended hours are needed because people want to use public transportation to travel to employment sites where the hours of employment are inconsistent with the hours that this transportation is available. This need was cited in conjunction with public bus transportation, as well as demand-response services. In addition, participants expressed a desire for weekend services. They want to be in a position to take public transportation to weekend jobs, as well as to services and weekend events.

Intra-Regional (Jefferson/Orange/Hardin Counties) Bus Transportation Linkages

Frequently, participants expressed a desire for intra-regional transportation service. They desire service that links cities of all sizes. Reducing isolation, especially of elderly persons, and increased access to services in other cities, is the impetus for the desire for more linkages.

Additional Buses

A number of participants commented that there is a need for additional buses. The view that underlies this stated need is that additional buses would make shorter trips possible, as well as allow for an increase in the number of bus routes – expanding transportation coverage.

Expanded Transportation Options

The desire for additional transportation options is consistent across the spectrum of stakeholders. Taxis, taxi service subsidized by vouchers issued by agencies that serve underserved persons, paratransit vehicles, express bus service, train service, light rail, ferries, and freeway expansion are examples of transportation options to which citizens want access. In some instances, participants shared what they viewed as exemplary examples from other cities that are similar in size to the larger cities in the three-county region. Programs in such Texas cities as Tyler, Austin, and San Antonio were cited. Moreover, bygone transportation services were recounted by several participants, as an illustration of how transportation options have diminished. Examples given were ferry service, Amtrak service, and the Inter-Urban.

Bus Transportation Coverage

Persons who reside in Orange and other cities where there is no “fixed route” bus transportation expressed a need for bus transportation services. They expressed that this would enhance access to jobs and essential services and reduce the isolation of individuals for whom automobile transportation is not an option.

Public Awareness

At virtually every session, the perceived need for greater public awareness of public transportation options was addressed. Participants expressed the belief that would help to increase ridership, overcome the region’s “car culture,” encourage the younger generation to embrace public transportation, and overcome negative perceptions and misconceptions about public transportation.

Affordability of Existing Services

The topic of affordability of existing services was often discussed. However, opinion was divided. Many of the participants that could be identified as transit-dependent, as well as service providers that serve transit-dependent persons perceive that bus fares are too high. As well, Special Transit services are perceived as too expensive for some. It was asserted that while these fees may seem reasonable, they are a barrier to persons with no or low income. However, a significant minority of participants perceived the fares and fees for bus transportation and Special Transit to be reasonable.

Bus Transportation Facilities

Beaumont bus patrons that participated in the process were vocal on the subject of existing facilities. These participants expressed a desire for enhancements such as bus shelters, security, and better maintenance of bus stops.

Special Transit Services Concerns

Reflective of the challenges associated with providing demand-response service, long waits after appointments accessed via paratransit, unreliability, and tardiness were among the issues most often mentioned. Patrons also would like for the wait time to be shortened, especially as pertains to getting picked up for return trips. In addition, persons who use Beaumont Municipal Special Transit for medical purposes do not want to have to schedule a separate trip to secure

prescriptions or to get follow-up medical tests. They want to use the same trip as the one that generated their need for follow-up medical tests and prescription drugs.

Programs and Services That Are Working Well

This topic was included so that transportation providers in the three-county region can identify which existing programs and services are perceived as working well. This input can serve as a foundation on which new programs can be adopted and/or existing programs retained.

Special Transit

Overall, Special Transit programs are perceived to be working well. A number of participants cited the very existence of these programs as beneficial. Special Transit services are viewed as providing a critical service; this service is viewed as enabling elderly and disabled persons to gain access to medical and other essential services.

Bus Transportation

Despite the perceived need for expanded coverage and extended hours that is documented herein, a substantial number of participants perceive the bus transportation that exists to be working well. The very existence of bus transportation in Beaumont and Port Arthur was mentioned as an asset.

No Concerns

A significant number of participants did not view any existing transportation service as working well. In light of commentary related to public awareness of transportation services and limitations on geographic coverage (documented herein), it is possible that this perception is tied to a lack of awareness of existing services, as well as a lack of bus transportation service in the geographic areas served by the persons stating this opinion.

Other

Some participants stated that the use of automobiles is working well and others mentioned programs outside of the purview of the public sector agencies that provide transportation services in the three-county service area. Examples of the latter are the Medicaid transportation program and bus service provided by school districts.

The Beaumont Municipal Transit policy of allowing bus passes to expire within a 30-day period as opposed to at the end of the month in which the pass was issued (even if 30 days have not passed since its issuance) was cited as a public transportation feature that is working well.

Effective Features of Successful Programs

Participants were asked to identify the features that make successful programs effective. Features that were most often cited include:

Wheelchair lifts on Special Transit vans

Participants were pleased that this feature makes it possible for elderly and disabled persons to access transportation to critical services.

Special Transit's Door-to-Door Service

This was viewed as a feature that makes Special Transit convenient for patrons, especially elderly and disabled patrons.

Personnel

Though all did not agree, a significant minority of participants mentioned courteous and professional personnel as a good feature of transportation programs that operate in the region. This feature was most consistently cited by transit providers.

New Programs/Services That Are Needed

The most frequently mentioned new programs and services that are perceived as needed are discussed below. (Due to overlapping dialogue, there is some repetition in this section.)

Service to Un-served Areas.

A commonly identified gap in services is the absence of bus transportation service to and within Orange County and to and within smaller communities in the region.

Additional Service Options

Examples of additional service options that participants desire include conventional taxi service, taxi services supported by vouchers that subsidize the cost of the trip, a mode that is between bus and paratransit, park and ride services, and service to the Beaumont airport.

Cross-Regional Service

A system that is regionally based, with service provided throughout the region, is desired by a number of persons who participated in the public outreach process.

Transportation to the Southeast Texas Regional Airport

Participants in several sessions stated a desire for public transportation service to the airport.

Public Education

A number of participants expressed the view that an enhanced public education program would increase ridership, improve the experience of existing riders, and improve public perception of public transportation.

More Use of Technology

Several participants perceived that technology could be used to improve the experience of transportation patrons. Scheduling, announcements of upcoming bus stops to assist visually impaired persons, and electronic bus passes are instances where it is believed that technology could improve the public transportation experience.

Prospective Responsible Agencies

Participants were asked which agencies should take responsibility for new programs and improvements to existing programs. The objective of this query was to stimulate dialogue focused on coordination and cooperation for the provision of transportation services in the JOHRTS region.

A consensus emerged that a coordinated effort on the part of public sector agencies that provide transportation services, is desirable. Moreover, other public sector agencies, such as the Veterans Administration, were mentioned as possible collaborators.

Other ideas set forth include the idea of nonprofit entities that address the needs of underserved populations providing transportation for their clients, the concept of providers of residential services for elderly and handicapped citizens paying for transportation for their clients, and the idea of the public and private sectors collaborating to provide transportation services.

Other

In every forum and via the surveys, an opportunity was provided for participants to share any other ideas they might have regarding transportation issues in the three-county region. Comments often focused on the constraints that impede the creation of the intra-regional linkages that are desired by the majority of citizens who participated in first round of the outreach process. Funding shortfalls, the lack of a dedicated funding source, and funding guidelines that hamper the ability to provide comprehensive services were the most frequently cited barriers. Other salient comments follow.

More public transportation would reduce emissions that cause air pollution.

Some participants asserted that more public transportation would result in fewer cars on roads, leading to a reduction in automobile emissions.

Connect bus transportation and bikeways.

It was put forth at a meeting attended by hike and bike activists that connections between bus stops and bikeways would boost the economy by increasing tourism in the region.

Bus service to the Social Security office is needed.

A number of participants stated that there is a need for bus service to the Social Security office; fewer days of service than provided by regular bus service would be acceptable.

Public Input Conclusion

A broad cross-section of 113 persons took part in the public outreach process for the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan update. Neighborhood associations, transportation advocacy groups, human service providers, economic development corporations, public housing agency clients, transit providers, and other concerned citizens participated by attending meetings and completing surveys.

Expanded hours of service, cross-regional service, and more buses were the highest priorities for participants. Many expressed an awareness of the constraints under which transportation agencies in the region are operating, the greatest of these being funding constraints and comparatively low population densities especially outside of the urban areas. Nevertheless, a strong desire for improved access to employment and essential services manifested itself throughout the process.

1.3.4 Second Round of Public Workshops

While Phase One public involvement activities identified transportation needs, gaps in services, and effective programs, services, and policies, the public outreach of Phase Two involved public meetings to present plan recommendations for review and comment. Phase Two of the public outreach process occurred in June 2011 and is the subject of this section.

1.3.5 Second Round of Public Workshops - Publicity and Logistics

Five public meetings were convened as part of the final round of the public outreach process. All meetings were open to the public.

At least one public meeting was convened in each of the three counties in the South East Texas region. Meetings were held both during and after typical work hours so that citizens could attend the meeting that best fit their schedules. A list of public meetings, along with attendance figures, is shown in Table .

Table 2 – Second Round of Public Meetings

Meeting	Date and Time	Location	Attendance
Hardin County Public Meeting	June 13, 2011 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Silsbee City Hall 105 South 3 rd Silsbee, Texas	13
Hardin County Public Meeting	June 13, 2011 5:00 p.m. –7:00 p.m.	Lumberton City Hall 836 Main Street Lumberton, Texas	13
Jefferson County Public Meeting	June 14, 2011 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Theodore Johns Sr Library 4255 Fannett Beaumont, Texas	8
Orange County Public Meeting	June 15, 2011 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Orange Public Library 220 North 5th Street Orange, Texas	10
Jefferson County Public Meeting	June 16, 2011 4:00 p.m. –6:00 p.m.	Port Arthur Public Library 4615 9th Avenue Port Arthur, Texas	12

Publicity

The public meetings were publicized via public service announcements distributed to media in the region. Additional means were used to publicize the meetings, such as:

- Posters were displayed in public libraries.
- Meeting announcements were sent via electronic mail to economic development directors, human services providers, and others who completed surveys during the first phase of the planning process.
- Meeting announcements were sent via United States mail to civic leaders and other individuals who participated in the public outreach sessions held in the first phase of the planning process.
- Flyers were displayed in Port Arthur Transit vehicles and Beaumont Municipal Transit vehicles.
- The public meeting schedule was published on the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission website.

Meeting notices were written in English and Spanish.

Technical Memorandum Task 1-10: Second Round of Public Workshops provides an English and Spanish language version of the aforementioned meeting notice; as well as a list of distribution sites, a list of media that received public service announcements, and a list of neighborhood associations and non-governmental organizations that received notices via United States mail.

Meeting Logistics, Location, and Attendance

An open house format was utilized for the meetings. Citizens had a two-hour window to attend each meeting and comment on plan recommendations. These recommendations were displayed in summary form on easels and the planning team took notes of comments made by citizens in attendance.

In addition, a “comment form” was made available at all of the meetings. The “comment form” provided an additional opportunity for citizens to express their views. Its secondary purpose was to gather contact data to form the foundation of a database for the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission’s future use.

1.3.6 Second Round of Public Workshops - Public Input

Very little public input was received during these workshops. As noted in Table , attendance was low. Some of the general comments received were not regarding the plan’s ideas specifically, but continuations of the input received earlier in the process. Public comments from each workshop are provided in more detail in Technical Memorandum Task 1-10: Second Round of Public Workshops.

Section 2.0: Transportation Resources in the Region

2.1 – CURRENT CONDITIONS

Many elderly residents, individuals with disabilities, persons with low incomes and other area residents who do not utilize private vehicles must utilize the existing network of transportation providers and human service agencies. This section outlines the transportation providers and agencies that participate in coordination of regional public transportation services. This document outlines 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. To develop this inventory, information was obtained from the Texas Department of Transportation inventory of transportation providers and responses were summarized from a regional coordination survey.

The types of transportation available include:

- Public transit
- For-profit transportation providers
- Specialized not-for-profit transportation providers
- Human service agencies
- Workforce agencies

The participants of regional public transportation coordination can be summarized into two groups: transportation providers and human service providers/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.

2.1.1 Coordination Survey

To identify the current conditions and inventory of transportation providers and human service providers, a survey was administered to a list of active participating agencies throughout the region. A comprehensive list of recipients was created using information from the previous coordination plan, as well as updated information from the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission. Each person and/or agency was attempted to be verified twice via telephone to ensure the correct contact information was listed. Each entity was then notified of the coordination plan update project, and asked if they could provide feedback through completion of a comprehensive survey. A follow-up email was provided by the SETRPC, and the survey was discussed during the steering committee meeting in December 2010. Fifteen surveys were completed and returned, providing an understanding of the active participants in transportation coordination, as well as possible coordination resources available.

2.1.2 - Transportation Providers

Fixed Route Services

Beaumont Municipal Transit

www.beaumonttransit.com

Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) is a publicly funded transit agency. According to the 2010 Transit Development Plan, BMT owns 18 fixed-route buses and nine (9) paratransit vans. BMT operates nine (9) fixed-routes during the week, and seven (7) fixed-routes on Saturday, and a paratransit service, called Special Transit Services, in the urban area of Beaumont, Texas, six days a week from 6:00 am to 9:30 pm. It provides services to all residents of Beaumont, with no limitations for accessing its fixed route service. All of BMT's 18 fixed route buses are equipped with wheelchair ramps. 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 2009 National Transit Database, BMT provided 651,637 passenger trips in 2009. Its annual expense to provide transit is \$4,541,674. BMT's fare structure is listed in Table , the normal adult passenger fare is \$1.25.



Table 3 - BMT Fare Structure

Beaumont Municipal Transit - Fare Structure	
Fixed Route	Amount
Adult Cash	\$1.25
Reduced Cash Fare (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$0.75
Adult Monthly Pass	\$40.00
Reduced Monthly Pass	\$30.00
Transfers	\$0.25
Adult Tickets (Transfer Included)	\$1.50
Reduced Tickets (Transfer Included)	\$1.00
Paratransit	Amount
Cash One-way Ride	\$2.50
Monthly Pass	\$80.00
Book of Ten Tickets	\$25.00

**Source: Beaumont Municipal Transit website, March 2011*

Port Arthur Transit

www.portarthur.net

Port Arthur Transit (PAT) is a publicly funded transit agency that owns ten (10) fixed-route buses and seven (7) paratransit vans (as of March 2011). PAT operates 11 fixed-routes and a paratransit service in the urban area of Port Arthur, Texas, five days a week from 6:15 am to 6:15 pm. It provides services to all residents of Port Arthur, with no limitations for accessing its fixed route service. 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. Residents must apply to qualify for its paratransit service. It provides approximately 150,000 trips a year (148,689 in FY2009). Its annual expense to provide transit is \$1,754,720 (FY2009). PAT's fare structure is provided in Table 4, the normal adult passenger fare is \$1.00.



Table 4 - PAT Fare Structure

Port Arthur Transit - Fare Structure	
Fixed Route	Amount
Adult Cash	\$1.00
Reduced Cash Fare (Elderly, Disabled, Youth)	\$0.50
Children (ages 5-12)	\$0.50
Zone Transfers	\$0.50
Route Transfers	Free
Children under 5 years of age	Free
Paratransit	Amount
Cash Fare	\$2.00

**Source: Port Arthur Transit, March 2011*

Rural Demand-Response

South East Texas Transit

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 County

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

Operated by: Nutrition and Services for Seniors
(800) 259-4457
(409) 892-0979

Monday thru Friday 8 am to 4 pm
\$1.00 for traveling within the county
\$1.50 for traveling outside the county

Mid-Jefferson County

Curb-to-curb service for the elderly and/or disabled residents residing in Mid-Jefferson County. Picks up eligible residents anywhere in Groves, Port Neches, and Nederland.

Operated by: Nutrition and Services for Seniors
(800) 259-4457
(409) 892-0979

Monday thru Friday 8 am to 4 pm
\$1.00 for traveling within Mid-County (Groves, Port Neches, Nederland)
\$2.50 for traveling to Beaumont or Port Arthur

Orange County

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

Operated by: Orange County Transportation
(409) 745-9511
and Orange Community Action Association
(409) 886-8348

Monday thru Friday 7 am to 4 pm
\$1.00 for traveling within the county
\$2.50 for traveling to Beaumont or Port Arthur

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 FY2010. Services are provided to all residents of the areas of Orange County, rural areas of Hardin County, western rural Jefferson County, and the mid-county area (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 below.

Table 5 - SETT Fare Structure

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

**Source: South East Texas Transit informational brochures, February 2011*

Table 6 - Summary of Transportation Providers

Provider	Type of Service	Annual Ridership	Fleet Size	Fare Structure	Geographic Area
Beaumont Municipal Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed Route Paratransit 	*651,637 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 Fixed-Route buses 9 Paratransit buses 	See Table 3	Beaumont urban area
Port Arthur Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed Route Paratransit 	*148,689 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Fixed-Route buses 7 Paratransit buses 	See Table 4	Port Arthur urban area
South East Texas Transit - Orange County Transportation, Orange Community Action Association, and Nutrition and Services for Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand Response 	59,544 (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31 vans 	See Table 5	Rural Hardin and Western Jefferson County
					Mid Jefferson County (Groves, Port Neches, and Nederland)
					Orange County

**Source: 2009 National Transit Database*

2.1.3 - Human Service Providers and Agencies

Responding Agencies

Below is a list of agencies that provided responses to the survey.

- Beaumont Center - Workforce Solutions
- Silsbee - Workforce Solutions (*as of August 31, 2011, this location will be closed*)
- Orange - Workforce Solutions
- Port Arthur - Workforce Solutions
- Spindletop Center
- Resource Information Support Empowerment (RISE) Center
- Health and Human Services Commission

Coordination Efforts

Below is a summary of coordination efforts stated by the survey participants.

- Beaumont Center - Workforce Solutions
The workforce center in Beaumont coordinates with BMT and SETT for transportation services. They also provide transportation services information to their participants.
- Silsbee - Workforce Solutions
The workforce center in Silsbee coordinates with SETT for transportation services from Nutrition and Services for Seniors. They also provide transportation services information to their participants. (*This location will be closed effective August 31, 2011*)
- Orange - Workforce Solutions
The workforce center in Orange coordinates with SETT for transportation services. They also provide transportation services information to their participants.
- Port Arthur - Workforce Solutions
The workforce center in Port Arthur coordinates with PAT for transportation services. They also provide transportation services information to their participants.
- RISE
RISE participates in regional coordination and planning activities.
- Health and Human Services Commission
HHSC coordinates its transportation services for its clients with state contracted transportation providers. They also participate in regional coordination and planning activities, and share information with other agencies.

Summary of Human Service Agencies

Table 7 - Summary of Human Service Agency and Client Services

Agency	Type of Org.	Services Provided	Clients	Geographic Area Served	Involvement in Trans. Assistance	Eligibility Requirements
Beaumont Center - Workforce Solutions	Workforce Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Training Job Placement Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Client Types 	Jefferson County (north)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Trans. Information Provide funding for Trans. 	Choices or WIA Eligibility
Silsbee – Workforce Solutions	Workforce Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Training Job Placement Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Client Types 	Hardin County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Trans. Information Provide funding for Trans. 	Choices or WIA Eligibility
Spindletop Center	Social Service Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services Mental Health Substance Abuse/IDD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled Low Income Medicaid General Public 	Hardin, Chambers, Orange, Jefferson Counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not fund trans. Services Provide Trans. Information 	Intellectual Disabilities Eligibility Requirements
Orange – Workforce Solutions	Workforce Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Training Job Placement Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Client Types 	Orange County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Trans. Information Provide funding for Trans. 	Choices or WIA Eligibility
RISE	Non-Profit Disability Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and Referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Client Types 	Hardin, Orange, Jefferson Counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not fund trans. Services Provide Trans. Information 	N/A
Port Arthur – Workforce Solutions	Workforce Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Training Job Placement Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled Low Income General Public 	Hardin, Orange, Jefferson Counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Trans. Information Provide funding for Trans. 	TANF clients
Health & Human Services Commission	State Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Income Assistance Social Services Health Care Counseling 	All Client Types	Hardin, Orange, Jefferson Counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire transportation providers Eligibility Determination 	Medicaid and Children with Special Healthcare Needs Programs

WIA – The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is an employment and training program designed to provide services that will increase skills for adults and youth that will result in employment and an increase in earnings. WIA offers funding for transportation to education and job training programs that can help in overcoming employment barriers.

Choices – Choices is the employment and training program serving applicants and former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance. Local Workforce Development Boards administer the Choices program, developing service strategies that enable individuals to find and retain employment and upgrade skills in order to move up the economic ladder. Funding is provided for recipients to receive temporary transportation assistance.

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides financial help for children and their parents or relatives who are living with them. Monthly cash payments help pay for food, clothing, housing, utilities, furniture, transportation, telephone, laundry, household equipment, medical supplies not paid for by Medicaid and other basic needs.

Section 3: Comprehensive Assessment of Unmet Needs

3.1 – UNMET NEEDS

A key step in coordinating transportation services is a careful analysis of the mobility needs of various segments of the population and the potential needs of transit services. This section identifies populations who benefit from a coordinated transportation system, and the needs of a wide-range of existing and potential transit users, as well as agencies and entities as related to their role in coordinating human service transportation. While Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT), Port Arthur Transit (PAT), and South East Texas Transit (SETT) serve the public and a large number of different populations within the three-county area, this particular plan focuses on specific groups of transit dependent populations. Transit dependent populations are spread throughout the three-county area. Being transit dependent means "having to rely on transit services instead of the private automobile to meet one's travel needs." Transit dependent persons generally either do not have access to a vehicle or are unable to operate a vehicle. The elderly (65 years of age and over), the young (under 16 years of age), persons with disabilities, and low-income families are more likely to be transit dependent.

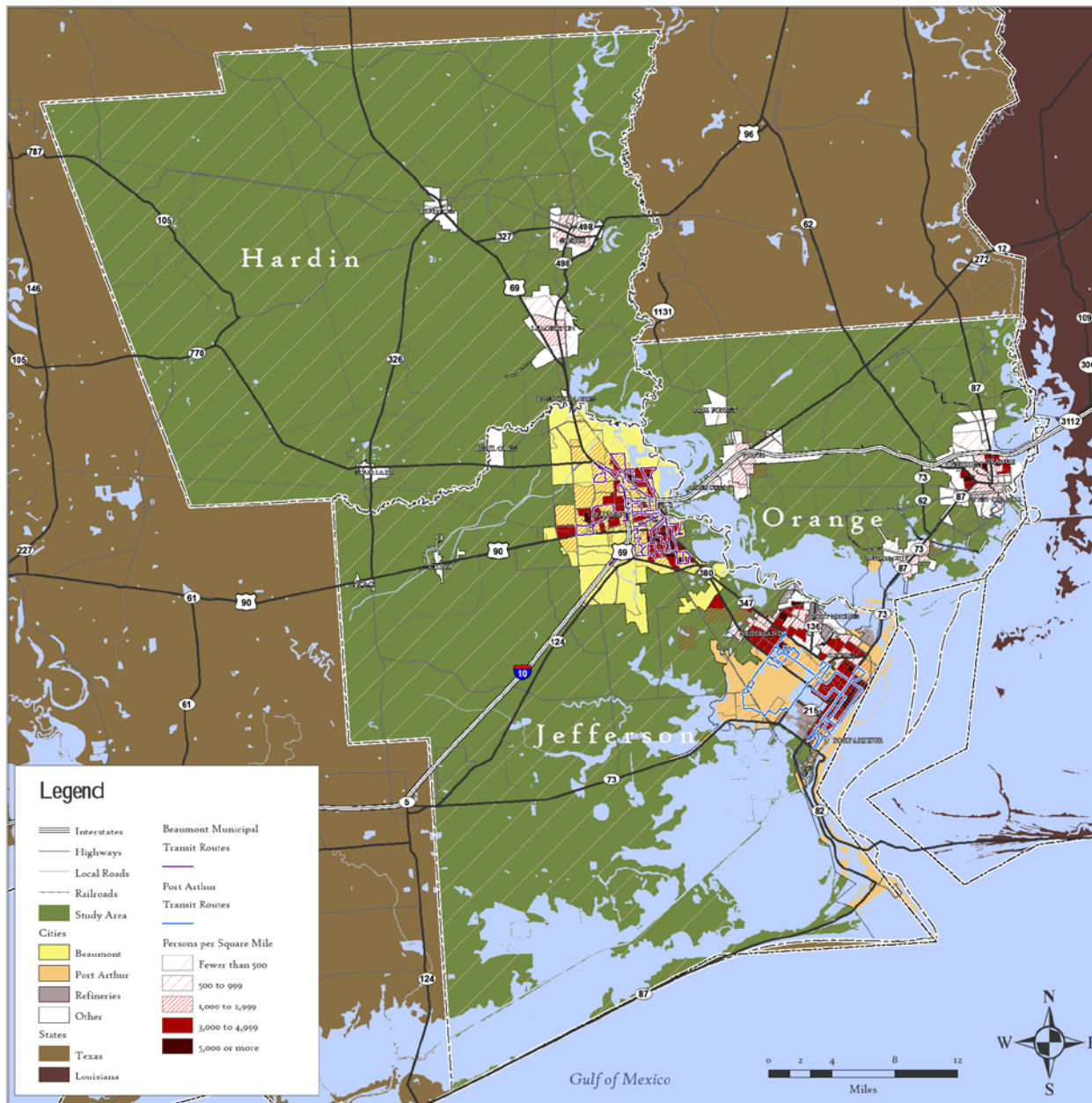
3.1.1 Updated Demographic Profile of Region

Demographic Context

Map 1 through Map 4 provides an overview of the demographic context in the southeast Texas region. Map 1 and Map 2 show the past ten year population growth of the region has mostly occurred in the Beaumont and Port Arthur urban areas, as well as some select rural areas in between. The lack of significant growth provides the region opportunities to build upon growing trends of existing populations, allowing a more precise understanding of who needs transportation services and where they need to go.

Map 3 shows that northeast Hardin County, western Jefferson County, eastern areas of the city of Beaumont, and the south by southeast area of the city of Port Arthur are the areas of the region with the highest percentage of minority populations. Traditionally, minority populations are underserved by traditional transportation options (personal automobile, transit service, etc.), serving as an indicator of areas that might benefit from better services.

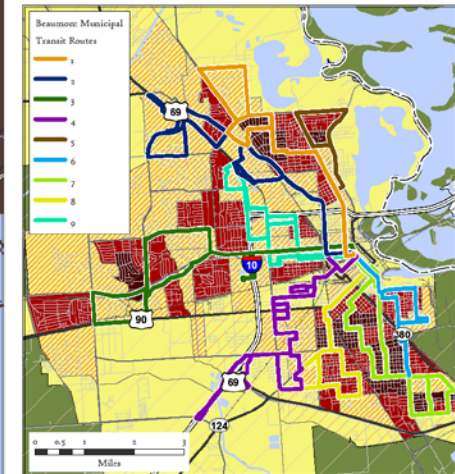
When "target" areas of transit dependent populations (low-income, elderly, and disabled) are overlapped with areas of populations who use transit to access work, underserved areas can be identified. Map 4 shows the percentage of workers who use transit to access work. Very few places in the rural areas have high percentage of transit users. Within the urban areas, eastern Port Arthur and northeast Beaumont have the highest percentage of transit users using transit to access work.



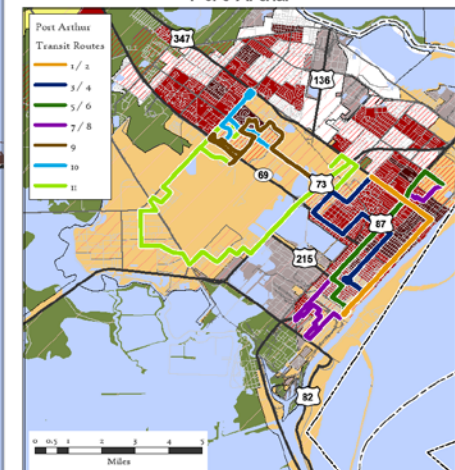
South East Texas Regional Coordination Plan Update

Population Density
by Census Block Group, 2000

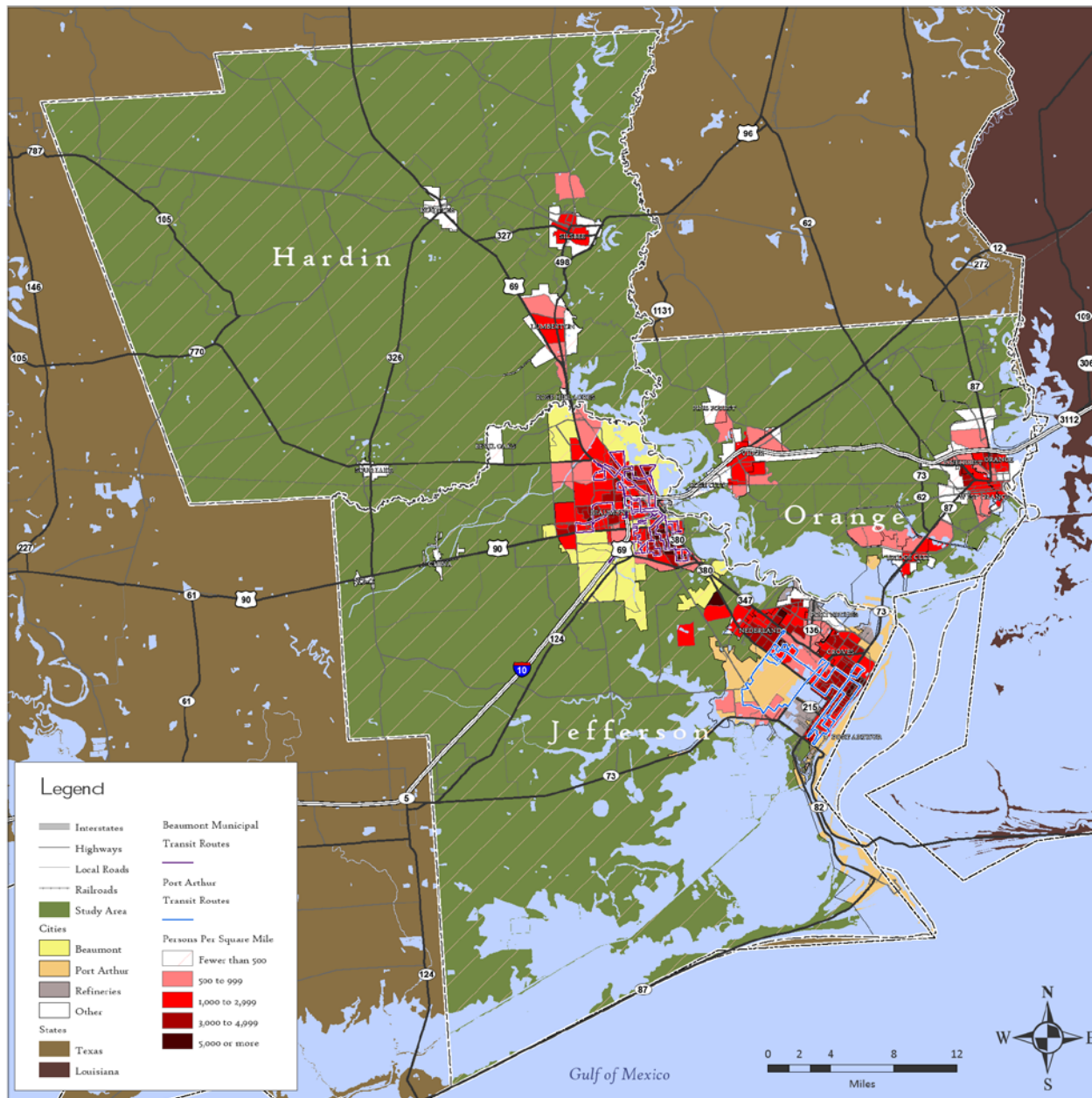
Beaumont



Port Arthur

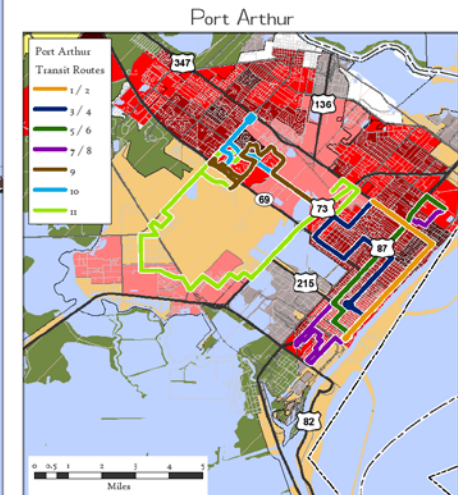
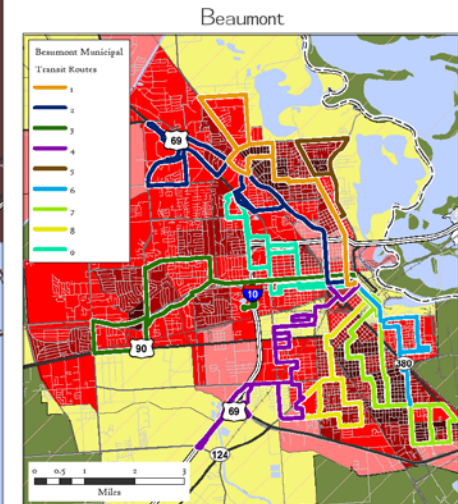


Map 1 - Population density - 2000

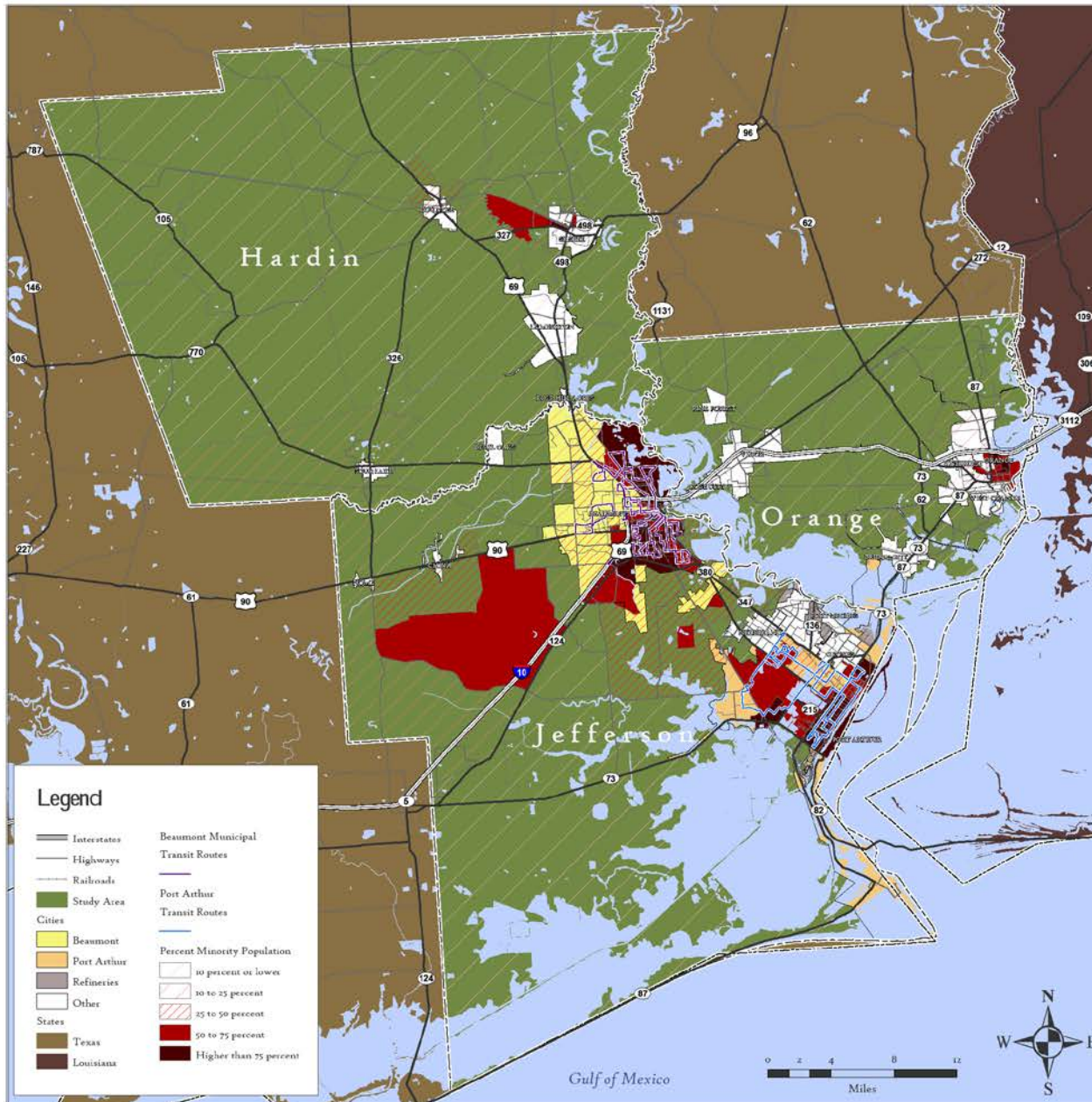


South East Texas Regional Coordination Plan Update

Population Density
by Census Block Group, 2010



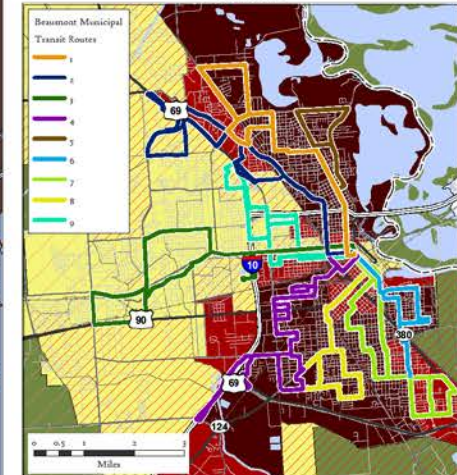
Map 2 - Population density - 2010



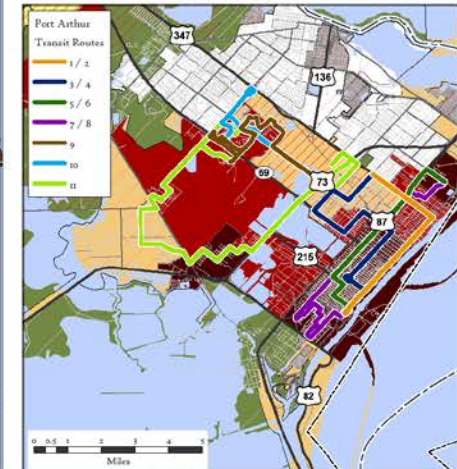
South East Texas Regional Coordination Plan Update

Percent Minority Population by Census Block Group, 2000

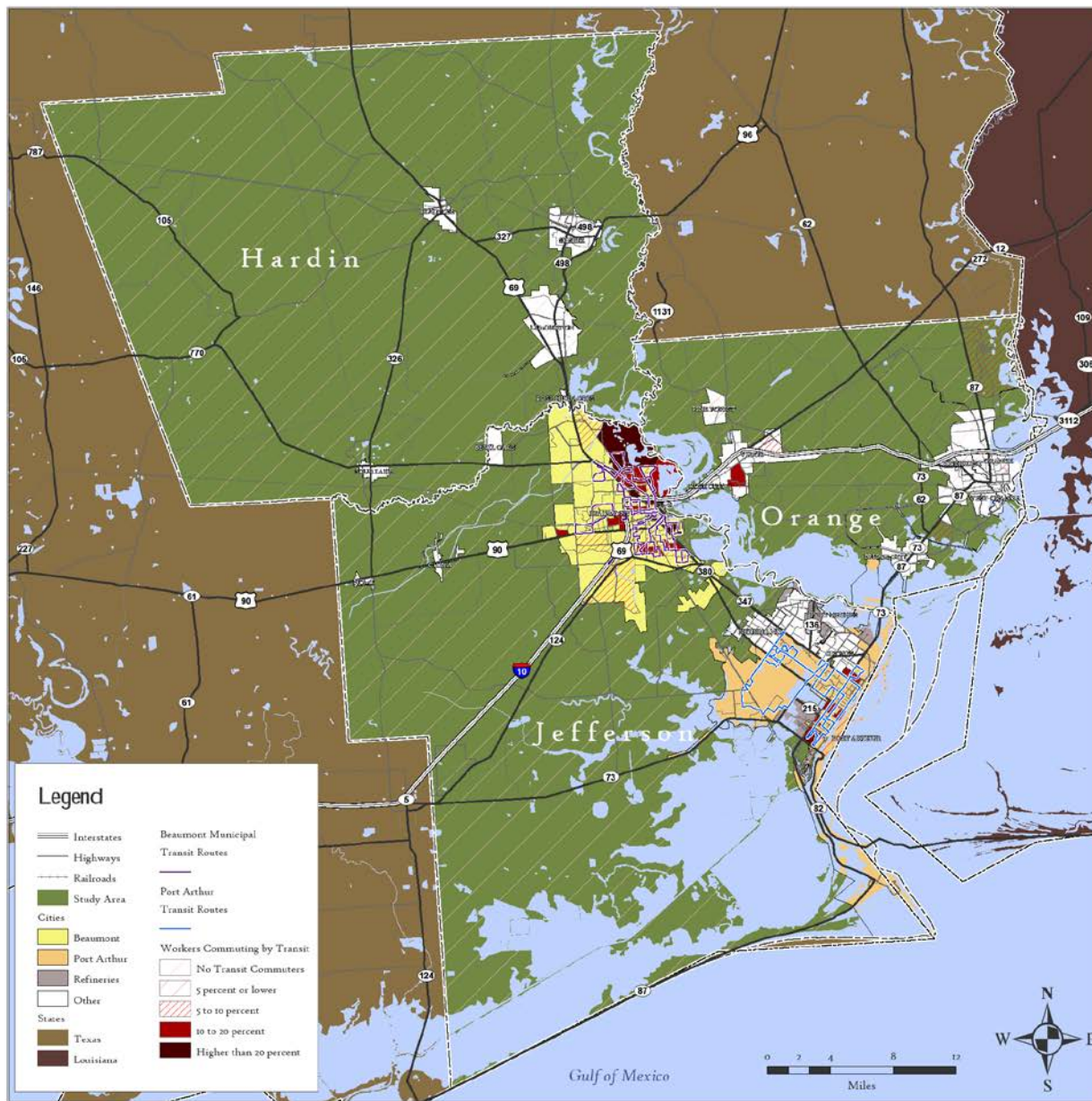
Beaumont



Port Arthur



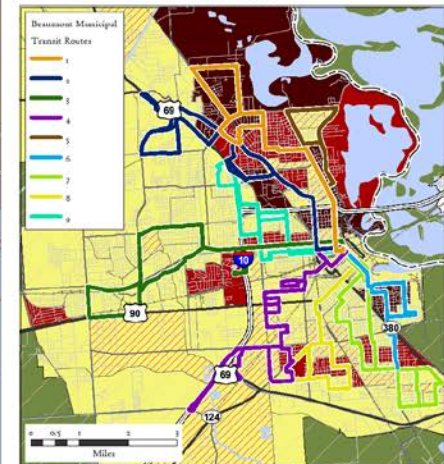
Map 3 - Percentage of population that are minorities



South East Texas Regional Coordination Plan Update

Workers Commuting by Transit
by Census Block Group, 2000

Beaumont



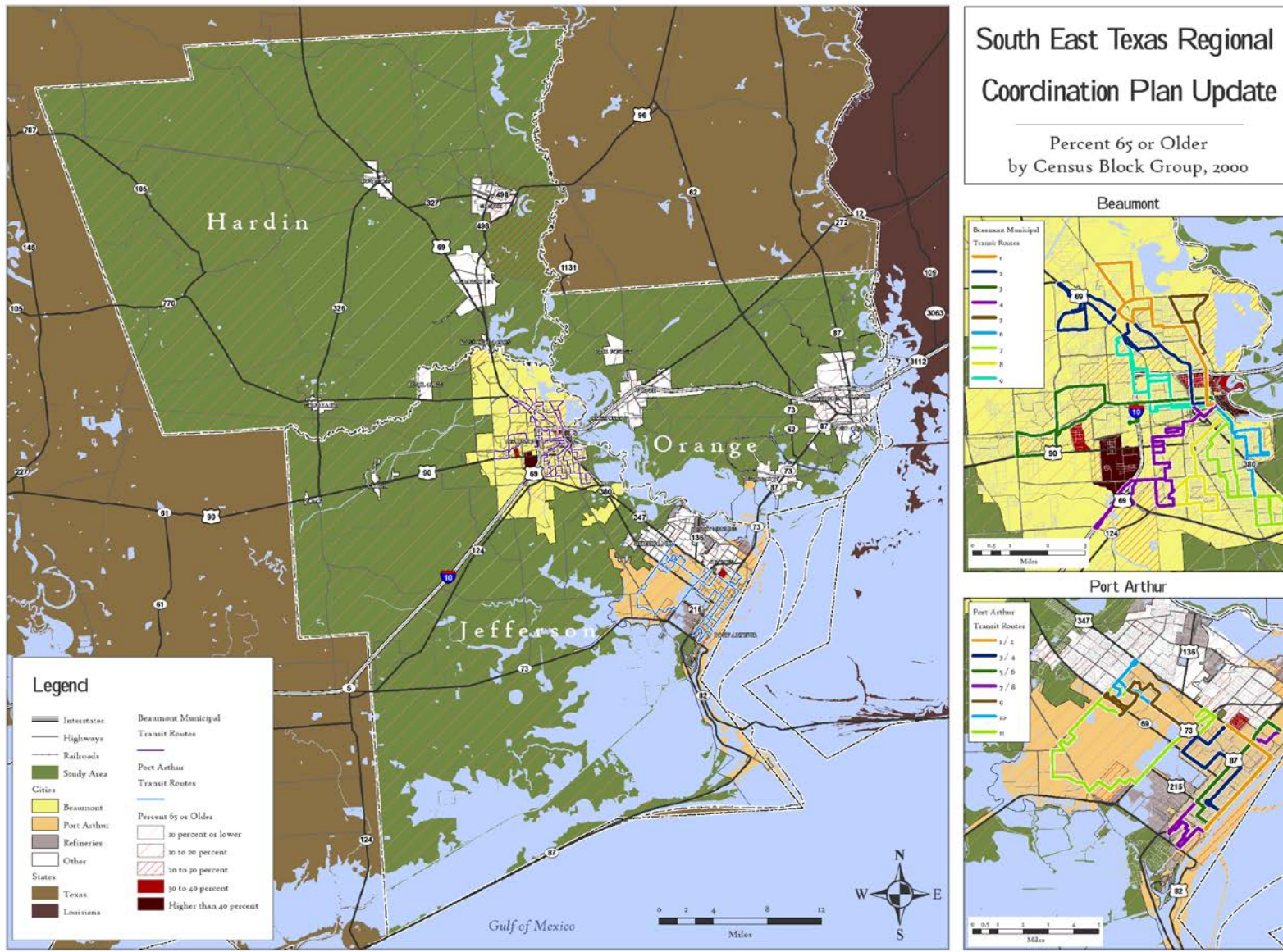
Port Arthur



Map 4 - Workers who commute to work using transit

Seniors

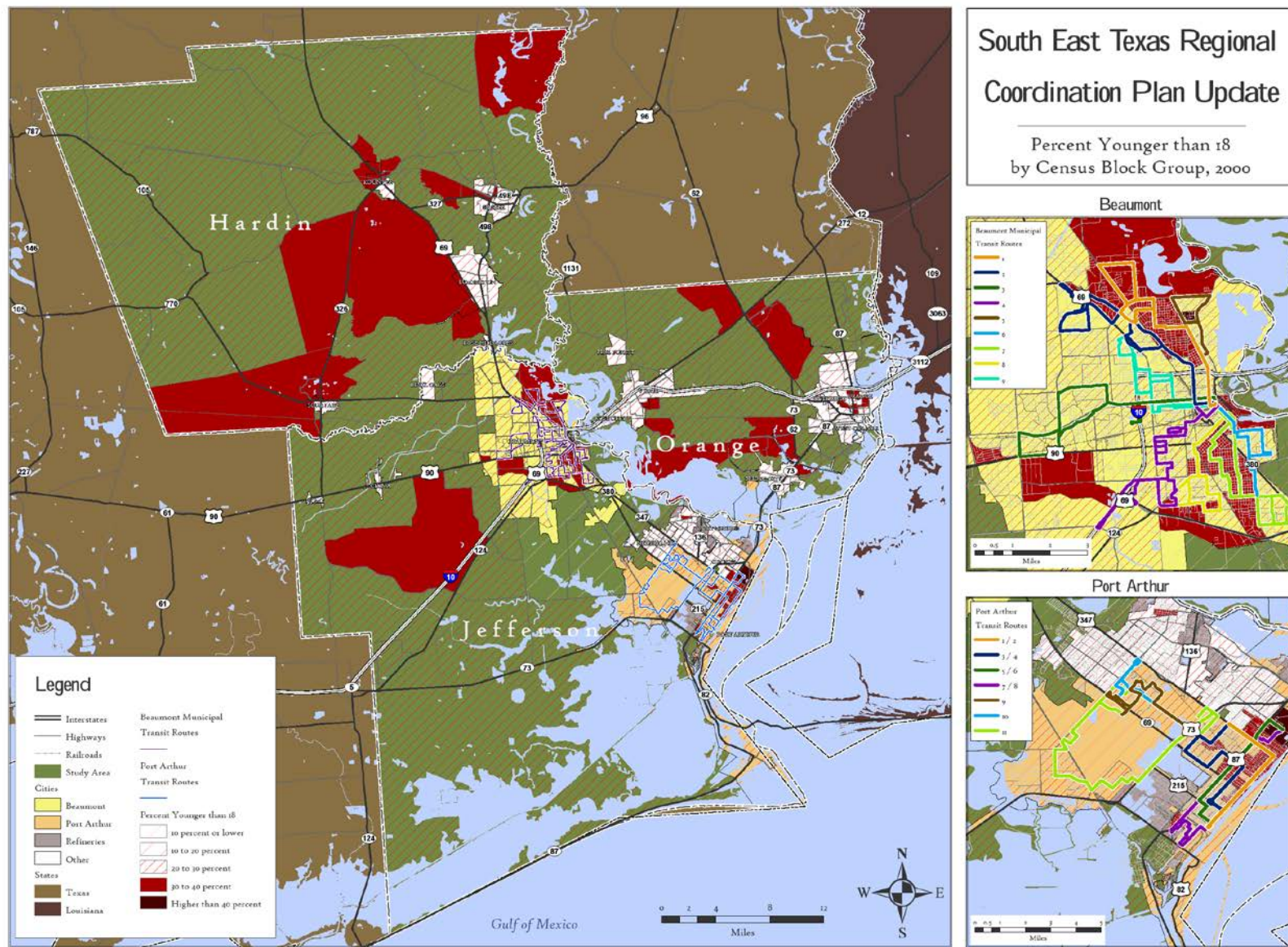
Map 5 identifies the highest urban percentage of elderly populations are in the southern and eastern areas of Beaumont, and some small areas in eastern Port Arthur. There are no large percentages of elderly populations in the rural areas.



Map 5 - Percentage of population age 65 years and older

Children

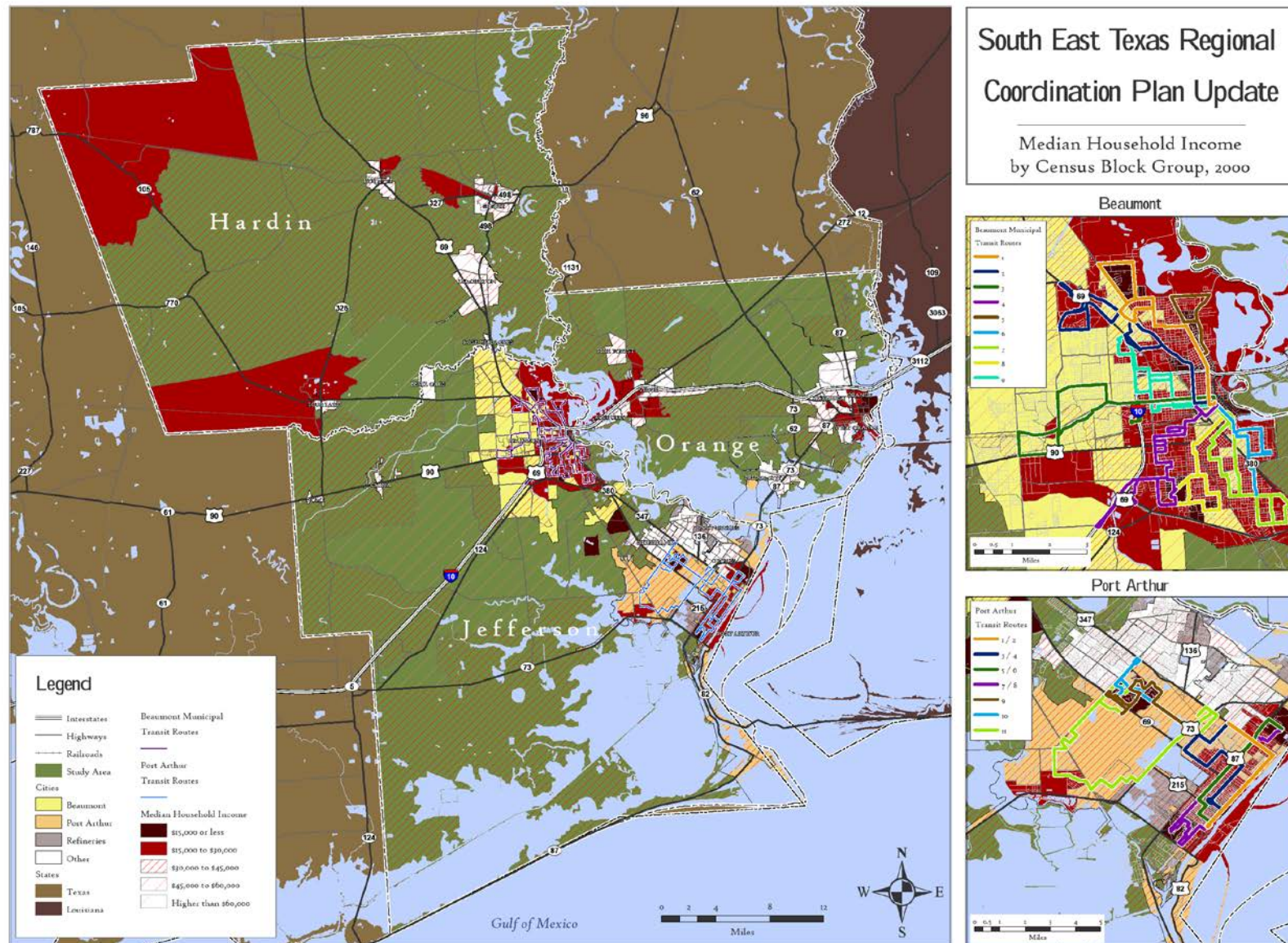
Map 6 identifies there are several areas in all three counties that have high percentages of under the age of 18 years population. In the urban areas, high percentages occur in the northeast and southern ends of Beaumont, and in the eastern areas of Port Arthur.



Map 6 - Percentage of population under the age of 18 years

Low Income Households

Based on 2000 US census data, there are high percentages of low income households in north and south Hardin County, some areas around Silsbee, and many areas in eastern Beaumont and eastern Port Arthur.



Map 7 - Percentage of households that are low income

3.1.2 Review of Unmet Needs

Responding Agencies

Below is a list of agencies that provided responses to the survey regarding unmet transportation needs.

- Beaumont Center - Workforce Solutions
- Silsbee - Workforce Solutions
- Orange - Workforce Solutions
- Port Arthur - Workforce Solutions
- Spindletop Center
- RISE
- Health and Human Services Commission

Unmet Needs

Most participants stated that while there may be unmet needs in the region, the SETRPC and the transportation providers in the region provide adequate coverage with the limited resource available. Almost all of the survey participants identified that providing more geographic coverage of transportation for persons of low income, elderly and disabled, increasing hours of service for the existing transit services, and centralizing sources of information as the main areas of unmet needs. Some specific comments regarding unmet needs are:



- Providing more direct service to workforce worksites
- Timely delivery of clients to worksites. More reliable vehicles
- The need for regional transit connectivity between Hardin, Jefferson and Orange Counties
- The issues of unmet needs are associated with the gaps in communication and some factors of access, such as flexible hours and lower fees (issues commonly associated with the level of funding available)

Human service agencies did not indicate any specific geographic areas of unmet needs, but did indicate that more service in the rural areas and increased service hours in the urban areas were needed.

SETT does an excellent job providing rural transit services, coordinating transportation needs over the three county rural areas by contracting with three transportation providers. But, with limited funding and resources, such as vehicles, not all transportation requests can be accommodated. Further, there are areas that are within the urban or non-rural areas that are excluded from being served by SETT, but are also too low densely populated to accommodate urban transit service. These areas are essentially not served by public transportation.

In the urban areas, BMT and PAT do provide good services with the resources that have been allocated. The extent of service coverage focuses on the areas and times of day with the highest demand. Service coverage is established with a balance of demand and efficiency. From a performance perspective, both transit systems are performing as expected. But, from the perspective of residents with limited incomes and limited access to transportation, the relative high cost of fares, limited hours of service, and limited service coverage creates barriers to accessing employment and/or education.

Additional Unmet Need Information

Specific analysis of travel patterns and unmet needs was conducted for the Silsbee and rural Hardin County areas. These specific studies provided information regarding the travel demands and unmet transportation needs of these areas.

Constraints and Obstacles

Participants in the survey and discussions identified several areas that present constraints and obstacles to establishing a complete coordination system. The information gathered is summarized into three main areas of focus: Regional Connectivity, Resources, and Communications.

Regional Connectivity

The need for residents to access destinations outside of their communities is a common comment from stakeholders and the public. This is especially an issue for low-income residents and the elderly. The SETRPC, human service agencies, and transportation providers continuously work on this issue to identify ways to provide seamless travel across the region. Unfortunately, funding, operations logistics, and allocation of resources make this task difficult.

Several strategies and coordination recommendations can be developed to assist in overcoming this obstacle by focusing on providing seamless travel, and not just connections. This may mean that a single route serves multiple common regional destinations. The Smart Card technology can allow individuals to choose the types of fares and transit services that meet their travel needs, providing seamless access to multiple transportation systems. Regional connectivity of transportation services should also focus on coordination of policies and procedures to ensure users only need to be familiar with one set of rules and not multiple variations depending on jurisdiction and geographical location.

Resources

Public transit systems across the United States are experiencing decreases in operating funding, and increases in demand. Ten to 20 years of sprawled population growth that once depended on automobiles, has begun to look to transit as a transportation option. This demand has placed a large burden on existing resources. Sprawled growth and limited funding makes it difficult for transit to allocate enough resources to serve all residents. As a result, localities must choose where to allocate resources most effectively, charge fares that help recover expenses, limit hours of

service to the core times when service is needed the most, and limit destinations to those that are most commonly and conveniently accessed.

Funding strategies are being explored as part of other transportation planning processes, but there are some service design strategies that might help address these concerns. Coordination of services can help with service delivery, and in-turn allows resources to be better allocated.

Communications

Participants in the survey and discussions believe that transportation providers in southeast Texas are doing the best with what resources they have. The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission does a good job planning and coordinating transportation services. There is a continuous understanding of who needs transportation assistance, and where there are gaps in services. Further, there have been many programs and services put in place to help residents with improving their transportation options. But, it is perceived that one missing link is the communities' awareness of these transportation programs and options.

No single strategy will be successful unless it can be effectively communicated to the intended market groups. Coordination strategies should include clear and effective understandings of how to best communicate with the intended audiences. These audiences may be residents who need transportation services or even human service agencies who help educate communities.

Section 4: Planning for Comprehensive Services

The southeast Texas region has on-going transportation planning processes that may lend to providing a means to implementing coordination strategies. This section outlines the funding programs in the region that support transportation services, the planning processes, and coordination opportunities that already exist. Further, it sets forth preliminary ideas of forming a continuous working group that will help foster and implement coordination recommendations.

4.1 – FUNDING PROGRAMS AND PLANNING PROCESSES

4.1.1 Funding Programs

Federal transportation funding related to transit services and potential coordination is available through the FTA Section 5307 - Urban Formula Grant and 5309 - Discretionary Capital Grant programs. Additional funding programs include Section 5310 – Elderly and Disabled Specialized Transit, FTA Section 5316 – Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), and FTA Section 5317 – New Freedom programs that are administered by TxDOT. TxDOT serves as the designated recipient of funds that are used in rural and small-urbanized areas of the state. A discussion and current allocation of each funding option is provided below.

Urbanized Formula Grants (Section 5307)

The Section 5307 formula grant program provides capital and operating assistance to urban areas to meet the transportation needs of the public. No limitations are put on who can benefit from the services. There are some Charter regulations that prevent, or limit, a locality's ability to contract for services, which does limit the possibilities for coordination. Currently, Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) and Port Arthur Transit (PAT) are allocated these funds annually, and are used to supplement the fixed-route and paratransit operations in the municipal boundaries. Section 5307 funds can be used for:

- Financial operating assistance;
- Procurement of capital items, such as buses and maintenance equipment;
- Transportation enhancements;
- Transit security enhancements; and
- Transit planning.

While funding is limited, and both BMT and PAT continue to do as much service possible with the funding allocated, there is no restriction that prevents these funds from being used for services outside of the municipal boundaries as the federal funds are allocated to the urbanized area. This means that BMT and PAT are not restricted from extending services regionally, allowing connections between the two transit systems. However, local limitations exist because of the matching fund source.

Non-Urbanized (Rural) Formula Grants (Section 5311)

Section 5311 formula grant program provides capital and operating assistance to non-urban, rural areas of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties. Funding is limited to providing assistance to transit programs that serve the rural areas, outside of the Beaumont and Port Arthur municipal boundaries. Currently, SETRPC is allocated the funding, which provides operating assistance to South East Texas Transit (SETT) to provide rural transit services. Section 5311 funds can be used for:

- Financial operating assistance;
- Procurement of capital items, such as buses and maintenance equipment; and
- Transit security enhancements.

SETRPC currently uses all of the funds allocated to the southeast Texas region to operate the SETT system and purchase related capital equipment. These funds are currently, being fully utilized for coordination efforts, focusing on transporting residents from the rural areas to destinations in the urban areas.

Discretionary Capital Grants (Section 5309)

The Section 5309 grant program is a discretionary allocation from the Federal Transit Administration to fund capital projects of significant transportation impact. Funds are based on competitive application, demonstrating need and intended outcomes. Funding is traditionally allocated to urban transportation systems, but can be applied for by regional and rural entities providing transportation services. Section 5309 funds can be used for:

- Procurement of major capital items, such as facilities and buses; and
- Technology procurements.

BMT and PAT have received Section 5309 in the past, but no allocation has been established for the coming fiscal year. Allocation of funds is determined from year to year. These funds may be used for establishing capital infrastructure needed for coordination, such as expanding the farebox Smart Card technology and constructing new facilities to promote regional services.

Elderly and Disabled Specialized Transit Program (Section 5310)

The Section 5310 formula grant program provides capital funding to meet the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities in areas where public mass transportation services are otherwise unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. Examples of eligible Section 5310 projects include:

- Procurement of accessible vans and buses;
- Procurement of communication equipment;
- Procurement of computer hardware and software; and
- Mobility management activities for eligible applicants.

Similar to Section 5311, SETRPC currently uses all of the funds allocated to the southeast Texas region to operate the SETT system's Mid-County program. These funds are currently, being fully utilized for coordination efforts, focusing on transporting eligible residents in mid-Jefferson County to destinations within the service area including Beaumont and Port Arthur. Funds can be used to fund mobility management services, which promote and educate existing and potential transit users on transit service.

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program (Section 5316)

The purpose of the JARC program is to fund local programs that offer job access services for low-income individuals. JARC funds are distributed to states on a formula basis, depending on that state's rate of low-income population. This approach differs from previous funding cycles, when grants were awarded purely on an "earmark" basis. JARC funds will pay for up to 50% of operating costs and 80% of capital costs. The remaining funds are required to be provided through local match sources. Examples of eligible JARC projects include:

- Late-night and weekend service;
- Guaranteed ride home programs;
- Vanpools or shuttle services to improve access to employment or training sites;
- Car-share or other projects to improve access to autos;
- Access to childcare and training; and
- Mobility management.

These funds could be used to fund regional transit services, but the required local match makes the use prohibitive when crossing jurisdictions. These funds provide a means to create coordination in the form of services between transit systems. Localities are encouraged to match these funds with other state programs to coordinate funding sources. Further, funds can be used to fund mobility management services, which promote and educate existing and potential transit users on transit service.

New Freedom Program (Section 5317)

The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the workforce and full participation in society. The New Freedom Program seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). New Freedom funds are available for capital and operating expenses that support new public transportation services and alternatives beyond those required by the ADA. These funds are designed to assist individuals with disabilities with accessing transportation services, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services. The same match requirements for JARC apply for the New Freedom Program. Examples of eligible New Freedom Program projects include:

- Expansion of paratransit service hours or service area beyond minimal requirements;
- Purchase of accessible taxi or other vehicles;

- Promotion of accessible ride sharing or vanpool programs;
- Administration of volunteer programs;
- Building curb cuts, providing accessible bus stops;
- Travel training programs; and
- Mobility management.

These funds could be used to fund enhanced transit services, but the required local match makes the use prohibitive with limited economic environments. Localities are encouraged to match these funds with other state programs to coordinate funding sources. These funds provide a means to create coordination in the form of services. Further, funds can be used to fund mobility management services, which promote and educate existing and potential transit users on transit service.

Planning Processes

Transportation planning in a regional area is typically a collaborative process, led by the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and other key stakeholders in the regional transportation system. The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission serves this role of MPO for the Jefferson-Orange-Hardin Regional Transportation Study (JOHRTS) area. The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties, such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and the public through a proactive public participation process conducted by the MPO in coordination with the state department of transportation and transit operators. The planning process includes a number of steps:

- Forecasting future population and employment growth;
- Assessing projected land uses in the region;
- Forecasting future travel demand;
- Identifying major growth corridors and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvements;
- Estimating the impact of the transportation system on air quality within the region in (non-attainment areas); and
- Developing a financial plan that covers operating costs, maintenance of the system, system preservation costs and new capital investments.

There are five core functions of a MPO.

- **Establish a setting:** Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision making in the metropolitan area.
- **Evaluate alternatives:** Evaluate transportation alternatives, scaled to the size and complexity of the region; to the nature of its transportation issues, and within the realistically achievable options.
- **Maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):** Develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area with a planning horizon of at least

twenty years. The MTP should foster mobility and access for persons and goods, promote efficient system performance and preservation and enhance the area's quality of life.

- **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a short-range capital improvement program based on the long-range transportation plan. The TIP is designed to promote the area's transportation goals by programming projects that address capacity needs, congestion reduction, transit service needs, air quality improvements and transportation enhancements.
- **Involve the Public:** Involve the public and the affected special interest groups in the four essential functions listed above.

Relationship among agencies in transportation planning and project implementation.

Transportation planning must be cooperative, because no single agency has responsibility for the construction, operation, or maintenance of the entire transportation system. For example, roads that are part of the Interstate Highway System are subject to certain standards and are maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation. Other roads are county arterials or city streets designed, operated, and maintained by counties or local municipalities. Public transportation systems are built, operated and maintained by localities.

The MPO is responsible for actively seeking the participation of all relevant agencies and stakeholders in the planning process, so they can share information and develop coordinated solutions.

Key documents produced by metropolitan planning process.

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Transit Development Plans (TDP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): The UPWP lists the transportation studies and tasks to be performed by the MPO staff or a member agency. Because the UPWP reflects local priorities, the content differs from one MPO to another.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):

The transportation plan is the statement of the ways the region plans to invest in the transportation system. The MTP shall include both long-range and short-range program strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The TIP is a financially constrained four-year program covering the most immediate implementation priorities for transportation projects and strategies from the MTP. It is the region's way of allocating its limited transportation resources among the various capital and operating needs of the area, based on a clear set of short-term transportation priorities.

Transit Development Plans (TDP)

SETRPC also provides transit planning assistance to the three transportation providers. A Transit Development Plan is developed to analyze services and provide recommendations for utilization of resources. Moreover, when funding is feasible, new project ideas are analyzed. A TDP offers short and long-term direction for changes to service, and growth of new service.

Section 5: Planning Processes

5.1 – WORKING PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

Working Partnerships

Southeast Texas has several working partnerships between agencies and transportation providers. Human service agencies work directly with transportation providers, such as the workforce centers contracting with SETT to provide transportation for eligible clients. SETRPC brokers contracted trips from human service agencies for SETT to provide services to the rural communities. Some human service agencies purchase bus passes for on-going travel needs of their clients. SETRPC has established a committee of human service agencies and transportation providers to discuss on-going coordination efforts and new strategies. All of these relationships foster an existing working group that is well positioned to establish new coordination ideas, evaluate progress, and determine new need and changes.

Incentives

As with any working group there needs to be incentives and reasons the group is compelled to work together to improve the use of resources. In almost all regional communities, change presents uncertainty, and uncertainty creates caution. Caution lends itself to hesitations and ideas falling short of implementation. But caution is justified because every partner in a working group has priorities, limitations and accountabilities. Each must first ensure their core needs are satisfied before they can leverage their resources. Because of this, these partners must identify the benefits of the coordination ideas in relation to their priorities. To do this, a working group should have active roles in establishing new ideas, monitoring success and examining the impact of change.

Empowered Working Group

Further, a working group should be empowered with providing key information to enabling coordination success. Each should be a key partner in the success of each coordination idea. This means that each partner actively provides feedback on the impacts of new services, data to help with analysis, and continuous information on needs. The repeated statement of needs does not go unheard, needs are prioritized with available resources. But, if there is a lack of a statement it only suggests to the “planning processes” there is a lack of need. Partners should be encouraged and provided a means to continually provide an assessment of transportation needs. Also, a continuous flow of information and data of needs and resources allows planning entities to understand how to best allocate resources as they become available. The lack of data and information leads to poor planning, and reverting to traditional allocation methods. Further, all of the input and information continuously gathered prepares the planning entities for opportunities. Federal and state funding opportunities do reoccur, commonly in new forms of funding sources and requirements. When a working group continuously defines its needs and resources, and provides proof points in the form of data and information, new funding sources can be quickly applied for, this is the age-old “preparation meets opportunity.” A region must know what it needs, and the outcomes it seeks to be prepared for coordination opportunities.

Section 6: Staff Structure to Sustain Planning and Services

As discussed in other sections, the coordination plan not only addresses the immediate needs for transportation, but also defines a framework for ensuring continual evaluation and development of coordination initiatives. To accomplish this, a lead agency and lead staff would be established to perform key activities that move coordination efforts forward, into implementation and successful outcomes. Such activities include designing services, overseeing or performing tasks such as training, public outreach, marketing, and implementation of other key coordination activities. This section outlines a framework for sustaining coordination through the establishment of a regional coordination council to work with South East Texas Regional Planning Commission staff, ideally the mobility coordinator, as a lead agency to monitor the progress of goals and objectives, and engage stakeholders to help improve regional mobility. This framework of a regional coordination council supported by a mobility coordinator is built on three main concepts:

Leadership – Establish leadership within stakeholders that advocates, generates support, and institutes mechanisms for coordination at the highest level;

Participation – Establish a forum to bring and keep at the table the right state, regional, and local stakeholders; and

Continuity - Ensure an ongoing forum and leadership that stays focused on overall transportation goals and responds to ever-changing needs.

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission can provide the ongoing forum for members to discuss local transportation coordination needs, especially those of older adults, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes. The forum would foster the creation of a Regional Coordination Council that would serve to facilitate the coordination initiatives, measure progress, and assist with updating this plan to reflect new opportunities. Further, the SETRPC can provide regional staff to assist the council's activities and help foster the exchange.

This section outlines the dynamics of a sustaining regional coordination: coordination structure, coordination activities, public outreach and awareness, and funding by examining a specific aspect of how coordination could occur in the region, with a focus on a regional coordination group supported by regional staff.

6.1 – ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Sustaining coordination for transportation in the Jefferson, Hardin and Orange County region will require a two-point approach. The first is the establishment of regional staff that can lead and assist with implementing coordination strategies. This would best be achieved by establishing the position of a mobility manager. A mobility manager would be able to work with each stakeholder one-on-one, work to overcome barriers, gain detailed understanding of resources and needs,

ensure implementation of coordination initiatives, and work to demonstrate coordination success. The second is the establishment of a coordination group that can exchange ideas, discuss impacts and barriers of coordination, and assist regional staff with implementation.

This subsection covers the proposed structure that fosters coordination primarily at a regional coordination council level. The mobility manager position has been extensively discussed in other sections of the coordination plan update. This includes composition and regional staffing needed to ensure the exchange necessary to promote coordination.

6.1.1 Composition and Selection

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission has established the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee as a group to assist with updating the coordination plan. This group serves as a foundation to create a permanent council that meets on a regular basis to discuss the coordination plans progress and modifications. Currently, the committee is made-up of human service agencies, private and public transportation providers, and staff of the SETRPC. This group represents the interest and knowledge of a wide range of professionals with constituents that would benefit from greater mobility, the desired result of transportation coordination. Building on this group, the SETRPC can establish a regional coordination structure composed of a regional group and regional staff. The primary objective of this group is to monitor and direct coordination activities.

Government and Organizational Members

Any of the following organizations are automatically a member of the Council upon formal adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding, outlined by the SETRPC, by that governing body or organization, and formal acceptance by the Council:

- Texas Department of Transportation and the SETRPC will each have standing membership.
- Any public, private non-profit, or for-profit organization based in the three-county region that currently funds, arranges, or provides such transportation services for its citizens, clients, or customers;
- Any public transportation agency or state/regional/county entity involved in the planning or provision of public transportation in the three-county region;
- Organizations representing groups of consumers and constituents that would be positively affected by such mobility and access improvements in the three-county region;
- Medical centers, hospitals, and rural healthcare providers in the three-county region;
- Organizations representing the needs of persons with disabilities in the three-county region;
- Organizations representing the needs of persons with low income in the three-county region; and
- Institutions providing adult and post-secondary education in the three-county region.

Each organizational member shall designate one representative and up to two alternate representatives to the Council.

Citizen Members

It is important to allow residents the chance to be a part of the discussions and decisions of regional mobility. To that end, the Council shall have volunteer citizen members, with no compensation. Citizen members must be residents of the Southeast Texas region and take an active interest in improving mobility. There shall be at least one citizen member on the Council. The maximum number of citizen members on the Council shall equate to no more than 10% of the total organizational members. The term of each citizen member shall be two years. Citizen members may serve multiple terms, but must submit an application at the end of each term.

Applications to be a citizen member must be submitted to the Secretary no later than the Council's regular meeting. Appointed by the Chair, the Council will review the applications and recommend the appropriate number of citizen members, to be voted upon by the council at the Council's regular meeting. Citizen members have voting rights but do not have the right to designate an alternate.

6.1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

It is recommended that the RCC transition from a steering committee to a standing committee that meets every two to three months to advise SETRPC on its transportation programs, and to provide a forum for transportation and human service staff to share information and collaborate on mutual issues of concern. The current committee has been tasked with oversight of this coordination project, and members will be involved with future implementation efforts, as well as taking a lead role in funding decisions for use of federal and state funding for which SETRPC and its partners are designated recipient.

The primary responsibilities of the Regional Coordination Council are proposed as:

- Assist with the hire of staff for RCC coordination activities;
- Provide contractual or staffing oversight for personnel;
- Facilitate the selection and approval of RCC members;
- Facilitate meetings of the RCC, including preparing meeting materials;
- Work with transportation providers, as needed, to facilitate federal funding processes;
- Prepare an annual work plan to identify work tasks and implementation activities;
- Prepare an annual evaluation/summary report of coordination activities;
- Assume program oversight for implementation of coordination activities;
- Represent RCC to the SETRPC Board of Directors and other partner policy boards;
- Work with and recruit participation from community partners; and
- Increase awareness and support of transportation options throughout the region.

The primary roles of the RCC and its members are proposed as follows:

- The RCC will represent a diverse range of stakeholder interests within the Southeast Texas region.
- Members will seek appointment for one of the identified membership categories through an application process administered by the SETRPC, and confirmed by the Board of Directors.

- Members will serve as representatives of a specific constituency group as appointed
- Members will attend meetings, review meeting materials, and participate in decision-making as required.
- As applicable, members may be asked to participate in related program activities outside regular meeting structure, i.e. project selection, outreach, etc.
- Members will execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SETRPC to document respective roles and responsibilities.
- The RCC will select a chairperson to chair meetings, represent the full RCC as needed, to provide regular updates to the SETRPC, and coordinate efforts with staff.

Voting

Each member is afforded one full vote on any decision put to a vote. Each organizational member's vote can be cast by his/her representative or alternate representative. Citizen members must be present at meetings to vote; proxy votes for citizen members should not be permitted.

To be in "good standing," a member (1) must attend at least 75% of the regular monthly meetings, and miss no more than two consecutive regular monthly meetings in a calendar year; and (2) must participate in some facet of the Council's work program. The Chair may determine if a missed meeting is excused; an excused miss shall not count as non-attendance.

Council Officers

The Officers of the Council shall be as follows:

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Treasurer/Secretary

The term of each officer shall be one year. Officers may serve multiple terms.

Responsibilities of the Officers

The Chair, or in the event of his/her absence, the Vice Chair, shall preside at all meetings of the Council; but neither shall be deprived of his/her right to vote. The Chair or Vice Chair shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may from time to time be voted by the Council, including the establishment of committees and appointment of committee members as may be necessary or convenient for carrying out the business of the Council.

The Secretary/Treasurer shall be responsible for advising the Council on policy matters pertaining to management and reporting of annual and quarterly information. The Secretary/Treasurer, with the assistance of SETRPC staff and the Regional Mobility Coordinator, shall be responsible for disseminating information to Council members, writing Council correspondence, keeping meeting attendance records, and taking minutes of meetings.

Collectively, the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer shall comprise the Executive Committee. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer must be members in good standing.

6.1.3 Planning Activity Staffing

Sustaining regional coordination will require staffing at the regional level to, assisting the Regional Coordination Council and working with stakeholders to implement coordination initiatives. This staffing need is best matched with the concept of the Regional Mobility Coordinator (RMC).

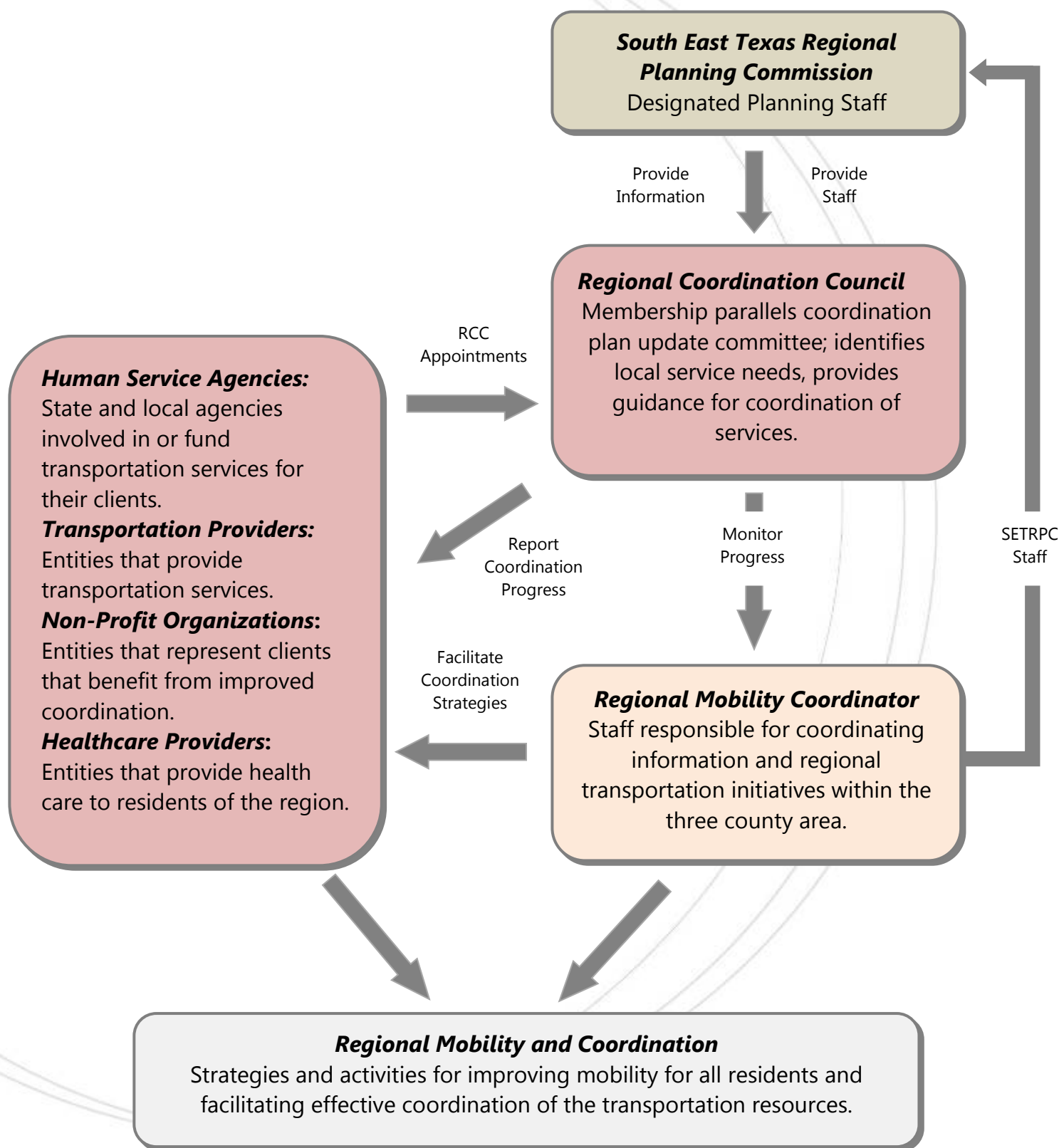
A regional mobility coordinator can provide services ranging from data analysis to travel training. This type of position has become very common in the transportation coordination industry, and serves to centralize information, initiatives, and provide the focused one-on-one discussions needed to extensively understand resources available and areas of greatest need. In context of supporting a Regional Coordination Council, the coordinator would be the primary staff and point of contact for the assist from the SETRPC. Such staff shall provide core administrative support for meeting facilitation, including preparation of meeting agendas, materials and meeting minutes. They will actively engage the council by providing reports that allow the group to monitor the progress of coordination initiatives.

The primary responsibilities of this position would include:

- Act as ongoing staff support to the Regional Coordination Council.
- Partner/outreach with transportation and human service agencies involved in mobility services in each of the three counties.
- Establish and market a single point of contact for obtaining information on existing transportation options.
- Coordinate communication, promoting awareness of services and service success.
- Develop communication materials in newspapers, newsletters and print materials promoting mobility management resources to be distributed as needed.
- Develop transportation guidebooks that promote the transportation safety and mobility options serving the area.
- Develop training materials and presentations to be used regionally by the coordinator or partnering agencies.
- Lead data collection and technology initiatives by developing a comprehensive database of information needed for on-going planning initiatives, as well as serve as the lead for coordinating technology implementation, such as the regional smart card project.
- Serve as the lead for the creation of the backbone service that will greatly enhance the mobility of residents, including the elderly and the disabled. As the service is designed and implemented the RMC will be responsible for fostering the discussions, planning and assuring maximum usage by the human services community to promote an effective design and usage.

6.1.4 Proposed Organizational Chart

Regional Coordination Organizational and Flow Chart



6.2 – ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY

Sustaining coordination will require on-going activities of both the Regional Coordination Council and the Regional Mobility Coordinator. Each will have a significant role in the planning, implementation and success of coordination initiatives.

6.2.1 Regional Coordination Council Activities

For the RCC, as with any group based on volunteer participation, it is critical to create incentives for stakeholders to be involved. This is especially important when the group is made up of individuals with limited time and extensive responsibilities. Participating in regular coordination meeting may not be appealing without the right incentives and activity. This means that the activities of the RCC should have substance, focusing on measuring outcomes, and celebrating and building on successes. At minimum the regional group shall:

- Help develop, implement, and provide guidance for the coordination of transportation services and information within the region so that people can access local and regional transportation services to get to locations within the region;
- Recommend, guide, and monitor a Regional Mobility Coordinator, an individual that will be responsible for mobility management and awareness, and to aid in facilitating the coordination of transportation services and information in the region;
- Advise the community, including governmental officials, stakeholders, and business and community leaders on the need for funding of mobility management and coordination efforts; and
- Seek additional public and private funding sources to support these mobility management and coordination efforts.

Some near term activities of the RCC may include:

- Appoint a nominating committee to propose RCC officers.
- RCC leadership to establish subcommittees as needed to work on specific coordination plan recommendations.
- Develop a communications strategy to inform and engage the public in the region regarding the RCC's activities, goals, and successes.
- Develop a strategy for communicating with stakeholders, the state, and neighboring regions.
- Establish a process and protocol for assembling information regarding transportation services that creates the foundation for a service resource directory with the intention of providing information and referrals for users – who uses services, where do they go, how do they pay.
- Define the reports needed to demonstrate project results and success.
- Establish a membership committee to increase stakeholder base through a variety of outreach methods.
- Work with state officials to determine funding opportunities, requirements and expectations for an eventual Regional Mobility Coordinator.

- Reach consensus on adopting tools and strategies to continually document unmet community transportation needs.
- Re-evaluate goals and accomplishments at the end of the coordination plan's first year, August 2012, as well as the existing mission and vision statement.
- Analyze and understand the various transportation service's cost-allocation and program funding guidelines in preparation for creating a region backbone service.

6.2.2 Regional Mobility Coordinator Activities

The activities of the Regional Mobility Coordinator will be more extensive and dynamic, based largely on the tasks outlined by the RCC and SETRPC. The coordinator would work with stakeholders to get projects implemented and report back to the RCC on progress. To achieve the items in the Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives section of this plan the RMC will need to undertake a number of short term activities as follows:

- Document Review and Research: Review the Regional Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan and other existing documentation to obtain an understanding of the area, services, needs, organizations, etc. in the region.
- Human Services Agency Outreach: Conduct outreach to all human services agencies and transportation providers in the region to obtain a better understanding of capabilities, resources, plans and related items.
- Initial RCC Meeting: Organize and serve as the staff member for the initial and on-going meetings of the RCC.
- Data and Technology: Research, implement, and coordinate technology that will allow the region to coordinate data and service planning. Initial technology should focus on coordinating demand response scheduling, as well as the smart card program.
- One-Call Number: Once the RMC has been established and coordinating of communications has begun and ready for public use, a central 800 number should be established and advertised.
- Website: Establish a website to promote and provide information on the new RMC program in the region. Include links to all supporting agencies and detailed information regarding transportation services available.
- Communications Plan: Establish a communications plan with the assistance of the RCC and SETRPC to effectively educate residents and promote transportation services and coordination initiatives. Communication and marketing data will be collected and campaigns will be directed to targeted audiences of the general public, organizations and agencies. Advertising techniques will utilize mixed-media, including newspaper advertisements, press releases, brochures and posters placed at various human services agencies, as well as public service announcements on radio stations broadcast throughout the region.
- Program Evaluation: Develop a coordination program evaluation methodology. To this end collect data on a daily basis and compile this data into reports for the RCC and SETRPC. This data will detail the RMC activity for each month including the number of clients contacted, training, number of agencies contacted and results of contacts, marketing and advertising activities, and general progress of coordination initiatives.

- Survey: Conduct an initial survey process that forms the foundation of a periodic follow-up survey process to assess transportation needs, client satisfaction, unmet needs and coordination impacts. Utilize the database, surveys and analysis to analyze the effectiveness of the coordination program and to recommendations.

6.2.3 Work Flow and Decision Processes

With the assistance of the Regional Mobility Coordinator, or SETRPC staff designee, the Regional Coordination Council shall annually review the coordination plan and determine necessary changes and updates. This review will be based on the on-going reporting of annually performance goals set to accomplish the recommendations and objectives, and on-going data provided on service delivery across the region. Such reports shall be defined at the onset of the RCC formation, and changed as needed to understand the coordination dynamics in the region.

Regular Meetings

The Council shall meet every two months or on another date and/or at another time at the call of the Chair. The Council may vote at a prior meeting not to hold the next regular monthly meeting. The Chair may also cancel a regular monthly meeting. At the regular meetings, the Council may take such actions, pass such resolutions, or conduct such other business as are on the agenda or may otherwise be properly brought before it.

Special and Informational Meetings

The Chair, or in the event of his/her absence, the Vice Chair may call a special meeting of the Council as required and shall call a special meeting at the request of one-third (1/3) of the members. Business at special meetings shall be limited to the subjects stated in the call for them. The Chair may call an informational meeting as may be required for the presentation and dissemination of reports, analyses, or other data, and for the informal discussion thereof by the Council. No formal action is expected to be taken at such meetings.

6.2.4 Updating Schedule

The Regional Coordination Council shall update the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan annually to reflect accomplishments and new initiatives. Every five years, the plan shall be updated to reflect new analysis of services needs and gaps, and emerging partnerships and opportunities.

6.2.5 Relationship to Other Regional Transportation Planning Activities

The activities, strategies, and progress of the Regional Coordination Council shall be included as an individual section in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. This will allow for the funding needs and established priorities to be integrated with regional wide transportation discussions and decisions. As the MTP is updated, it shall draw from the updates of the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan. This plan reflects the changes in needs and initiatives of the RCC. Further, as each urban area develops a Transit Development Plan, a section shall be created that addresses any coordination needs and strategies for the respective transit system.

6.3 – OUTREACH AND PUBLIC INFORMATION STRATEGIES

To provide continuous information for the modification and update of the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan, and to promote and increase awareness of the success of coordination initiatives, SETRPC staff and the Regional Coordination Council should incorporate outreach and public information strategies into the roles and activities of related to sustaining coordination. Outreach and communication strategies listed below address communicating with both transit users, as well as other stakeholders and interested group. The strategies suggested below fall into two categories: Direct involvement and information distribution techniques are described below. Each category defines how

IDT = Information Distribution Technique, which refers to public information materials that are used to inform the general public of issues regarding the relevant project.

DIT = Direct Involvement Technique, which refers to methods that engage the public in “hands on” workshops and/or discussion about the relevant project.

6.3.1 Promoting Awareness Informational Materials (IDT)

SETRPC has done a good job developing materials that help educate and inform residents regarding transportation services throughout the region. Building on this approach, and under the direction of the RCC, the RMC should develop informational materials to promote new service awareness, gather community input, and demonstrate transportation coordination success. The exact types of materials would be dependent on the outcome of the Communications Plan; identifying types of materials, distribution strategies, and target audiences. As staff of the SETRPC, the Regional Mobility Coordinator would have the responsibility of developing the materials

Communications List (IDT)

Every community has individuals that seek to participate in the planning, decision making, and implementation of projects. To help facilitate the public’s participation in project planning, the RCC and RMC should maintain a mailing list of interested parties, community members, elected officials, and those who attend public informational meetings. This approach will allow coordination efforts to continue the line of communication with those who are active participants. As staff of the SETRPC, the Regional Mobility Coordinator would make this a function of their reoccurring responsibilities, developing a communications list as the person interacts with stakeholders and the public.

Radio and Local Television Programming (IDT)

Regardless of the new age of technology and social media, a common source of information remains to be radio and television. The Regional Mobility Manager should be a guest participant on local public radio and television programs, educating the public about the region’s coordination and transportation services.

Community Listening Sessions (DIT)

Depending upon the project and area of relevance, coordination efforts should continue to conduct public meetings and workshops throughout the region, defined as Community Listening Sessions. What separates these workshops would be the focus on two main aspects: demonstrating to the public and stakeholders the coordination initiatives and results, and gathering an understanding of the community's transportation needs. If the public is aware that reoccurring meetings are held, the ability to attend dramatically increases and the awareness of service increases. Community listening Sessions would be a reoccurring function of the Regional Mobility Coordinator, coordinating such meetings with other transportation public engagement needs. The RMC would identify the locations and schedule community workshops, coordinating with other community and human service agency activities to reach a maximum audience.

Community Presentations (DIT)

As staff of the SETRPC, the Regional Mobility Coordinator should conduct at least three community presentations that identify the various transportation services available and on-going initiatives, the location of these presentations can be in coordination with existing and on-going activities, such as senior centers and education facilities. The purpose of the presentations is to help educate targeted audiences on service available and how to access such services.

6.3.2 Strategies to Define Needs and Success

Passenger Survey (DIT)

An important part of on-going development and evaluation of transportation coordination initiatives is the assessment of user and stakeholder perspectives. While qualitative, the perspectives do provide an understanding of transportation needs, as well as how to best gauge the awareness of initiatives. With the assistance of the SETRPC, the Regional Mobility Coordinator should conduct an annual survey of demand response and urban transit passengers. The intent is to gather basic information on the qualitative performance of public transportation services. The information will seek improvements and areas of unmet needs identified by transit users. The approach to the survey can be refined each year, garnering assistance from the transportation providers, resulting in minimal investment from the SETRPC. While an annual survey approach may seem to be more than needed, it does provide a sense of stable reoccurrence that allows a passenger to eventually provide their feedback.

Agency Survey (DIT)

Similar to the purpose of a passenger survey, the Regional Mobility Coordinator should conduct an annual survey of human service agencies and transportation providers to understand their satisfaction with coordination efforts, and desired improvements. This survey can be conducted as part of an annual meeting and assessment. As a Regional Mobility Coordinator continues to interact with stakeholders, agencies, and providers they will be able to gain an understanding of needs and perspectives, but a survey will allow them to quantify changes in coordination, and gauge participation and awareness.

Contact with Neighborhood Associations and Homeowners' Associations (DIT)

The Regional Mobility Coordinator should solicit input from and make presentations to neighborhood groups and associations. The neighborhood and community group forum will provide feedback from groups representing the interests of neighborhoods. Further, these groups provide strong community assistance to help ensure coordination project success by generating ridership. Further these forums would allow the Regional Mobility Coordinator to gather feedback after service implementation, reviewing the impact and effectiveness. These forums would be balanced with other community outreach efforts to prevent over saturation.

6.3.3 Reporting Success

Stakeholder Presentations (DIT)

As staff of the SETRPC, the Regional Mobility Coordinator should conduct at least three stakeholder presentations, including human service agency groups, elected bodies, and the business community. The purpose of these presentations is to inform stakeholders of the various transportation services available and on-going initiatives. Presentations should focus on identifying current initiatives and results, and future initiatives and support needed from the community.

Annual Report (IDT)

One of the most effective ways to communicate the transportation coordination projects planned and implemented to stakeholders and elected officials who are potentially assisting financially with coordination projects is the creation of an annual transportation coordination report. An annual report would demonstrate coordination activities and successes in the region, as well as upcoming initiatives. The audience of this report will be state agencies, local stakeholders, government entities, coordination partners, and the general public. It would identify investments and outcomes, and provide a comprehensive overview of what coordination activities have been conducted in a given year. The report can be the sum of the work conducted and reports provided by the Regional Mobility Coordinator.

Website information (IDT)

To provide information that reaches to all communities and stakeholders within the region the SETRPC should develop a website that provides a range of information, from transportation services to performance reports. Ideally the website would be a standalone web address that allows for simple marketing and communication methods. The website would provide the comprehensive transportation information and communication materials collected by the regional Mobility Coordinator. The RMC would be responsible for updating the information and maintaining the website.

Section 7: Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives

The fundamental purpose of planning for public transportation coordination is to define transportation needs and resources that, when unified, create increased mobility and access for those with limited transportation options. Unfortunately, planning in general is a long process, and transportation planning truly embodies the complexities of analysis, discussion, decision making and prioritization. Because of this, planning for coordination seeks to address both short-term needs and create a framework to ensure future opportunities for community mobility and accessibility. This plan will outline strategies built on the anticipation for immediate change and expectations for creating a strong framework for emerging opportunities.

This section provides the basis for coordination by creating mission and vision statements that provide overarching direction, as well as goals and specific objectives. The mission and vision statements are intentionally vague, setting the tone of the recommendations and strategies implemented. It is anticipated that as coordination continues these statements are modified, as needed, to reflect a new direction. The goals and objectives are built on several core principles developed through the outreach and input processes. They reflect short and long term needs for transportation services and coordination initiatives. Each goal is intended to provide specific direction, and its associated objectives can be measured and implemented according to an anticipated schedule or timeline. As coordination continues to evolve in the region, and new initiatives are implemented, these goals and objectives will change significantly to reflect new strategies that match changing transportation needs, but the mission and vision statements will hold to the core intent of coordination in southeast Texas.

Primary Recommendations

- 1) Establish a Regional Mobility Coordinator.
- 2) Centralize information and promotion of transportation services.
- 3) Create a regional "backbone" transit service connecting Port Arthur, Orange, Lumberton, Silsbee, and Beaumont.
- 4) Unify or coordinate demand response services between urban, rural, and human service transportation services.
- 5) Implement a Regional Smart Card Program.
- 6) Establish a regional coordination council.
- 7) Establish clear data collection, analysis and reporting procedures for transportation coordination.

7.1 — MISSION AND VISION

The mission and vision statements offer the context in which coordinated human service public transportation service strategies are developed and implemented in the Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin County region. These statements are based on the input and discussion received during focus meetings with stakeholders and the steering committee, as well as comments received during the stakeholder survey process. The mission statement identifies the purpose defined for the coordination plan and the outcomes. The vision statement identifies the eventual effect reached when the goals and objectives of this plan are being achieved.

Mission:

Promote, coordinate, and sustain human services and transportation for the Jefferson, Hardin and Orange County area through the use of technology, communication, and the creation of a coordination council representing diverse perspectives.

Vision:

To develop and sustain a coordinated transportation system offering dependable, accessible, affordable, and convenient transportation options. Establish a coordination of transportation resources and services that respond to unmet needs and offer service to every resident, especially those who have limited transportation options.

7.2 – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals and objectives of this plan are built upon three comprehensive strategies: enhance communication, establish connectivity, and coordinate resources.

7.2.1 Enhance Communications

To be effective, the transportation services and resources available must be accurately communicated to the targeted markets. Further, the intent of information must be modified according to the use and audience. With multiple transportation providers and human service agencies, it is unreasonable to expect and rely on each entity to coordinate communication and information. Therefore, it is critical that information be coordinated regionally. A single entity should serve as a repository for transportation related information.

For residents, awareness of transportation options is the first step to achieving travel independence, especially when one has limited transportation means. Getting to information that assists with understanding how to access transportation services offers an individual the ability to improve one's mobility. But standard communication of transportation choices to residents is either limited by distribution methods or by available funding for production. The method customers' use to access information varies, such as a website or picking-up a brochure at the library. This makes one or two methods of distribution less effective than desired. Further, when a resident is presented with only parts of a more comprehensive network of services, one's perception of services becomes limited. The key to effectively providing information to those who need it is to create an understanding of the targeted users and how they access information.

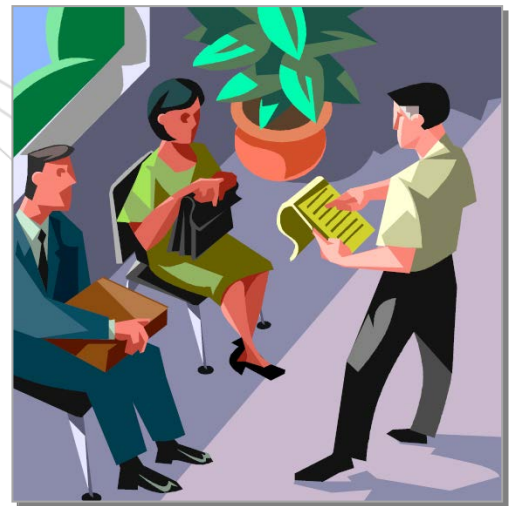
For stakeholders, awareness of transportation services is a resource to help provide advice to those needing transportation. Understanding what services exist and how to access them allows stakeholders to provide complete assistance to their constituency. Most stakeholders access transportation information in the same way an individual would. Because of this, stakeholders may experience the same limited understanding of a more comprehensive network of services. For stakeholders, it is not only important to know what services are available, but how the network interacts, and how their needs and the needs of their constituents can be addressed. Further, an exchange and understanding of transportation programs allows stakeholders to continuously indicate areas of unmet needs, helping the region respond effectively to meeting transportation needs as they evolve. The use of a coordination council would foster the necessary interaction.

The Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin County area continues to develop initiatives and services to meet the needs of residents with limited transportation options. From the implementation of new services to the development of information resources, the region has made significant efforts to address unmet needs. Clearly communicating these and future efforts will be critical to ensuring awareness and use of coordination programs. To achieve the overarching principle of establishing and continuing the communication, promotion, and awareness of transportation coordination services and efforts the following goals and objectives are recommended.

Communication Recommendations

1) *Regional Mobility Coordinator*

A regional mobility coordinator can provide services ranging from data analysis to travel training. This type of position has become very common in the transportation coordination industry, and serves to centralize information, initiatives, and provide the focused one-on-one discussions needed to thoroughly understand resources available and areas of greatest need. In context of communication, this position would coordinate the communication of the various transportation services so that residents of the region can best understand their transportation options.



2) *Define Central Source of Transportation Information*

Whether it is a resident, caregiver, or stakeholders information about transportation services at a regional level would greatly improve the awareness of an individual's transportation options. The SETRPC has done a great job with creating a variety of information for the region. The information has been effective in communicating the services available to residents at the regional level. SETRPC should build upon that success and merge additional information from other sources. Further, SETRPC should explore new ways of conveying the information to residents. This approach will require an understanding of each audience group, what transportation information they seek most, and how they access information.

3) *Stakeholder Communication Engagement*

Stakeholder communication engagement is centered on the idea of developing a forum for how stakeholders can share with the region the information they provide to their constituents, how some information can be unified for regional communication purposes, how to ensure the structure of such communication can benefit stated goals and objectives, and how best to take ownership and help disseminate information as needed. This would be one of the functions of a regional coordination council (discussed later in this document). Communication engagement would allow each stakeholder to understand what information is available, how they can contribute, and how they can benefit from communication coordination. A Regional Mobility Coordinator could serve as the moderator for this coordination council function.



GOAL - Regionally coordinate transportation information.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a regional position, such as a mobility coordinator, with the responsibilities of collecting, coordinating, and creating communications related to transportation services in the region.
- Work with human service agencies and their participants to understand what information is currently provided and what information may be needed to make effective transportation choices.
- Work with the transportation providers to understand the information currently distributed, and determine how such information can best be coordinated, and how much information is duplicated.
- Develop outreach to employers that facilitates the distribution of coordinated transportation information.
- Establish awareness of communication coordination among agencies and providers so that they understand how they benefit and participate.
- Create a comprehensive map of transportation services.

GOAL - Develop a comprehensive transportation communications plan.

OBJECTIVES

- Work with human service agencies and their consumers to understand how information is accessed and how to best communicate transportation choices.
- Inventory the current communications and information distributed by transportation providers and human service agencies.
- Develop a plan with a component that focuses specifically on internal stakeholder exchange.
- Develop a plan component that focuses on how technology advancements, specifically the smart card program, are communicated.

GOAL - Develop a centralized source of transportation information.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a single-point source of all transportation service information in the region, such as a website and/or printed materials.
- Develop a regional brand and identity for comprehensive information created and distributed.
- Establish a staffed hotline for providing information for all transportation services.

GOAL - Foster communication leadership

OBJECTIVES

- Create a forum for stakeholders to exchange information and the understanding of how to develop and communication regional transportation information.
- Foster stakeholders to take ownership of communication materials.
- Establish a single contact/person for communication coordination.
- Report the progress of communication coordination to a regional stakeholder group on a regular basis, such as a coordination council.

GOAL - Promote the understanding of how to use the various transportation services.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a "travel trainer" position, hotline, and/or program.
- Conduct community group presentations, outreach booths at farmers' markets, etc., around the region to inform public about transportation services and options.
- Encourage public agencies and transportation providers to hold meetings in places served by public transit and to include instructions for accessing offices and meeting sites by bus, bike, and walking.

7.2.2 Establish Connectivity

All residents have a right to mobility. Individuals with limited incomes and people with disabilities rely heavily, sometimes exclusively, on public and specialized transportation services to live independent and fulfilling lives. These services are essential for travel to work and medical appointments, to run essential errands, or simply to take advantage of social or cultural opportunities. Coordination of transportation services creates the connectivity needed to offer residents mobility.

While there are many transportation providers serving numerous and diverse clientele, significant gaps still exist in the transportation network, which limits the mobility of the individuals who rely on it. Across the region, users of the public transportation services and human service programs live and work in different areas and have different travel patterns. To the maximum extent feasible, gaps in transportation services should be eliminated to ensure viable transportation options

Connectivity can be achieved two ways; operationally and logistically. Operationally, connectivity can be achieved with the creation of expanded or new services that serve unmet needs and gaps in service coverage. New services can be specific to targeted areas (such as the Town of Silsbee) or more regionally focused (a regional commuter transit route). Logistically, current services that already overlap or are planned to be overlapped can be coordinated for better connectivity with managing operational logistics. This ranges from timing of transfers between routes and transportation systems, to providing facilities for safe and secure transfers, to providing technology that provides a seamless method of accessing services.

Currently transportation providers and the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission are working to establish a logistical foundation for creating possible operational connectivity. The most recent initiative is the exploration of using smart card technology to allow for a universal fare payment system, fostering seamless regional travel. The process of this initiative will help establish the basis for future operational and logistical strategies. Once successfully implemented, it will provide precedence and familiarity for future connectivity coordination. To further achieve the overarching principle of establishing and continuing transportation connectivity the following goals and objectives are recommended.



Connectivity Recommendations

1) *Regional “Backbone” Transit Service*

One of the highest concerns expressed throughout the region has been the development of a regional transit service connecting the municipalities of Port Arthur, Beaumont, Silsbee, Lumberton, and Orange. This also proves to be the most challenging due to jurisdictional and funding issues. Regardless, it should be the priority of the region to develop a “backbone” type service extending from each end of the region. To create this route, there are three key steps that would need to be undertaken: 1) identify the major and minor transit-oriented destinations, 2) determine service overlap that would occur, and 3) develop infrastructure that facilitates safe, and reliable transfers between services.

2) *Regional Smart Card Program*

The discussion and implementation of a smart card program has been on-going for many years now. As part of this coordination plan update, a further in-depth analysis was conducted to determine the feasibility of implementing a regional smart card program. The determination is that it is feasible for all transportation providers to share a single smart card technology that allows passengers universal access to all transportation resources. There are still two outstanding issues that would need to be addressed before the region could move forward such a program; 1) technical integration planning, and 2) discussions of revenue distribution. Technical integration ensures all the right components are in place to allow for smart card distribution and usage. The more complex step is the discussion of revenue distribution. There is no simple approach, but the establishment of a Regional Mobility Coordinator can assist with taking the lead in the discussions to give voice to all perspectives. A smart card program will undoubtedly break down the barriers of using multiple systems. When coupled with the recommendation for a backbone type service, it becomes critical for facilitating transfers.

3) *Transfer Facility Planning*

The region should examine locations for facilitating transfers between different transportation systems. This is currently done to some extent within municipal boundaries and between rural services. Building on that foundation and the knowledge of primary transit-oriented travel corridors, the region should identify the primary locations that best promote transfers between multiple modes of transit and between pedestrian, bicycle and automobile systems. Transfer locations could be stand-alone facilities or joint use. In some cases, transfers are best made in active centers, allowing users access to services such as retail locations. Having a framework for making transfers is a foundation that can help foster other initiatives, such as establishing a regional backbone service.

GOAL – Define and Implement a Regional Transit Service.

OBJECTIVES

- Define major employment nodes, and define a regional transit “backbone” extending from Orange to Port Arthur that connects such nodes.
- Conduct an analysis of how Port Arthur and Beaumont transit services can be restructured to compliment the regional backbone alignment.
- Develop a backbone alignment that overlaps with existing transit services coverage to allow for effective reallocation of resources.
- Identify critical areas of transfer between each system and the backbone.
- Create an alignment that can be implemented in phases.
- Implement the service in concert with the Smart Card technology.
- Establish data collection plans and performance benchmarks.

GOAL - Reduce or eliminate service gaps to areas of unmet needs.

OBJECTIVES

- Annually identify geographic areas of unmet needs and services implemented to meet such needs.
- Annually measure the performance of new services.

GOAL - Implement a Regional Smart Card Program.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a single point of contact for smart card program coordination.
- Establish a plan for technology implementation and phasing of smart cards.
- Establish a plan for smart card distribution.
- Establish a plan for smart card communication and promotion.
- Work with a coordination council to monitor the implementation and distribution of smart cards.
- Establish an annual assessment of smart card distribution and use.
- Implement the smart card program in phases to ensure success, and the ability to identify areas needing improvement before a more comprehensive implementation is initiated.
- Establish data needs and collection procedures for planning and reporting purposes.

GOAL - Coordinate and foster transfers between multiple transportation providers.

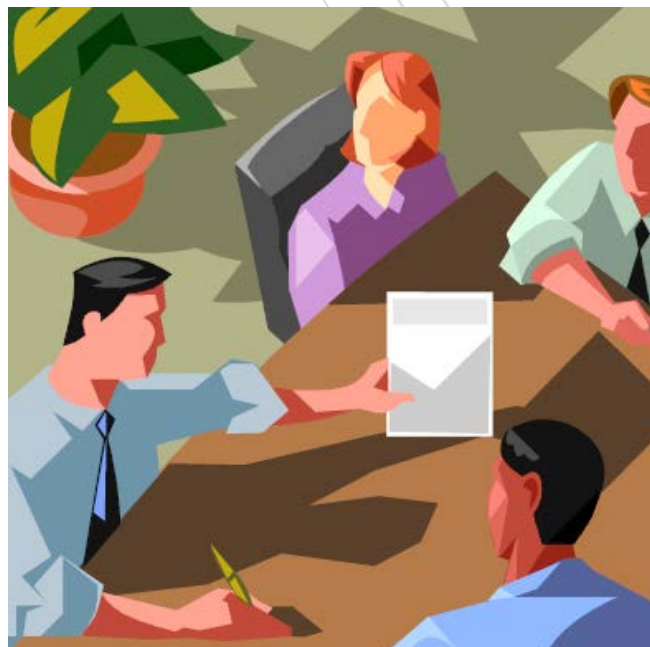
OBJECTIVES

- Identify criteria for successful implementation of transfer facilities that ensure efficient transfers, clear operational logistics, and customer safety and security.
- Identify conceptual crossings of transportation services.
- Define criteria for efficient transfers between transportation services.
- Identify transfer facility locations, including co-locating with other land uses that optimize and foster efficient transfers between transportation services.

7.2.3 Coordination of Resources

The costs of providing public transportation and human service transportation services are indeed rising. Cost containment, however, cannot not only be achieved at the expense of service delivery. Fortunately, coordination of transportation programs and services offers the potential to improve service delivery by reducing duplication, making use of available capacity elsewhere in the system, and achieving economies of scale in providing these services. Currently, transportation providers in the region are continuously balancing demand, need and resources to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. The use of a coordination council and regional discussions of resources can aid in the decision making processes that define how resources are deployed.

As an example, accessible vehicles are expensive to acquire and maintain. Maximizing the efficiency of demand response transportation vehicles helps to reduce program costs by generating additional user revenue while also helping to eliminate gaps in service, without the need for additional capital purchases. Little duplication or redundancy of demand response services exist in Southeast Texas, but through collaboration transportation providers can create extra capacity to address unmet needs. Coordination of vehicle scheduling between urban and rural services can help identify opportunities for providing greater capacity and eliminate redundancy. Such coordination is not easy, and does require coordination of funding and expectations of service delivery, but it does help establish precedence for managing issues related to cross jurisdictional service delivery of future initiatives.



Coordination of resources between transportation providers, as well as stakeholder and human service agencies offers a means to better address unmet needs. Each stakeholder has some sort of resource to offer, ranging from actual transportation services to providing a forum for information distribution to receiving continuous input on the needs of the communities. Coordination requires continuous discussions and exchange of ideas. To successfully coordinate resources, the following goals and objectives are recommended.

Resource Recommendations

1) Regional Coordination Council

The framework for a regional coordination council is discussed further in the coordination plan. The idea of a council provides a framework for coordinating resources that help improve residents' mobility. The initial formation of the council should be built on three main concepts: 1) creating a forum for exchanging ideas and information, 2) developing ownership of idea implementation, and 3) understanding and monitoring coordination performance. This coordination plan identifies a variety of tasks that the coordination council can perform, and there seems to be no shortage of desire for participation. The key to the success of a council will be establishing staff that can help foster the engagement desired. The Regional Mobility Coordinator could serve as the council's facilitator; moderating the forum of exchange, providing information and performance reporting, and exploring the council's ideas further as needed.

2) Transportation Coordination Data

To effectively plan and implement transportation coordination initiatives, the region should create a central database of information regarding services and needs, and coordinate the collection of information on an on-going basis. A central source of information for planning purposes serves multiple purposes. A database allows for planning efforts to be more efficient, information to be consistent regionally, and for an on-going analysis of effectiveness. The SETRPC should serve as the central source, working with each stakeholder and partner to identify data, and create a conduit for information.

3) Unification of Data and Analysis

The power of accurate and timely information can never be over stated when it comes to effectively planning for transportation coordination. The time and energy consumed unifying data for each region planning project can be avoided, at least for the transit perspective, if there is a common repository of information. This would be the responsibility of a Regional Mobility Coordinator and a function of the regional coordination council. The information gathered would evolve over time, and as needs become evident, but would initially entail GIS data, detailed ridership, demand, performance, inventory and resources, and financials.

GOAL - Establish a regional coordination council.

OBJECTIVES

- Implement the strategies set forth in this plan to create and facilitate coordination among multiple stakeholders in the form of a Regional Coordination Council.
- Define a process for member appointment.
- Define by-laws and council decision authority.
- Define reporting expectations and data sources.

GOAL - Develop a single source for regional coordination management.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish the position of a mobility manager to generally coordinate transportation services and unmet needs planning. Specifically the position would manage the coordination council, perform communication coordination services, conduct travel training assistance, work with human service agencies one-on-one to develop solutions, collect and report performance of coordination efforts, and manage the implementation and coordination of a smart card program.

GOAL – Explore the feasibility coordinate demand response scheduling.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the feasibility of scheduling software coordination and/or unification.
- Develop a method to collect data and examine the scheduling of urban and rural demand response services.

GOAL - Establish a single source of logistical information of transportation services.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a single source of Geographical Information System (GIS) data for planning purposes. GIS data should include at a minimum route alignments, bus stops, and passenger boardings.
- Establish a method to collect on-going performance information related to service delivery and financial dynamics.
- Develop reports for stakeholders and partners that demonstrate use and importance of data. Assisting localities and the region with transportation infrastructure discussions and decisions.

GOAL – Determine the possibility to reduce redundancy of transportation services.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the costs and benefits of reducing the overlap of demand response services between urban and rural transportation providers.
- Examine the regulatory limitations, obstacles, and opportunities of a single demand response system, serving both rural and urban markets.

7.3 – IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Found in this section is a suggested timeline of each goal and related objectives. As discussed in the introduction of this section, planning for coordination anticipates addressing immediate needs, as well as defining a framework for long-term coordination initiatives. This timeline reflects that concept.

Table 8 - Timeline of Implementation of Goals and Objectives

Goal	Communications	3rd Qtr 2011	4th Qtr 2011	1st Qtr 2012	2nd Qtr 2012	3rd Qtr 2012	4th Qtr 2012	1st Qtr 2013	2nd Qtr 2013	3rd Qtr 2013	4th Qtr 2013	1st Qtr 2014	2nd Qtr 2014	3rd Qtr 2014	4th Qtr 2014
Regionally Coordinate Transportation Information	Establish a Regional Mobility Coordinator														
	Coordinate Communication w/ Human Service Agencies														
	Coordinate Communication w/ Transportation Providers														
	Employer Outreach														
	Establish Communication Coordination Awareness														
	Comprehensive Transportation Map														
Develop Comprehensive Communication Plan	Develop Understanding of How Information is Accessed														
	Inventory Current Communications and Distribution														
	Develop Plan for Internal Stakeholder Exchange														
	Develop Plan for Technology Role in Communication														
Develop A Centralized Source of Transportation Information	Develop a Single Source of Transportation Information														
	Develop a Regional Transportation Brand														
	Establish a Transportation Hotline														
Foster Communication Leadership	Create a Forum for Stakeholder Exchange														
	Foster Stakeholder Ownership of Coordinated Information														
	Establish Single Contact for Communication Coordination														
	Report Progress to Regional Coordination Council														
Promote Understanding of How to Use Transportation Systems	Establish a Travel Trainer														
	Community Presentations														
	Accessible Transportation Related Meetings														

Goal	Connectivity	3rd Qtr 2011	4th Qtr 2011	1st Qtr 2012	2nd Qtr 2012	3rd Qtr 2012	4th Qtr 2012	1st Qtr 2013	2nd Qtr 2013	3rd Qtr 2013	4th Qtr 2013	1st Qtr 2014	2nd Qtr 2014	3rd Qtr 2014	4th Qtr 2014
Regional Transit Service	Define Major Nodes														
	Urban System Restructure Analysis														
	Backbone Alignment														
	Critical Transfer Locations														
	Phased Implementation Plan														
	Implementation in Coordination with Smart Card Program														
	Data Collection Plan and Performance														
Reduce Service Gaps	Annually Identify Service Gaps														
	Annually Measure Service Delivery of New Services														
Regional Smart Card Program	Establish Smart Card Point of Contact														
	Plan for Technology Implementation														
	Plan for Smart Card Distribution														
	Smart Card Promotion														
	Coordination Council Implementation Monitoring														
	Establish Annual Assessment of Smart Card Program														
	Phased Smart Card Implementation														
	Establish Smart Card Data Needs														
Coordinate Transportation mode Transfers	Identify Criteria for Successful Transfer Facilitation														
	Conceptual Crossing of Transportation Services														
	Define Criteria for Efficient Transfers														
	Identify Transfer Locations														

Goal	Resources	3rd Qtrr 2011	4th Qtrr 2011	1st Qtrr 2012	2nd Qtrr 2012	3rd Qtrr 2012	4th Qtrr 2012	1st Qtrr 2013	2nd Qtrr 2013	3rd Qtrr 2013	4th Qtrr 2013	1st Qtrr 2014	2nd Qtrr 2014	3rd Qtrr 2014	4th Qtrr 2014
Establish Regional Coordination Council	Implement Strategies of Coordination Council														
	Define Process of Member Appointment														
	Define By-Laws and Decision Authority														
	Define Reporting and Data Sources														
Reduce Redundancy of Transportation Services	Examine Overlap of Demand Response Services														
	Explore Feasibility of Single Demand Response System														
Coordination Management	Establish a Regional Mobility Coordinator														
Coordinate Demand Response Scheduling	Determine Feasibility of Unified Scheduling														
	Develop Method of Demand Response Data Collection														
Unified Data and Analysis	Establish a Single Source for GIS Data														
	Establish Method for On-Going Performance Collection														
	Define Reporting Expectations														

Section 8.0: Leveraging Resources/ Sustainability

8.1 PLANNING ACTIVITY FUNDING

The potential funding sources to use for sustaining regional activities, specifically the Regional Coordination Council and the Regional Mobility Coordinator include: 1) the New Freedom program, to expand transit services for the elderly and person with disabilities; 2) the Job Access and Reverse Commute program, for a wide range of projects to increase access to employment; and 3) 5311 funding for public transportation in non-urbanized areas.

New Freedom Program

The New Freedom Program is a new program under SAFETEA-LU. The purpose of New Freedom is to expand transportation services for the elderly and persons with disabilities beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some examples of this include same-day service, door-through-door service, and service beyond the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile requirement of a fixed route. New Freedom Program funding must be competitively solicited. Funds can be used for sustaining coordination, as well as actual projects. In some states, the funds have been used to sustain similar position as the Regional Mobility Coordinator.

The current funding structure requires a 50 percent local match for net operating deficit or a 20 percent local match for capital expenses. Sources for the local match have been expanded to allow flexibility for funds to come from multiple sources, including revenues from human service transportation contracts and state level human service program funding. Because the Regional Mobility Coordinator and Regional Coordination Council are region entities, the local funds would need to come from the SETRPC, either from local contributions or revenues from services provided.

Funded Activities

- Regional Mobility Coordinator
- Administrative Functions of Regional Coordination Council
- Informational Materials
- Community Listening Sessions
- Presentations
- Passenger Surveys
- Annual Report
- Website

Matching Funding Sources

- Human Service Program Funds
- Excess Revenues from Purchase of Service
- Local Government Funds
- SETRPC Funding
- State Funds

Job Access and Reverse Commute

The JARC Program provides funding for developing new or expanded transportation services that connect welfare recipients and other low income persons to jobs and other employment-related services. TxDOT is the designated recipient for JARC funds in areas of the State with populations under 200,000 persons. From its inception in federal fiscal year (FFY) 1999, Federal JARC funds were awarded as a discretionary grant, and Texas receives a significant amount of grant funding under this program. Funds can be used for sustaining coordination, as well as actual projects. It is not a common source of funding for the Regional Mobility Coordinator position, but because 10 percent of the funds can be used for planning and technical assistance they can be used for some of the activities that promote the use of regional transportation services from urban areas to suburban and rural employment centers.

A major impact on the availability of the JARC Program in the SAFETEA-LU legislation was a change to a formula program based on the number of low-income individuals in each state, significantly increasing the funds for the Southeast region. This change has made JARC funding more competitive within the region, increasing the need for specific priorities to meet the transportation needs of people with low incomes. The grant formula does require a 50 percent local match. Sources for the local match have been expanded to allow flexibility for funds to come from multiple sources, including revenues from human service transportation contracts and state level human service program funding. Sources within the Southeast Texas region could include existing revenues from human service transportation contracts and the potential offset funds associated with transit consolidation or realignments. Ideally this grant would be matched with funding from human service contracts that provide transportation services for employment.

Funded Activities

- Regional Mobility Coordinator
- Administrative Functions of Regional Coordination Council
- Informational Materials
- Website

Matching Funding Sources

- Human Service Program Funds
- Excess Revenues from Purchase of Service
- Local Government Funds
- SETRPC Funding
- State Funds

Section 5311 Funding

Section 5311 provides funding for public transportation in non-urbanized areas. Funds are apportioned to the states according to a statutory formula based on each state's population in rural and small urban areas (population under 50,000). This is a state-administered program in which the federal government allocates the funds to states, and the states oversee the program and determine the criteria for eligible projects. A majority of the funds are dedicated to operating expenses. Capital expenses are funded at up to 80 percent of the net project costs, while operating expenses are funded up to 50 percent.

The current funding structure requires a 50 percent local match for net operating deficit or a 20 percent local match for capital expenses. Sources for the local match have been expanded to allow flexibility for funds to come from multiple sources, including revenues from human service transportation contracts and state level human service program funding. Because the Regional Mobility Coordinator and Regional Coordination Council are region entities, the local funds would need to come from the SETRPC, either from local contributions or revenues from services provided.

Funded Activities

- Regional Mobility Coordinator
- Administrative Functions of Regional Coordination Council
- Informational Materials
- Community Listening Sessions
- Presentations
- Passenger Surveys
- Annual Report
- Website

Matching Funding Sources

- Human Service Program Funds
- Excess Revenues from Purchase of Service
- Local Government Funds
- SETRPC Funding
- State Funds

8.2 – FUNDING THROUGH COORDINATION

Funding from the coordination of transportation services is an increasingly common way to create funds for additional coordination initiatives. The approach builds on the concept of centralizing and/or consolidating existing transportation service funding and resources, specifically demand-response and rural transit. The financial result of the increase in operational efficiency is more funding to increase community mobility. While coordination is not just about consolidation of resources, it does provide a foundation for future initiatives that assist with increasing transportation options. This approach has been successful in many states and regions throughout the nation. In Florida, coordination of transportation services at the regional level is a state

mandate. This approach was instituted to optimize the efficient use of states funds. In other states, individual regions have taken it upon themselves to consolidate services and create a regionally coordinated demand-response and rural transit system that provides more services with the same level of financial resources. As a result, more coordination projects, such as mobility management and travel training are provided. In most cases, consolidation was a means to ensure the efficient and effective use of funding.

Consolidation and coordination of transportation services is most commonly done by a single entity that is either a public agency or a private (possibly non-profit) transportation broker serving the region. In some regions the approach to consolidating services and improving coordination efforts has been accomplished by a private or non-profit entity. However, in most areas that have taken the steps to improve service efficiency, coordination is done by a public regional entity, held accountable by a policy board that represents the elected bodies throughout the region. Because of its regional commission designation, the SETRPC would serve as the best entity to broker the coordination of human service and rural public transportation services. The SETRPC has existing resources and infrastructure needed to manage third part contracts and work with multiple stakeholders throughout the region. Further, an entity like the SETRPC is held accountable by the localities for the services it provides and the funds it expends. The SETRPC has the best opportunity to provide comprehensive and complete coordinated transportation services that will result in the most effective use of existing funds and provide the highest level of potential funding for other initiatives that improve mobility.

This concept is not new to the SETRPC. Past efforts have been made to obtain brokerage contracting for human service transportation in order to better coordinate services. This approach lacked the intimate knowledge needed to develop accurate cost estimates for transportation services. However, under a structure of a Regional Coordination Council, the financial dynamics of providing transportation services would be more available, shifting the decision of how to structure transportation brokerage and coordination on how the results best impact the community, providing the most services for the investments made.

The first steps to centralizing services under the SETRPC would be a natural part of the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Mobility Coordinator and the Regional Coordination Council. The data collected, the information assembled, and the needs identified would all build the foundation for effectively creating a regional broker of all human service and demand response transportation. The creation of this funding source would allow the SETRPC to implement a wide range of coordination projects, increasing the community's transportation choices and mobility.

Section 9: Performance Measures

9.1 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES OVERVIEW

Effective Regional Human Service and Public Transportation Coordination strategies require defining anticipated outcomes and measurements for determining related success. Performance measures allow each project and objective to continually be evaluated for its effectiveness, and provide an indication if the objective needs to be revised to reflect improved strategies. Each goal and objective of the coordination plan has a fundamental purpose and a proposed outcome. This section of the plan outlines possible measures and anticipated outcomes of each set of goals and objectives.

Reflecting the measures the Federal Transit Administration has set forth for their funding programs, the following core concepts form the basis for measuring the impacts of this coordination plan's strategies.

- **Efficiency of Operations** – Increase the number of rides for persons who are older, persons with disabilities and persons with limited incomes for the same or lower cost.
- **Program Effectiveness** – Increase the number of communities with easier access to transportation services for persons who are older, persons with disabilities and persons with limited incomes.
- **Customer Satisfaction** – Increase the quality of transportation services for persons who are older, persons with disabilities and persons with limited incomes.

9.1.1 Outcome Evaluation Measures

United We Ride describes program outcomes and results in the following terms:

"Outcomes are the positive changes in the community or state as a result of the indicators. Outcomes are the specific and measurable changes that will occur because of outputs and indicators. Changes may be in practice, policy, condition, action, service, operation, status, etc. Outcomes are a measurement of change in the short-term and should be designed to lead to long-term change."

Based on this concept, coordinated transportation service measurement should focus on four factors:

- **System characteristics:** What are the characteristics of transportation services, including their processes and activities that are impacted by better transportation options?
- **Outputs:** What outputs have been created by the coordination initiatives and activities that are relative to efficiency and effectiveness?

- **Service attributes:** What are the perceptions of the customers and agencies of the coordinated transportation services?
- **Service assessments:** What analytical steps have been taken to gather insights from users and stakeholders to determine how the overall processes and activities influence coordinated transportation services?

Measurement of initiatives and strategies will range from qualitative to quantitative outcomes. The diagram below demonstrates the spectrum of ways to assess the measurement of an objective.

9.1.2 Data Collection Needs

Initial Data Collection

While not all recommended strategies will occur in the near term, a highly important near-term activity is **the collection of baseline data** measuring current levels of activity and perceptions related to each objective. To have the ability to show long-term changes, the SETRPC will need to know the status of current activities in each of these areas.

Performance evaluation requires data and statistics be formulated to result in meaningful performance measures. To ensure appropriate formulations, it is useful to categorize the data and statistics as follows:

Resource inputs: Resources expended in addressing the goals, objectives, and projects intended to improve transportation services. They include labor, capital, materials, services, and other measurable items. Inputs may be classified either as financial or nonfinancial.

Service outputs: Nonfinancial operating results of resource expenditures. They may be expressed as service quantity outputs such as miles or hours of service or service statistics such as accidents, road calls, or delays for use in assessing quality performance.

Public consumption statistics: The actual results of service outputs considering the price or fare structure. Such information can be expressed in either financial or nonfinancial terms. For example, the number of passenger boardings is nonfinancial; passenger revenue is financial. Changes on a regional basis can be assessed by considering four fundamental types of measures can are commonly used in assessing transportation services:

- System characteristics,
- Performance measures,
- Service attributes, and
- Service assessments.

System characteristics include descriptions of the resource inputs required for service: funds, personnel, vehicles, etc. A fundamental result of coordination activities is expected to be an increase in the supply of transportation services available to seniors, persons with disabilities, low income populations, and the general public.

Performance measures typically apply ratios of inputs and outputs to measure factors such as resource efficiency, service effectiveness, and cost effectiveness. To formulate resource efficiency performance measures, resource inputs are expressed in relation to service outputs (e.g., labor cost per service hour). To formulate service effectiveness performance measures, public consumption statistics are used with service outputs (e.g., passenger boardings per vehicle service mile). To formulate cost effectiveness performance measures, resource inputs are used with public consumption statistics (e.g., cost per passenger boarding). Again, the assistance and resources applied through coordination are expected to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness within particular communities.

There are three common performance measures associated with direct transportation services:

- cost per passenger,
- passengers per hour (or per mile), and
- cost per hour (or per mile).

Of these, the first is the most important because it describes how much service is actually being consumed in terms of the dollar value of the resources required to produce those services. Using these statistics, one can get a good feel for how services are operating compared to their prior performance and compared to services in similar communities.

The **service attributes** include measures of quality — from both the system and the rider perspectives — such as acceptability, accessibility, adaptability, affordability, and availability. Changes in these quality attributes can be measured through customer surveys.

The **service assessments** (collected through customer surveys) reflect the outcomes of the services, or how the services influence the lives of those who use them. Taken together, the service assessments and service attributes can be used to express changes in customer satisfaction with the services consumed. Again, we would expect to find a noticeable improvement in measures of customer satisfaction due to the resources applied to the coordinated transportation program.

9.2 — USING PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The best means for coordination to quantitatively address their qualitative performance is to carefully track the three common measures over time. If costs per passenger or per hour (or per mile) decline significantly and permanently, this is an indicator of successful coordination activities. If the passengers per hour (or per mile) indicator falls dramatically and permanently, this is an indicator of real problems. (Short-term seasonal cycles should not be a cause of major concern.) After tracking these measures for several years, overall standards of performance should be established on a regional basis.

A second means of assessing relative performance is to compare the region's performance with that of the performance of other communities. Such comparisons are fraught with difficulty, as local quantitative performance will be significantly influenced by a region community's own goals and objectives, which may or may not be anything like another community's goals and objectives. Differences in terrain, weather, local economic conditions, and service policies can also

significantly influence the relative performance of different systems. With these caveats in mind, it is possible to suggest some performance measures that are worth considering:

- **Cost effectiveness** answers the question, “**How much does it cost to carry one passenger?**” The obvious measure is the performance indicator **operating cost per passenger**.
- **Service effectiveness** answers the question, “**How many passengers ride for every unit of service provided?**” It is recommended that the performance indicator **passengers per hour** be used instead of passengers per service mile because the speed of service can vary greatly with the type of service provided. Passengers per mile may be an easier statistic to collect, however.
- **Cost efficiency** answers the question, “**How much does it cost to produce a unit of service?**” It is suggested that the performance indicator **operating cost per hour** be used because the largest proportion of costs (i.e., wages and salaries) are paid on an hourly basis. **Operating cost per mile** is also useful for some analyses.

For direct transportation operations the major statistics that should be followed over time are those that pertain to efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation services. While many statistics could be used, the most important ones are the following:

- **Efficiency:**
 - cost per trip
 - cost per hour of operation
 - cost per mile of operation.
- **Effectiveness:**
 - number of passenger trips per vehicle mile
 - number of passenger trips per vehicle hour.

Among the many other factors that could be considered in addition to these are **system productivity**, defined as the number of annual passengers divided by the population of the service area, and **subsidy level**, defined as the amount of governmental funds used on an annual basis divided by the annual number of passenger trips.

The measures used should be used to compare trends in the operation of the system over time. If costs are increasing at a greater rate than the rate of inflation, or if numbers of passenger trips per unit of service are declining, then corrective actions will need to be taken. If costs are relatively stable and the numbers of trips per mile or per hour are increasing, then there are many reasons to be happy with the overall operations and management of coordinated transportation services in the region.

9.3 – MEASURING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

9.3.1 Communications

Regionally Coordinate Transportation Information

Objectives

- Establish a Regional Mobility Coordinator
- Coordinate Communication w/ Human Service Agencies
- Coordinate Communication w/ Transportation Providers
- Employer Outreach
- Establish Communication Coordination Awareness
- Comprehensive Transportation Map

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Establish Regional Mobility Coordinator position.
- Increased ridership in target areas for information distribution.
- Establishment of an information database.
- Annual survey of human service agencies' communication materials and processes.
- Annual survey of transportation providers' communication materials and processes.
- Higher ridership at employment centers.
- Increased awareness by stakeholders of purpose to centralize transportation communication.
- Annual update of comprehensive transportation map.

Costs

Moderate, mainly annually reoccurring costs - Cost of fulltime staff position. Map design may be required consulting services.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- Ends 2nd Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Develop Comprehensive Communication Plan

Objectives

- Develop Understanding of How Information is Accessed
- Inventory Current Communications and Distribution
- Develop Plan for Internal Stakeholder Exchange
- Develop Plan for Technology Role in Communication

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Define Communication Plan scope.
- Extended awareness by residents of transportation services. *(This can be assessed by conducting an on-board survey and determining which new riders accessed new information.)*
- Extended awareness by stakeholders of transportation services. *(This can be assessed by conducting a stakeholder communications survey, or conducting annual meetings to discuss comprehensive materials)*
- Increased use of targeted awareness of technology.
- Increased ridership in geographic areas.
- Increased ridership with targeted audiences.

Costs

Moderate, minor annually reoccurring costs – A communications plan may involve outside assistance, but if a Regional Mobility Coordinator is created, that position may have the skills to develop the plan, and conduct annual updates.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- Ends 2nd Quarter 2012
- Annual Performance Review

Develop a Centralized Source of Transportation Information

Objectives

- Develop a Single Source of Transportation Information
- Develop a Regional Transportation Brand
- Establish a Transportation Hotline

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased activity of accessing information by residents. *(this can be assessed by measuring the levels of printing, website "hits", and phone calls).*
- Increased ridership related to specific markets accessing information.
- Number of hotline phone calls.
- Awareness of regional communication. *(This can be assessed by conducting an on-board survey to determine information passengers are aware of.)*

Costs

High, mainly annually reoccurring costs – SETRPC staff can begin to assemble information. The establishment of a hotline will require designating either existing staff of SETRPC or partnering agency, or retaining new staff.

Schedule

Centralize Information

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- Ends 4th Quarter 2012

Hotline (Contingent on Funding)

- Implement by 2013

Foster Communication Leadership

Objectives

- Create a Forum for Stakeholder Exchange
- Foster Stakeholder Ownership of Coordinated Information
- Establish Single Contact for Communication Coordination
- Report Progress to Regional Coordination Council

Performance and Benchmark Measures

Increased awareness of services provided by human service agencies and transportation providers.
(This can be measured by a survey of targeted audiences or conducting an annual meeting).

Costs

Low – To foster communication leadership among stakeholders, the SETRPC and RCC can take advantage of other coordination initiatives.

Schedule

- Start 1st Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Promote Understanding of How to Use Transportation Systems

Objectives

- Establish a Travel Trainer
- Community Presentations
- Accessible Transportation Related Meetings

Performance and Benchmark Measures

Conduct travel training as requested

Measure resident awareness of travel training program (conduct on-board survey of existing passenger awareness, and gather feedback at other community workshops).

Conduct four community workshops annually.

Increased ridership in areas where travel training has been focus.

Increased ridership in areas where community presentations have been conducted.

Costs

Moderate, mainly annually reoccurring costs – Cost of staff to conduct training and presentations. The Regional Mobility Coordinator would have these responsibilities.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- On-Going, Annual Performance Review

9.3.2 Connectivity

Regional Transit Service

Objectives

- Define Major Nodes
- Urban System Restructure Analysis
- Backbone Alignment
- Critical Transfer Locations
- Phased Implementation Plan
- Implementation in Coordination with Smart Card Program
- Data Collection Plan and Performance

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Annual boarding counts at each targeted node
- Annual transfers between other transportation systems
- Total annual ridership
- Ridership/Cost
- Cost/Mile
- Annual ridership per route segment
- Increased ridership as related to transfers between each transportation system

Costs

High, mainly annually reoccurring costs – Initial capital investment, but mainly on-going annual operating costs. If this service is planned efficiently in concert with examining existing service restructuring, the regional route may not require additional capital investment, excluding bus stop and transfer facilities.

Schedule

Planning for Services

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- Ends 1st Quarter 2013
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Service Starts – Contingent on Funding

Reduce Service Gaps

Objectives

- Annually Identify Service Gaps
- Annually Measure Service Delivery of New Services

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased ridership
- Reduced cost per passenger
- Increased passengers per mile
- Increased passengers per hour

Costs

High, mainly annually reoccurring operating costs – The cost for eliminating service gaps is variable and depends on the strategies developed, and who operates such service.

Schedule

- Start 1st Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Coordinate Transportation Mode Transfers

Objectives

- Identify Criteria for Successful Transfer Facilitation
- Conceptual Crossing of Transportation Services
- Define Criteria for Efficient Transfers
- Identify Transfer Locations

Performance and Benchmark Measures

Increased ridership related to transfer facility or joint-use location implementation
Increased ridership

Costs

High, mainly capital costs – To effectively facilitate transfers between transportation systems and modes, even at joint-use locations, some sort of transit facility must be provided.

Schedule

- Start 1st Quarter 2012
- Ends 4th Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Regional Smart Card Program

Objectives

- Establish Smart Card Point of Contact
- Plan for Technology Implementation
- Plan for Smart card Distribution
- Smart Card Promotion
- Coordination Council Implementation Monitoring
- Establish Annual Assessment of Smart Card Program
- Phased Smart Card Implementation
- Establish Smart Card Data Needs

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased ridership
- Increased regional travel

Costs

High, both capital and operating investment – The Smart card initiative will have an initial capital cost for those vehicle and transportation providers not yet equipped. There will be an initial cost for kiosks for vending the Smart Cards. The annual operating cost will be shared among all transportation providers, and includes distribution and maintenance.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- 2015
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

9.3.3 Resources

Establish Regional Coordination Council

Objectives

- Implement Strategies of Coordination Council
- Define Process of Member Appointment
- Define By-Laws and Decision Authority
- Define Reporting and Data Sources

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Reduced cost per passenger
- Reduced capital costs

Costs

Low, mainly annually reoccurring costs – Cost associated with establishing a RCC are mainly with the staff time needed to provide information and carry-out directives. This cost would be captured by establishing a Regional Mobility Coordinator.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- Ends 2nd Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Reduce Redundancy of Transportation Services

Objectives

- Examine Overlap of Demand Response Services
- Explore Feasibility of Single Demand Response System

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased passengers per mile
- Increased passengers per hour
- Increased passengers per vehicle, per month
- Decreased cost per passenger

Costs

Low – The merging of demand response services should provide for neutral financial impact.

Schedule

- Start 1st Quarter 2012
- End 2nd Quarter 2013
- Annual Assessment and Performance Review

Coordination Management

Objectives

- Establish a Regional Mobility Coordinator

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased ridership on all transportation systems.
- Increased awareness of transportation services.
- More efficient coordination planning and implementation.

Costs

Moderate, mainly annually reoccurring costs – Cost of staff position and time dedicated to manage coordination initiatives.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Coordinate Demand Response Scheduling

Objectives

- Determine Feasibility of Unified Scheduling
- Develop Method of Demand Response Data Collection

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Increased passengers per mile
- Increased passengers per hour
- Increased passengers per vehicle, per month
- Decreased cost per passenger

Costs

Moderate, initial capital investment – Coordinating scheduling activities will mainly require the initial investment in a single software source and training. There is some on-going maintenance costs common from most vendors. This software purchase can also be coordinated with a mobility management aspect from most demand response scheduling vendors.

Schedule

- Start 1st Quarter 2012
- End 1st Quarter 2013
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Unified Data and Analysis

Objectives

- Establish a Single Source for GIS Data
- Establish Method for On-Going Performance Collection
- Define Reporting Expectations

Performance and Benchmark Measures

- Reduced cost/mile for transportation services
- Reduce cost/hour for transportation services
- Comprehensive GIS and information database
- More efficient service planning

Costs

Low, mainly annually reoccurring costs – SETRPC can work with stakeholders and transportation providers to establish a data reporting protocol that allows for a minimal data input process.

Schedule

- Start 4th Quarter 2011
- End 3rd Quarter 2012
- On-Going, Annual Assessment

Section 10: Conclusion

The reliance on public transportation is growing and has continued to grow in the fixed route public transit, rural demand-response, and human services/non-profit groups. This can be attributed to any number of things including the downturn in the economy (persons seeking jobs further away from home), the increase in the number of elderly, and more persons seeking job retraining and further education. Human service providers continue to experience shrinking resources and look for ways to save in order to continue providing transportation to services the elderly, disabled, and low-income rely upon. In contrast, the region's transportation providers continue to struggle with simply sustaining existing services, and barely considering expanding service to match needs. Coordinating existing transportation services is a necessity to assist with addressing all of these needs.

While Beaumont and Port Arthur continue to be population and employment centers, and provide transit services to meet the needs of the urban area residents, a vast number of persons who could benefit from coordination live in rural areas. The areas that need access to transportation services are the most difficult to provide such services. Fortunately, the South East Texas region has made significant efforts to establish services that greatly improve access and mobility. As a result, there is a network of rural transportation providers that make efforts to fill the region's transportation needs. This coordination plan update provides many strategies and opportunities to improve the existing transportation coordination that offer residents of the South East Texas region improved mobility and accessibility options.

In this report there are several improvements and strategies identified that can be implemented, having a significant impact on the region's mobility. Some of these are listed in the Section 7, and as discussed the top common findings were related to creating regional connectivity, communication, and resources (particularly information and data). And, while each county has unique characteristics and transportation challenges, there are strategies that would help address the most common needs. The South East Texas region should pursue addressing the following short-term key strategies:

Minor Investment Strategies

- *Comprehensive Communications Plan* - A comprehensive communication plan would provide direction for how to further promote existing and new coordination / transportation initiatives. The investment would be minimal, and provide clear direction for how to best communicate with the various target populations throughout the region. Further, it would provide a base understanding of what communication and marketing resources that exist that can be better coordinated.

- *Promote Understanding of How to Use Transportation Systems* - Developing a travel training is the most effective way to promote a better understanding of the services available, what services best match a user's needs, and how to access such services. There are two parts to this recommendation. The first is a minimal investment in developing coordinated travel training materials for all stakeholders to use. The second requires establishing a regional coordinator position, and that individual working with residents and agencies that need travel training assistance.
- *Unified Data and Analysis* - As the SETRPC moves forward with its work plan for FY2012, more unified data and analysis would be key to further developing viable coordination initiatives. Centralized data ranging from ridership to operational performance measures can help better plan for revised and new strategies. The effort would require minimal investment that involves the use of existing technical staff to coordinate the data collection and possibly the analysis.

Major Investment

Regional Mobility Coordinator - As discussed throughout the latter part of this document, the region would greatly benefit from a Regional Mobility Coordinator that would take the lead on many of the strategies and recommendations listed. A single person can make enough of a difference to aid in implementing many coordination initiatives. Further, the establishment of regional coordinators is now a national trend. There is an emerging wealth of information for a person to access to aid in their coordination responsibilities.

Regionally Coordinate Transportation Information - Coordinated information about transportation services would be valuable to all residents and stakeholders. It provides a means to understand all transportation options available, and empowers individuals to determine the best possible way to coordinate their individual transportation needs. Further, offering a one-stop source of information is another national trend, and there are even federal grants emerging to help assist with providing centralized information to target audiences.

Regional Transit Service - Regional transit service is not a new strategy, but continues to be on the forefront of the regional community's needs. While achieving regional connectivity may be more of a long-term strategy, the region should continue to examine the approach to creating the "back-bone" discussed in this document. There are several key aspects to this approach that can be discussed in the short term. First, connections need to be made with regional employment centers and population centers that need transit. Second, what resources would be needed and the type of service that would best meet the stated needs. Finally, what alignment and connectivity to existing systems (i.e. does a service penetrate into the urban core or only serve the edge). The main barrier is not financial as much as the jurisdiction issues. Resources could possibly be reallocated to help with the funding logistics, but until there is still concerns from each of the multiple jurisdiction regarding

ensuring existing constituents are still served properly. This is not an easy task, but continued communication and discussion would eventually achieve agreement and implementation.

Regional Smart Card Program - Sufficient analysis and planning has been conducted for the establishment of a regional smart card program. While there is no defined “need” in terms of stated desires from the stakeholder and the public, a smart card program can be the catalyst for regional connectivity. If persons within the region are to travel across the region and between multiple transit services, there is a need for a unified fare media approach. The simplicity of a single fare media will break down the barriers associated with using multiple systems. Further, it sets the precedence for future regionally coordinated initiatives that requires local jurisdictions to agree on logistics or operations and implementation.

Throughout the coordinated planning process, it is clear that many community groups and stakeholders are concerned about transit issues. This planning process continues to bring them to the table to discuss needs and solutions, and coordination between human service agencies and transit providers needs to continue beyond this plan. With continuing these efforts, the region will continue to refine its understanding of transportation needs, strategies, and how to most effectively implement solutions. The current strategy of the SETRPC FY2012 work plan will serve best to engage the steering committee that helped form this plan.