

Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee Meeting

October 26, 2017

1:30 PM

**South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Homer E. Nagel Conference Room
2210 Eastex Freeway
Beaumont, TX 77703**

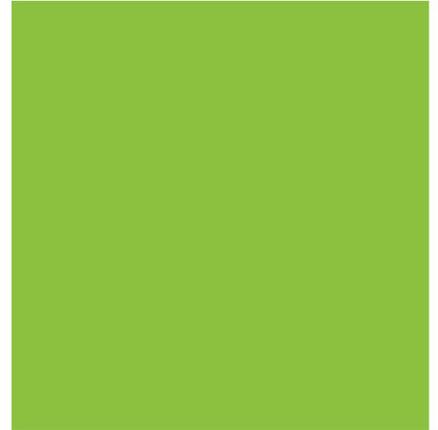
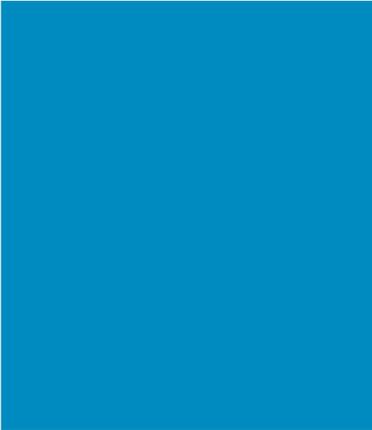
Agenda

- **Introduction of New Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee Members**
- **Review and Discussion of 2017 South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan Executive Summary**
 - Bob Dickinson, Director, South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
- **Review and Discussion of Scope of Work for the Transit Connectivity Study between the Cities of Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange**
 - Bob Dickinson, Director, South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
 - Todd Hansen, Associate Transportation Researcher, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
- **Other Business**
- **Next Meeting Date**
- **Adjourn**

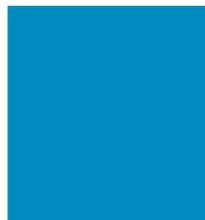
Planning for the Future

2017 South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



TRANSPORTATION &
ENVIRONMENTAL
RESOURCES



SETRPC
SOUTH EAST TEXAS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Executive Summary

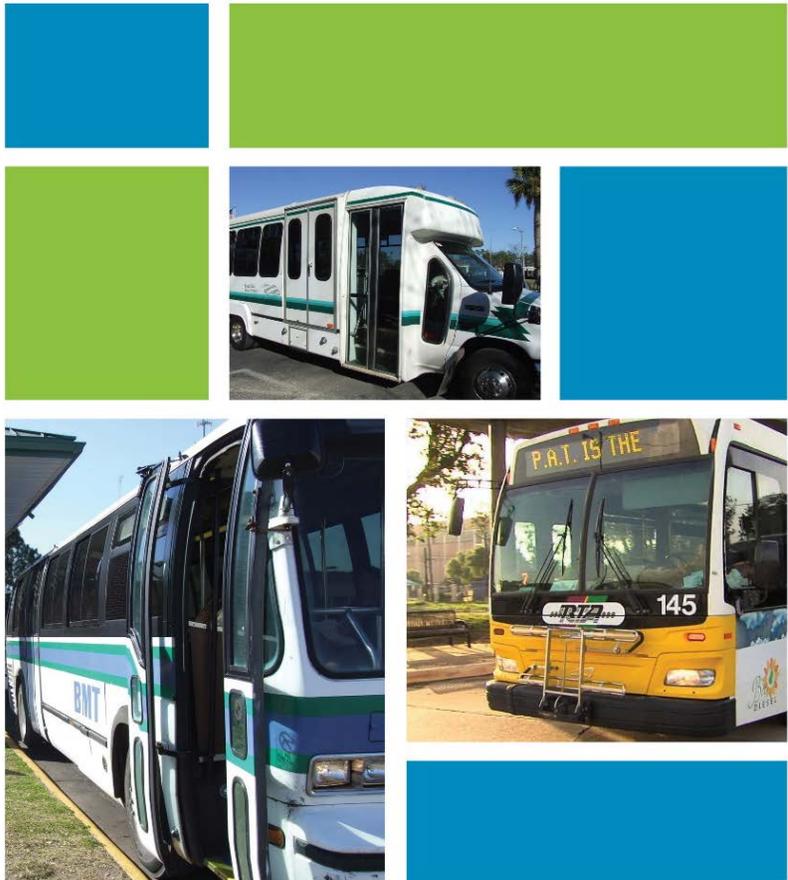
Introduction



At the request of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and with guidance and input from human service agencies, public transit operators, and other interested parties in each county, the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) facilitates the planning process and prepared a Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan for the southeast Texas region, which consists of Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties.

Purpose

The 2017 coordination plan is intended to provide a framework to assist community leaders, human services agencies, and public transit operators with improving transportation services in each county and between counties. The objective of the 2017 coordination plan is to assess the existing transportation needs and services in the region; identify unmet needs or service gaps for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes; and to identify and prioritize strategies for meeting those needs, in a cost-effective manner.



On February 24, 2004, President George W. Bush signed executive order 13330 establishing the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. The order called for the formation of a council consisting of 11 Federal departments charged with coordinating 62 Federal programs that provide funding for human services transportation. The council developed a report that recommended the most effective means of facilitating intergration of services, simplifying access and mobility, and the most efficient use of available resources. The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) United We Ride (UWR) program, also begun in 2004, provided grants for coordinated planning at the State level and formulated a self-assessment tool to assist States and regions in developing coordinated plans.



The Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan was created in response to FTA regulations set forth by those programs. Transit projects using funds from the FTA's Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) must be derived from a locally-developed plan for public transit and human services transportation coordination. The Section 5310 program funds assist with the purchase of specialized transit vehicles used to serve elderly and disabled persons, and provide

capital and operating assistance for public transportation services that go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Methodology

SETRPC, with guidance and input from human services agencies, public transit operators, and other interested parties in each county, has sponsored the planning process and prepared the maps, tables and inventories of the coordination plan for the region. For the South East Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan, SETRPC staff invited a wide range of stakeholders from Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties to meetings to identify the unmet transportation needs in the region. Stakeholders represented the following members of the counties:

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

SETRPC and the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee (RPTCSC) provided guidance to the consultant team throughout the project to assess options and to identify specific coordination strategies for implementation. The methodology to update the plan involved a number of concepts, which included the following:

- ✓ Conducting a widespread public involvement process;
- ✓ Documenting inventories of all of the existing transportation providers;
- ✓ Conducting a needs assessment;
- ✓ Preparing a demographic profile;
- ✓ Identifying and prioritizing strategies to address unmet needs; and
- ✓ Develop Mission Statement, goals, and develop performance measures.

Public Involvement



The concept of public involvement for the purpose of this plan is the two-way communication between government and citizens. More specifically, it means SETRPC sharing information with the public for review and considering input from the public. Public involvement includes providing the public with information at key decision points and providing opportunities to influence SETRPC decisions.

In May of 2016 work began on an update to the coordinated plan. The majority of participants at this time were either individuals or representatives of agencies that formed the RPTCSC. During the update SETRPC reiterated the meaning of coordinated planning, re-emphasized its importance for the region, and gave old and new stakeholders an opportunity to provide input toward the updated plan.

In the months of July and August of 2016 three focus groups and four public meetings were held to let the citizens of the region assist in the development of the update of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan. Agency and Rider surveys were also conducted and were also used in the development of the plan.

The 2017 Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan builds on the communication, data collection, identification of common objectives, and development of a shared knowledge based from the last five years. It also introduces the results of strategic planning sessions that identified specific activities that serve to implement an updated set of goals and objectives. Finally, the 2017 Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan introduces performance measures that will contribute to the monitoring of human services transportation in the region and allow practitioners and planners to adjust strategies accordingly.

Public Input Conclusion

Many of the participants in the surveys and public meetings, while acknowledging that the public transit agencies provide the best service they can with the limited resources available, expressed that there are unmet needs in the region. Participants identified additional geographic coverage and increased hours of service as the primary needs for the existing transit services.

One common comment from the public meetings and surveys was the need for residents to access destinations outside of their communities. This is especially an issue for low-income residents and the elderly. SETRPC, and the human services agencies, continuously work on this issue by providing Demand Response services across the region. The agencies also provide public transportation information to the residents of the region.

During the month of February 2017, four additional public meetings were held to introduce the public to the Draft 2017 Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan. These meetings also gave the public an opportunity to offer comments to the plan.



Summary of Unmet Needs

A summary of the key findings of the focus groups, public meetings, and surveys, and the identification of unmet transportation needs for inter-county travel appears below:

UNMET NEEDS FOR TRAVEL BETWEEN COUNTIES

- ✓ Lack of coordination between the existing services across the region.
- ✓ Limited transportation options between counties for travel to medical centers, including veterans traveling to Veterans Administration medical facilities in Jefferson County.

UNMET NEEDS FOR TRAVEL WITHIN ORANGE COUNTY

- ✓ Lack of transportation services because Orange County does not have fixed route transit services.
- ✓ Lack of transportation operators, which is a problem for the demand response service that is operated by Orange County. The County cannot get enough qualified operators to work for the service due to low pay and part time status.
- ✓ Lack of adequate public transportation for work trips.

UNMET NEEDS FOR TRAVEL WITHIN HARDIN COUNTY

- ✓ Lack of public transit service throughout the county.
- ✓ Lack of transportation services connecting citizens to airports and medical appointments.

UNMET NEEDS FOR TRAVEL WITHIN JEFFERSON COUNTY

- ✓ Lack of dedicated funding source to provide services to areas that due to lack of funding cannot be served.
- ✓ Need amenities at bus stops.
- ✓ Lack of weekend transportation services. Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) does not operate on Sundays and operates only limited services on Saturday.
- ✓ Lack of adequate transportation for employees, in both service area and hours.
 - Transit service does not serve people in the Parkdale area
 - Citizens who work in retail cannot get home by bus due to the lack of Local evening transit service.
- ✓ Lack of public awareness and education on the available transportation options.
- ✓ Limited public transit service for the general public outside of the City of Beaumont.
- ✓ Veterans need rides to colleges: Lamar University, Lamar Institute of Technology, Vista College, and Brightwood College.
- ✓ Long headways between bus trips.

Strategies and Recommendations

Opportunities for improving transportation services must nurture a trusting relationship among participating organizations by clarifying vision statements, mission statements, and goals and objectives, ultimately guiding the participants toward a more coordinated approach to transportation and mobility throughout the counties the region and the state. Therefore, vision and mission statements, and goals and objectives play an important role in transportation planning by providing organizational identity and understanding of the transportation planning directions.

The following vision statement, mission statement, and goals and objectives were based on input and discussions received during the stakeholders meetings, focus group meetings and public meeting held during the plan update.

VISION STATEMENT

Provide full mobility and access to healthcare, human services, employment, education, commerce, social, and community services for all persons in the Jefferson, Hardin and Orange County region.

MISSION STATEMENT

To foster the development of a seamless public transportation system that achieves efficiencies, eliminates duplication, increases coordination, and addresses service gaps. Maximize the resources available for regional human service transportation through coordination in planning, and service delivery.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity plays a crucial role as agencies at the Federal and state level focus on expanding the public transit system to meet the demands of urban and rural regions. All citizens within the southeast Texas region have a right to mobility and the transportation agencies within the region have a need to explore mechanisms to

improve connectivity by improving transportation services. While the region's transportation providers do a very good job in serving a varied clientele, there are significant transportation gaps that do exist in the region. One of the problem areas that came up frequently in the SETRPC's outreach efforts was the transit disconnect between the Cities of Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas. The Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT) and the Port Arthur Transit (PAT) systems provide an excellent service within their service areas, but there is a gap in service between the two transit authorities that does not provide a seamless service to allow patrons to have access to both communities.

There are also gaps in public transportation service between the City of Orange, the City of Silsbee, Texas and the surrounding rural areas. These areas do not currently have fixed route transit service; therefore, they rely heavily on the South East Texas Transit System (SETT), which is a demand response service, to move them throughout the region. Although SETT does offer a good transportation option the provider has concerns in securing enough operators to address all of the citizen's transportation needs.

Recommendations:

Developing connectivity between Port Arthur, Beaumont, Silsbee, and Orange, Texas is one of the region's highest concerns. There are no easy ways to achieve this result due to the jurisdictional as well as funding issues. However, connectivity can be achieved with the creation of a new type of service, possibly a demand response service to connect these municipalities. To accomplish this task there would need to be a study conducted to address these issues: 1) identify how many riders would use the service 2) identify the major destinations 3) identify the locations that would best promote patron transfers.

Due to the shortage of bus operators in the region, SETT sometimes cannot provide their patrons with transportation service. However, by providing enticements, such as bonuses, benefits, and full time employment to attract operators SETT could possibly maintain operators and eliminate transportation service deficiencies within the region.

GOAL 1

Establish connectivity among the Cities of Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange, Texas.

Strategic Objectives:

1.1 Continue Beaumont Municipal Transit (BMT), Port Arthur Transit (PAT), and South East Texas Transit (SETT).

1.2 Identify opportunities to maintain and expand the number of vehicles in the region providing transportation services.

1.3 Develop a regional transit service that would operate between the City of Beaumont and the City of Port Arthur.

1.4 Explore the possibility of acquiring permanent operators by offering additional incentives

Timeline;

1.1 Ongoing through 5 year plan period

1.2 Ongoing through 5 year plan period

1.3 Begin with study in FY 2018

1.4 Begin in FY 2018

Roadblocks:

Funding

Cooperation between agencies



EXPANSION OF SERVICE

Operating hours and expanded weekend service for BMT and PAT needs to be addressed. According to the attendees of the focus groups held for the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan, whether it is a senior citizen going to a medical appointment or someone trying to get to a place of employment, improving the service hours of operation and adding more weekend service would greatly improve the public's confidence in the existing transit systems. Few potential riders consider services convenient enough to rely on public transportation in place of cars. For those who lack vehicles, the limited service hours and routes impair their economic opportunity.

Limited hours affect those who work during off-peak hours and also those looking to attend entertainment venues at night. The public says that additional service is needed in the region, and demand exists for more frequent weekend services. Transit is most attractive when patrons are certain that they will not be stranded and the transit system is reliable.

Recommendations:

SETRPC should conduct a study to examine the feasibility of expanding the hours of operations by at least one hour in the evening and providing additional routes on weekends. The Study should address the areas of 1) how many people would actually use the expanded service 2) where the major attractions of the patrons are located 3) determine if the transit routes are accommodating the needs of riders.

GOAL 2

Expand public transportation service throughout the region.

Strategic Objectives:

2.1 Explore the possibility of expanding the transit service operation hours by initiating a survey to transportation patrons to get feedback on the need for expanded weekday and weekend services.

2.2 Review existing transit routes within the Cities of Beaumont and Port Arthur to identify potential changes to accommodate priority populations groups.

Timeline:

2.1 Begin survey in FY 2018

2.2 Ongoing through the 5 year plan period

Roadblocks:

Low ridership

Connectivity among all agencies

SECURE FUNDING

For most public transportation systems, operating cost seem to be rising every year and there seems to be no end in sight. The aging population is helping to spur growth in paratransit use across the southeast Texas Region, and it is in need of funding. The strong demand for the door-to-door service by individuals with disabilities is in need of funding also. The cost of operating fixed route transit service, the constant need for expanded service, and uncertainty of the cost of fuel for transit vehicles, all lead to transportation agencies continuously searching for additional funding. Currently, transportation providers in the region are continuously balancing demand, need and resources to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. Vehicles are expensive to acquire and maintain. Therefore, it is imperative that SETRPC keep in touch with Federal funding allocations to make sure that southeast Texas receives their fair share of transportation funding.

Recommendations:

The local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) should designate a staff person to constantly monitor the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Federal Register, and all

state and federal legislation for new grants opportunities to acquire additional transportation funding.

GOAL 3

Advocate and support efforts to secure funding for transportation services throughout the region.

Strategic Objectives:

3.1 Explore the possibilities of available funding to help expand transportation services throughout the region.

3.2 Diversify funding base by seeking new transportation funding opportunities to benefit priority population groups.

Timeline:

3.1 Ongoing

3.2 Ongoing

Roadblocks:

Lack of potential funding sources

Competitiveness among local providers

Complicated processes (grants)

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Transportation options can be critical to the ability of transit dependent persons to get where they need to go, especially when they have limited driving options. Transportation operators need to be aware of the needs, challenges, problems, and issues that these transit dependents experience every day. Many operator training programs focus on how to drive the bus. But this is only half of the job. The operators

should be trained on how to manage day to day issues relating to transit dependent persons such as individuals with disabilities, aging populations, and individuals with limited English proficiency, etc.

Recommendations:

The operating agencies should offer professional development training to bus operators that include topics on customer interaction, bus supervision issues, preventing and managing violence incidents on the bus, etc.



GOAL 4

Increase awareness and understanding of transportation issues that priority population groups face throughout the region.

Strategic Objectives:

4.1 Collaborate with various transportation agencies to disseminate information to bus operators on the transportation needs of the priority population groups.

4.2 Conduct training classes for bus operators on how to interact with bus patrons.

4.3 Consider recruiting bus drivers based on customer service skills rather than on driving skills

Timeline:

4.1 Begin in FY 2018

4.2 Begin in FY 2017

4.3 Ongoing

Roadblocks:

Requires cooperation of counties and transportation agencies

Funding

INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

Increasing public awareness of transportation services within the three-county region is a core element of a successful public transportation system. As the attendees of the SETRPC public stated, "People don't know how or who can ride the bus". Yet, informing the public and motivating people to ride public transportation remain a great challenge.

Public awareness campaign can motivate changes in transit ridership in a number of ways. After viewing some kind of advertisement of transportation services, a pamphlet, or a public service announcement, people might be motivated to use the services, and/or inform others of the services provided.

Recommendations:

It is extremely important to involve the stakeholders to organize focus groups of the target audience as part of the messaging development and implementation. If they are involved, there is a far greater chance that the transportation information will reach the intended groups.

Agencies like, for example, the Department of Human Services Commission, is geared specifically to public awareness and can help communities to spread the word about the advantages of using public transportation.

GOAL 5

Increase awareness and understanding of advantages of using public transportation to priority population groups throughout the region, such as individuals with disabilities, aging populations, and individuals with limited English proficiency, etc.

Strategic Objectives:

5.1 Collaborate with agencies on the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee to form focus groups to help advertise the bus services.

5.2 Leverage various media and opportunities

Traditional Media (Radio, TV, Print)

Op-Ed Pieces

Social Media (Twitter, Facebook)

Community meetings

5.3 Look for opportunities to expose the system to new passengers

5.4 Print pertinent transportation information in English and in Spanish to assist the Spanish speaking population to understand the available options.

Timeline:

5.1 Begin FY 2018

5.2 Begin FY 2018

5.3 Ongoing

5.4 Begin FY 2018

Roadblocks:

Requires cooperation of counties and transportation agencies

Funding

IMPROVE AMENITIES AT BUS STOPS

All bus riders have the right to feel safe and as comfortable as possible while waiting for a bus at a bus stop. For some individuals using the BMT and PAT bus systems, the idea of waiting at a bus stop may cause fear of inconvenient and unsafe conditions, such as enduring detrimental weather and waiting in an unsafe environment. This is especially true given the fact that not all buses run on time which forces a rider to wait even longer in these conditions. Research has found that bus stops with good amenities have a positive effect on ridership (according to the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), thereby, giving the bus riders a sense of safety and comfort while waiting for their bus.

Bus stop amenities consist of benches, shelter, proper signage, garbage cans, route maps, appropriate sidewalks and ramps (recommended by Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines of 1990), and proper lighting, etc. It has been suggest, by attendees of

the SETRPC public meetings that improving the amenities at the bus stops might increase the ridership of the transit systems. Many bus stops in the region lack some of these amenities because of lack of funding and possibly because of poor ridership at the bus stops. The most important amenities that concern the members of the public are trash cans and shelters. Research by the TCRP has shown that bus stops with these amenities have higher ridership than those stops that do not. Remember, the bus stop is the transit system's waiting room. No wants to go to a doctor's office that had a dark waiting room and no place to sit. At the minimum bus stops should be well lit and have a bench.

Recommendations:

The MPO should work with local governments to improve the amenities around bus stops and start an Adopt-A-Stop program to encourage individuals or groups (church, social, etc.) to keep bus stops clean.

GOAL 6

Improve the infrastructure around bus stops

Strategic Objectives:

6.1 Work with local governments to provide better sidewalks that provide access to public transit stops.

6.2 Explore opportunities that will secure funding to improve amenities at transit bus stops (i.e. shelters, benches, trash cans).

6.3 Work with community organizations to begin an "Adopt-A-Stop" program, which would allow for the public to help with keeping the bus stops clean.

Timeline:

6.1 Begin in FY 2017

6.2 Begin in FY 2018

6.3 Ongoing throughout the 5 year plan period

Roadblocks:

Political and business support

Citizens participation

WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In just the past few years, platforms such as websites, Twitter, Facebook and blogging have rapidly become some of the most powerful and effective tools a transit agency can use to engage their current and potential ridership as well as other important stakeholders. In what started as a trickle, now more than 50 transit agencies in the United States have some form of social media presence. Transit agencies, have leveraged websites and social media in ways that project a more friendly and personal face for transit to the public.

While websites are built for information or specific functions, such as finding a route schedules or purchasing tickets and social media is created for interaction, both of these form so technology can be instrumental in getting transportation information to citizens throughout the region.

Recommendation:

SETRPC should also create a presence on social media to help build trust and increase transparency. Create how-to-videos for YouTube that would offer advice for the first time rider and explain how to use the system, bike racks, and fareboxes.

GOAL 7

Develop a website that would provide transportation information to priority population groups.

Strategic Objectives:

7.1 Establish transportation coordination, both rural and urban, by developing an informational website that would be an easy to use resource connecting users with a variety of transportation services in the southeast Texas region. This would include information about public transportation, taxi services, Uber services paratransit, nonprofit organizations, Carpool South East Texas, and others.

Timeline:

7.1 Begin in FY 2017 and will be an ongoing project

Roadblocks;

Cost

Web access (consumers)

Keeping the website up-to-date

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE UUMET NEEDS OF EACH PRIORITY SEGMENT

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of the Elderly

Rapid growth in the number of older people in the southeast Texas region during the coming decades will lead to greatly increased needs for expanded and enhanced public transportation services in the urban as well as the region's rural areas. The older adult population utilizes the public transportation services so that they can remain independent and live in their own homes. Some of the needed actions that will help to expand mobility options for the older people include the following:

- ✓ Enhancements to fixed-route public transportation operations and planning such as additional bus operator training, incorporating travel needs of older people in route planning and stop placement, and coordination with other agencies and transportation providers;

- ✓ Enhancements to public transportation vehicles such as low-floor buses, kneeling buses, improved interior circulation, additional stanchions and grab bars, comfortable seating designed for older riders, and accessibility features either required or encouraged by ADA like lifts and ramps, larger letters on head signs, and stop announcements;
- ✓ Actions to help older people take advantage of existing services, like presenting information in ways that are easy to read and as clear as possible, information and assistance programs to connect older people with appropriate services, and outreach and training programs;
- ✓ Application of universal design strategies at transit facilities, bus stops, and on streets and sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of transit facilities and stops;
- ✓ Assuring supportive services to caregivers who provide transportation, encouraging further development of unsubsidized private transportation services, coordinating with non-emergency medical transportation provided under Medicaid and Medicare, and supporting modifications to automobiles and roadways to increase the safety of older drivers.

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of the Disabled

Individuals with disabilities can achieve a greater degree of freedom when they have full access to a variety of transit modes, but this can only be achieved when the pathways to transit – the infrastructure and conditions in the built environment – allow full access to transit stops, stations, and vehicles.

- ✓ Develop an aggressive marketing campaign to inform individuals with disabilities about the benefits of using accessible fixed-route transit and inform the general public about the social equity importance of accessible transit services;
- ✓ Install special poles at transit stops to help vision-impaired and other riders to identify the location as a public bus stop;
- ✓ Installation of landing pads, curb cuts and bus shelters;

- ✓ Partner with the City or local businesses to build sidewalks to fill gaps between transit stops and sidewalks not linked to the stops;
- ✓ Promote coordination among service providers.

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of the Veterans

Veterans need access to public transportation to receive the employment and training services that are available in the region to help them thrive in post-military careers. They also need to be able to get to medical services and benefits offered to them by the Veterans Administration.

- ✓ Improve connectivity across multiple modes including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian;
- ✓ Explore using innovation and technology when appropriate;
- ✓ Include veterans who use the transit system on transportation committees.

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of the Children (under the age of 18)

Providing the safest possible public transportation ride to children under the age of 18 is a primary concern. Although many school age children take a school bus to school, many others take public transportation. Some also need public transportation to perform a variety of duties throughout their day to day activities. There is a need for having access to part-time jobs in the evening and on weekends, and also a need to visit friends and family. To help these young citizens enjoy their public transportation experiences there is a need for the following:

- ✓ Provide the school with public transit education and training seminars and training;
- ✓ Provide improved bus stop amenities (i.e. shelters, benches, trash cans, etc.);

- ✓ Provide information on social media, including Facebook and Twitter; websites and content need to be regularly and frequently updated; youth are aware of and avoid stagnant sites.

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of Persons with Limited English Proficiency

There are persons with limited English proficiency that are already riders of public transportation. Because they lack the ability to speak English well, this population often work in jobs which tend to pay low-wages, and are likely to depend on public transportation because they cannot afford a car. There are some that do not know about the transportation options in the region. Some strategies that can be helpful in assisting this population to use public transportation are:

- ✓ Provide culturally appropriate outreach programs to inform the community about available services;
- ✓ Provide the Latino community gathering places with a how-to-ride video and a laminated pocket guide with riding information in Spanish;
- ✓ Hire staff who reflect the target community population or train staff to communicate with the target community population;
- ✓ Keep in touch with members of the community and seek their advice on what small changes you can make so that your service is more attuned to their cultural mores and can better accommodate their way of living.

Prioritize Strategies to Address Unmet Needs of Low-income citizens

Access to transportation by low-income individuals and families has become limited as the majority of low-income households reside in rural areas and cities, while basic amenities are increasingly located in the suburbs. With jobs emerging further and further away from low-income residential areas in southeast Texas, many low-income workers often have difficulty accessing jobs, training and other services such as childcare because of inadequate transportation. In addition, many minimum wage

jobs require working evening or weekend hours, but traditional transportation systems often do not serve their routes during these times. Access to affordable transportation for low-income workers, elderly rural residents and children makes the trip to work, school, and medical appointments possible. It fosters self-sustainability, promotes independence, and permits spending on other household essentials. Given these benefits, these strategies will demonstrate that rural public transportation is indispensable.

- ✓ Implement half-priced days periodically, maybe once a week to help low-income patrons;
- ✓ Provide bike racks on buses so that low-income patrons could combine transit and cycling to provide a higher level of affordable mobility.

REGIONALLY COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

This section shall include a general description of the background and purpose of this five-year plan and the methodology used to develop it including a description of how the development and approval process engaged priority populations including individuals with disabilities and individuals 65 and older.

II. TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES IN THE REGION

This section shall include a list and narrative description of:

- Transportation providers derived from a current, comprehensive inventory of providers including those offering public fixed route and demand-response services, and those offering services through private, non-profit, community-based organizations, health and human services agencies, work force agencies, and others. By August 31, 2015, the Public Transportation Division, under contract with the Texas A & M Transportation Institute (TTI), will update the 2013 provider inventory. TTI will obtain information directly from recipients of funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). **Lead agencies shall survey non-FTA recipients for inclusion in the inventory.**
- All agencies responsible for transportation planning in the region.

III. COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC'S UNMET TRANSPORTATION NEEDS, ASSESSMENT OF OVERLAPS & GAPS IN THE DELIVERY OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES & GAP ANALYSIS

This section shall be based on a current, comprehensive regional needs assessment and gap analysis and include a narrative description with supporting data explaining the region's unmet needs and inefficiencies based on findings from this needs assessment. This section shall include:

- Geographic data
- Demographic data on overall population, age, race, income, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency, and other data to indicate need for transportation services.
- A list and narrative description of all health and human services agencies and programs, and work force agencies, and contact information derived from a current, comprehensive inventory of such agencies.
- Assessment of transportation overlaps and gaps in services including unmet transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, individuals 65 and older, people with low incomes, individuals with limited English proficiency, children , veterans, people lacking transportation to and from employment and other members of the public.
- A description of the research methodology, observations/findings and recommendations.
- Research instruments.

IV. PLANNING FOR COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

This section shall describe how this five-year plan integrates services of various programs including:

- Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) program and other FTA-funded programs
- Health and human services programs
- Work force programs
- Other

V. INTEGRATED PLANNING PROCESSES

This section shall describe how this five-year public transit-human services transportation plan will align or integrate with other metropolitan, rural, and statewide transportation plans, as appropriate. This section shall include a:

- Comprehensive list and narrative description of various planning processes concerning transportation needs and/or services conducted in the planning region such as those led by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), rural planning organizations (RPOs), other transportation agencies, work force agencies, health and human services agencies, and others.
- Explanation of how these plans are or will be integrated.

VI. VISION, MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section shall include vision and mission statements as well as clearly articulated goal(s) and objectives for achieving the goal(s). Lead agencies shall determine the vision and mission statements, goals and objectives using a deliberative process actively involving the steering committee and other stakeholders including riders and potential riders. Lead agencies and other stakeholders shall collaboratively prioritize objectives (identifying those that are short- or long-term) and address implementation based on time, resources and feasibility.

VII. SUSTAIN PLANNING & IMPLEMENT PLAN

This section shall describe the planning region's capacity to sustain regional transportation planning activities and to implement or "work the plan" once it is developed and approved. This shall include a description of:

- Organizational infrastructure, staff capacity, and plans for leveraging resources to conduct and pay for activities and projects to achieve identified priorities;
- How the lead agency will regularly and meaningfully engage regional stakeholders including individuals with disabilities, individuals 65 and older, people with low incomes, veterans, advocates for children, and other members of the public;

VIII. PERFORMANCE MEASURES TO EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS

This section shall list and describe specific, locally-determined metrics for each identified gap in transportation service (or for each priority identified in the plan). Each metric shall objectively measure the extent to which each priority was met or gap filled. This section shall describe how the lead agency will collect, maintain and assess this data

In addition, this section shall describe how the lead agency will collect, maintain and provide data on statewide performance measures to the Texas Department of Transportation which will collect common data elements statewide. The statewide performance metrics are listed on page 21 of the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning Guidebook.



Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning

PURPOSE

The purpose of the regionally coordinated transportation planning (RCTP) effort is to provide more efficient and effective public transportation services, especially for people with disabilities, older adults, people with low incomes and others with health and human service needs.

STATE AND FEDERAL MANDATES

- Transportation Code. In 2003, the Texas legislature and governor added Chap. 461 requiring coordination of public transportation services funded with federal, state, or local funds.
- Executive Order 13330 on Human Services Transportation Coordination. In 2004, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13330 calling for:
 - Reducing duplication among federally funded human service transportation services
 - Increasing efficient delivery of services
 - Expanding access to transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes and others
- The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU). In 2005, the federal transportation bill called for establishing locally-developed, coordinated public transit / human services transportation plans. Three Federal Transportation Administration programs were explicitly linked to these plans: Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC), New Freedom, and Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities.

FUNDING FROM TxDOT TO REGIONS

- Initial funding. In 2006, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) contracted with local agencies to develop a regionally coordinated plan for each of Texas' 24 designated state planning regions.
 - A locally-determined agency serves as lead for coordinating regional transportation activities.
 - Most lead agencies are councils of government / regional planning commissions. Others include entities such as metropolitan planning organizations, a county, a city, a community action agency and even a steering committee that formed itself into a non-profit organization.
- Continuation Funding. TxDOT has provided funding in subsequent years to move forward with regionally coordinated transportation planning activities.

STEERING COMMITTEES

Fundamental to the regional planning effort is the routine engagement of a stakeholder steering committee in each region. These committees provide insight and guidance on regional public transportation issues and activities such as developing, updating and implementing regional transportation plans. At a minimum, committees shall include representatives of:

- older adults, individuals w/disabilities & people w/low incomes (or advocates for these priority populations)
- human services providers
- public, private and non-profit transportation providers
- recipients of funding thru Sec. 5307 (small urban transp. providers) & Sec. 5311 (rural transp. providers)

LEAD AGENCY ROLE

The lead agency:

- Facilitates discussion and keeps others engaged in the planning process.
- Manages the development, implementation and ongoing modification of a regionally coordinated transportation plan. The lead agency assures that activities move forward and goals and objectives are accomplished satisfactorily and in a timely and inclusive manner.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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