

Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee Meeting

Virtual Meeting
Thursday, November 4, 2021
1:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS CAN ATTEND THE MEETING
FROM YOUR COMPUTER BY LOGGING ONTO:**

<https://www.gotomeet.me/SETRPC/ter>

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1-877-309-2073

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Agenda

1. Introduction of New Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee Members

-Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources, SETRPC

2. Report on Progress of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan Update

-Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources, SETRPC

-Jim Moore, Moore & Associates

3. Update on Beaumont Municipal Transit

-Albert Eby, General Manager, Beaumont Municipal Transit

4. Other Business

5. Next Meeting Date

6. Adjourn

REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

DATE: Thursday, November 4, 2021

TIME: 10:00 A.M.

PLACE: South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC)
(Call-in Virtual Meeting)

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bob Dickinson, Director of Transportation and Environmental Resources, South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) welcomed the attendees, thanked them for coming, and requested introductions.

II. REPORT ON PROGRESS OF THE REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN UPDATE

-Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources (SETRPC)

-Jim Moore, Moore & Associates

Mr. Bob Dickinson introduced staff members from Moore & Associates which included Mr. Jim Moore, Senior Associate and Kathy Chambers, Project Manager.

Mr. Moore and Ms. Chambers presented their 5-year Regionally Coordinated Public Transportation Plan highlighting their objectives, study area, scope of work and upcoming tasks.

Three virtual public meeting were held on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. The first one was held at 11:00 a.m., as well as, one held at 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

After the presentation was completed, attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Mrs. Karen McKinney, Citizen, Orange County asked if the meetings were advertised in the Orange Leader.

Mr. Dickinson responded that the meetings are advertised mostly on local newspapers and that the survey was made available through the SETRPC website. Over 25,000 postcards were mailed out to households within the 4 counties. Surveys were

promoted through social media and were also mailed out via the 20 stakeholders who requested printed copies and made available to their clientele.

Mr. Kevin King, Business Representative, Workforce Solutions, asked if it was possible to have a copy of the survey findings.

Mr. Dickinson stated that once a final report from Moore & Associates is submitted, the information will be provided to the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Steering Committee for their review, comment and approval.

III. REVIEW UPDATE ON BEAUMONT MUNICIPAL TRANSIT

-Albert Eby, General Manager, Beaumont Municipal Transit

Mr. Dickinson introduced Mr. Albert Eby, General Manager, Beaumont Municipal Transit.

Mr. Eby explained the recent changes and updates approved within the Beaumont Municipal Transit. As of last year, Beaumont Municipal Transit have contracted with First Transit to take over the management of public transit. Since that time, they have been working with the City of Beaumont on a short and long term planning efforts.

As of last week, the City of Beaumont Council approved the rebranding of the Beaumont Municipal Transit which is now called BMT Zip. A new logo has been adopted. See below:



8 new busses are on order and will go into rotation starting in March 2022.

A mobile application will be available for citizens to download which will display real time data and allow busses to be tracked and show exactly where they are located within the city. Click the link below to view the bus lines real time tracker.

<https://beaumonttransit.ridesystems.net/routes>

Phase II will include passenger count on the bus.

A study to determine the bus route functionality within the city and its underserved areas has been evaluated and completed. The findings will be shared next week with

the City of Beaumont council. Approved changes will be put in place simultaneously with the introduction of the new busses.

New technology is now available for special needs transportation. Beaumont Municipal Transit has partnered with CTS Tripmaster for their real time scheduling software. This will automatically interact with each driver's tablet and help coordinate multi-loading trips while reducing the cost-per-passenger by increasing shared rides.

After the presentation was completed, members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr. Stacy Jackson, Independent Living Specialist, Rise Center asked if the specialty busses that were being introduced were going to be wheelchair accessible?

Mr. Eby responded that all vehicles are ADA accessible.

Mr. Dickinson asked if the ridership numbers were holding steady?

Mr. Eby responded that as of right now, they are at 85% ridership of the pre COVID numbers.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

V. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Mid-January 2022.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Albert Eby	General Manager, BMT
Janell Dischler	Director of Transportation, Orange County Transportation
Karen McKinney	Citizen, Orange County
Kevin King	Business Representative, Workforce Solutions, SET Works
Stacy Jackson	Independent Living Specialist, Rise Center
Vernetta Spivey	Manager, Community Relations – Legacy Community Health

GUESTS PRESENT

Bul Mabil	Public Transportation Coordinator, TxDOT-Beaumont
Jim Moore	Senior Associate, Moore & Associates
Kathy Chambers	Project Manager, Moore & Associates
Travis Madison	Public Transportation Coordinator, TxDOT – Houston

STAFF PRESENT

Bob Dickinson	Director, SETRPC
Lucie Michaud	Administrative Assistant, SETRPC
Anna Papoutsis	Transportation Program Manager, SETRPC



**REGIONAL PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION
COORDINATION PLAN**

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 4, 2021



PROJECT OBJECTIVES



- Identify and quantify demand for transportation services
- Compare demand with available services
- Identify practical, cost-effective mobility-enhancing opportunities



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Online bilingual community survey
- Community stakeholder survey
- Pop-up events in each county
- Virtual community workshops
- Bilingual interactive project webpage



COMMUNITY SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

- Typical mode of travel: “drive alone” (77%)
- Access to personal vehicle: “all the time” (77%)
- Familiarity with public transit (33%)
- Absence/insufficient public transportation service as a barrier: “work” (18%) and “healthcare” (24%)
- Greatest motivator to potential future use of public transit: “later evening service” (32%), “link between Beaumont and Port Arthur” (30%), and “improved access to transit service information” (27%).

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY: LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Beaumont Housing Authority
- Beaumont Transit*
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
- City of Bevil Oaks
- City of Orange
- City of West Orange
- Da Vita Golden Triangle Dialysis
- Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis Center
- Goodwill Industries of Southeast Texas
- Jack Brooks Regional Airport
- Jasper County
- Jasper Emergency Service District #1
- Lamar University
- Nutrition and Services for Seniors*
- Orange Community Action Association*
- Orange County Transportation*
- Orange Fire Department
- Port Arthur Housing Authority
- Port Arthur Transit*
- Port of Beaumont
- Renal Center of Orange (Da Vita)
- RISE (Resource, Information, Support and Empowerment)
- Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club Beaumont*
- South East Texas Regional Planning Commission, Community Services Division
- Spindletop Center*
- The Arc of Greater Beaumont
- United Way of Orange County
- Workforce Solutions – Orange
- Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

**Directly operates transportation service*

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

- Many portions of the project area currently not served by public transit.
- Need for extended service hours to provide access to employment and healthcare services.
- Need connectivity between counties.
- Need access to medical facilities in Houston area.
- Dialysis patients need transportation service on weekends and holidays.
- Cost is often a barrier to transportation access.

COMMUNITY POP-UP EVENTS: HARDIN COUNTY

- Brookshire Bros, Lumberton
- Brookshire Bros, Sour Lake
- 30 attendees
- Comments:
 - Need service along Hwy 96
 - Lumberton doesn't have public transit service
 - Sour Lake: Want service to library

COMMUNITY POP-UP EVENTS: JASPER COUNTY

- Brookshire Bros, Kirbyville
- Brookshire Bros, Jasper
- 30 attendees
- Comments:
 - Jasper County doesn't have public transit service
 - Need service between Jasper County and Hardin or Orange counties so as to access healthcare services

COMMUNITY POP-UP EVENTS: JEFFERSON COUNTY

- Market Basket Food, Beaumont
- La Vaquita Market, Port Arthur
- 110 attendees
- Comments:
 - Insufficient public transit for disabled individuals
 - Need all transit service materials in Spanish

COMMUNITY POP-UP EVENTS: ORANGE COUNTY

- Market Basket Food, Bridge City
- Danny's Super Foods, West Orange
- 50 attendees
- Comments:
 - Non-profit: Need replacement vehicles
 - Need service: Orange to Port Neches
 - More weekday evening service (later hours)
 - Need weekend service

PROJECT NEXT STEPS

Prepare Needs Assessment/Gap Analysis tech memo

Prepare draft project report

Presentations and public review/comment

Prepare final project report



QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION

Stakeholder Survey Summary

1.1 Methodology

A stakeholder survey was distributed via first class mail and email to 94 organizations throughout the project area. The stakeholder survey sought to collect information about populations served and services provided as well as transportation services offered. The stakeholder survey also requested respondents to identify existing transportation needs among the populations they served, which was used in developing the Needs Assessment.

Completed surveys were received from the following 29 organizations:

- Beaumont Housing Authority
- Beaumont Transit*
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
- City of Bevil Oaks
- City of Orange
- City of West Orange
- Da Vita Golden Triangle Dialysis
- Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis Center
- Goodwill Industries of Southeast Texas
- Jack Brooks Regional Airport
- Jasper County
- Jasper Emergency Service District #1
- Lamar University
- Nutrition and Services for Seniors*
- Orange Community Action Association*
- Orange County Transportation*
- Orange Fire Department
- Port Arthur Housing Authority
- Port Arthur Transit*
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- Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club Beaumont*
- South East Texas Regional Planning Commission, Community Services Division
- Spindletop Center*
- The Arc of Greater Beaumont
- United Way of Orange County
- Workforce Solutions – Orange
- Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

**Directly operates transportation service*

1.2 Observations, Findings, and Conclusions

Observations

The majority of the stakeholders responding to the survey do not directly operate transportation. Approximately one-third said they do not operate, contract for, or subsidize any transportation services. Seven respondents directly operate transportation with full responsibility, while another two purchase/contract for services from another entity. Other common responses include subsidizing rides or fares (31 percent) and providing initial assistance in obtaining transportation (21 percent).

They most frequently refer clients to transit provider guides or websites (69 percent) and provide clients with transportation guides and/or schedules (52 percent). Approximately one-third make telephone calls on behalf of clients/riders and/or use Texas 211 to offer additional information.

The most common transportation need with which clients communicate having difficulty obtaining is medical trips, followed by access to veterans' services, essential shopping, and weekday trips. The most significant challenges encountered by responding organizations are that transportation is not part of their core mission (28 percent), there is a lack of transportation services in the area (28 percent), and there is a lack of funding to support coordination activities (24 percent).

Eleven respondents indicated an interest in participating in a virtual stakeholder roundtable. Another five said they might be interested.

The survey instrument asked stakeholders to comment on the following:

- Clients'/members' primary barriers to accessing transportation;
- Enhancements most needed to improve coordination of public transit and human service transportation; and
- Other issues, concerns, or information they believe are relevant to the issue.

Barriers to accessing transportation

- Availability/frequency of bus transportation to and from campus. (Lamar University)
- Clients in low-paying jobs or unemployed are unable to access service. Some lack drivers licenses or are unable to get them. (Workforce Solutions – Orange)
- Cost, accessibility, lack of availability. (RISE)
- Internet or phone access, as most of the clients are seniors and need help accessing those things in order to contact us. (Orange Community Action Association)
- Lack of financial resources. (Workforce Solutions SETX)
- Lack of knowledge and education of what options are out there. Difficulties getting to/from our building. (The Arc of Greater Beaumont)
- Lack of routes, needing transportation to mid-county, number of transfers required to get where they need to go. (Goodwill Industries of SETX)
- Limited routes, limited schedule. (Beaumont Housing Authority)
- Minimal to no transportation services. (Jasper County)
- Mobility limitations, funding, late evening service hours, some employment opportunities are not close to transportation. (Port Arthur Transit)
- Needing more advanced help than driver (i.e., caregiver or provider). Some clients either cannot afford or are not able to get the help they need for daily functions and often want drivers to perform these duties. (Orange County Transportation)
- No vehicle in household – no family or friends to assist – time of transit vehicle does not coincide with time of appointment. Nothing available to assist outside of volunteer help. (SETRPC Community Services Division)

- Patients on dialysis generally treat for four hours three times a week. Transportation times are very limited. Patients can only be placed on certain shifts to accommodate transportation. This greatly limits patients. Patients who treat on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday must be placed on 2nd shift (very limited space). Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday patients also must be placed on 2nd shift to accommodate transportation hours. Since transportation does not operate on Saturdays, patients must make other arrangements. However, many do not have another option and tend to miss treatment. (Renal Center of Orange – DaVita)
- Patients say it's impossible to schedule a same-day reservation. Not enough bus stops. Holidays cause them to miss treatment since transportation does not operate on those days. (Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis)
- The transportation company through Medicaid switched in June and there have been issues. Drivers are late, drivers having children or other people in the car making patients uncomfortable. Not an issue with City, but good to note. (DaVita Golden Triangle Dialysis)
- We currently provide transportation so the clients we have only express a need to get to Houston for medical appointments. Most other trips we can help them with. (Nutrition and Services for Seniors)

Most-needed enhancements:

- A detailed plan on existing transportation resources and efforts to improve support to the citizens. (Jasper County)
- ADA-compliant public access and bus stops. (RISE)
- Better software in order to help run and schedule the routes for a more sufficient outcome in order to generate more rides. (Orange Community Action Association)
- Bus routes to Houston – VA, MD Anderson, etc. (Nutrition and Services for Seniors)
- Consistent funding sources. Consistent and regular conversations between providers. (Port Arthur Transit)
- Easier access to the scheduling of rides on current special transit system. (RISE)
- Extended hours of operation to include early morning and evening times. (Renal Center of Orange – DaVita)
- Get away from traditional bus service and move to more “on demand” personal service. (Beaumont Housing Authority)
- Increasing the number of wheelchair accessible/special transit buses and services from city-to-city within the county. (RISE)
- Information to populations that can benefit from transportation options that exist. (The Arc of Greater Beaumont)
- Linking BMT to Port Arthur. (Goodwill Industries of SETX)
- Need to extend hours. If patients are not a part of Medicaid they do not have access to affordable transportation. (Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis)
- Patients that don't have access to unlimited transportation rides (through Medicaid) have difficulty accessing transportation if their treatment goes over the scheduled time. Better coordination with public transit and the organization would be beneficial. (DaVita Golden Triangle Dialysis)
- Perhaps expanded hours that are advertised. Safe bus stops. (Workforce Solutions SETX)

- Some way to have more immediate resources to lead individuals to transportation service, especially for elderly and individuals with disabilities. (SETRPC Community Services Division)
- Some way for transportation to become more available between counties, especially for those in Triangle who have medical resources in Houston. (SETRPC Community Services Division)
- Upgrade intersection signal preemption for emergency vehicle traffic. (Orange Fire Department)

Other issues, concerns, or information

- Airport and taxi services are standard partnerships. Lack of taxi services is a common complaint. (Jack Brooks Regional Airport)
- Lack of funding to upgrade 18-year-old preemption system. Infrared emitter technology in preemption is being replaced with a GPS cloud-based system that is a subscription service that no longer requires the entity to own the equipment and maintain it. (Orange Fire Department)
- Lack of wheelchair-accessible transportation for veterans needing services inter-/intra-county where they live. (RISE)

Findings

Based on the input from the stakeholders responding to the survey, we have identified the following broad findings.

1. There are geographic areas and individuals not served by existing public transit services.
2. There is a need for extended service hours to provide access to employment and healthcare.
3. There is a lack of service between counties.
4. There is a need for access to medical facilities in Houston.
5. A patient's ability to undergo dialysis treatments on weekends and holidays is impacted by a lack of available transportation, and transportation may be unavailable if a treatment runs over the scheduled time.
6. Cost is often a barrier to transportation.

Conclusions

While several transportation providers operate service within the project area, there are still significant gaps between the service provided and the needs of individuals or populations within the community. These will be addressed in greater detail through the Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis.