



# Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) Virtual Public Workshop Notes

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December 2020 – January 2021

Public Transportation Division

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## **Introduction**

This document compiles input gathered during virtual public workshops held by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Public Transportation Division (PTN), in December 2020 and January 2021 as part of the FY 2022-2023 call for projects for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

## **Workshop Format and Content**

The discussion outlines included further on were drawn from the Regional Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plans for each of the TxDOT Districts. In cases where more than one regional plan had jurisdiction over the TxDOT District boundary, the outlines reflect both applicable plans. The notes are a record of the meeting conversation and do not reflect the opinion of TxDOT or any of its division or staff. Every effort was made to accurately represent the comments made at the meetings; however, omissions or errors may have occurred.

The required workshops were held via WebEx Events due to the restrictions put in place at the time in response to the COVID outbreak. Information on how to access the WebEx meeting for each TxDOT District and/or transit region was available on the TxDOT.gov website (see Appendix A – Workshop Notice).

Each virtual workshop was structured around three workshop sections and was facilitated by the TxDOT Public Transportation Division. During the first section, an overview of the FTA Section 5310 Program was presented, including the purpose of the program, how projects funded through this program are identified and selected, who is eligible to apply for funding, and which expenses can be covered by these funds. The second section consisted of presentations by the TxDOT Public Transit Coordinators (PTC) and transit providers in each region. They explained the services provided, how to access them, safety measures implemented associated to COVID protocols, and which services have been discontinued or modified as a result. During the third portion of the workshop, attendees had the opportunity to provide their comments on the goals from the applicable Coordinated Plans or were provided time to give general comments about the service. Excerpts from the Coordinated Plans were visible on the screen to all workshop attendees and were also read out loud to give attendees the opportunity to provide comments on the success or shortcomings they associated with each one. Comments were captured live and visible on the screen. At the end of the presentation, all attendees were reminded of the multiple ways in which they could provide additional comments. All comment avenues remained open until January 22, 2021.

Table 1: Summary of all Workshop Meetings

Workshop	District	Date and Time	Time	Regions	Attendees (1)
1	Paris and Atlanta	December 1, 2020	10 a.m.	5 and 6	9
2	Fort Worth and Dallas	December 2, 2020	10 a.m.	4	14
3	Bryan and Lufkin	December 2, 2020	1 p.m.	13 and 14	9
4	Houston and Beaumont	December 3, 2020	1 p.m.	15 and 16	18
5	El Paso and Odessa	December 8, 2020	10 a.m.	8 and 9	24
6	Childress and Wichita Falls	December 8, 2020	1 p.m.	2 and 3	5
7	Waco and Brownwood	December 9, 2020	10 a.m.	11 and 23	7
8	Brownwood and San Angelo	December 11, 2020	1 p.m.	10 and 23	12
9	Tyler	December 15, 2020	10 a.m.	6	10
10	Yoakum	December 15, 2020	1 p.m.	17	5
11	Austin	December 16, 2020	10 a.m.	12	7
12	Corpus Christi	December 17, 2020	10 a.m.	20	8
13	Pharr	December 17, 2020	1 p.m.	21	9
14	San Antonio	January 6, 2021	1 p.m.	18	16
15	Laredo	January 7, 2021	10 a.m.	19 and 24	12
16	Abilene	January 7, 2021	1 p.m.	7	11
17	Amarillo	January 12, 2021	10 a.m.	1	13
18	Lubbock	January 13, 2021	1 p.m.	2	9

(1) Attendees do not include TxDOT or consultant staff. At least one TxDOT staff member and three consultants were present at each workshop.

## Workshop Commentary - Summary of Themes

- **Success through FTA 5310 Program.** Transit providers are grateful and have made good use of TxDOT and FTA funds to work to meet needs outlined in Regional Coordinated Service plans. They hope to continue building on that success.
- **Better vehicles.** Passengers and providers noted that vehicles are getting more comfortable and efficient. Providers are looking into smaller buses, that can be more adaptable to optimize their fleets. However, in some cases, not all desired vehicles are available for purchase and they recognize in some areas, buses still need to be upgraded.
- **Continued and improved marketing of services.** Transit providers have made significant improvements in disseminating traveler information. This includes new apps, websites, hotlines and real-time traveler information made available. Providers are working together to develop training programs, materials and share information.
- **Traveling extended distances is hard.** Users expressed inter-county/service area trips continue to be a challenging to schedule or achieve. Providers also stated these types of trips also continue to be difficult to arrange.
- **Driver shortages across the state.** Transit providers continue to experience driver shortages. Providers are offering improved benefit packages, hazard pay and paying for training to try and incentivize drivers.
- **New technologies have challenges.** Some providers have had success using social media, apps and innovative marketing strategies while others find most passengers prefer to get information via handouts/hard copies and arrange trips via the phone. Many seniors do not have access to the internet, smart phones and/or know how to use these technologies.
- **Reduced ridership due to the COVID outbreak.** There have been periods where ridership has declined significantly due to the COVID outbreak, and demand for services in rural areas is lower. Many sites that offer day services to seniors and disabled individuals are closed or operating at reduced services/hours. Transit providers across the state have adapted their service, accommodated social distancing guidelines, implemented extensive cleaning protocols, and used their staff and vehicles in innovative ways to provide meals, groceries while still transporting passengers. However, some users still have concerns about the number of people in a bus at a given time.
- **Planning has been impacted due to COVID outbreak.** The COVID outbreak has slowed down expected service expansions and the ability of providers to meet and collaborate on planning efforts. Coordination meetings have been delayed and it can be challenging to meet with partners.

# 1. Paris and Atlanta Districts Virtual Workshop. Regions 5 and 6

December 1, 2020, 10 a.m.

Attendance: 9



## 1.1 Region 5: Ark-Tex

(a) **Goal 1:** Enhance the quality of the customers travel experience

### *Workshop comments:*

- Improvements to vehicles. More comfortable passenger experience.
- Potential improvements through technology that assists passengers with getting into the vehicle.
- Use of comment cards and listening to passengers, adjusting service accordingly.
- Put out surveys through call center. This was an effective way to communicate information to passengers and specifically discuss COVID related safety measures.

(b) **Goal 2:** Expand the availability of services to those who are unserved

### *Workshop comments:*

- Some service options have been reduced but in doing so, rural service has been expanded.
- Agencies have been working on 5-year plans and closing gaps in service, the COVID outbreak has disrupted some of that planning. Public transit agencies have been very flexible in adapting. Some transit providers have been delivering goods and groceries to help protect users who use their service for that purpose.

(c) **Goal 3:** Increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery

### *Workshop comments:*

- More efficient vehicles, less fuel being used. Additional fleet optimization is being considered.

(d) **Goal 4:** Establish and sustain communications and decision-making mechanisms among sponsors and stakeholders to guide plan implementation effectively

### *Workshop comments:*

- Agencies and partners are busy responding to COVID related needs. Post pandemic, additional coordination will move forward.

## 1.2 Region 6: East-Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Submit in a timely manner planning documents, as may be required by appropriate state and federal agencies

No specific comments

- (b) **Goal 2:** Secure the ongoing cooperation of city, county, other local government, and private sector entities in State Planning Region 6

### *Workshop comments:*

- East Texas Council of Governments and Longview have been able to use the 5310 funds to expand service to areas with service gaps.
  - The expansion of service has been successful and relatively easy to accomplish. Marketing was done to new passengers. Passengers and service providers are pleased with the new service.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Ensure to everyone within State Planning Region 6 a full and unfettered opportunity to affect the outcome of area public transportation service

### *Workshop comments:*

- Broad-based expansion of outreach and inclusion of key stakeholders in coordination meetings. Work has been done to bring transit providers together to find solutions and fill service gaps.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Partner with the Texas Transportation Commission to effect legislative change

### *Workshop comments:*

- It has been a challenge to find funding to implement some of these strategies.
- Funding has been used to look at ways to market and collaborate on service options.
- Focus has been on looking at new/improved facilities.
- Texas Technical Assistance Program has been used to look into a long-term home for Paris Metro (5311 funds).

## 2. Fort Worth and Dallas Districts Workshop. Region 4

Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 10 a.m.

Attendance: 14



### 2.1 Region 4 - North Texas (Streamline)

(a) **Objective 1:** Provide additional transit service to underserved locations

*Workshop comments:*

- Attendees believe were no areas currently identified as underserved.

(b) **Objective 2:** Improve coordination between existing transit providers to simplify cross-county trips

*Workshop comments:*

- Partnership with NCTCOG for senior services. Partnership led to out of county trips being provided. Additional promotion recommended to increase usage/demand.

(c) **Objective 3:** Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate non-traditional ways to deliver public transportation service, including partnerships among public and private transportation providers

*Workshop comments:*

- Good senior services partnership. New services during COVID outbreak: food delivery w/ Meals on Wheels. Coordination with senior centers and food pantries also occurred.

(d) **Objective 4:** Improve affordable public transportation to the Veterans Affairs (VA) clinic in Bonham, TX.

*Workshop comments:*

- Trips into Dallas for medical trips are allowed, including VA facilities in Dallas and Garland.
- Partnership with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) to get clients to VA destination in Bonham by using services by the Denton Civic Center and TAPS, who take users to VA facility.

(e) **Objective 5:** Improve transportation options for local access to job and education opportunities



*Workshop comments:*

- Public Transit Services & Cleburne provider gets clients to park-n-ride in Fort Worth (FTW) for job access.
  - Destinations also include VA in FTW and other medical destinations.
- (f) **Objective 6:** Explore partnerships with existing transportation providers to reduce the number of transfers for regional trips

*Workshop comments:*

- Driver retention efforts include increased salaries and flexible hours.
- Transit providers have lost drivers due to the COVID outbreak or perceived transit demand reductions. Driver retention ebbs and flows.
- Ridership decreased initially - now around 40% capacity.

**Additional comments made at workshop:**

- Cross-county or out of service area trips can be difficult to arrange and get reimbursed for. For example, trips to Denton. These are coded as out-of-service-area, which allows for better tracking of reimbursements.
- Reduced fare cards available for seniors and those on fixed incomes (eligible clients). Client Advocate Program, assistance getting to medical appointments, was expanded to include shopping trips and prescription drug trips. It is accomplished by calling 877-631-5278 or going on the website. Before the COVID outbreak, providers advertised at health fairs and senior centers, etc. The outbreak has reduced traditional outreach efforts. Clients find services by calling in 60+, veterans and disabled service centers, Meals on Wheels, Kaufman County food pantry partnerships, and other partnerships.
- Tarrant County - has there been further discussion to extend transit services to Every and Crowley, Texas. Forest Hill has received service, but when/will these be extended to Everman and Crowley?
  - These are in the Metro area, so not in our service area. Please contact Catholic Charities to uncover what services are provided in this area. Phone number 817-534-0814.
  - MyRide in Tarrant County may also aid this area, 682-587-7091.

**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
My Ride 10 in Tarrant County is now offering transportation in Crowley called Zip Zone Crowley. It is provided by Trinity Metro and for all other partners or people throughout the community and are needing some type of transportation assistance. They can get more information by calling 817-569-4244.	Voicemail	12/2/2020
Commenter noted that TexRail is used as their transportation service provided. No services are offered in the area. Need to offer public transportation services in Grapevine, Colleyville, Southlake, Keller, HEB.	Online Survey	12/10/2020
Commenter noted that PTS is used as their transportation service provider. Personnel are rude. Have more transportation options.	Online Survey	11/20/2020
Transportation services in Tarrant County are too expensive. No low-cost options available.	Online Survey	12/10/2020
Transportation is not available in all areas in Denton County. Provide options in areas which do not offer transportation services (Flower Mound, Castle Hills, Double Oak). Provider access to services currently not available. Adult students in our area have difficulty scheduling or accessing rides to work. Many live in a different city from where they work, and either there are no/limited transit options available, they do not cross city boundaries, or the ride with connections would be too difficult and lengthy for them to manage independently.	Online Survey	12/10/2020
I've noticed some bus stops in east Dallas and along Skillman in Dallas don't have sidewalks. I've seen seniors and people in wheelchairs try to get to these bus stops on the grass and this is totally unacceptable.	Online Survey	11/20/2020
Personnel trained to take care of people with disabilities needs, more spaces designated for people with disabilities. More rides, more choices for rides. I think there is not fairly and reliable public transportation services in my county for people with disabilities and for their needs. As well as well trained personnel that can take care with their needs.	Online Survey	12/13/2020

### 3. Bryan and Lufkin Districts Workshop. Regions 13 and 14

Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 1 p.m.

Attendance: 9



#### 3.1 Region 13 – Brazos Valley

(a) **Goal 1:** Create a coordinated partnership of transportation providers

*Workshop comments:*

- Existing partnerships. More encouragement to improve capacity – Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living (BVCIL).
- Ongoing training drivers.

(b) **Goal 2:** Promote and maximize utilization of available transportation resources

*Workshop comments:*

- Worked with stakeholders and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to get software and other tools. Discussion including funding resource and issues.
- Attend coordinated meeting with East Texas.
- Provide Transportation overview class in BCS Area – BVCIL.

(c) **Goal 3:** Eliminate gaps in transportation services

*Workshop comments:*

- Routes have not changed in 10+ years, Lufkin is considering changes to stops and routes.
- Seniors have made requests for public transportation.
- Launch program to get people to their health care and additional medical services.
- Looking to partner with health providers. Issues such as risk and health insurance.

(d) **Goal 4:** Encourage local political support of public transportation services

*Workshop comments:*

- Promote existing network by working with providers, counties, judges and help them to understand the service and funding related issues. Maintain a good relationship with elected officials.

- Prepare to move to Transportation Management Agency (TMA).

### 3.2 Region 14 – Deep East Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Encourage the implementation of general public transportation circulator or express routes from low population counties to higher population counties

*Workshop comments:*

- Distributing funds to cities to promote shuttles to work.
- (b) **Goal 2:** Facilitate the inclusion of Transit Services Provider information into the DETCOG Region 2-1-1 HHS referral data base

No specific comments

- (c) **Goal 3:** Facilitate the installation, and use, of “bus stop” facilities at locations of likely use by the elderly and handicapped users.

*Workshop comments:*

- Working with Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to identify where these stops can be located. Study includes demographic survey.
  - Installation of ADA ramps and other amenities after the study.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Encourage the creation and distribution of information on existing transit services in the region

*Workshop comments:*

- Create partnership with colleges to provide services and develop new routes for them.
- (e) **Goal 5:** Work with cities and counties who are adding or expanding their bicycle and pedestrian modes to enhance transit and as a possible source for funding

No specific comments

- (f) **Goal 6:** Educate citizens of DETCOG region on transit services available and provided in each area

No specific comments

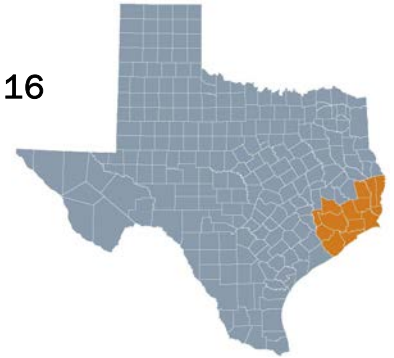
- (g) **Goal 7:** Encourage the establishment of contractual relationships between dial-a-ride, paratransit and medical transportation providers with state & federal funding sources, health care providers and non-profit organizations to provide transit services to the qualified elderly and disabled in the 12-county region

No specific comments

#### 4. Houston and Beaumont Districts Workshop. Regions 15 and 16

*Thursday, December 3, 2020, 1 p.m.*

**Attendance: 18**



##### 4.1 Region 15 – South East Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Establish connectivity among the Cities of Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange, Texas.

*Workshop comments:*

- Great service! Good communication, efficient service. Pickup times in evening available. Grateful for effective transportation to medical appointments. Appreciate food transport from food bank.
- Food delivery service is much appreciated. Hasn't used ride-services, but excited to use for medical rides.

- (b) **Goal 2:** Expand public transportation service throughout the region

*Workshop comments:*

- No funding was provided to execute survey or to continue the service. Transportation between Beaumont and Port Arthur is important and necessary, but funding isn't available.

- (c) **Goal 3:** Advocate and support efforts to secure funding for transportation services throughout the region

No specific comments

- (d) **Goal 4:** Increase awareness and understanding of transportation issues that priority population groups face throughout the region

*Workshop comments:*

- Subcontractors attempted to disseminate limited English (LEP groups: Spanish & Vietnamese) and basic transportation information to priority population groups, but challenges of 2020 have sidetracked this.

- (e) **Goal 5:** Increase awareness and understanding of the 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.

*Workshop comments:*

- Issue identified by distributing information via radio/television because of funding for advertising. Alternative identified - setup tables at libraries and grocery stores. Targeting client audience where they are. A few years ago, a subcontractor mentioned a smaller number of riders were using services, new advertising methods have led to increased ridership.
- (f) **Goal 6:** Improve the infrastructure around bus stops.  
  
No specific comment
- (g) **Goal 7:** Develop a website that would provide transportation information to priority population groups.

*Workshop comments:*

- SETX Regional Planning has information available on their website. Contact info for subcontractors is also available. Subcontractor may have additional information about their services.
- Elder care services were called to initiate transportation services.
- Client for transportation services and advocate for Mounting Horizons. Social media is an effective tool for distributing information. One tool (Hootsuite) allows for controlling multiple platforms simultaneously. Currently they are using for Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Posts can be edited prior to distribution and highlights platform specific adjustments required. Great to get info out in a timely manner.

**Additional comments made at workshop:**

- Mounting Horizons has good information and communication about alternative transportation opportunities. We learned about service outages when the service was requested.
- Harris County Rides does a great job communicating contractors available for connections to various parts of Harris County. Wherever Metrolift doesn't go, Harris County Rides will cover. Good partnership and information about services available.
- Ride along service provided. This allows facetime with clients and survey them about the services needed and provided.
- Recently spoke with a Mounting Horizons consumer who is visually impaired (Paula Salazar) who expressed gratitude for food box from MHI. "It kept me out of the market and away from COVID."

## 4.2 Region 16 – Gulf Coast

- (a) **Goal 1:** Provide guidance related to the implementation of regional transit coordination pilot projects that were identified in the regional transit coordination Action Plan

### *Workshop comments:*

- Appreciates services provided in Galveston County.
  - Transportation services are available between Galveston and Gulf Coast.
  - Prior to the COVID outbreak, Mounting Horizons and Connect Transit were trying to provide transportation for youth attempting to get into workforce development programs. This related to youth transitioning into the workforce. Pilot initiated/organized by Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC).
- (b) **Goal 2:** Assist with tasks related to the development of regional transit planning initiatives that focus on identifying opportunities for expanding transit services in the region for all, as well as improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the current regional transit system

### *Workshop comments:*

- Connect Transit is still hoping to get this program up and running after the pandemic.
  - Attempting to support subcontractors/service providers and keep consumers safe. We welcome collaboration and meetings for future opportunities.
  - Throughout the last few months, Connect Transit has collaborated with community organizations. We are still attempting to lead these info distribution efforts throughout the service area. This is one of our priorities in the coming year.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Promote regional coordination among existing and future public and private transportation providers, social service and health and human service agencies

### *Workshop comments:*

- In July 2020, there was a meeting collaborating with Galveston County Food Bank. Basic transportation wasn't provided due to COVID outbreak, but food distribution was initiated.
- Helped seniors with a variety of types of meals. Broadened services to distribute meals to those affected by the pandemic.
- CARES Act funding has allowed them to assist consumers who aren't mobile. Clients with disabilities can apply and receive grocery gift cards for food and hygiene products.



Service assistance extended to rent and utility payments. Autoimmune disability clients are served in this way during the pandemic. Important for safety of clients so they can help themselves. Metrolift tickets and Q-cards were also available for additional transportation options.

- We must apply and qualify for Meals on Wheels?
  - There is a Galveston County Meals on Wheels, phone number 713-533-4978.
- We collaborate with the School Districts in Galveston County for transition from high school into higher learning.
- God bless, for these services!

**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

<b>Summarized Content</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
Commenter greatly appreciated the food delivery service provided.	Voicemail	12/2/2020
Commenter appreciated the service provided by Mounting Horizons and assistance with getting to medical appointments and the store. Commenter was also very appreciative of the food delivery since COVID.	Voicemail	12/3/2020
Commenter is very pleased with service provided by Mounting Horizons. Staff is courteous, attentive and accommodating. Commenter uses service to get to medical appointments, pharmacy and senior services.	Voicemail	12/8/2020
Commenter is very appreciative of service provided by Mounting Horizons. Commenter has a disability and uses service on a regular basis and was specifically happy with service to go grocery shopping.	Voicemail	12/10/2020
Commenter appreciated Mounting Horizons, uses the service to get around. Prior to using Mounting Horizons, commenter used loved ones, coworkers, taxi and Uber to get out. "I've been thankful to be able to use accessible transportation now, and to interact with staff how just seem to "get it."	Online Comment Form	12/03/2020
"I always have a smooth ride anytime that I've been using them, and they have also been helpful in situations if I ever need a ride."	Online Comment Form	12/16/2020
Use transportation services to go to BrightLife at YMCA.	Online Survey	12/15/2020

Summarized Content (continued)	Source	Date Received
<p>Use transportation services to go to the post office. Usually, transportation services are available but due to higher client counts lately, being able to secure a ride is harder to do. Senior on very limited disability income, present world health situation makes traveling with many other people unsafe, and a little worrisome. Mounting Horizons provides a good service, but they don't cover the area where my doctor is. The most important improvement that I would like to see, is continued and increased funding. I have tried another transportation service and ended up waiting for 3 hours for a 15-minute ride to Walmart. I use, and trust Mounting Horizons because I have found them to be reliable, on time, within my budget and very courteous to each rider, no matter how challenging. Your continued and increased funding would enable them to continue their great work, as they serve the disabled. this might allow them to expand their service area, and possibly enable them to reach more of those who need their services. They do their very best to accommodate each of their riders! but for them to serve more people, they would need more drivers, more people to take requests, and more ADA compliant vans. your support, TXDOT, in the way of continued and increased funding would ensure that these fine services continue! Mounting Horizons is an excellent investment in the transportation of those who are disabled.</p>	Online Survey	12/8/2020
<p>If transportation services are not available, how long will others be available to support mobility needs?</p>	Online Survey	12/3/2020
<p>Would like to have pleasant interactions with staff who are familiar with disabilities.</p>	Online Survey	12/29/2020
<p>Nothing else (related to transportation services) needs changing for me. Ability to schedule multiple trips in advance instead of day per day. Eldercare was very convenient with the information they had on website that list different providers with transportation providers. Mounting Horizons transportation services have been good, and the drivers are friendly and nice</p>	Online Survey	12/8/2020
<p>Run the route intended - with more availability. Add more space to buses.</p>	Online Survey	1/21/2021
<p>Serving more of the rural areas consistently.</p>	Online Survey	1/5/2021

Summarized Content (continued)	Source	Date Received
Staff that is knowledgeable about disabilities. Many of the staff do not seem to know much about different accommodations. Service is unreliable and unprofessional.	Online Survey	12/29/2020
Have service available in The Woodlands/Spring. There are many people in Montgomery County who are not in a service area and could do many things to benefit their communities if they had transportation when their senior citizen parents cannot drive.	Online Survey	12/15/2020
More services to the surrounding areas like League city, Friendswood, Kemah.	Online Survey	12/8/2020
Expand service area.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
Shorter wait for bus to arrive. Happy with M.H.I. Transportation.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
Increase service availability.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
Ability to book multiple days at a time, and easy access to transportation.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
Increase access to transportation services after hours.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
Shorter waiting time.	Online Survey	12/4/2020
In our county (Galveston) in general, transportation services are very broken up. Would like to see a more coherent system that broadens access for all Galveston county residents who are seniors/persons with disabilities would be amazing. Making the connections move even more smoothly into our immediate surrounding counties would also greatly widen peoples' ability to find employment. Before using Mounting Horizons services, the barriers I encountered with public transportation- or the lack thereof, made me have to quit one job and made working at another job very expensive, in terms of transportation costs. Having affordable public transportation now, is increasing my financial/overall independence within my family and community. I have been incredibly grateful and would love to see continued improvements across all providers for our county.	Online Survey	12/4/2020

Summarized Content (continued)	Source	Date Received
<p>Hire well-trained drivers who can help out if the person has a speech disability. We need safer and effective convenient transportation for our population. It is imperative for their journeys towards independence. It is out of sheer helplessness that I have to Uber for someone. I am the only transport alternative for every single matter of life. I am growing old and exhausted too. MHCIL is a great source but very limited or too full when needed at times.</p>	Online Survey	12/3/2020
<p>Ensure that disabled individuals with diabetes and other illnesses return trips are available, expedited and expeditiously in or on the commuted date.</p>	Online Survey	11/20/2020

## 5. El Paso and Odessa Districts Workshop. Regions 8 and 9

*Tuesday, December 8, 2020, 10 a.m.*

**Attendance: 24**



### 5.1 Region 8 – Upper Rio Grande

- (a) **Goal 1:** Maintain an inclusive and sustainable planning process that seeks and values public participation, communicates its goals and activities to the public and honors its Regional Plan and Priorities

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Project Amistad continues to have bi-monthly meetings with their stakeholders. They changed from in-person meetings to virtual meetings. It's working out well for them. They have seen a decrease in participation although they still reach out to the same stakeholders. Although in-person meetings can be more meaningful, they continue to have them. The GoBusGo website is updated based on the latest meeting information. There is a steering committee with representatives from multiple organizations or agencies, like managed-care organizations, non-profit agencies that represent the adjacent counties, and others. Through these organizations, they continue to get program updates and that's how they continue public participation. Issues like a gap in the service are identified. Recommendations are made based on the feedback received. No wrong-door program - after needs are identified, a connection is established with the Aging Disability Center to help solve the problem or meet their needs.

(b) **Goal 2:** Provide technical assistance and training to transit providers and encourage linkages between providers and with organizations serving transit dependent populations to create a customer-centered and seamless public transportation system

#### *Workshop comments:*

- The agency had a transportation summit in 2019. Different transportation providers, social service agencies, dialysis centers, and others attended. They had different panel sessions to talk about customer service, surveys, and if routes are meeting the client needs. Also discussed if the fares were reasonable. Clients were screened and then referred to a partner agency (like the Area Agency on Aging) if they didn't qualify for the 5310 Program. They tried to find the link to a transportation service that helps the client get to their destinations or appointments. The City of El Paso Sun Metro presented on the phone application process. There is a big challenge with the All

Aboard America service (Presidio and Midland area) because they can dictate their schedule. They can only make recommendations. They work with this entity to adjust their schedule to meet the needs of the users.

- (c) **Goal 3:** Ensure broad public knowledge of transit services and issues and maintain effective public awareness effort targeted to significant segments regarding specialized services and resources

No specific comments

- (d) **Goal 4:** Work to eliminate physical, financial, regulatory and operational barriers to the delivery of seamless regional transportation

*Workshop comments:*

- Providers have various pilot projects being implemented. They are working closely with the dialysis centers and have identified only a few in the El Paso area. Transportation services are usually scheduled on a will-call basis. They are trying to reduce wait time for users by selecting a few dialysis centers and are working with them to schedule the return trip after treatment is finished. This allows them to pick up patients a lot sooner. If this pilot project is successful, they will be reaching out to more dialysis centers in the El Paso area. Doctor's appointments can be more challenging in comparison to dialysis appointments because they tend to be shorter. They have a pilot program coming in the next month or so to schedule trips by zones. Right now, the scheduling process is open to the entire City of El Paso. Having zones would reduce the response/wait times.
- The County went after some money to do a feasibility study and to look at existing service and potential improvements. From the study, the County looked at 6 scenarios – 2 scenarios came out as being preferred, where a transit provider would follow the same corridor but would allow some deviation from the route by about ¼ mile. If the user wanted to get picked up and was within ¼ mile of the deviation, they would schedule a pick-up and take the user wherever they wanted to go within that corridor. They are also working to create a dial-up service, similar to ride-hailing service and have secured some funding through the MPO. Working with the City of El Paso to create a single service for the entire region from county line to county line. The user would see a single sign – a single service they can use regardless of where they live. Scenario 6 would cover 100% of rural areas. They are creating an LGC (Local Government Corporation) which operates like a business and serves the entire area. Recently, bylaws have been passed and the next step is for the agencies to take it to their Board. In addition to this, they are adding additional routes because there has never been a route-analysis done for the El Paso County Transit since it first began 15/20 years ago. Areas in far East El Paso have been growing and the need for transportation is there.

The study took this into account. Scenario 3 could launch next year to provide additional services in different areas.

- Providers are working closely with the VA. A lot of their population needs general shopping trips. They are trying to show the 5310 Program to the VA, which is a new client. They have been supporting them during the COVID outbreak associated trips and anything that is outside of the scope of their service times. They are trying to engage other transportation providers and share the 5310 Program because it is something that they might not be able to service, but they can. The relationship with the VA is being built because of the large number of veterans in the community using the service. Although they get trips through the VA program, they might still need to go shopping or run other errands and they can take these users there.
- (e) **Goal 5:** Enhance the mobility of older adults and persons with disabilities through an inclusive and deliberative process that encourages coordinated services and the efficient use of limited §5310 funds to ensure the creation and continuation of mobility services where existing transportation services do not fully meet the needs of rural and urban communities

*Workshop comments:*

- Project Amistad continues applying for 5310 funding and other programs to purchase more vehicles. They try to maximize the use of the vehicles. They sell their vehicles to other transportation providers within the region. They coordinate with New Mexico and Chaparral to provide services in rural areas. They have identified stakeholders in these areas and found solutions to support demand response in areas where there are no public transportation services. Under various circumstances they also allow for same-day services.

## 5.2 Region 9 – Permian Basin

- (a) **Goal 1:** Promote public transportation within the seventeen counties of Planning Region 9 and the five counties included in the Big Bend region

*Workshop comments:*

- One of the things providers are doing is making sure that when an individual or their family come in they know which transportation services are available into the community. They are making sure to supply information to users in rural areas as well as about EZ Rider in the city. They have shared brochures and contact information from two agencies with users. They provide displays in working areas with information. They don't have budget to do other things, but they do get multiple individuals on a daily basis and information about their partners in the area is shared with them. In terms of social media, Facebook is the main tool used. Social media is not commonly



used by their users. It's not working well for them at the time but working with other partners in the State who have more funding.

- Project Amistad uses social media (Facebook account). Kids are usually the ones contacting them while trying to get services for their parents or grandparents. They ask about the program and how they can get in. Social media seems to be a good tool and worth the investment. Kids know how to use social media and are very concerned about their parents and what is going on with the pandemic. They are getting COVID-trips through the Facebook account.
- West Texas Opportunities, Inc. uses social media, has a website, and brochures. Their phone number is on the vehicles. They work with agencies in the area, with their regionally coordinated transportation planning partners. These are their primary ways to promote public awareness. They collaborate with the Able Center in Odessa. They would ask if they provide rides, who pays for the ride, or if the passenger has financial constraints. Able Center would provide the fare and the transit provider provides the ride. They have collaborated with several other agencies, like the Basin Services and some of the State Protective Agencies. They would help spread the word on which services are available.

- (b) **Goal 2:** Facilitate the expansion of transportation services to meet the needs of more clients

No specific comments

- (c) **Goal 3:** Develop and market a centralized information system regarding transportation for transit-related requests among urban and rural providers

No specific comments

- (d) **Goal 4:** Develop innovative methods that assist with the continuation of public transportation services and the sustainability of multi-modal facilities

*Workshop comments:*

- In relation to green energy, providers are not doing this at the moment. They are leveraging other funding sources to support the services they provide, like medical transportation needs, and to do more for the population they serve.
- (e) **Goal 5:** Coordinate with transportation providers, stakeholders, and the general public for the purposes of 5310 Planning & Programming

*Workshop comments:*

- Permian Care has quarterly meetings in the area with all the stakeholders in the area and other individuals in the community who might have transportation needs. Individuals from VA and the Odessa County have attended these meetings. Allows them to talk and come up with opportunities to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. Meeting attendance can be anywhere from 5 to 15 individuals in a room, representing different areas of the Midland-Odessa region. In the outer areas, there are different transportation needs and these meetings provide the opportunity to talk about them. These meetings have led to relationships that continue to be developed. They have worked closely with Able Center, Permian Care, and West Texas opportunities. The meetings also provide an opportunity to talk about their own needs as they move into the future. For example, how to reach individuals in counties that are in West Odessa? Continued opportunity for brainstorming and have discussions. These meetings are open to the public. More people show up to meetings because they find out about these meetings from other individuals in their community (information sharing). These meetings are being held in person but it has been more difficult to host these meetings in recent times.

***Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:***

<b>Summarized Content</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
Excellent customer service (El Paso County)	Online Survey	12/8/2020

## 6. Childress and Wichita Falls Districts Workshop. Regions 2 and 3

*Tuesday, December 8, 2020, 1 p.m.*

**Attendance: 5**



### 6.1 Region 2 – South Plains

- (a) **Goal 1:** Increase public outreach and education on transportation services in the South Plains region  
  
No specific comments
- (b) **Goal 2:** Continue to improve the coordination and communication between public and private transportation providers  
  
No specific comments
- (c) **Goal 3:** Increased the accessibility of transit services to veterans and low - income individuals  
  
No specific comments
- (d) **Goal 4:** Increase the accessibility of transit services to seniors and disabled individuals  
  
No specific comments

### 6.2 Region 3 – Nortex

- (a) **Goal 1:** Increase survey participation rate of agencies  
  
No specific comments
- (b) **Goal 2:** Improve communications between service providers and clients

#### *Workshop comments:*

- More of effort being made to discuss services provided to various organizations and clients. Traveling to individual organizations to market their efforts. These organizations include Air Force bases and military clients. Advertising night crawler service. Additionally, United Way of Wichita Falls has been communicated with.
- Night Crawler details started in January 2019. Originally began with Work Services and is now open to the public. Partnership has been wonderful.
- Marketing efforts also include VA meetings in Wichita Falls. VA partnership include an office sharing in Rolling Planes. VA will move in with SHARP Lines. Volunteer driven van

from Wichita Falls to Oklahoma City. This service is currently being provided to the VA on behalf of SHARP Lines.

- Purchased service contract with SHARP Lines. This partnership is part of the marketing efforts. Trying to leverage this existing service.

(c) **Goal 3:** Bridge the transportation gap between service providers and clients

*Workshop comments:*

- Medical assistance services provided by SHARP Lines. This is a curb-to-curb, demand response service. Due to the COVID outbreak, SHARP Lines is struggling with retaining drivers. Drivers resigning associated with health concerns. Normally SHARP Line and WFS share drivers. Currently driver pool is down 5-8%. SHARP Lines is currently paying hazard pay (time and a half).
- WFS is also struggling retaining drivers. Pay rate is a major sticking point. Working to get this fixed.

## 7. Waco and Brownwood Districts Workshop. Regions 11 and 23

Wednesday, December 9, 2020, 10 a.m.

Attendance: 7



### 7.1 Region 11 – Heart of Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Encourage coordination and collaboration by seeking innovative models in planning and delivery of transportation services

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Meeting in Waco to discuss coordination of services in 2018.
- Once the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service is implemented, additional collaboration will likely occur.
- BRT virtual meeting on Thursday, December 10, 2020, people can provide feedback on station locations. Anticipate future collaboration.
- Hill Country Transit was looking at Public-Private-Partnerships in Killeen and Temple to get businesses to sponsor routes and help provide services on the fixed-route side (example: HEB and Temple Business Center). If fixed route services would increase, ADA service would also increase with the service. This has been on hold in light of the COVID outbreak.
- The agency has also looked at on-demand service provided through Baylor Scott and White medical offices to offer transit service to patients. This has also been put on hold in light of the COVID outbreak.
- The BRT project was re-introduced in October 2020 virtually. There has been extensive outreach via social media, posters, websites, cross-sharing by partners and television news. Feedback has been good. Waco Transit has had success using Facebook to share information and receive feedback. Public participation has increased through virtual tools as opposed to public meetings that have been held in the past.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) developed a guide that gives a snapshot of all the transportation options in the region. It is a hard copy that is disseminated to schools, hospitals and other public locations. A website is being developed to highlight all the transportation options along with Facebook. Currently, most of the outreach is being done by word-of-mouth or through the guide.

- (b) **Goal 2:** Maximize connectivity and use of resources between various transportation agencies, public service agencies, and stakeholders within and adjacent to the Heart of Texas Region

*Workshop comments:*

- Waco Transit does maintenance on HOTCOG vehicles. Previously, the maintenance was done with independent providers and HOTCOG is happy with the maintenance service that is being provided.
  - Communication with Waco Transit and HOTCOG has been good and reimbursement for expenses has been timely.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Expand the public transit network utilizing both fixed route and demand response services, maximize network efficiency through the use of intelligent transportation systems and travel demand management strategies

*Workshop comments:*

- Connector route that services Marlin, Golinda, Chilton, Robinson to bring passengers into the fixed route system. Specifically bring in workers to high volume worksites (example: Sanderson Farm) including late night service for workers. Have also expanded to provide Saturday service. Additional service has been expanded for students and individuals needing to connect with law enforcement.
  - Waco Transit is working on a touch-less fare option in response to the COVID outbreak.
  - There is a need to increase service frequency. Considering the use of different vehicles (traditionally large buses), that would be smaller and a better fit for service in urban areas with fewer passengers. Would like to go from a one-hour frequency (headway) to a 30-minute frequency. The buses that may work the best are not available on the Texas Smart Buy website. Rather than run big busses on one-hour headway, it may be more efficient to run smaller busses on 30-minute headways.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Enhancement of safety and security measures which impact the public transportation network

*Workshop comments:*

- Waco Transit has used some driver shields that have worked well for fixed route buses but working to find options for smaller vehicles. Looking to find better driver shields on small vehicles in the future.
- TxDOT and FTA has done a great job with Public Transportation Plan (PTrans) process to provide guidance and assistance in response to the COVID outbreak .

## 7.2 Region 23 – Central Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Monitor and maximize service and operation efficiencies

No specific comments

- (b) **Goal 2:** Maximize coordination of transportation in the community

### *Workshop comments:*

- Waco has training videos on the website and travel training is offered to community groups. Previously offered in-person training prior to the COVID outbreak .

- (c) **Goal 3:** Enhance public awareness and support multimodal transportation

### *Workshop comments:*

- Advertising is done with all five cities, generally done with Chambers of Commerce. Transit service provided to Fort Hood and Veterans Hospital in Temple. Best advertising is generated with groups that are part of Regional Transportation Advisory Group (RTAG). There are members from Fort Hood involved in the group. Maintain a 2-way communication with stakeholders. Killeen-Temple MPO advertises all public meetings and sets up meetings in accessible locations for those interested.

## 8. Brownwood and San Angelo Districts Workshop. Regions 10 and 23

*Friday, December 11, 2020, 1 p.m.*

**Attendance: 12**



### 8.1 Region 10 – Concho Valley

- (a) **Goal 1:** Develop coordinated transportation plans and recommendations that facilitate improved capacity and delivery of services, enhance satisfaction with public transit services within regional communities and among transit dependent groups, and encourage cooperation to meet the transportation needs of the region

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Concho Valley has worked with the development district on initiatives.
  - Collaboration is ongoing with various agencies, disability connections, Air Force Base, good fellow partnership, etc. They collaborate with events in San Angelo to facilitate transportation for those events. They also collaborate with Child Protection Services-Rainbow Room. Collaborating with Rehabilitation Facility to other facilities to provide services. Esperanza Clinic also providing services (bus passes, ADA applications, training for using services).
  - Awareness campaigns and looking to identify gaps in service. Worked with housing board to identify possibilities (Council of Government - Foster Grandparents). Partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club.
- (b) **Goal 2: Safety:** Ensure that safety is of the utmost priority for our employees, passengers and general citizens of the Concho Valley and surrounding areas

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Developed a matrix that enables them to see violations by drivers. App (DriveCam) to monitor infractions. Rated against matrix and then they can take actions to remedy. If they have unsafe behavior, these are documented, and the driver goes to re-training. It helps communicate the outcome they are looking for by providing drivers with required PPE.
- Added hand sanitizer stations. In office and common areas they have a mask mandate. Dispatchers are wearing masks (mask mandate for drivers and users). Extra precautions in case close contact is needed.



- Extensive measures by providers (Concho and SWART) to protect drivers and users even though it is not cheap. Some expenses can be reimbursed by the costs are much greater than that. They are also dealing with the stress of the users and your own over safety and security, but they do it with a smile and very diligently. There is a cost that will show up down the road and that is something that really needs to come up when talking about driver retention, morale and level of service.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Reliability: Deliver quality services resulting in consistent mobility for our rural and urban passengers

*Workshop comments:*

- They use EcoLane for tracking of on-time performance (last year 95% on target) monitored daily, updated to the Board monthly. Ensuring that they have drivers available to address calendar. Dispatcher on site to monitor, assess and provide drivers where gaps are identified. Challenges, COVID-related issues, drivers on-site due to COVID, and driver retention. HR team has been doing monthly interviews to ensure staffing levels. Extended trips are challenging, long time for a single driver to be occupied.
  - Hazard pay has help some with retention. They are hoping to hire a couple more. It went to December 31st but has been turned into a permanent increase.
  - They are providing hazard pay - help with staffing some. No meal service available. Planning with Shannon hospital - COVID test delivery to Austin. They extended service hours in Brady, service to the grocery store.
  - They have been using FB for changes in fee, changes in services, and new additions.
  - Hazard pay helped less absences from staff. Wish that could continue, at least through the pandemic. In their region cases are rising, specially Eagle Pass which even got national attention for it. The situation is still bad in the area.
  - Purchased a camera to be able to conduct proper Zoom meetings for Board meetings.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Friendliness: Create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere for Concho Valley citizens and transit passengers

*Workshop comments:*

- They provide comfortable temperatures. Mobility managers can be reached for complaints on comfort levels. Drivers are instructed to make courtesy stops, especially in long distance trips.

- Uniformed appearance for drivers. Providing drivers with required PPE. Drivers can sanitize vehicles throughout the day. Increased sense of security for both sides. Provided partitions to keep drivers safe. Driver morale, checking daily with drivers and making sure they have a platform. They just finish evaluations with drivers. Take actions to remedy things that need to improve.

**Additional comments made at workshop:**

- They also work to provide transportation to some of the missing links in the area. They have a website to look up information. General managers are working on having a universal fare.
- Regional Coordination Group has a bilingual flyer for seniors, medical facilities, adult day programs, mental health programs, and anyone that does have transportation services. United Link, SPARTAN coordinated on transportation services.
- Mailed a flash drive to all county judges with all the services available to try and recruit participants.
- Good majority of the plan was started a year before most, mainly because impacts of Eagle Ford shale to revise. Partnerships and coordination goals were met at this time. A lot of the success was due to partnerships, they have 30 partnerships. Service contracts, referrals, unorthodox type partnerships that help advocate for transit and their partners. Big setback (SWART) maintain the costs of the PPE (foggers, supplies). Issue to keep it up. They provided hazard pay up until December but that is no longer provided. They had to concentrate on driver training and retraining for safety procedures. Some of the area of SWART in Eagle Pass will stop being "small urban" and that will be detrimental for small counties.
- Elderly and disabled non-emergency transportation services will be disseminated starting June 2021. The boundaries will change to managed-shared. Providers don't know how that will look yet but the implications will be massive.
- SWART August 2020 stopped non-emergency services (they landed with smaller operator). The rates do not commiserate the actual costs due to the rules on the providers.
- Transportation Network Companies TNC (UBER, LYFT) will be able to provide those services but will not be held to the same standards as providers. These are ongoing discussions but ultimately it will affect riders.

- CARES Relief fund for SWART ends on December 31st, contingent on TxDOT plans for the next two phases. The amount of funds they received (no need to match) was a godsend because ridership fell. Next steps are still of concern for rural providers. It is important to plan before the time ends because the costs have increase since the beginning of the pandemic. Yes, we have reduced riding, but having to reduce the capacity of vehicles, you have extra costs because you have less sitting per bus. That possesses an issue per bus which can double the costs per ride.
- New Federal Administration also makes them worry that there might be a change on fuel prices and political weather that would have impacts.
- Everything said will create gaps in service, because of the increase costs of providing service. As far as I know none of these providers have funds to support that. There is a potential for big issues. There needs to be an effort for an emphasis area group to ID emerging issues and strategies to mitigate them. So, they can go ahead, and lobby elected officials to help them address these issues and potential funding and solutions.
- In the same situation as other providers, waiting for next week's development on how the CARES will evolve.
- Also facing the same uncertainties and needs.

## 8.2 Region 23 – Central Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Monitor and maximize service and operation efficiencies

No specific comments

- (b) **Goal 2:** Maximize coordination of transportation in the community

No specific comments

- (c) **Goal 3:** Enhance public awareness and support multimodal transportation

No specific comments

**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
<p>Commenter noted that they transportation services for everything they can. An improvement would be having an administration, transit board, and area elected officials who care, value transit as a vital component of public life, and are willing to fund it. A transit agency which does not stop 5310 services to the neediest, seemingly on a whim, and without any advanced warning. Competency, professionalism, and customer service on the part transit administration and governance.</p> <p>Commenter mentioned that information is not readily available. Best way is to call, and hope get someone who knows something. 9.6% of San Angelo residents, under the age of 65, report some sort of disability, per 2015-2019 census aggregate. The state figure is 7.9%. San Angelo has a higher number of 65+ individuals than the state average; a lower median household income rate; a lower median per capita income rate; lower educational levels; and higher poverty rates. than the state averages There is a real need and demand for competent, efficient, and effective public transportation in the Concho Valley. Sadly, the citizens here, for the most part, are not receiving such service. There are things, both big and small, that should be done. But. in my view, the biggest obstacle to better service rests with the administration, CVTD board members, and the elected officials of the area, especially the San Angelo city council. These individuals seem to regard public transportation, not as a vital component of public life, akin to power, health, and safety, but rather, as a necessary evil; not as a powerful tool for economic development, and community betterment, but another welfare program, which they are forced to endure, and which, they must constrain, so as to keep it from spiraling out of control and costing any more money than is absolutely necessary to do the least possible. I know that funding is tight and budgets are stretched, but, after years of observing the system and its governance, I have come to the opinion that nothing will change for the better until the above changes.</p>	Online Survey	1/17/2021

## 9. Tyler District Workshop. Region 6

Tuesday, December 15, 2020, 10 a.m.

Attendance: 10



### 9.1 Region 6 – East Texas

- (a) **Goal 1:** Submit in a timely manner planning documents, as may be required by appropriate state and federal agencies

#### *Workshop comments:*

- East Texas Council of Government (ETCOG) is responsible for preparing all documents, and they are just going over the plan update. There haven't been any issues, committee is being active, and they have been able to be kept up to date.
  - East Texas Connect has allowed to coordinate. Tyler Transit has participated and received help from other partners in the procurement process. They are satisfied with the process. The previous plan had 44 recommendations, 24 were for GoBus, 8 areas were lacking but they will focus on those going forward.
- (b) **Goal 2:** Secure the ongoing cooperation of city, county, other local government, and private sector entities in State Planning Region 6

#### *Workshop comments:*

- The collaboration between NDMJ, LLC and ETCOG has been great. They have been able to serve inside the city and out. They want to keep the relationship alive. The two organizations have helped Tyler transit a lot with getting users to where they need to go.
  - Private sector involvement is good to see because it can be a great tool. We are open to help and collaborate because the taxpayers are benefiting from it. We can only do as much as elected officials can help us along. We are fortunate to have really helpful officials. Also, the regional and local providers, we are very pleased with the way we are working together, and we can continue to grow for everyone's benefit.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Ensure to everyone within State Planning Region 6 a full and unfettered opportunity to affect the outcome of area public transportation service

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Providers had a good public participation plan going. The providers have had meetings with the public before the COVID outbreak. They also had a planning program with

ArkTex that dovetailed into the public involvement meetings. They have started doing surveys from the public and agencies that they were serving so they could continue to get that input. They expect to keep the effort up for the next two years for any recommendations that need to be addressed.

- The ETC meets quarterly because we work together with three providers at different levels, so the communications channels are open. They have a monthly meeting with the western region. They also speak with Longview often. They use the meeting to document issues and gaps to be able to resolve them down the road, for safety customer services and connectivity. They use lessons learned to strategize on solutions to the issues.
- Providers have a constant line of communication with NDMJ and Longview Transit. During the COVID outbreak, they communicated to talk about barriers in buses (procurement, safety protocols, collaboration for supplies procurement).
- The East Texas Connect quarterly meetings are great to address issues and get to more opportunities and we are stronger together.
- The ETC group had events planned for the summer to promote public transit through the region, but it was put on hold. But preparations were very advanced. They do have a lot of support from County Judges. The Judges are very involved in being conduits to the transit providers when needs arise. They cover 14 counties, some very urban and some very rural, so they need different approaches. A fair amount of the rural trips are people needed to get to the cities from rural areas for medical appointments and it is a big undertaking to coordinate that.

(d) **Goal 4:** Partner with the Texas Transportation Commission to effect legislative change

*Workshop comments:*

- Providers have worked as part of the Texas Transit Association to attend and participate in the Texas Transportation Commission. In the previous session, they were looking at the TTA Transportation report (Texas Transit Geospatial Needs Report). Users want more hours of service, weekend service, etc. They were active to advocate for needs. They didn't necessarily accomplish a change but from the TTA report, along with private sector, they have been working on a pilot project (not advertised) to provide service on the weekends and after hours. Trying to follow-up on the recommendations of the report. From the report they took service Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday and added late hours. Pilot project is a good example of not reinventing the wheel or doubling services. By responding to the report, additional services address the real needs of the user. Every hour that needs to extend services is costly, what better way

to respond that to use a provider that already has the resources in place. This is good use of taxpayer's dollars.

- The agencies walk a fine line, they have to be mindful of not using any of their federal funds to lobby but it is very important for them to be outspoken about the efforts and services they are providing. Agencies have to evaluate their fleets and make changes to make them more efficient. ETCOG has applied and is utilizing the rural transit tech services program to evaluate the technology they use and find ways to improve efficiencies with their maintenance efforts. Agencies have to try to document and show to elected officials that they are making the most of the funds that they have allocated.
- GoBus works closely with the area agency to better understand senior needs. They were making regularly stops at Nutrition Centers to help understand better the senior population. They are implementing new or making changes in service according to those needs. They are working closely with partners on how they manage their funding to be more effective with fund use. They also work with Camp V (Opened in 2019 in the Tyler area) where they provide several services like therapy. The clinic in Tyler does provide some services to the Veteran populations on service days. They have also partnered with Amtrak through the GoVet to take users to the Shreveport area for services. The program has been growing (~3000 trips pre-COVID outbreak) through service improvements. They even applied it to the Texas Veterans Commission based on the program and its improvements.
- Providers work closely with the senior centers and Camp V (Veterans Clinic in the works for the regional location) to address the elderly population and disabled population. The COVID outbreak has made it more difficult but they are still working on strengthening and creating more partnerships with organizations like those ones and their agency partners.
- Longview Transit has been addressing the needs of the Veterans Hospital in Shreveport. It is a unique concept born in Tyler. One-stop shop facility (20 acres) to accommodate a large variety of veteran's services, transportation being the biggest one. They have a small-group meeting, president, executive director, ex-major, retired general, and Jamal, to put together the financial plan to move the concept forward. In a month, they will present the plan and outcome. They will share the funding level they are able to provide.

### Additional comments made at workshop:

- GoBus has a working relationship and a great coordinator has allowed them to move forward, because they can see the bigger picture and address the challenges. Differences in technology and platforms - They recently have been working with a new platform (contractor NDMJ) that will allow for instant communication. On busy days, communication is key to keeping efficiency and not doubling efforts. In future years, the previous Tiger grants will help but the support from TxDOT will continue to be crucial. In the case of Jamal, it is a great effort that they have managed to be so efficient with a fleet that has a high mileage. Very effective management and preventive maintenance. Regional Mobility Manager has been very good at keeping bookings in line.
- The last round of 5310 allowed for the rebuilding of some of the vehicles previously mentioned. So, it was a very successful unconventional use of funds.
- The Regional Mobility Manager is very effective but extra staff to support would be very beneficial. She works with all providers and users. Users really appreciate the service, and the measures for COVID safety. People with chronic panic have a more difficult time with early appointments, so extra hours are very much appreciated. There has been an increase of users coming into Tyler in Greyhound buses, more people are calling to book trips from the Greyhound stop to medical facilities and other locations.
- More technology is always appreciated but senior use a lot of phone, but we also work with a lot more veterans that are tech-savvy or want/expect more options like websites or phone apps.
- The Regional Mobility Manager coordinates a lot of trips that we cannot get around to. She is very good with addressing senior needs and coordinating different providers to better serve the users. We are also looking for better technology and maintaining or improving the vehicle fleet.
- Greyhound trips into Tyler, good example of how to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Greyhound relocated from downtown Tyler to a location in the Interstate that is out of the Tyler urbanized area. Transit providers had to adjust very quickly because a lot of users now had this extra connection. TxDOT got involved to see how to help bridge that gap and ensure the users still get the service they need.
- There are two MPO's in the Tyler/Longview area and we regularly attend their meetings. They are also on the ETC board. We have a good working relationship with both groups and that allows them to include our add-ons on their transportation plans.
- On the Greyhound issue, they have contacted James to try and get back to the City. They need help finding a new location to rectify the mistake. On the MPO, they helped



us secure funding for a route study that we are releasing in March. They also have been working on a new facility.

- Greyhound does receive inner city funding through Texas. It wouldn't require much to add service to the new location (20 miles out). We have looked at ways on how to fix it. It was about \$200K to address this. If they are receiving these funds, maybe a reallocation of those funds to provide the extra connection. It would be a very immediate fix. The initiative is not given, it is taken. Just a consideration.

***Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:***

<b>Summarized Content</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
Commenter mentioned that they would have not have another transportation alternative if public transportation was not available in their area. A better service area would be an improvement as well as increased availability. There are no services available in the area (Cherokee County).	Online Survey	12/10/2020

## 10. Yoakum District Workshop. Region 17

*Tuesday, December 15, 2020, 1 p.m.*

Attendance: 5



### 10.1 Region 17 – Golden Crescent (Victoria)

(a) **Goal 1:** Provide services that are affordable to all special groups

*Workshop comments:*

- Choose My Ride Program has lower costs for passengers (a regular paratransit trip can be costly >\$15/trip, our cost/trip is \$10/trip).

(b) **Goal 2:** Increase availability of transportation services

*Workshop comments:*

- There are several options available, including rural transportation throughout the eight-county region. As part of that, the Choose My Ride Voucher program has been able to expand out to the rural areas over the last couple of years.
- The partner agencies (dialysis centers, churches, community groups, social service agencies) will work with clients to determine needs and assess eligibility for the program. They distribute the vouchers to their clients.
- Taxi service can supplement service and provide service before/after hours and passengers can use the Choose My Ride Voucher. This helps enhance the availability of services.

(c) **Goal 3:** Improve fare collection processes

*Workshop comments:*

- With Choose My Ride Program, there is no fare collected, only a voucher is needed. Golden Crescent is working to improve the fare collection process including the use of "tap and go" technology.

(d) **Goal 4:** Increase public awareness by using several medias, and use of website

*Workshop comments:*

- Golden Crescent provides a Q&A document outlining basic information on how to use the service. The assessment and Q&A document are posted on the website. Marketing

materials including contact information were recently purchased and sent out to the community. Golden Crescent has not used Facebook to market services.

(e) **Goal 5:** Provide shelters

- There is a bus stop improvement program that will add 48 bus shelters in Victoria aligning with fixed route service. Also adding bicycle facilities, maps and other information to go on the shelters. Solar lighting will be installed for nighttime security, illumination and help drivers see passengers.

(f) **Goal 6:** Provide transportation for children

*Workshop comments:*

- Initial coordination has begun to provide services for children and specifically with Victoria Independent School District (ISD), who wants transportation to the Victoria College.

(g) **Goal 7:** Provide accessible bus stops

*Workshop comments:*

- As part of the bus stop improvement project, stops will be improved to ADA standards. The shelters themselves will make transit more accessible and comfortable for passengers.
- Golden Crescent has been working with TxDOT to coordinate sidewalk improvements as part of roadway improvements that will benefit transit riders.

(h) **Goal 8:** Increase public involvement in Regional Planning

*Workshop comments:*

- In coordination with Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee, they have begun the process of updating the 5-year Regional Transportation Plan. Currently doing various public involvement surveys (SWAT analysis, needs, identification, etc.).
- Golden Crescent has administered on-board surveys at times to get feedback on transportation needs and services.

(i) **Goal 9:** Provide transportation for Veterans

*Workshop comments:*

- Golden Crescent has begun coordinating rides to the VA hospital in San Antonio, charging \$20 for the service round-trip and has seen reductions in the demand for that

service due to the COVID outbreak. Currently, all services are free. Once fares go back into effect, they will consider the use of reduced-cost fares.

- Service is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays with pick-ups from other counties while in route to San Antonio.

(j) **Goal 10:** Maintain cost share routes for job access

*Workshop comments:*

- Offers commuter services (reverse commute); workers from Victoria urban areas going out into chemical plants in the more rural areas - there are currently seven routes, operated twice a day (a.m. and p.m.), offered seven days a week. This is fixed route service that is accessible to anyone.

## 11. Austin District Workshop

Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 10 a.m.

Region 12

Attendance: 7



### 11.1 Region 12 – Capital Area (Austin)

- (a) **Goal 1:** Preserve and expand transportation services for public and human service agencies, especially those that meet the critical needs of the transportation disadvantaged.

*Workshop comments:*

- The area in Williamson County (SH 130) is growing, population has increased a lot. Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) has a route that goes through Taylor. That's one of the areas we would want to expand to get seniors, it's a rural area. People outside need to come into Taylor for groceries, medicine. etc. Something to develop with local non-profits. Working in conjunction with CARTS.
  - Distance between services - bringing people in is challenging for seniors, especially if they have a disability. Partnering with someone in that area would be ideal - offering more service.
  - If you see something that fits these criteria, please reach out to Vanessa to see what options are out there.
  - Most agencies see the need to preserve and expand, but have a hard time applying sustainable partnerships.
  - This last plan was developed with multiple members from the RTCC group, Regional Transit Coordination Committee, and the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- (b) **Goal 2:** Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services for the public.

*Workshop comments:*

- Since the COVID outbreak will be around for a little longer, would this grant be able to be used for cleaning vehicles and PPE?

- CARTS have a steam cleaner that cleans the whole bus since the beginning of the pandemic. They procured one or two machines at the end of the routes. They have safety shields. They supply gloves and masks, and to get on the bus you need a mask.
  - City of San Marcos is doing the same. Blue Bonnett as well - all the PPE. They request all their clients to wear masks and gloves. They do as much as possible to make sure everything is wiped down and sanitized before the next client enters the bus. The biggest one is the steam sanitizer. Put it in the bus, close the bus and it steams the whole bus. Public safety has been #1.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Secure formal state and local agency agreements and identify and address funding, regulatory, programmatic, attitudinal and geographic barriers to implement coordinated transportation in the Capital Area.

*Workshop comments:*

- One of the agencies in the RTCC group had an investigation in vehicle cost sharing. If I'm taking seniors to the daycare center or the senior center for nutrition, there's a lag time to pick them back up after their appointment is over. Who else could be using that bus in those 4-5 hours?
  - Insurance was one of the barriers that was identified. Insurance, the liability, what type of arrangements and agreements would be needed to ensure that it's within what the vehicle was purchased for 5310 funds, defining what's incidental use. They took the approach of "let's look and see how we could get 100% usage of the vehicle for the whole day". Seeing if they can get elders from/to where they need to go. Some were able to make partnerships. It is possible, we just need to ask the question. Need to research and see how we can do it. Focus on the how, instead of maybe. If you want a positive outcome, you need to ask the question. Money is supposed to support elders and individuals with disabilities.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Increase the efficiency of transportation services for public and human service clients

*Workshop comments:*

- One of my past agencies was Faith in Action Caregivers. This agency is a volunteer agency. Using their volunteer agency platform, with these funds, they were able to work with the County to set up patient care to transit providers hubs and get them to a medical facility in Downtown Austin. This program supported that kind of coordination. There are plenty of possibilities to use these funds. We can bridge some of these gaps. Once the person goes to the medical appointment, after they're done, they can travel to the hub. Volunteers operate under different guidelines and are able to assist the client to their home. But the trip from the hub to the downtown started in a rural area,

it was rural 5310 funding that paid for part of the trip. If we sit down and talk about it, there are solutions that can be found to assist. CARTS, CAMPO, even CAPMETRO have great partnerships getting people where they want to go.

- Faith in Action based is an organization operating in town. Someone can bring them into Marble Falls, they can take the CARTS inner city bus route into the downtown Austin area, and come back to Marble Falls and a volunteer can take them back.
- (e) **Goal 5:** Increase public awareness of mobility options and improve access to transportation services for the public.

*Workshop comments:*

- A few years ago, the transit coordination developed a frontline training program. It wasn't with these 5310 funds, but it promoted the area. The program educated people about options targeting doctor's offices, nutrition centers, social service centers, about what transportation options there were to get their clients to their facilities.
- The 5310 should offer and help develop outreach programs to the chamber of commerce. Sends out flyers and cards letting people know this service is available (times, etc.). Walmart, HEB days to help seniors get their shopping and medication, especially now during the COVID outbreak. Picking up packages without having to go into the store. This is a conversation and a training. It's letting people know how the system works. It can be adapted in pandemic times to make it safer. Accommodating for personal safety and pandemic risks.
- Need to explore what we can do to assist seniors and aid them to get the services and appointments they need.
- This is a good opportunity to connect this service to the Mature Driver or the CarFit program. The Mature Driver program helps seniors in residential areas. It helps seniors who are still driving and teaches them proper mirror positioning, how to operate the safety features, etc. Prior to providing hands-on interaction with the senior in the car, there are also have educational presentations. Maybe a connection can be made with the 5310 programs. Maybe some might not be comfortable driving their cars anymore.

**Additional comments made at workshop:**

- When is the application going to be available? February 2021.
- Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area – spent time visiting Lockhart and other areas. One of the reasons she wanted the workshop was because of the community visiting those areas. Seeing transportation - mostly lack hereof. Getting these services out to individuals who really need it.
- Michelle provides resources to students, such as employment and further education opportunities.
- Will take the survey and provide feedback.
- Population of young people want to contribute to their communities. Getting around in their communities has been a challenge.
- There is a gap of service. Will connect with CAMPO to try and use these funds to bridge those gaps.



**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
Transportation services are used to go to the Airport. Personnel who take the extra steps to make sure individuals with disabilities are on the right bus and are getting off on the correct stop.	Online Survey	12/13/2020
Transportation services are used to go to voting centers. Transportation services are not always available when needed. TNC have unreliable WAV service. Buses are great, but TNC WAV unreliable. TNC needs WAV consistent service. Expanded service area and access to different county/city. The availability of WAV should be equitable to persons with disabilities who use fixed-framed motorized wheelchairs and scooters.	Online Survey	11/30/2020
Lead times offered by transportation services are not convenient for users that need to schedule dialysis appointments. Transportation services are not always available when needed. I think rural Texans are under-served with help. Forget the bike lanes and focus on this.	Online Survey	12/31/2020
More advertising of the services available. Connectivity between CARTS and CAP Metro within the rural communities and heavy advertising of what is available. Sidewalk connectivity needs to be improved. More signals like pedestrian hybrid beacons need to be installed. More advertising of available transit options is needed.	Online Survey	12/13/2020
More of it (transportation services) and less money wasted on car first transportation. Stop widening roads for cars. Prioritize public transit, walking, and cycling.	Online Survey	11/23/2020
Would like to see transportation in more rural areas to Travis County, i.e., Lee, Blanco counties.	Online Survey	1/8/2021

## 12. Corpus Christi District Workshop

*Thursday, December 17, 2020, 10 a.m.*

*Region 20*

*Attendance: 8*



### 12.1 Region 20 – Coastal Bend (Corpus Christi)

- (a) **Goal 1:** Establish and maintain strategic, efficient, and integrated transportation services

*Workshop comments:*

- Some of the strategic integration has been limited due to the COVID outbreak. Coordination is on-going with the Duval and Refugio County - CCRTA, Kleberg County (sister agency).
- Poverty level for Brooks and Duval Counties is high. The region generally has lower income levels compared to the state average. Services have been expanded to food; prescription delivery due to the pandemic. Is there a plan to continue the integration of these services through the next 5-year plan?
- Information on the 5- year plan will be provided.
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living program is a mobility options program, setup specifically through 5310 funding. (1) concerns over whether the goals are part of the current plan. Was unaware of fixed route service in rural areas. (2) 5310 funding provides agencies with flexibility to provider service.
- Through volunteers, individuals can call and request delivery service, and they will work with clients.

- (b) **Goal 2:** Provide a variety of transportation services to improve mobility and options for riders

*Workshop comments:*

- Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc. (REAL) asked to see page 116 of the Coordinated Plan.
- The pandemic has impacted provider's ability to meet some of these objectives. Contracts are in place with a number of providers in the area. Service provided is one-on-one and would offer social distancing.

- Clarified by Judy that when REAL or Kleburg County cannot provide services, Coastal Bend Center may be able to provide services.
  - Services are available through Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living that afford social distancing. Passengers must be >65 or have a disability. Passengers can call 361-883-8461 to get information on service.
  - REAL clarified that passenger demand for services nationwide has reduced due to pandemic. Steps have been taken to ensure safety and ridership for REAL has increased.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Pursue long-term financial resources to provide affordable transportation services.

*Workshop comments:*

- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living has seen an increase in demand for services, more trips are being provided than in the past and due to that, has used funding at higher rate.
  - The goal is to obtain additional funding for services. There is an opportunity to seek funds from the passengers, whether through a reduced fare or asking other organizations to help share the cost of service (ex: medical providers).
  - If TxDOT is missing any goals/objectives, there is an opportunity to add/edit/remove.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Expand operating hours and days of the week.

*Workshop comments:*

- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living coordinates with outside vendors to provide service 24/7, passengers can use the service during all hours/all days to be able to get to medical care, dialysis, work, etc.
- Doctor offices are scheduling appointments on weekends and during other times which can be a challenge.
- Some of the trips funded on the weekends are urban and funded through the Corpus Christi RTA. It is likely that some of the weekend/evening trips provided by REAL and Kleburg County are urban trips.
- REAL is working with TxDOT to find funding to provide evening/weekend service.
- There may be an opportunity to provide evening and weekend service to the rural areas.

- The ability to provide service is dependent on a number of factors, rural and urban needs and ability to provide service vary.

(e) **Goal 5:** Improve public awareness of available services

*Workshop comments:*

- Foenix Mobility Rising (Foenix Wellness) has done direct marketing (brochures and information) when services are being provided. They can help get the word out to friends and family. Also provide private-pay trips and work with non-profit entities to provide service.
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living get referrals through dialysis centers, uses social media and word-of-mouth to get the word out about service. Use of creative services rather than paid media. Word-of-mouth is one of the best ways to get the word out about service.
- Generally, phone is the best way to schedule appointments with users.
- There is not a need to do a lot of outreach, generally, they come to us to get information.
- Many of the users do not have internet access and are only able to schedule rides and get information via phone.
- Important to note that many of the service users are low-income and/or do not have access to high-speed internet.
- Difficult to educate potential users on the services available until the user actually needs the service. There is a need to do broad-based education on all services.

(f) **Goal 6:** Coordinate for residents' mobility needs to destinations outside the region

*Workshop comments:*

- Example was given where a passenger needs to go to San Antonio to see a specialist. May need to coordinate care through CBCIL.
- Currently there is not a contract in place to provide rural trips.
- Have been coordinating on providing services to Veterans to get service in Victoria, which is right outside of the Coastal Bend area. Set up a grant to provide services to veteran's when needed to obtain service.
- All transit vehicles are ADA accessible, which is not the case with private providers. CBCIL have worked with providers to encourage them to purchase vehicles that are accessible.

- Information related to the Coordinated plan, applications and scoring will be announced at a later date.

**Additional comments made at workshop:**

- This is the first time it has been noted that 5310 funds can be used for emergency preparedness. Clarification was asked on where those funds have been used in such a way. How can we do a better job of planning for resiliency in our planning?
- The information will be reviewed. Resiliency planning is important in planning decisions.
- Appreciates the survey that was developed and thinks it does a good job of getting feedback from users and hopes TxDOT can distribute it to the users of the service.
- In early 2019, Foenix – Mobility Rising, the Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living and the Area Agency on Aging began collaborating to provide mobility options to the elderly and those with disabilities in coastal Texas. The program received a grant from the US National Agency and Disability Transportation Center, and with it, Foenix launch an on-demand volunteer driver program for seniors and people with disabilities providing services throughout Coastal Bend.

***Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:***

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
Commenter noted that without public transportation in the area, they couldn't get where they needed to go. "so please please for everyone like me with disabilities where we can't drive, please continue the public transportation in our area."	Voicemail	12/4/2020
Commenter noted that without public transportation services they would have no other transportation alternative.	Online Survey	11/23/2020

### 13. Pharr District Workshop

*Thursday, December 17, 2020, 1 p.m.*

*Region 21*

*Attendance: 9*



#### 13.1 Region 21 – Lower Rio Grande (Brownsville, McAllen, Harlingen, South Padre Island)

(a) **Goal 1:** Improve the quality of customer's transit experience

*Workshop comments:*

- We're able to obtain funding to do fleet replacement. Ordered approximately 18 new buses to cover service - great for client. Clients appreciate the more modern vehicles, better appearance, larger fleet, improved service and better comfort. In late March/early April, due to lack of information, saw rise to feeling of isolationism. Clients still experience this; the shutdowns have been disorienting to them. Measures taken were safety measures, barriers, disinfecting, and face masks. In the long run, it establishes more comfort in the service. Even though it is a negative experience now, it will have overall positive outcomes.
- Help improve customer transit experience. Ride systems Mobil app can see where buses are in real time. Reduced calls to centers gives info of when buses are expected to arrive - this helped clients tremendously. Don't have to worry about brochures or not being able to see the signs because they are too far off the ground. Not everyone has smartphones with internet access, but many of the clients do. This app is being used by Brownsville, Valley Metro and UTRGV. Having one app that displays everything in one place in the palm of your hand is very useful.
- You can see where you're at on the map and find the closest bus stop. You can see the vehicle's icon and location. You can see if you've "missed" the bus in real time. Choose all available routes. Can also send out rider alerts. If a bus can't get to next bus stop (breakdown, etc.), clients can see that. There is also static message displayed. Current message informs clients about face mask requirements. Clients can find information for other transit providers.
- Improve quality of transit experience. We do provide refresher courses to drivers and implement any of the areas of improvements and address comments from the public. Helps people who use the service in a weekly basis to do shopping,

medical appointments. One-on-one trainings. Sunday meetings with all staff drivers to address all these issues.

- Take customer feedback into consideration and quarterly new training is provided. Trying to achieve best quality for passengers, elderly and handicapped.

(b) **Goal 2:** Provide increased transit alternatives to people in the region

*Workshop comments:*

- We were working on different projects with different communities. Raymonville Park and Ride to complement existing on-demand service - issues with competitive grant. They were looking for a larger project. Community and city leadership still interested. In Mission, got eight new buses for Citrus line. Finally got through in November, establishment of micro transit service designed to fill in the geographic gaps for specific locations or transit lines. Much interest to get this approved. It looks like a great idea - straddles line between taxi and bus service. Small scale, very flexible in terms of origins/destinations. There is also many other projects in the making/behind the scenes.
- We did expand our transit services this past year. We implemented a route realignment, which was derived from a transit study done in 2017. Placed these recommendations in effect. Ultimately, increased service coverage and also had positive impact on demand-response service. Greater service in fixed route service. Buses also provided to elderly and disabled population.
- One of the eight routes they looked at implementing (all fully planned - implementing is real challenge). Connecting Mission to University, North of Hidalgo, and North of Alton. Loop Mission, STC, McAllen, Edinburgh (UTRGV), back to Mission. It's imminent, but not set in stone yet.
- Pilot program and flex-routes can deviate the line in 1/2 mile in any direction if they get a 24-hour notice from clients who need it (disability/senior). On-demand service fills those gaps. Citrus encompasses a larger area.
- Working with Alliance group and cooperating with ATG. Gave a forecast of economic and population growth for 2045 (MTP). Incorporate data into their plans and restructure routes.
- 90% of student body is online. Transit is needed for educational facilities. Trying to preserve STC lines so their service doesn't fall to the wayside. Collaborate with ATG to merge one of their business 83 lines with STG lines to make that one route and not lose riders keeping things economical. Using for the planning of the mission citrus line.

- The agency is ready to undertake this task. Tried to provide a route for clients to get from/to locations - airport, trails, etc. Can help passengers to get to their destinations in a safe way.

(c) **Goal 3:** Coordinate transit agency functions

*Workshop comments:*

- Geographical planning, other aspects of the 2045 MTP was the eventual integration and standardization, including visual design of website to compile in the same general look. Execution is still a work in progress. Goal for a while, but not written in stone with the long-range plan. Regional service that has gone back and forth for years now. Metro connect stretched from McAllen to Brownsville. Express service partners with multiple agencies, ongoing. Passing up second year of operation. Starting 3rd year (sustainability). Facing uphill battle due to the COVID outbreak. Real challenge because communities are hurting - funding isn't there, trying to implement right now. It has been a long time in planning. First step now is using Ride Systems (were using DoubleMap) to connect with other providers in the region who use the same system/app. Regionality - finding a cohesive surface for passengers, trying to follow everyone else. Making things more convenient to users.
- Since June, many projects to push service forward and capture the public's attention. Micro transit service - typically works better in places where you would use an Uber. Innovative thinking between them and Ron Garza - all in with the idea. It would supplement the service and help reach people out of the range of their service. Connecting them with people from locations in that community. Collecting region/pool of information. Established regional call center at a building. Before, haphazard and people not designated for this task specifically. Volume was too much to handle. Now regional call center will eventually help riders outside of the area and help them find what transit agency will best suit their needs. This will be a regional call center.
- Difference between micro-transit and paratransit - Paratransit has to conform to certain guidelines, while micro-transit is more freeform and more fluid in terms of its capabilities. Micro-transit vehicles will all be ADA compliant. Minivan for paratransit. Smaller cutaway bus for micro-transit.
- Micro-transit's only limitation is that it operates within the city.
- Citrus line is too far away from student area (approximately 20 miles from the Dona School District).



- Citrus line was a city service. Project that was requested by Mission with specific aspects built in it. There are services that reach Dona through metro routes. Citrus was never meant to reach Dona - Citrus had another objective.

(d) **Goal 4:** Improve the image of transit across the region

*Workshop comments:*

- It's been difficult over the last ten months to do anything. Switching from in-person to virtual has been challenging. We have undertaken doing public outreach in the form of marketing/public outreach, like job fairs. Efforts are taking place but the COVID outbreak has taken wind out of our sails. Outreach that would typically be done has been closed down - can't congregate. Things have ground to a halt. Will not halt our efforts, but it has been difficult, since primary objectives have been requiring more from them recently - very challenging.
- Over the last two years, (pre-COVID outbreak) strong influence in social media. Engagement with passengers. Did a lot of marketing. Earlier this month, we had the McAllen parade float visible during the parade. Highlight the frontline heroes - staff from operations team to be part of it wearing mask. Not open to the public, but visible. Float of the electric bus with a Christmas tree inside. Our way to show the community that public transportation is still very much alive and around. We are moving heroes. Many of the front-line heroes continue to show up to work - this includes us who work in these transit systems. Moving our community - opportunity to say thanks.
- Back in Nov 2020, the Mayor rode on the bus. Importance of widening the system. Just recently, the city of McAllen (partnership with Texas Transit Association), hosted the annual conference, which was cancelled due to the COVID outbreak - was going to be in April. During that day (August), the City of McAllen/Metro McAllen was recognized as 2020 Urban Transit System of the Year. In the same conference we awarded the friend of Transit award to Senator Hinojosa.
- We did allow free ridership for the election but couldn't advertise due to lack of funding.
- This cost was to undertake RTAP to advertise transit services. However, due to the COVID outbreak, efforts were hindered.

(e) **Goal 5:** Improve public awareness of available services

No specific comments

**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

<b>Summarized Content</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
Commenter noted that they are generally uninformed about transportation services in the area. Was unaware there were transport services available. Don't have to worry about transportation.	Online Survey	11/20/2020
Commenter noted that transportation services are not available in all rural areas. Yes, however many others unable to use it because no service is available in the rural area.	Online Survey	12/13/2020
Greater outreach for individuals to be aware of this service and increased service area	Online Survey	12/14/2020

## 14. San Antonio District Workshop

Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 1 p.m.

Region 18 – Alamo Area (San Antonio)

Attendance: 16



### 14.1 Region 18 – Alamo Area

- (a) **Goal 1:** Enhance the quality of the customer’s travel experience – Customer service and safety are emphasized. Services that can be used conveniently and at a reasonable cost by the public

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) will unveiled an app soon. They will be able to schedule, cancel or see information in the app. The customer service experience will be greatly improved. It will also work in a desktop environment.
- (b) **Goal 2:** Expand the availability of services to those who are unserved – A full range of public transit services should be offered to all residents and visitors.

#### *Workshop comments:*

- It can be challenging to reach individuals in rural areas, getting word to them is difficult. They have a community scattered for thousands of acres. Newspapers are not circulated that far out.
- At AACOG, PR individuals have been using social media to try and reach people. They also the opportunity to subscribe for news in their website. "Community section" on the website, functions as a community board, they can submit information to be posted in this section. AACOG.com. There is also the Alamo Resource Center (San Antonio) for resources including information for medical related services 210-625-7200. Also, the Alamo Service connection (211-like) they provide information for people in their service area 210-477-3275.
- The Southwest Area Regional Transit District (SWART) has had luck using a Grassroots approach. Mobility Manager and Ops Manager send flyers to Meal services and regional and local nutrition centers or food centers in the area. One-on-one visits with medical facilities, doctors, veterans’ affairs offices groups, townhalls or meetings. Most of the clients don't have internet or social media access so talking to churches, adult daycares, home health facilities or other organizations helps a lot. Especially now

that virtual appointments are widespread. Housing authorities, they can put information in mailboxes.

- There is a program call " Mature Drivers Program" to help get elder populations to be more familiar with their vehicles or help them transition to regional transit services when it is not safe for them to drive.
  - The group discussed whether providers have taken a look at the comparison of census population totals vs the amount of people being reached. Providers are looking at the numbers, especially since we might jump to a larger urban area classification (Region 24). AACOG uses Remix software that helps the best routes based on population.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery – Efficiency is a measure of doing things right, while effectiveness is a measure of doing the right things

*Workshop comments:*

- AACOG has handed out self-mailers in the buses, since the COVID outbreak, the options are still only. Surveys within the websites. Plus verbal feedback through the departments. If a customer has feedback they can call and leave the comment directly. It is done all year long.
  - Some of these things are in the SWART 5-year plan. We do a lot of phone calls. Randomly selected routes, get called for short surveys and then added to a database. This helps identify weakness and strengths in our services. This is in addition to the mailers but the phone calls are more effective at getting back feedback. Goal 4: Establish and sustain communication among stakeholders in the region's transportation plan – Trust, and leadership continue to be the most important elements to sustaining communication
- (d) **Goal 4:** Establish and sustain communication among stakeholders in the region's transportation plan – Trust, and leadership continue to be the most important elements to sustaining communication.

*Workshop comments:*

- Providers try to participate in as many panels as there are available that deal with service to elderly populations. We encourage any non-profits that do the same to participate as well.
- How do we include people with disabilities and older adults in planning and implementation for transportation services?

- AACOG Regional Steering Committee will start meeting again. This will help get projects moving. There will be an RFP (Request for Proposal) for the next 5-year plan development.
- SWART noted that there are various means to make sure we include special populations. 17 representatives including an ADA and elderly rider. They also have representatives from other sections (ambulances, etc). They also have small focus groups that meet 2 or 3 times a year: renal care centers, veteran's services and mental health. Staff attends regional and local meetings for economic development, regional event, planning meetings, cities and counties to make sure they have special populations in other regional plans and considerations not only transportation ones.
- SWART has information posted in their website and social media but also does PSAs and distributes flyers. The majority of rural communities have one representative that functions as a spokesperson for special populations so we make an effort to keep in touch. The majority of our ridership is elderly and disabled. We probably lack in a rider base that would be younger than that (20-40 years old). By tradition the transit services in our area have been accessed fairly well by these special populations. A good majority of our veteran riders are over 60 years old (including their dependents). We have special programs with some county governments where they cover the fair for veteran riders. Misperception that these services are not for the general public, people assume they are only for elderly, disabled, low income. We continue to work in changing that perception, especially in the rural areas. Regardless of census results there is still a 2-year period of transition if there are any changes.
- Going forward AACOG will post information in the website and social media. We also do ads and PSAs. We are also going to be doing an email subscription, to try and ensure information gets out in time.
- The next SWART plan meeting is being scheduled, however it is difficult to get a quorum in a virtual setting.
- AACOG is using ECOLane - dispatching software. They can download from app store.
- It was asked whether the regional plan schedule was available yet. There is a link to the website but is there a meeting plan developed. It is important, so we can let our partners know.
- AACOG is working on that along with the subscription. It might be live in 2 or 3-weeks' time.

## 14.2 Region 24 – Middle Rio Grande (Uvalde, Brackettville, Eagle Pass, Crystal City Cotulla, Rock Springs)

### (a) **Goal 1:** Increase Coordination

#### *Workshop comments:*

- SWART is very active regionally in forming partnerships. "The more partnerships we have the better we can coordinate" - Service, Referral and Other providers. We coordinate with other providers to do in-kind services when needed.

### (b) **Goal 2:** Improve Training and Technology

#### *Workshop comments:*

- SWART will have an app coming out in March. They will be able to track travels, make appointments, refill funds in their account. It is a very big step forward. Last time the plan was developed we were in the mist of implementing an electronic fare card and now this. Technology in buses have also been upgraded (cameras, tablets, touchless fare cards). Also continued training for our staff (drivers, mechanics, ops).
- **Goal 3:** Increase Investment to alleviate future financial constraints and improve service quality

#### *Workshop comments:*

- SWART worked since we are becoming a standalone district on changing public perception into not a special transit service but an everyone transit service. We have increases partnerships and advertising revenues: Headstarts, Council of Gov with 311 and municipalities are investing back in our transit services. They have a Mobility Manager on staff. In partnership with the Ops Manager they work to increase partnerships, visibility and awareness. They are looking to grow the local investment to increase service. Once a standalone: it was key to be financially stable and sustainable. They use partnerships to achieve this. Being able to look at having a financial structure to achieve future projects and transition periods, they are working on a 5-year plan that can be developed by a consultant. This plan is a bit older because of the implications of the Eagle Ford Shell. We have a RPP out to procure for a consultant (deadline Feb. 5, 2021) so things are moving fast. Working with TxDOT (KFH Group Consultant on Technical Assistance Program) on a route study for Eagle Pass to prepare for growth. Infrastructure improvements in Uvalde and Crystal City, plus a property purchase in Eagle Pass. We try to use foundation funds, other TxDOT funding streams and 5310 to support activities in our 5-year plan.

#### *Other comments:*

- SWART is using Shah Software - Transit Manager. It can also be downloaded through the app store. Same as the one they are using to do electronic fare cards.
- SWART's next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2021 at 1:30 pm - virtual setting. If there is no quorum, the meeting will have to be just informational. The meetings are usually posted in the website and social media.

### Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
Commenter's mother uses the service and is very satisfied. Commenter felt that the wait time of two hours to be picked up or return home was too long.	Online Comment Form	1/6/2021
Commenter called in support of regional rail and more mass transit. Commenter has safety concerns driving on I-35 and I-10 corridors.	Voicemail	1/19/2021
Commenter mentioned that reducing the wait time would improve the service provided.	Online Survey	1/6/2021
More frequent trips. Transportation only picks up 1-2 times a day.	Online Survey	12/10/2020
In the city of new Braunfels, I would like to see three or more regularly scheduled routes providing free public transportation. Sun-Thurs. 7am-8pm. Fri-Sat 7am-11pm.	Online Survey	11/20/2020

## 15. Laredo District Workshop

*Thursday, January 7, 2021, 10 a.m.*

*Regions: 19 and 24*

*Attendance: 12*



### 15.1 Region 19 – South Texas (Laredo, Pueblo Nuevo, Marando City, Bruni, Oilton, El Cenizo)

(a) **Goal 1:** Enhance the quality of the customer’s travel experience

*Workshop comments:*

- 5311 agencies (Webb County and City of Del Rio) are increasing customer experience. Cleaning and disinfecting are being done. ADA compliance is important. Travel experience is a must. While funding is limited, daily operations are on-going.
- We have added buses to increase social distancing seating. We have added plexiglass and priority seating. Passengers and driver safety are in mind. Passengers know that when bus is packed, distancing is important.
- SWART works with the City of Del Rio. City of Del Rio (Elsa) has concentrated on technology for customers and drivers. Software for appointment scheduling is looking to be improved. Vehicles have been purchased. These are "ProMaster" vehicles which have been shown to be more comfortable for passengers.

(b) **Goal 2:** Expand the availability of services to those who are unserved

*Workshop comments:*

- 2010 Census provides transportation location indicators. Agencies may not have funding or resources to serve these identified locations. Routes and services are focused on increasing available service despite these limitations.
- Underserved areas in our region have been targeted through partnerships. These partnerships aim to close gaps, but additional needs exist - funding is an issue. Underserved areas still exist. For those of us who live along the border, Colonias are a challenge. Lack of infrastructure in Colonias. Hard to get vehicles out to these areas. Border area has a growing population. Additional population increases demand for services.



- Census pointed to increased population and underserved areas. Webb County population increases, resulting in additional underserved areas. Colonias are not always located near the urban areas. Additional distance presents challenges to routing and service provision. Routes, services, and scheduling will be a focus with the new Census results upcoming.

(c) **Goal 3:** Increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery

*Workshop comments:*

- Regional coordination efficiency. Webb County is the only county in South Texas region. Other stakeholders have been contributing to regional coordination efficiency.

(d) **Goal 4:** Investigate new sources of local revenue for public transit through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service. Establish and maintain strategic, efficient, and integrated transportation services

No specific comment

(e) **Goal 5:** Establish and sustain communications and decision-making mechanisms among sponsors and stakeholders to guide effective implementation of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan

*Workshop comments:*

- South Texas Development Council (STDC) has been meeting virtually regarding 5-year plan. This has been going well. Just beginning the finalization of consultant procurement to produce the plan.
- STDC serves PHR and LRD districts and meets every four months. Regional stakeholders have continued to coordinate with the progress of the update. On December 10<sup>th</sup> consultants began development of the 5-year plan. STDC board will meet this month and decide on consultant procurement.

(f) **Goal 6:** Improve the image of transit across the region

*Workshop comments:*

- Stakeholders have been excellent during the regional coordination - Star and Zapata areas have been assisted. Coordination has improved the image of transit.
- Rider survey was completed during the development of the last plan - next plan will also include a survey.

- Branding has been well received by the passengers. Surveys were completed as part of Community Action Agency. Through these surveys, we understand passenger needs/wants. Coordination with El Metro.

**Other comments:**

- STDC is starting the update of their Regional Public Transportation Plan. Please contribute as now is the time. Last two meetings we found stakeholders shared their experiences with mitigating through the COVID outbreak. To join these meetings, STDC circulates invites to stakeholders and they share with their contacts. It's also posted to the Texas Register.

**15.2 Region 24 – Middle Rio Grande (Uvalde, Brackettville, Eagle Pass, Crystal City Cotulla, Rock Springs)**

**(a) Goal 1: Increase coordination**

*Workshop comments:*

- SWART worked on coordination over last three years. Over 30 partnerships have increased over time, including transit providers, members of public, and businesses. Coordination with local mom and pop transportation providers has been more challenging. Strong coordination efforts with City of Del Rio, client services and training are met through coordinated efforts. Additionally, when vehicle breakdowns occur, these rural providers work together. Coordination efforts are worked out behind the scenes and the customer is unaware (seamless). Veteran service officers, mental health organizations, and renal care facilities have focus groups that meet 3-4 time per year.

**(b) Goal 2: Improve Training and Technology**

*Workshop comments:*

- Software app will be rolled out in March - electronic farecard is an important technology. Installed cameras in all vehicles. Drivers can coordinate and do admin on tablets - pre-trip and post-trip on tablets. Training has continued - Mobility Manager and Operations Manager are certified in travel training through Easter Seals. Mobility Manager call customers to determine route success and service quality.

**(c) Goal 3: Increase Investment to alleviate future financial constraints and improve service quality**

### *Workshop comments:*

- Administration staff has worked on this. Community perception is important. Services are not just for elderly and disabled. Partnerships have grown. Advertising through bus wrapping has increased fund raising. Local support system has been engaged financially over the last few years. These stakeholders now have an active interest. Mobility management program is utilized to get the word out regarding our services and show that an impact is being made. Economic impact of our services is generated through the scheduling software. This allows us to report on economic dollars to the community.

### **Other comments:**

- 17-member stakeholder committee has been meeting virtually. Participation through phone calls and emails to maintain engagement - February 16th is the next meeting. Request for bid is out to perform a needs assessment and complete the 5-year plan. SWART's region is in year six of their plan, so they have been working a while on this effort and have been able to meet many of their previously identified goals and objectives.
- SWART services will be applying for software which will enable riders more choices and investing in more comfortable vehicles for passengers. Additionally, investing in training for drivers. Customer service enhancement has been a focus, this includes enhancements to telephone, technology, training, and comfort. Seeking to improve information dissemination to the public. Medical service trips (renal care), disabled individuals, seniors, veterans, and mental health clientele are a focus. Work hand in hand with City of Del Rio.
- Eagle Pass will be a small urban designation. Colonias contribute to increasing population there. Need to focus on transition from rural to small urban without affecting service provision. SWART has been working on this transition for four years. This consideration has including adding activities to the regional plan. Currently working with KFH Group through TxDOT TA program. Route analysis study is underway for Eagle Pass to better determine a future route/trends - working with various stakeholders to do this. Slowly transitioning flex route into a fixed route - using rural discretionary funding will add an additionally flex route. Multimodal facility is under consideration as well. Needs assessment and facility conceptional design activities are underway - funding is undetermined. Thinking about 10-20 years in the future.

## 16. Abilene District Workshop

Thursday, January 7, 2021, 1 p.m.

Region 7

Attendance: 11



### 16.1 Region 7 – West Central Texas (Abilene, Rotan, Aspermont)

- (a) **Goal 1:** Increase knowledge between key stakeholders and community members by sharing information resources, practices, and capabilities, thus avoiding duplication response capabilities in either public or private sectors

#### *Workshop comments:*

- Regional Stakeholder Group put together a website with information about the providers and services available - [wctxrides.com](http://wctxrides.com)
- CityLink was the lead agency. CityLink has a partnership with the United Way office to help coordinate regional efforts. The last year and a half CityLink has been working on this website including the information of all service providers in the region plus information about contact information. Also, used as mobility manager gateway to help coordinate trips for passengers that move across service areas in the region. It has been popular - they are proud of it.
- Some of the technology implemented includes bus location devices (ABL) in the last few weeks. It is a big piece of technology. Also, additional security systems (camera surveillance, some upgrades to existing ones too). There is a RFP for the new Enunciation system, we are reviewing responses and will decide on the next step soon.
- Central Texas Rural Transit District (CTRTD) works with West Texas Opportunities, Inc. (WTO), SPARTAN and CityLink quarterly through the regional coordination meetings. There has been on occasion the notification of the need for service from the website but a lot of the use right now it is still from traditional process. We have a partnership to provide service to veterans.
- Southern Plains Rural Transit District (SPARTAN) is connecting systems with West Texas opportunities. They are connecting systems in Abilene. They hope to continue to expand those options to be able to go across multiple counties through technologies. As Greyhound and others continue to pull out of rural areas,

rural transit will continue to fill the gaps. They plan to incorporate the eight transit systems in this area.

- Abilene is interested in learning about the relay system, because they have had customers that need the service but it was challenging to set it up and providers ended up having to provide service in a personal vehicle because they were restricted by county line restrictions for providers. "Rural transportation really sucks to be blunt".
  - CTRTD had not heard of something like this. When it is a special call like this they refer to a mobility manager, as long as we have a place of service over there should not have been a necessity to address the need this way – An individual can call the 1-800-710-2277 number and request service. All the calls go through scheduling but for same day, they go directly to dispatch. For something special it would go to the mobility manager and most of the time we can make it happen. General managers are very keen on getting people where they need to go.
- With the preventive maintenance program CityLink has, they are getting a lot of years of service from their revenue vehicles. They use small buses from demand response. More than half the fleet are 2009 vehicles. They usually have a 5-year life expectancy, but they have been able to double that through preventive maintenance. The crew has been outstanding a lot of the vehicles are working with 3,000 miles. There is never enough money for preventive maintenance, but we stretch our money. It is a very successful program, so we just need to continue and anything that can be done to garner support.
- A participant noted having bad experiences with requesting same day service. Dispatch requires three-day notice.
  - CTRTD noted that policies have changed, we do require 48 hours, but we can put in same day requests from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm. If you think dispatch is not taking you seriously, you can request to speak with a mobility manager or the general manager.
- A participant noted that a lot has been done and improvements have been made in the past few years.
  - Unfortunately, with CTRTD, it can depend on the dispatcher, but we continue to work hard to provide better service each time.
  - West Texas Opportunities Inc, out of Lamesa. TRAX 806-872-8354.

- CTRTD uses Facebook a lot more now. They are also considering the use of advertising in buses. It is very good for interaction with the public.
- Citylink, because of the COVID outbreak a lot of things are on a standstill, but now that we have a good system - we did a lot of marketing for that. We used our Facebook page and website. Local news media promoting the safety measures. A lot of pamphlets, brochures, flyers in buses and locations that our users frequent. We put stickers on our vehicles to promote the website. We also has an SMS system for the bus stops, so you can text the stop ID to the SMS system and get a next time bus arrival. We are moving to be able to get back on "normal" flow of business with our regular coordination. We are working on contacting our stakeholder group to increase membership. We created a lot of promotional materials, mailed flash drives to entities in the region that could have interest in the services. We also provided print-out materials for them to distribute. We've been doing a lot of marketing for these. It is too early to tell how well things are going - it went live a couple of weeks ago, but the main objective is to improve the user experience. We do realize there have been complaints, so we are trying to do what we can to improve. This is a big city approach to technology usage. Not very common for communities like Abilene. Hopefully it will improve ridership, but the COVID outbreak was unforeseen and people are more apprehensive to get in public transportation. Hopefully that will change in the future. The app is compatible with any smartphone.
- There was some miscommunication through the COVID outbreak, CityLink services were not affected. The service affected was the senior centers. We are offering some transportation, but we are working to pick those up until they are able to get back into service.
- It was noted that it can take up to two hours to get across Abilene. It depends on your starting point and destination. CityLink is in preliminary discussions, but the plan is to provide demand response vehicles that we usually use for ADA and senior citizen services. So, it wouldn't not require the 2-hour ride in the fixed route system.

**Other comments:**

- The decals in the bus stops poles have the information for the SMS service. "For bus arrival information text 325-240-5678 Stop ID: XXXX". It is not visible for moving cars, but it is appropriate for pedestrians. They include QR codes installed around three and 1/2 feet from the ground - eyesight level. It takes you to the download page for the service app. There might be data charges based on the user's phone service, but the

app is free. Partner: TRANSLOC. If you stay on the line it will forward you to the dispatch and customer service office; 325-676-6BUS Main Line.

- Now is a good time for planning agencies to step back and do some planning for the future. Public transit got a bad rep at the start of the pandemic, especially urban settings, but Texas has one of the best systems in the nation. We can always do better, and we are working with TxDOT, PTN. Our relationship is stringer and think it will be blossomed into good things in the future.

**Comments received from Online Survey, Comment Form or other Sources:**

Summarized Content	Source	Date Received
They have been a life-line in many ways (Double Mountain Coach)	Online Survey	1/7/2021

## 17. Amarillo District Workshop

*Tuesday, January 12, 2021, 10 a.m.*

*Region 1*

*Attendance: 13*



### 17.1 Region 1 – Panhandle (Amarillo)

- (a) **Goal 1:** Increase reliable access to low income residents regionally in the most convenient form possible (Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) has made efforts to improve the transportation services provided in the region.
- Amarillo City Transit (ACT) has an agreement with Amarillo College to provide free transit to all students, faculty and staff at two campuses (West and Main) to school and anywhere in the service area - they need to show student ID.
- ACT provides materials in different languages and has language services to accommodate other languages as needed (as many 26 languages by the City of Amarillo).
- The coordination and program with ACT and Amarillo College has been successful.
- Funding from TxDOT was used to fund the One Ride Now mobile phone app. Riders can see the location of bus stops, headways and the location of buses. There have been some issues getting bus on-board/equipment/GPS/scheduling software to work with the app. The City of Amarillo is in the app, in the future - will work to include additional providers.
- We have had some issues with apps working in rural areas, will work with Katie to get a system that will work on PTC vehicles.

- (b) **Goal 2:** Increase reliable access to elderly individuals regionally in the most convenient form possible (Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- The programs implemented to help make transit more accessible has made transit better for all riders, including elderly individuals.



- Right now, ridership is down, the hope is to increase marketing and offer additional services once we are past the COVID outbreak (ex: shopping trips). Also working to get new buses for fixed routes and expand the overall flexibility of the fleet (ex: flexible route in the hospital district). The hope is to open up service in quadrants of the service areas.
- The additional services under development by ACT will greatly aid the entire community.
- A participant asked “I currently live in Fort Worth, but plan to move back to Amarillo and live at a downtown retirement community -- Park Place Towers or The Continental. I do not drive because of glaucoma. What alternatives do I have if I want to work - maybe school sub/staff?”
  - Either of those locations provide services to disabled individuals - would need to be arranged in advance, there is a subscription service that could be used to arrange for regular rides. Application is available at Amarillo.gov, 806-378-6842, select #3 on the menu - to discuss specialized transportation services.

(c) **Goal 3:** Establish more accessible routes & entry points for disabled individuals to access stops & pickups (Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- ACT has made efforts to add bus stops and make buses more accessible.
- ACT have added several bus stops and worked to make the route to bus stops more accessible (sidewalks), in some cases there have been new shelters. ACT acknowledges improvements are needed; however, these can be costly, the City and ACT see this as a priority and will work to continue developing these projects.

(d) **Goal 4:** To continue to seek financial opportunities for all areas of public transportation and keeping the status quo at a minimum with a desired increase in funding to expand existing public options. (Short & Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- ACT is working to create an advertising program to develop additional revenue sources. Currently, ACT does not advertise on buses.
- Panhandle Community Services (PCS) is working with local businesses (ex: Tyson Plant) to get a grant that will assist in providing transportation services for workers. Currently, it is a challenge to provider services and afford social distancing on the vehicles. PCS provides transportation for both shifts of workers.

- It would be beneficial for there to be a portal that identifies various funding sources available for transit providers (outside of traditional opportunities such as FTA or TxDOT).
  - This might be something TxDOT should consider with the next coordinated call - developing a database of funding opportunities.
  - When meetings are held for PROMPT (coordinated meeting with transit providers), members will note upcoming funding opportunities (ex: private foundation). One of the goals was to reduce dropouts for those that do not have transportation to school. Workforce Solutions Panhandle have started some programs including a CDL class to get more drivers certified to drive buses.
  - PCS has a consultant that works to research grants and find potential funding sources.
  - ACT uses a program to assist getting drivers certified with CDL, it began last fall but was put on hold due to the COVID outbreak. ACT acknowledges that they need to restart that program. The City also offers 16 weeks paid leave, hazard pay, and additional pay if you have "passenger endorsement."
  - PCS has been able to continue paying drivers even as service has been cut.
  - ACT would like to provide Sunday service, however, there currently is not enough funding to provide that service. ACT acknowledges that riders would like this service (ex: worship services or to visit friends and relatives).
- (e) **Goal 5:** To increase regional public awareness of the regional public transportation resources and reduce the feelings of lack of trust in the public transportation resources (Short & Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- PCS has employed a Communications Director which has led to improved social media presence, a newsletter, and email correspondence with elected officials.
- PROMPT has developed Public Information and Education campaign through the Coordinated Call funding. Materials have included flyers, information on transit funding, a website, and assessment tool that help a potential rider find services (ex: who to call, based on needs and eligibility). Designed to reach people that speak other languages than English (Spanish and another language, like Vietnamese). Information will also go out to local school districts showing them transportation options. Outreach has been done to health and human service agencies, providers, assisted living and medical facilities and the general public.

There was good participation as part of the program. There will be briefing documents for local officials to provide information on transit options and availability in the region. The One Ride app was also funded through Coordinated Call funds as a demonstration project to address a number of the needs under Goal 5 (low-income, elderly, disabled individuals).

- ACT is working with the East Ridge neighborhood (surveys, local meetings) to identify what transportation services are needed in the community (area is in NE part of Amarillo, near the airport).

(f) **Goal 6:** To establish a stable and reliable regional pool of drivers to meet public transportation needs (Long Term)

*Workshop comments:*

- The City of Amarillo is working to retain and find drivers by emphasizing good benefits (pension). The City has found a number of second-career individuals that come and work as drivers. The City is considering adding their own driver certification to increase the pool of drivers. Competition for drivers with over-the-road drivers and oil and gas industry.
- Driver retention can be difficult, potential drivers can make more working in the oil and gas industry.
- PCS offers very good benefits for drivers. Driver retention is relatively good, many of the drivers are second-career individuals and work because enjoy their work and interacting with riders.
- It is important to use the TxDOT PIO to notify individuals of public meetings, changes in service, etc. Transit providers can use this network/outreach mechanism to get the word out.
- Both agencies greatly appreciate the work of Richard Neill and Katie Paul and their representative agencies to help support transit in the region.

ACT, PCS and the other transit agencies do great work and TxDOT appreciates the work Katie Paul has done for transit in the region.

## 18. Lubbock District Workshop

Wednesday, January 13, 2021, 1 p.m.

Region 2

Attendance: 9



### 18.1 Region 2 – South Plains (Lubbock, Plainview, Littlefield, Muleshoe, Levelland, Sundown, Brownfield)

- (a) **Goal 1:** Increase public outreach and education on transportation services in the South Plains region

#### *Workshop comments:*

- The South Plains Association of Governments (SPAG) completed the TxDOT funded pilot project aimed at this goal. Currently undergoing coordinated call funded planning operation to further enhance this. One of the things that came up a lot is that this region is very reliant on the relationships between private entities, public agencies, etc. This presents particular set of challenges - likely an ongoing challenge.
  - With help from SPAG providers on our pilot project, they did a roadshow and aimed transportation trainings to social and medical service entities trying to train staff to give them information on how to better give transit information to users. Recipients seemed to like to get this information. Lots of in person trainings - very rural in nature.
  - Lots of positive feedback from the region - training directly from the entities was very positive. Focus on how each of their programs worked, physical limits, maps, apps, what kind of funding/vouchers were available.
  - From different services (15 or 20 helped train), about 53% of their time was spent helping clientele address transportation-related issues.
  - Transit providers do provide good training - this was a coordinated effort.
  - Medical agencies said that transportation was an issue at least half of the time.
  - A lot was on those social workers to give clientele the transportation information.
  - No numbers/figures as a result from this new training effort.

- Clientele's misunderstanding of how to access information related to funding for transportation for medical and mental health issues.
  - Getting info from case manager is usually very fluid, helps people feel more comfortable given the relationship that already exists.
  - SPARTAN is not doing much on training the passenger, but disseminating information to different social service agencies, such that clients and clientele can get information directly with their case workers (dialysis center, etc.). Members that attended the meetings were from all throughout the region.
  - Mobility management it's about helping people navigate where they need to go, regardless of it is in SPARTAN's service area or not.
- (b) **Goal 2:** Continue to improve the coordination and communication between public and private transportation providers

*Workshop comments:*

- This goal talks about the grey area that is just outside Lubbock City with no service and lots of growth. How to fill that gap and how to communicate - why there is a gap there, and why it's so difficult to address.
- There is a "grey area" between urban and rural (especially in the southwest area).
- Many gaps prior to the COVID outbreak. Currently, CitiBus is using the on-demand service a lot - it's been expanded to city limits. Goal to keep within city limits. Redoing fixed route system to make more sense given its growth. Gaps are being filled by on-demand services. Taking people from far west to far east and everything in between. The challenge is that sometimes they are 15- or 16-mile trips. How do we redevelop services to prevent those long trips? Passengers can be in the vehicle for up to 45 minutes since its a shared service.
- Dispatch from SPARTAN calling Citibus and vice versa - as move into the area, there is a potential to get on the same app. There is a lot of space and potential for coordination between the two agencies.
- Example is a service from Lubbock to South Plains College. Citibus was taking people to their park and ride. Finding more ways to connect the two systems and many other services in west Texas in general. Technology help facilitate the seamlessness of these solutions - working towards better coordination.
- Building better interface between the systems.

- Minimal hardware changes. Focus on technological integration and limiting costs to the agency.
- (c) **Goal 3:** Increased the accessibility of transit services to veterans and low - income individuals

*Workshop comments:*

- Not exactly implementation, but recently awarded planning call efforts - take what they did with pilot and format it in a way that is directly developed for certain groups, including veterans. Finding out who, besides the VA, which groups do we need to educate to better reach veteran population.
  - Actively working on this now.
  - Finding specific ways to address access issues and information issues that face veteran population.
  - On-demand service provided has filled in the gaps. Services to veterans are included. Trips can get booked. On demand service has filled many gaps, including better service and accessibility to special groups, including veterans.
  - Increasing foreign language communication, expanding knowledge for deaf and hard of hearing populations, training staff in ASL, Spanish speaking – is any of that happening?
  - Work with I-Can-Speak/We-Speak for limited English proficiency. A speaker is installed on the bus, providers can find the user’s language and call the dispatcher to connect them with someone who speaks their native language. Service is available for LEP (limited English proficiency) individuals.
- (d) **Goal 4:** Increase the accessibility of transit services to seniors and disabled individuals

*Workshop comments:*

- SPARTAN has used funding from the §5310 program to arrange purchase of service agreements with senior centers and TAD (adult daycare centers) for individuals with mobility challenges. Subcontract senior centers to provide trips - trying to get new services in rural areas in senior centers and communities.
- Many only were doing meal delivery over the summer - also focusing on food delivery.
- No one was allowed to come to these centers. Instead of giving people rides to centers, they were instead taking meals to their houses in March/April and throughout the summer.

- Some providers are doing trips now, but many still only do meal delivery.
- Partner organizations include Hockley County Senior Citizens, Brownfield Senior Citizens, Scurry County Senior Citizens, Liferun Center for Independent Living.

# **Appendix**

## Public Involvement Workshop Online Survey Summary