

Appendix D:

Summary of Prior Work

- **Summary of the 2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study Report**
- **Summary of the 2009 Alliance for Regional Mobility (ARM) Proposal**

Summary of the 2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study Report

Performed for

**East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination
Planning Steering Committee**



Performed in cooperation with the

**East Texas Council of Governments
Texas Department of Transportation Tyler District**

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BACKGROUND

In 2008, East Texas Regional Transportation Planning Steering Committee contracted with Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) was contracted by the to conduct the East Texas Regional Transfer Study. The purpose of the study was to identify possible transfer points for new and potential transportation services and conduct a comprehensive effort to guide lead entities to successfully implement regional coordination of public transportation services for the East Texas region.

The primary objectives of the group were to develop a service concept for regional public transportation for rural East Texas to:

- Provide a comprehensive service plan, with seamless connections within and beyond the boundaries of East Texas;
- Provide greater access to jobs, healthcare, retail, and recreation;
- Serve the general public while enabling coordination or integration with client service providers; and
- Identify opportunities for private sector involvement;
- Ensure a level of service that is appropriate to the population and demographics by county and with consideration for growth;
- Develop a capital improvement program to support the service concept;
- Estimate the financial resources required to develop the service concept, with consideration for operating and capital requirements; and
- Identify possible strategies for sources of local share required beyond projected federal and state funding.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Transit need in the East Texas Region is especially pronounced because of the concentrations of seniors over age 65, lower income population, zero auto households, and concentrations of persons with disabilities. Demographers project an increase in these transit need populations in the next 10 to 20 years. East Texas is also becoming more diverse, and while the urbanized population is growing, there is also a greater risk of isolation of populations in more rural areas of the region. The need for transit mobility will continue to grow in the region.

The study also found that:

- In general, public transportation for the general population is not sufficient to meet need, especially in rural areas and small cities outside Tyler and Longview.
- The level of public transportation services (miles, hours) in the rural area of the East Texas Region does not meet the demand for service.
- There is also a lack of connectivity for the services that are available.

One goal of local transit is to provide “seamless” transit services for the public. The concept of seamless service means that a transit user can conveniently find information, plan a trip by transit, and use public transportation services, without being concerned about what agency or provider is operating the service. Regions that have seamless transit services typically include one point of customer information for all transit services, one common fare structure and shared media to pay fares, consistent branding of transit services, and the ability for passengers to access multiple public transportation services across the region.

The study concluded that the East Texas Region does not offer seamless transit services throughout the region and that services are not coordinated for a regional system. However, the report also noted that there are opportunities to overcome the associated challenges. First, regional elected and community leaders are committed to expand public transportation services in the East Texas Region and to support efforts to provide a seamless regional transit system to the public. Additionally, leadership is evident in the work of the East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Steering Committee.

The vision of the Steering Committee for Regional Transportation Coordination is to provide a comprehensive, sustainable system of efficient and effective public transportation services with seamless connections within and beyond the boundaries of East Texas, providing greater access to jobs, healthcare, retail, and recreation to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of East Texas citizens. The intent of the Steering Committee is to ensure that the benefits of the public transportation resources are maximized through coordination of services. The committee's commitment to this concept can also serve as an impetus to begin the process of creating seamless service for the region. Finally, the commitment of the region's providers of public transportation to work through the challenges for regional coordination also represents another advantage for creating seamless service in the region.

The report speculated that given the increases in population, population density, and the growing population of target markets (seniors, low income, persons with disabilities), the East Texas Region could receive increases in available funding. The report also discussed how improved performance indicators could also help increase the region's federal funding for rural transit and state funding for urban and rural transit. However, the report also noted that in instances of increased funding, federal and state funding opportunities would also require additional local funding support. Even with any projected increases in funding, the report points out that:

The overall need for public transportation in East Texas remains greater than available federal/state funding;

- There may be some opportunities to share funding at the regional level;
- All funding sources for public transportation require local investment; and
- Value is added with a regional approach.

While examining a regional network of public transportation routes and transfer points for East Texas, the report also points out additional opportunities for coordination with client and private transportation providers, including opportunities for shared services, interlocal agreements, and purchase of service to assist in meeting public transportation demand. The report notes that additional coordination can reduce duplication of services, provide additional options for customers and clients, and improve the effective use of resources.

ADDRESSING A REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Inventory of Transit Providers

As part of the study, TTI compiled a list of all institutions providing some form of public transportation within the region. The inventory was organized by rural transit, urban transit, intercity bus and rail, private for hire, elderly and disabled providers, and client providers.

The research to identify existing public, private and client transportation providers discovered there are a number of transportation providers in the region. However, most of the providers serve a specific target population, usually a client group.

Categories of transportation services in the East Texas Region:

- General public transportation
 - Rural transit
 - Urban transit
- Intercity common carriers
 - Intercity bus
 - Intercity passenger rail
- Private-for-hire transportation providers
 - Taxis
 - Charter bus
 - Limousines
- Limited eligibility public transportation
 - Elderly and disabled transportation
 - Medical transportation
- Organizations that purchase transportation services
- Client transportation providers
 - Faith-based providers
 - Other transportation providers

Transit Need Index

The purpose of the transit need index is to identify and document areas of high need when developing a coordinated regional transit system. As part of this study, TTI conducted a transit need index for the general population within the Tyler Urbanized Area, the Longview Urbanized Area, and the more rural portions of the region. The transit need index identifies areas of highest transit need that may be most conducive to any new or existing form of public transportation.

The categories used to determine transit need and their key characteristics are as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Characteristic</u>
Population	Density in persons per square mile
Household Income	Percent of households living below the poverty line
Auto Availability	Concentrations of households with no access to a car
Age Distribution	Concentrations of people over 65
Disabled Population	Concentrations of persons with a workforce disability

The report concluded that the highest transit need in the region is generally in small cities and towns (urban clusters). This is especially true of Marshall, Jacksonville, Palestine, Jefferson, Athens, Kilgore, Henderson, and Carthage. For Rural East Texas, transit need is generally higher in the eastern half of the region. In Camp and Marion Counties, all census block groups have a medium transit need or higher. Finally, transit need is lowest in the northwestern counties of Rains and Van Zandt, where no area was categorized as very high transit need.

Transit Attractors

As part of the study, the Steering Committee also asked TTI to identify locations throughout the region that would have a high degree of probability of being transit destinations if a region-wide coordinated public transit system were in place. The list of transit attractors was comprised of approximately 1,100 locations and was divided into the following groups:

- Shopping - 253 grocery stores, retail, and shopping areas
- Employer - 198 major employment centers in the region
- Education - 70 high schools, 11 vocational schools and community colleges, and 11 colleges and universities
- Social Service/Government - 125 social service agencies, 227 public agencies and government offices, and 45 senior centers
- Medical - 112 hospitals and clinics and 26 dialysis centers
- Transportation - 22 airports, existing intercity bus and rail facilities, and local transit centers.

CONCEPT FOR TRANSFER POINTS AND REGIONAL TRANSIT SERVICES

The concept for a regional coordinated transit system for East Texas includes a network of public transportation services that are connected through several strategically located transfer points. The primary assumptions for the concept of transfer points and regional transit services for the report were as follows:

- The regional system will continue to emphasize community in rural East Texas. Local public transportation will emphasize access for residents to local destinations.
- A minimum of one transfer point will be identified for each county.
- Community transportation connections at the transfer points will be available through demand response transit.
- A network of scheduled routes serving transfer locations will provide regional connections.
- Regional connections will also serve urban transit centers and interregional transportation facilities.
- Client specific transportation providers will be encouraged to access the regional network of public transportation services.
- The coordinated services will provide private sector opportunities.
- The network of transfer points and regional transportation services will be complemented by improved public information to ensure seamless access to transit services for riders.

Identifying the Location of Transfer Points

The Steering Committee wanted to identify specific transfer points within the region from which a coordinated transit service could operate. The general guideline set forth was to have one transfer point for each county. Based on the analysis of ETCOG passenger trips, Athens, Canton, Carthage, Emory, Gilmer, Henderson, Jacksonville, Jefferson, Longview, Marshall, Mineola, Palestine, Pittsburg, and Tyler were chosen as the primary cities for locations of transfer points. Gladewater and Kilgore were also identified as secondary cities also in need of transfer points. Specific areas within these cities were then chosen as potential transfer sites. Overall, a total of 25 potential transfer sites were identified. Members of the Steering Committee provided feedback on the 25 potential transfer points. The majority of the sites were considered acceptable.

Transfer sites were identified into three groups, with the first set of locations representing the highest demand and level of service. The first group of transfer sites included Kilgore, Longview, Marshall, Mineola, and Tyler. These are the cities that already have freestanding facilities for intercity bus or rail, and would require less capital in providing supplemental amenities. The second group of transfer sites included Athens, Gilmer, Jefferson, and Palestine. These cities are generally smaller in population or catchment area and do not already have freestanding transit facilities. The third group of transfer sites included Canton, Carthage, Emory, Gladewater, Henderson, Jacksonville, and Pittsburg. These are the smallest cities with the least demand among the transfer sites.

Regional Governance Models

The report also outlined four governance models as a means of addressing the effective delivery of public transportation. These four models can be envisioned as a continuum, with each requiring more formality and structure than the previous model. Variations are viable, depending on local leadership.

Handshake to Work Together

This informal, yet frequently used structure allows entities to work together to pursue:

- Common automated scheduling and dispatch;
- Shared 211/ public information/ website;
- Single fare structure; and
- Common logos and a unified public image.

The Midland-Odessa EZ-Rider is an example of this type of regional governance model.

Compact – Formal Interlocal Agreement

In addition to the activities noted above, such an arrangement allows entities to:

- Share resources and risks;
- Pursue funding as a team; and
- Enter into interlocal agreements for service.

An example of this type of regional governance model is North East Transportation Services (NETS), an interlocal agreement between seven cities in Tarrant County.

Umbrella Policy Board

Such an arrangement includes:

- Policy board sets policies for the region;
- Policy board makes decisions for the allocation of funding; and
- Policy board receives funds, allocates funds, and sets policies for operating service.

An example of this type of governance model is the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) in Dallas-Fort Worth.

One Entity for Regional Transit

Such an arrangement includes:

- Regional transit entity may provide service directly; and
- Regional transit entity may contract to provide service.

An example of this type of governance model is the Hill Country Transit District- a single entity that serves two urbanized areas (Killeen and Temple) as well as a large rural transit district.

Summary and Recommendations for Implementation

The report also offered the following ideas regarding implementation:

Adopt a Regional Strategy

Regional public transportation for East Texas calls for a comprehensive service plan. The service plan should include seamless connections within and beyond the boundaries of East Texas. The regional service plan should serve the general public while enabling coordination or integration with client service providers. There are opportunities for the private sector within this approach.

Pursue Opportunities to Improve Efficiency

Public transportation providers can enter into contracts with other public, private, and client transportation providers that can deliver the most efficient service. Another strategy to improve efficiency is to optimize service using tools for automated routing and scheduling and automated vehicle location systems. Interlining with national and regional intercity transportation providers represents another opportunity. The demographic profile of East Texas suggests programs like carpooling and vanpooling can meet needs at a lower cost overall. Shared fleets and transit facilities can optimize capital investment.

Increase Operating Revenues

- Increase fare recovery by revising fare structures and employing new tools for fare media.
- Partner with universities and colleges to implement student transportation programs.
- Investigate contracts for service with other public agencies.
- Seek out opportunities to contract transit services for client service agencies.

Investigate Other Sources of Funding

A strong message included in the study was the need to develop other sources of local funding. Some suggestions discussed included:

- Economic development sales tax
- Community Development Block Grants
- Contracts for sale of service
- Private sector opportunities
- Non-traditional sources
- Impact fees
- Parking fees or fines

Aggressively Pursue Capital Funding

In addition to the operating revenues listed above, the region should aggressively pursue sources of capital funding for passenger facilities (and revenue vehicles). Some suggestions discussed in the report included:

- Bond funds
- Livable Communities
- TCEQ Clean Fuel
- High speed rail corridor/ intercity rail
- Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus
- Donated property/ private utility relocation

Legislative Initiatives

The interests for the East Texas Region may be enhanced through the following legislative initiatives:

- Option to flex funding at the regional level between urban and rural transit;
- Increase the State Legislature's support for public transportation funding;
- Support initiatives to expand Federal Congressional support for transit funding, especially for small urban and rural areas;
- Resolve limits on private sector eligibility for some categories of funding;
- Resolve limitations on coordination due to insurance; and
- Support AMTRAK Reauthorization

Summary of the 2009 Alliance for Regional Mobility (ARM) Proposal

Originally submitted by the
Alliance for Regional Mobility



Submitted to the
Texas Department of Transportation
Public Transportation Division
December 2009

Summarized November 2013 as part of the
EastTexConnects Coordination Study by the
Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)

Summary of the 2009 Alliance for Regional Mobility (ARM) Proposal

Overview & Background

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) for the 14-county East Texas Region. The RPO includes all rural communities in this area and also partners with the urban communities of Tyler and Longview. Partners in the Alliance for Regional Mobility (ARM) include the East Texas Rural Transit District of ETCOG, Longview Transit and Tyler Transit. The partnership strives came together to coordinate services and activities for the partners' mutual benefit and combine resources to better address (any) deficiencies.

ARM was created to facilitate improvements of transportation services for the elderly, low income and persons with disabilities, as well as the general population. This proposal created a unified strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the needs of the target population and lays out strategies for meeting these needs and prioritizes services. ARM also intends to minimize the duplication of transportation services and create a framework to utilize program funds that will allocate funding through a unified and consistent structure.

Scope of Work

ARM partners proposed to improve the delivery of transportation services for the elderly, persons with disabilities and individuals with limited incomes; generate efficiencies in operation for increased levels of service; and to encourage cooperation and coordination.

Proposed Services and Activities

ARM proposed to develop a comprehensive regional transit model to facilitate seamless solutions utilizing the resources from the region's existing public transit agencies. The proposal also planned demographic modeling to identify elderly, low income and disabled populations for marketing, community outreach and service improvement purposes. ARM also proposed to incorporate a regional emergency transit response plan in conjunction with the regional homeland security emergency response plan and the creation of a regional transit assets database comprised of all public, private, and non-profit assets available for deployment during emergencies.

The ARM proposal addressed increasing purchasing power through joint procurement of transit-related goods and services and to make strides towards full utilization of available technology to increase efficiency and provide more seamless service. Planning and coordination activities were also included in the group's scope of work. ARM proposed to synchronize existing services and provide new service delivery above and beyond the current service model. A new publicly accessible ARM website link would also provide a mechanism to share alerts, announcements, reports, presentations, surveys and gather public comments.

ARM identified further coordination activities to work on, including:

- Closely working with the Citizens Advisory Team to develop collaborative strategies, identify any gaps and/or redundancies in services, and identify new opportunities for coordination.
- Researching innovative programs that the group could duplicate.

- Training and the usage of technology to coordinate transportation operations, scheduling rides, providing route and bus stop information, managing information, and improving quality service for consumers.
- Working with the state to analyze transit services, and identify opportunities to increase efficiency and enhance service.
- Exploring additional sources through public-private partnerships or foundations to fund transportation coordination efforts.
- Facilitating a cultural mindset shift from dependency on private, personal vehicles and encouraging increased use of mass transit.
- Partnering to inform and educate the public about public transportation options, particularly fixed route services.
- Training operators and drivers to be sensitive to customers' needs and how best to meet these needs.

Project Objectives

As part of its workplan, the ARM proposal contained the following project objectives:

- Develop a regional demographic and transit model to determine and plan for the region's public transportation needs through technology collaboration.
- Develop a regional maintenance program to perform routine maintenance procedures for each transportation provider.
- Coordinate regional transit staff training to develop a highly-trained workforce that will provide outstanding customer service. Additionally, training services may be expanded to offer trainings to other transit agencies, school districts and service providers.
- Develop a regional transit database to enforce a regional emergency response plan.
- Develop a regional compact outreach program, website, and collaboration of materials to inform citizens of the benefits of public transportation and how to use various services, resulting in more seamless service being readily available to customers.