

# Coordination Strategies for EasTexConnects

Performed for

**East Texas Council of Governments, Lead Agency for the  
EasTexConnects Steering Committee**



Performed in cooperation with the

**East Texas Council of Governments  
and**

**Texas Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division**



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## **DISCLAIMER**

The Texas Department of Transportation and the East Texas Council of Governments provided funds for this research. The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors from TTI, who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the information presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Texas Department of Transportation or the East Texas Council of Governments.

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# Coordination Strategies for EasTexConnects

## INTRODUCTION

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) was contracted by the East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) to facilitate the identification of coordination strategies for EasTexConnects (Steering Committee). ETCOG is a voluntary association of public entities within the 14-county East Texas region. Among its many responsibilities, ETCOG provides rural public transportation for the 14-county area. EasTexConnects is the entity responsible for ensuring the coordination of public transportation efforts within the 14-county region known as State Planning Region 6. The EasTexConnects Steering Committee was formally established in 2010 to ensure the maximization of public transportation resources within the region. Prior to 2010, the committee was known as the East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Steering Committee.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study researched options for transportation providers in the region to function better and serve the public more efficiently. Stakeholders included but were not limited to EasTexConnects, ETCOG, East Texas Regional Transportation Partners (ET RTP), Longview Transit, Tyler Transit, local government officials and designees, Amtrak, inter-city bus companies, private operators, human service agencies, non-profit organizations, and civic volunteers.

### **Objectives and Key Tasks**

There were six primary objectives for this study:

- Ensure independence and impartiality by engaging a third party to lead the project.
- Build on previous study findings, without duplicating previous work.
- Engage stakeholders in Planning Region 6 throughout the project.
- Identify various options for transportation providers to serve the public more efficiently.
- Document cost, benefits, opportunities, and risks of the options.
- Share project deliverables to ensure transparency for the project process and findings.

Key tasks included:

1. Reviewing previous study findings from the 2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study and the 2009 Alliance for Regional Mobility (ARM) Scope of Work and completing a brief summary of the previous study findings and recommendations for stakeholders.
2. Preparing a peer case study report to provide examples of regionally coordinated transportation services in other Texas regions, as well as national examples.

3. Meeting with stakeholders to discuss existing conditions and documenting existing examples of coordinated services.
4. Conducting a workshop with EastTexConnects members to facilitate a discussion of options for transportation providers in Planning Region 6 to function and serve the public in East Texas more efficiently.
5. Creating a matrix describing various options to function and serve the public more efficiently and preparing a report to document identified options.

## **BACKGROUND**

EastTexConnects was formally established in 2010 to ensure the maximization of public transportation resources within the 14-county area that comprises Texas Planning Region 6. The committee strives to improve the quality of life in East Texas through transportation choices by working to create and connect a comprehensive, flexible, and sustainable public transportation system throughout and beyond State Planning Region 6. The committee includes representatives from both public and private transportation providers, the region's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local governments, Amtrak, local workforce development entities, the business community, health and human service agencies, and transportation users and civic volunteers among others. ETCOG serves as the lead agency for the Steering Committee and oversees the group's organizational requirements, completes all reporting requirements, and serves as the organization's fiscal agent.

Prior to January 2010, the group was known as the East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Steering Committee. The group's early efforts are discussed below.

### **History and Overview of Prior Coordination Efforts**

In May 2003, the Texas Legislature added Chapter 461 – Statewide Coordination of Public Transportation to the State's Transportation Code to maximize public transportation resources through coordination of services. The goals of coordination are to eliminate waste, generate increased efficiencies, and further clean air efforts. The responsibility for implementing statewide coordination of public transportation was delegated to the Texas Transportation Commission and the Commission assigned development of regional transit coordination plans to the Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group. The Study Group defined regions by council of government boundaries and tasked these regions with the development of a regional coordination plan.

The East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Steering Committee was formed in June 2005 to address the goals of Chapter 461 and develop the regional coordination plan for Planning Region 6. This original group produced the East Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Plan in November 2006, which included six priorities officially adopted by the Original Steering Committee:

1. People first, barrier free.
2. Multimodal interconnectivity across the region.
3. Aggressive outreach and education to a broad base.
4. Increased and flexible funding.
5. Increased and expanded services.
6. Emergency planning and homeland security.

The group developed a framework to implement these six priorities and concurrently developed a list of 15 recommended projects that are found in Appendix A: Projects from the 2006 Regional Coordination Plan. One action item stemming from this effort was the authorization of the 2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study, which is discussed in greater detail in the “Summary of Prior Work” section of this report.

In 2011, the Steering Committee formally evaluated their progress toward implementing the 2006 Regional Transportation Coordination Plan and updated the plan to reflect efforts that had been accomplished, work still in progress, and additional opportunities to enhance the delivery of public transportation services in the region. As part of this initiative, community workshops were conducted in 11 counties, stakeholder surveys were completed by 375 organizations, and public transportation providers were interviewed. Based on the input received, the 2011 Plan Update created 20 projects, dividing them into three stages: short-term, mid-term, and long-term. This list is found in Appendix B: Projects from the 2011 Regional Coordination Plan.

A comparison of strategies developed as part of the 2006 and 2011 regional coordination plans was also conducted as part of the 2011 updated plan. The 2011 coordination strategies included four new suggested activities that were not related to former strategies identified in the 2006 Coordination Plan, including:

- Provide business-sponsored shopping day and special event transit service.
- Conduct feasibility studies of specific new expanded transit services including potential changes in funding allocations to pay for added service.
- Prepare a regional application for Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC).
- Implement an Interagency Automated Fare Card System.

A comparative analysis of the projects is provided in Appendix C: Comparison of 2006 and 2011 Coordination Strategies.

Throughout the history of East Texas coordination efforts, the overarching vision for regional coordination has remained constant: to provide a comprehensive, sustainable system of efficient and effective public transportation services with seamless connections within and beyond the boundaries of East Texas, to provide greater access to jobs, healthcare, retail, and recreation to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of East Texas citizens (East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study Report, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, 2008).

### Existing Conditions

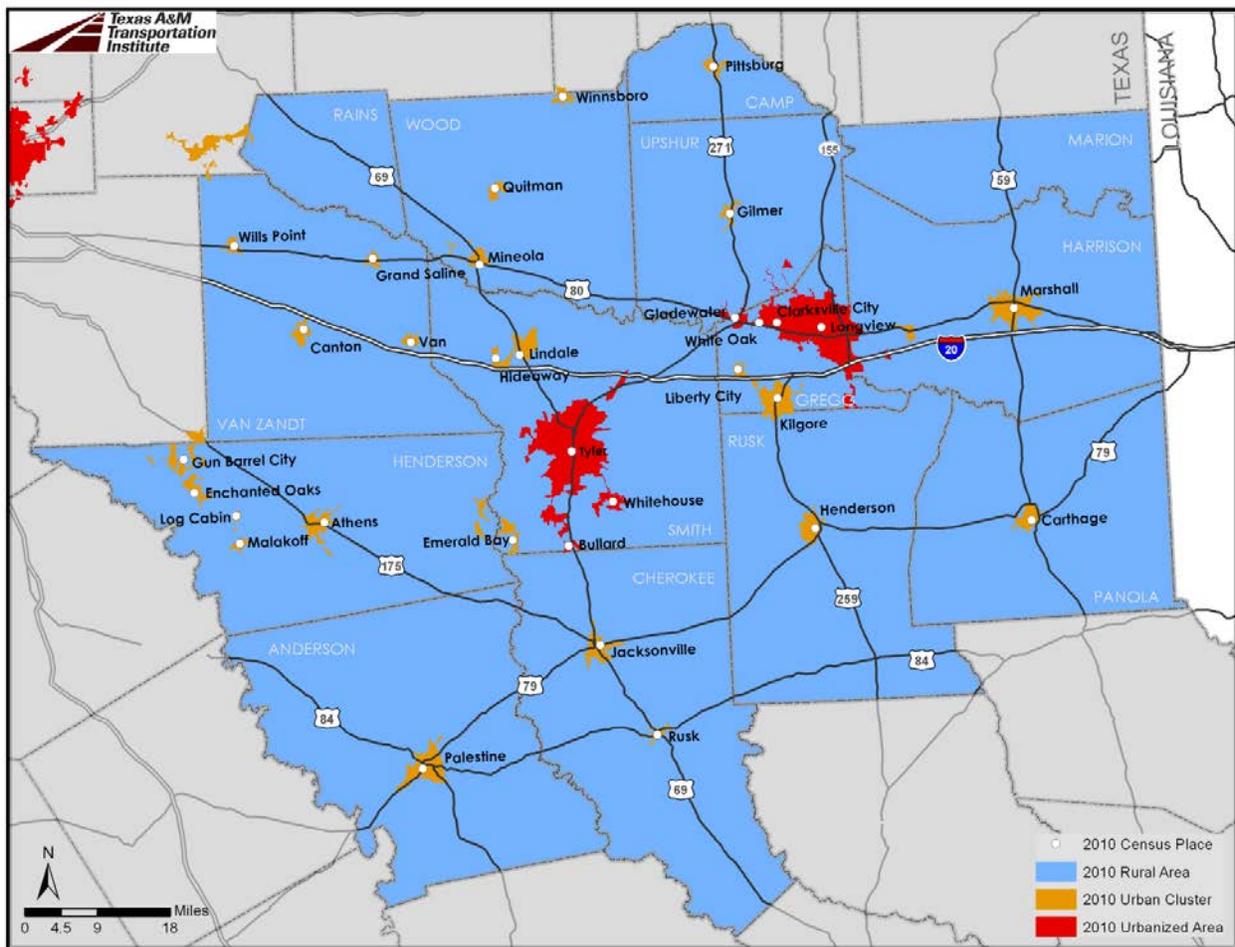
The East Texas region is a 14-county area including Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Wood, and Van Zandt Counties (Figure 1). These counties encompass approximately 9,600 square miles of East Texas, south of Interstate Highway 30, and extending east to the Louisiana border. The Trinity River forms the southwestern border, and the Sabine River flows through nine of the region's 14 counties.



**Figure 1. Counties and Cities in the East Texas Region.**

The region has two primary urban centers, complemented by several smaller cities as shown in Figure 1. Tyler, the county seat of Smith County, is the largest city in the region, with a population of 130,247 (U.S. Census 2010). Longview, the county seat of Gregg County, is the second largest city, with a population of 98,884 (Census 2010). Other cities in this region include Athens in Henderson County, Palestine in Anderson County, Jacksonville in Cherokee County, Marshall in Harrison County, and Kilgore in Gregg County.

The 14 counties comprising the East Texas region had a combined population 829,749 in 2010. Roughly, 27.6 percent of the region’s population resides in the urbanized areas of either Tyler or Longview, while another 21.7 percent reside in other cities and towns. The remaining 50.7 percent reside in rural areas. The overall population density for the region is 86 people per square mile. Figure 2 shows the urban and rural areas within the 14-county region.



**Figure 2. Urban and Rural Areas in East Texas.**

From 2000 to 2010, the region’s population grew by 11.3 percent—growing from 745,180 in 2000 to a population of 829,749 in 2010. By 2020, the region is projected to have a population of approximately 939,036, and by 2030, the Texas State Data Center estimates the region’s population at over 1 million (Texas State Data Center, 2000–2010 Migration Scenario). The

three fastest growing counties from 2000 to 2010 were Smith, Rains, and Wood. Table 1 shows population growth by county for 2010 along with projections for 2020 and 2030.

**Table 1. Population Growth by County.**

<b>Population Growth By County</b>						
<b>County</b>	<b>Year 2010</b>		<b>Year 2020 Projection</b>		<b>Year 2030 Projection</b>	
	number	percent of total	number	percent of total	number	percent of total
Anderson County	58,458	7.0%	61,877	6.6%	64,595	6.1%
Camp County	12,401	1.5%	14,401	1.5%	16,599	1.6%
Cherokee County	50,845	6.1%	57,725	6.1%	65,704	6.2%
Gregg County	121,730	14.7%	137,122	14.6%	159,456	14.9%
Harrison County	65,631	7.9%	71,779	7.6%	79,903	7.5%
Henderson County	78,532	9.5%	85,477	9.1%	91,816	8.6%
Marion County	10,546	1.3%	11,048	1.2%	10,807	1.0%
Panola County	23,796	2.9%	25,861	2.8%	28,092	2.6%
Rains County	10,914	1.3%	13,129	1.4%	15,051	1.4%
Rusk County	53,330	6.4%	63,711	6.8%	77,240	7.2%
Smith County	209,714	25.3%	244,281	26.0%	287,454	26.9%
Upshur County	39,309	4.7%	45,395	4.8%	52,312	4.9%
Van Zandt County	52,579	6.3%	58,455	6.2%	64,146	6.0%
Wood County	41,964	5.1%	48,775	5.2%	54,427	5.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>829,749</b>		<b>939,036</b>		<b>1,067,602</b>	

*Source: U.S. Census and Texas State Data Center*

Demographically, the 2010 Census determined the region's population as 69.6 percent non-Hispanic White, 15.1 percent Black or African-American, and 14.0 percent Hispanic or Latino. Comparatively, 2006 Census data showed the region's population as 77 percent

non-Hispanic white, 16.2 percent Black or African-American, and 8.7 percent Hispanic or Latino.

Currently, all 14 counties have populations with non-Hispanic White as the majority. However, by 2030, Gregg and Smith Counties are projected to gain a Hispanic majority. For the overall region, Hispanic is projected to replace Black/African American as the largest racial or ethnic minority by 2015, possibly sooner in light of current escalation trends.

Census data from 2010 showed 15.5 percent of the population in East Texas as aged 65 and over, compared to 10.3 percent statewide. This is an increase from 2006 data, when 15 percent of the population in East Texas was aged 65 and over, compared to 9.9 percent statewide. Moreover, 25.5 percent of the population in East Texas has an income at 150 percent of the poverty level, compared with 27.7 percent statewide for Census 2010. The numbers represented within these groups continue to increase in East Texas. The continued growth of elderly populations and individuals living in poverty suggests a sustained need for public transportation in East Texas.

In analyzing demographic data for the East Texas region, TTI acquired data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Texas State Data Center. All data from 2000–2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau. All data from 2020–2030 are projections from the Texas State Data Center.

## **REVIEW OF PRIOR WORK**

To provide a foundation for the regional coordination efforts addressed as part of this project, TTI staff reviewed the 2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study (Transfer Study) and the 2009 Alliance for Regional Mobility Scope of Work (ARM Proposal). Below is a high-level summary of findings and recommendations, including an assessment of the implementation status, overall effectiveness, and the continued viability of the recommendations contained within the prior study and previous proposal. Appendix D: Summary of Prior Work contains a more extensive review of the Transfer Study and the ARM Proposal.

### **2008 East Texas Regional Transit Transfer Study**

#### *Overview*

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

## *Summary of Findings*

The Transfer Study concluded that the need for transit mobility will continue to grow in the region due to a combination of the following factors:

- Transit need is especially pronounced because of the concentrations of seniors over age 65, the lower income population, zero automobile households, and concentrations of persons with disabilities in the East Texas Region.
- Demographers project an increase in these transit need populations over 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 study also found that:

- In general, public transportation for the general population is not sufficient to meet the need, especially in rural areas and small cities outside of 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.

## *Seamless Service: Enhancing the Customer Experience*

One goal of local public transportation 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, 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. The opportunities identified were primarily fourfold:

1. The commitment of elected officials and community leaders in the region to expand public transportation services and support efforts to provide a seamless regional transit system.
2. The leadership evident in the work of the Steering Committee and their intention that the benefits of public transportation resources be maximized through coordination of services.

3. The committee's resolve can be the impetus to begin creating seamless service for the region.
4. Finally, the commitment of the region's transit providers to work through the challenges associated with regional coordination also represents another advantage for creating seamless service in the region.

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

Looking to future challenges and opportunities, the report pointed out that:

- Additional coordination can reduce duplication of services, provide additional options for customers and clients, and improve the effective use of resources.
- The need for public transportation in East Texas remains greater than available federal/state funding.
- All funding sources for public transportation require local investment.
- There may be some opportunities to share funding at the regional level.
- Additional opportunities exist for coordination with client and private transportation providers, including opportunities for shared services, interlocal agreements, and purchase of service to assist in meeting demand for services.

### *Transit Needs within the Region*

The study concluded that the highest transit need in the region was generally in small cities and towns (urban clusters). This was especially true of Marshall, Jacksonville, Palestine, Jefferson, Athens, Kilgore, Henderson, and Carthage. For Rural East Texas, transit need was generally higher in the eastern half of the region. In Camp and Marion Counties, all census block groups had a medium transit need or higher. Finally, transit need was 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.

### *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.

### *Recommendations for Implementation*

The study offered six concepts for the Steering Committee to consider for implementation.

#### *1. Adopt a Regional Strategy*

Regional public transportation for East Texas requires 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.

## 2. *Pursue Opportunities to Improve Efficiency*

- Optimize service using tools for automated routing and scheduling and automated vehicle location systems.
- Shared fleets and transit facilities as a means of optimizing capital investment.
- Public transportation providers can enter into contracts with other public, private, and client transportation providers that can deliver the most efficient service.
- Interlining with national and regional intercity transportation providers
- Using programs like carpooling and vanpooling to meet needs at a lower cost overall.

## 3. *Increase Operating Revenues*

- Increase fare recovery by revising the fare structure and implementing new tools for fare media.
- Partner with universities or technical 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.

## 4. *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.

## 5. *Aggressively Pursue Capital Funding*

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

- Bond funds.
- Livable communities.
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Clean Fuel.
- High speed rail corridor/ intercity rail.

- Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus.
- Donated property/private utility relocation.

#### 6. *Legislative Initiatives*

The study suggested that the interests of the region could 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.
- Support AMTRAK Reauthorization.

#### *Recommendations Moving Forward*

The study offered a thorough inventory of opportunities to expand service in East Texas and many recommended approaches and actions for doing so. There are numerous areas where minimal or no progress has occurred since the report was published in 2010: investigating other sources of funding; creating a seamless customer experience, including call center, fare medium, and fare structure; shared fleets; and vanpooling or carpooling programs. These areas represent opportunities to increase coordination.

Connecting new communities is also a vital component of this study that should be pursued further. Because the key demographic data referenced in the report is now approximately five years old, TTI recommends revisiting the analysis of service gaps with respect to the information provided in 2010 Census data, especially for the communities of Jacksonville, Palestine, Jefferson, Athens, Henderson, and Carthage. Once this step is completed, TTI would recommend reviewing all traditional and non-traditional service options and partnerships for providing transit services for the key communities in need, including considering options to seek local funding to help support implementation of services. Because the overarching goal is to provide more transportation options for the customer, TTI recommends selecting a target community to pilot new service and also considering new opportunities to facilitate transfers and coordinate transit services.

## **Alliance for Regional Mobility Scope of Work**

### *Overview*

In 2009, TxDOT issued a Coordinated Call for Projects under the 5304 State Planning Assistance and 5317 New Freedom Grant Programs. The three public transit providers within the East Texas Region formed a consortium, the Alliance for Regional Mobility, to work together to enhance mobility for the region. Specifically, ARM's mission was to operate a safe, dependable, and effective transportation network that provides mobility, improves the quality of life, and stimulates economic development through the provision of both small urban and rural transportation services. As noted on the application submittal, the types of projects originally submitted for consideration as part of the coordinated call proposal included Facilities, Marketing, Operating Assistance, Planning, Training, Research, and Program Administration.

The scope of work proposed as part of the ARM submittal included a variety of activities and plans.

### *Proposed Services and Activities*

ARM proposed to develop a comprehensive regional transit model to facilitate seamless solutions the resources of 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 create a regional transit assets database containing all public, private, and non-profit assets available for deployment during emergencies.

The ARM plan addressed increasing purchasing power through joint procurement of transit-related goods and services and proposed implementing available technology to increase efficiency and provide more seamless service. Planning and coordination activities were included in the group's scope of work, as well as a new website to provide share alerts, announcements, reports, presentations, surveys, and gather public comments.

ARM identified coordination activities to work on, including:

- Working with the Citizens Advisory Team to develop collaborative strategies, identify gaps and redundancies in services, and identify new opportunities for coordination.
- Researching innovative programs that the group could duplicate.
- Using technology to coordinate transportation operations, scheduling rides, providing route and bus stop information, managing information, and improving quality service for consumers.

- Analyzing transit services and identifying opportunities to increase efficiency and enhance service (service improvements).
- Exploring public-private partnerships or foundations to secure additional funding for coordination efforts.
- Facilitating a cultural mindset to encourage increased use of transit.
- Educating the public about public transportation options, particularly fixed route services.
- Customer-service training for operators and drivers.

### *Project Objectives*

ARM's original scope of work, proposed five key project areas:

- Technology collaboration.
- Regional maintenance program for routine maintenance.
- Regional transit staff training with potential expansion to include other transit agencies, school districts, and service providers.
- Regional transit database as part of the regional emergency response plan.
- Outreach initiative including a website and materials to inform citizens of the benefits of public transportation and how to use various services.

### *Implementation Status*

- Technology collaboration has occurred. All providers in the region now are on the same software (Route Match). There are opportunities to continue progressing in this area.
- Regional maintenance program for routine maintenance was implemented.
- Two major training initiatives occurred as a result of the ARM Proposal:
  - Calyptus Consulting Group conducted sessions over a three-week period in Longview, Tyler and Kilgore. Sessions were open to participation from all providers of public transportation in the region; more than 85 drivers participated.
  - Driver training programs by Taptco were also purchased and made available to public transportation providers in the region, including a train the trainer package.
- The original ARM proposal referenced potential future expansion of staff training to include other transit agencies, school districts, and service providers and additional opportunities exist. Future training expansion should also include opportunities for non-traditional drivers who provide public transportation services in the region, including private providers, Intercity Bus, and non-profits.
- Regional transit database as part of the regional emergency response plan: this task has not been funded as part of any grant award.
- The outreach initiative funded through this effort has made significant progress. The website and other printed guide materials have been developed and deployed. The public service announcement production is now complete and the finished product can not only

deployed but also leveraged as a tool to generate additional awareness of and coverage for the many benefits of transit for East Texas.

### *Recommendations Moving Forward*

The Driver Training Program developed as part of this original proposal is one project the Steering Committee could expand upon as part of the next phase of coordination-related strategies. In fact, an item related to expanding training programs to include staff from all types of providers in the region is included in the matrix of coordination strategies discussed in later sections within this report.

The PSA created as part of the outreach efforts funded through the New Freedom grant also represents a near-term opportunity to complement, and build open, efforts to promote the value of public transportation throughout the region. This tool can be leveraged with other potential outreach and public information activities discussed in the Connecting with Customers and the Community Breakout Session held at the October 29<sup>th</sup> EasTexConnects Workshop to maximize impact. Examples of such activities are presented in the matrix of action items created by TTI as part of this study.

Wider advertising of the website also represents a near-term opportunity to further promote public transportation throughout the region. There is also the need to further promote this asset to both external and internal customers. TTI would recommend providing a website overview for the EasTexConnects Steering Committee at a future committee meeting so that steering committee members are fully aware of the resources contained within the website.

Increasing purchasing power through joint procurement of transit-related goods and services is another priority identified under the ARM scope of work that the group has been able to make progress. There are many other potential opportunities represented within this area that could significantly benefit the delivery of public transportation services in the region. Examples that will be discussed in the recommended strategies found later in this report include a regional fare card and also a regional call center. Creating a dashboard also represents an opportunity to build upon the initial progress made on technology collaboration as part of this scope of work. Finally, opportunities to expand the regional maintenance program also merit additional consideration.

## **PEER CASE STUDIES**

### **Overview**

As part of the EasTexConnects study, TTI researchers reviewed multiple case studies from around the state and across the nation. Ultimately, six relevant case studies were selected—three from other regions within Texas (Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission, Hill Country Transit District, and Texoma Area Paratransit Services) and three from out of state (Foothills Transit, Valley Metro, and the Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance). These cases were

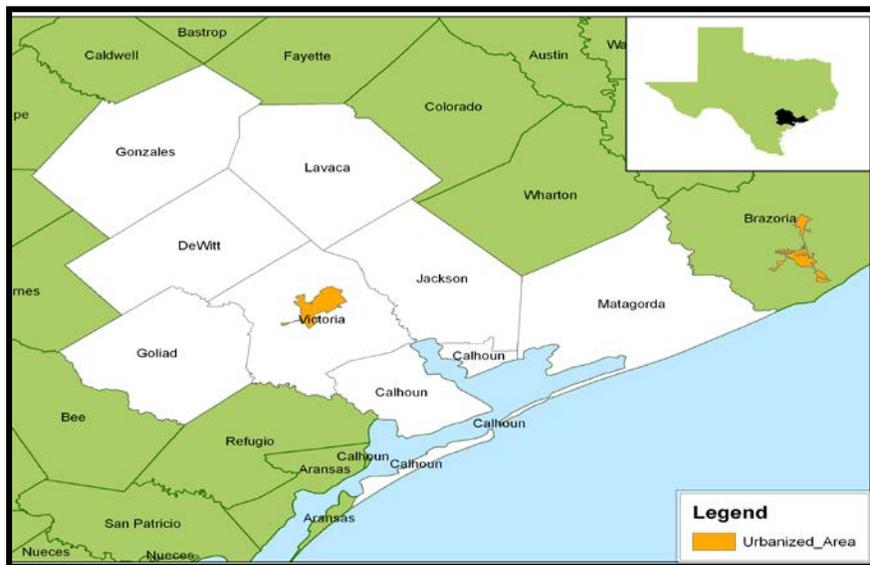
selected based on their application for the region because of their similarities to East Texas, their organizational structure, operational features, regional coordination efforts, or some combination thereof.

Criteria examined in the full case studies, found in Appendix E, includes organizational structure, history, operational agreements, service development and design, schedule coordination, level of service, service implementation and integration, revenue sharing, fares and fare media, branding, public engagement, responsiveness to customers, challenges faced, best practices, and other keys to success. Highlights of best practices from each of the case studies are found below.

### **Best Practices among Case Studies**

#### *Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (Golden Crescent)*

Golden Crescent is the rural-urban transit district for an 8-county region covering 7,087 square miles of non-urbanized land area bordering the Gulf Coast and the Victoria urbanized area. The counties served include Calhoun, Dewitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria. Golden Crescent directly operates rural transportation service within Victoria and DeWitt Counties and uses subcontractors to provide transportation in the other six counties. Using an interlocal agreement, the City of Victoria contracts with Golden Crescent to operate fixed route and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complementary paratransit service in the urbanized area. Urban service is branded as “Victoria Transit.” Golden Crescent also serves as the lead agency for the state’s regional coordination plan. Figure 3 shows the Golden Crescent service area.



**Figure 3. Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission Service Area.**

### **Golden Crescent Best Practice: *Public-Private Partnership – Inteplast***

Golden Crescent began fostering public-private partnerships in 2008 to provide vanpool service for employees in the region through Job Access Reverse Commute programs. One of Golden Crescent's most successful partnerships is providing rural transportation for employees of Inteplast, a plastics and chemical manufacturing company in Lolita, Texas. Inteplast has a 700-acre site where more than 2,000 people are employed. The plant operates seven days a week, with shifts from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and workers need affordable and reliable transportation during non-traditional work hours. At one point, the company was losing employees who could not afford to commute 25 to 40 miles each way.

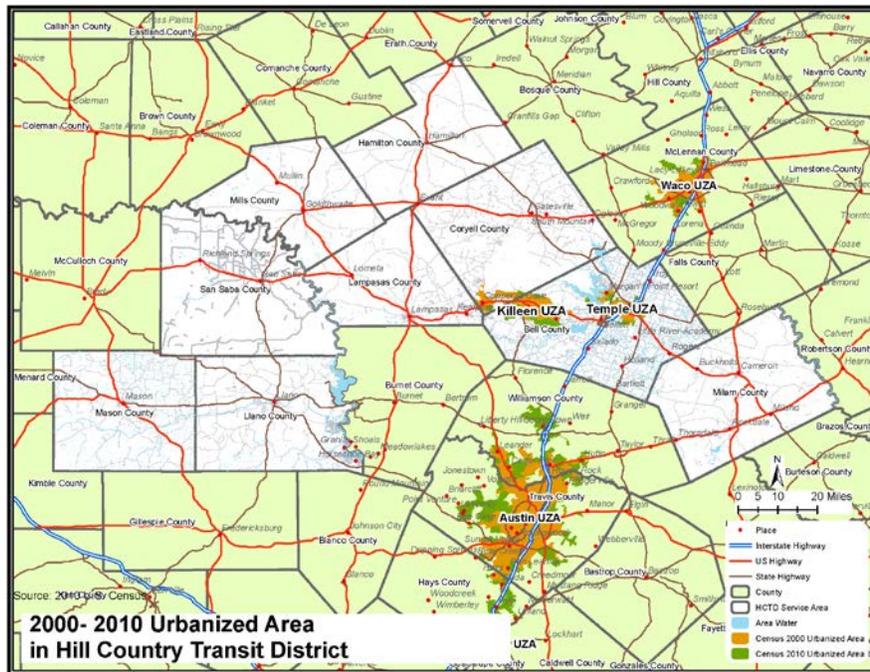
Working together to meet the needs of these rural communities, Inteplast purchased the first bus and Golden Crescent initially operated one route that generated 1,300 trips per month. The success of the service spurred Golden Crescent to expand to four more routes that now generate 9,000 trips per month. Inteplast estimates that over 35 percent of their workers use the program to commute to and from work. Inteplast has a three-year contract for service and provides Golden Crescent a 50 percent local match.

In an effort to be responsive to both the needs of Inteplast and their employees, Golden Crescent took several steps to ensure employees using the service can get to and from work on time. To ensure on-time performance, Golden Crescent developed partnerships with outlying communities to house vehicles so the vehicle can start the route each day in the community served. For example, the City of Yoakum houses vehicles for Golden Crescent for trips to Inteplast generated in Yoakum. Golden Crescent also purchased additional buses to ensure an adequate spare ratio, further demonstrating their commitment to service reliability.

### *Hill Country Transit District ("The HOP" or HCTD)*

The HOP provides rural and urban transit services across approximately 9,000 square miles in Central Texas, an area that is comparable in size to the East Texas Region. Figure 4 shows The HOP service area. The HOP rural transit division serves nine counties (Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, Milam, Mills, and San Saba), and also operates urban transit services in two urbanized areas (UZAs), the Killeen UZA and the Temple UZA.

The HOP service area population grew from 2000 to 2010 by 6 percent in the rural areas and 26 to 30 percent in the urban areas, which is comparable to the growth in the East Texas region over the same period.



**Figure 4. Hill Country Transit District Service Area.**

**Hill Country Best Practice: Automated Scheduling and Dispatch**

In 2008, HCTD implemented an automated scheduling and dispatch system. The new system helps HCTD reduce or eliminate duplicative or redundant services and helps identify opportunities for more efficient routing. The automated software allows HCTD to keep service hours constant while expanding transit into previously un-served areas, resulting in overall increase in vehicle boardings/revenue vehicle hour in the urban areas.

**Hill Country Best Practice: Combined Urban Operations Center**

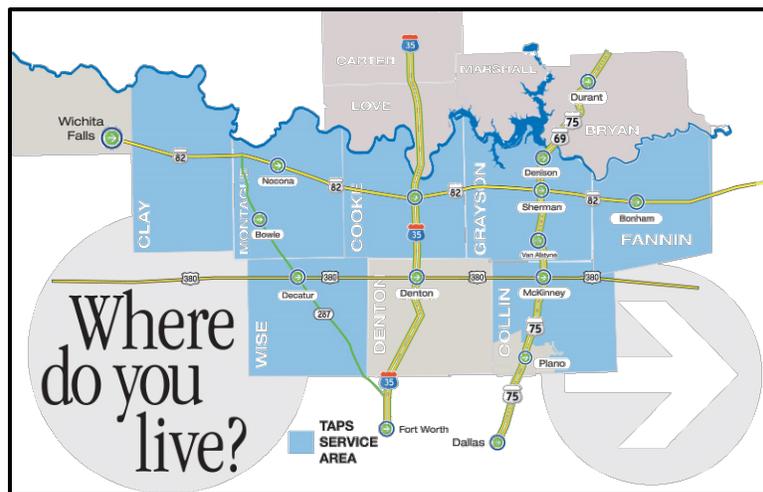
The HOP consolidated urban operations in February 2013 and closed two leased properties in Temple and Killeen. The transit district now has one consolidated urban operations center in Belton that serves both urban areas. This 30,000 square feet, \$6.8 million facility houses 100 buses and 100 of the agency’s employees. The HOP now conducts operations for fixed and paratransit services in all urban areas out of a single facility. The new facility also greatly expands the training and other operations’ capabilities. An automated washing facility uses recaptured water to wash 100 buses twice a week.

### **Hill Country Best Practice: *Partnerships***

The HOP is an important partner in veterans' activities and community affairs. The transit district provides important connections between Killeen, Fort Hood, and the Veterans Administration (VA) facility in Temple. The HOP also provides connections to other VA services and facilities in bordering regions, much like East Texas does with VA facilities in Dallas and Shreveport. The HOP also began providing hourly service to Texas A&M University-Central Texas in 2013.

### ***Texoma Area Paratransit Services (TAPS)***

TAPS is a rural-urban transit district serving a 7-county region in far North Texas. TAPS' service area encompasses 5,601 square miles. TAPS is contracted to provide public transportation for the small urban transit district for Sherman-Denison. TAPS provides a variety of services, each focused on different transit markets. The transit district now provides more than 400,000 passenger trips annually and operates more than 2.8 million revenue miles. TAPS began offering a "Go Anywhere" pass for \$80 a month in November 2013, and customers who use this pass have unlimited rides on any service (excluding airport shuttle service) in the TAPS system. Figure 5 shows the counties included in the TAPS service area.



**Figure 5. TAPS Service Area.**

### **TAPS Best Practice: *Public-Private Partnerships***

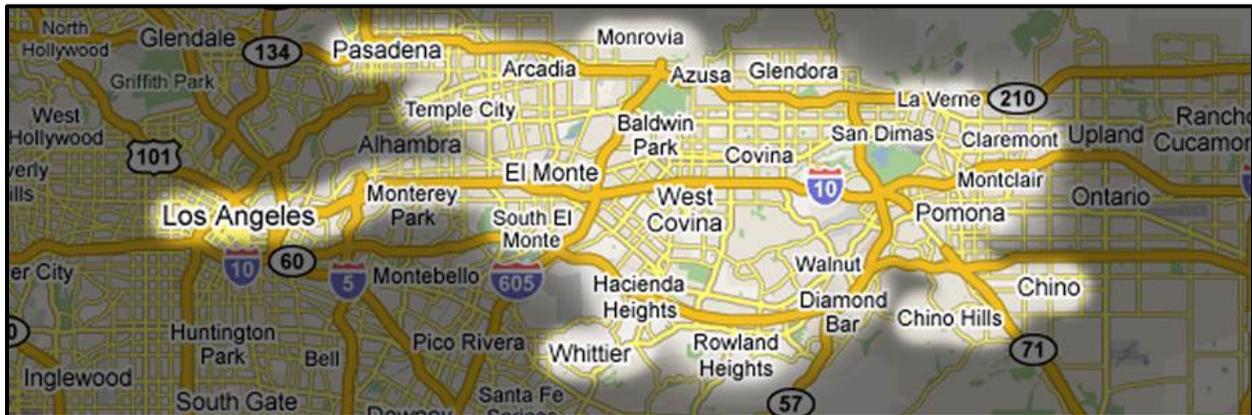
TAPS operates many job access shuttles including service from the cities of Nocona, Gainesville, and Bowie to the Peterbilt Motor Company facility located in Denton. Employees can purchase an \$80 monthly pass for unlimited shuttle rides. The program is so popular, that all seating is at capacity and there is a waiting list for service.

**TAPS Best Practice: Fuel Purchases**

TAPS purchases fuel from bulk fuel purchasers including the City of Bonham and neighboring Tarrant County. TAPS is able to piggyback on Tarrant County’s existing diesel fuel contract at a discounted rate. Through these partnerships, TAPS has been able to save approximately 21 percent on fuel.

*Foothill Transit*

Foothill Transit is a fixed route bus operator and an example of a successful public-private partnership and regional coordination between multiple agencies, cities, and counties in the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys of California. Foothills operates through a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) comprised of one representative from each of the JPA’s 22 member cities. The 22 cities are broken into five clusters and a smaller, executive board made up of one representative from each cluster provides agency governance. The executive director and management staff are public employees, and contractors provide operations, maintenance, and customer service. Figure 6 shows the Foothill Transit service area.



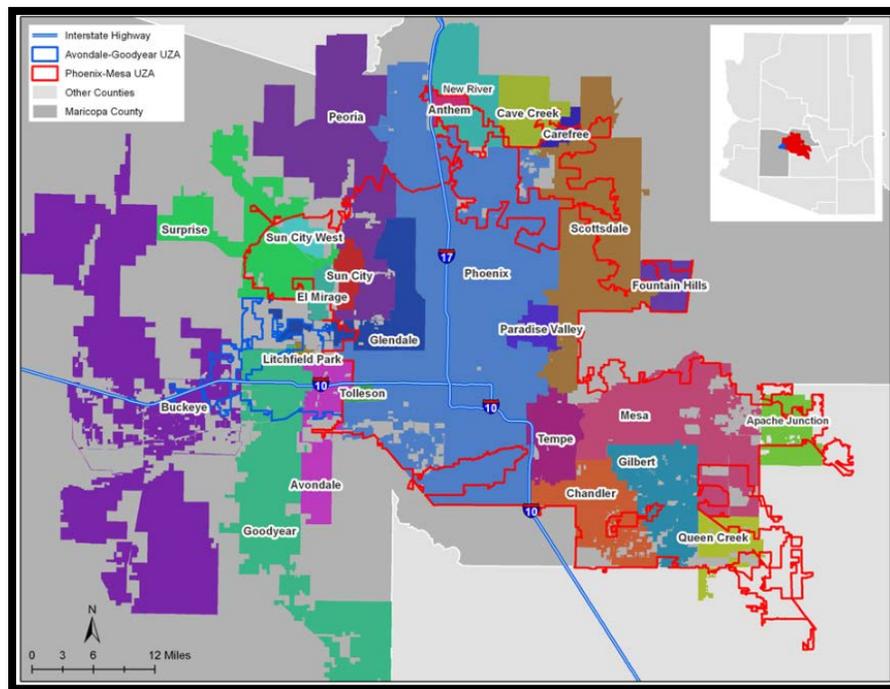
**Figure 6. Foothill Transit Service Area.**

**Foothill Best Practice: Seamless**

From the customer’s perspective, there is one agency and one logo. The fare media are the same for all service and are accepted by several regional operators. There is a single system map, one bus book for all services and routes, and one phone number for agency information (1-800- RIDE INFO).

## Valley Metro

The transit system in the Greater Phoenix metropolitan area in Maricopa County, Arizona is known as “Valley Metro.” Maricopa County is located in south central Arizona, has a population of 3.8 million, and covers 9,200 square miles. The Greater Phoenix metropolitan area includes two urbanized areas: Phoenix-Mesa and Avondale-Goodyear. Figure 7 illustrates the urbanized areas are comprised of multiple cities.



**Figure 7. Urbanized Areas and Major Cities in Maricopa County.**

Three primary agencies contract for fixed route bus service in the Phoenix area including the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA), the City of Phoenix, and the City of Tempe. The standard service delivery method within the region is contracting to third-party transportation providers. RPTA, City of Phoenix, and City of Tempe contract with private companies to operate fixed routes for the region. Several additional cities fund transit services and buy service through RPTA, City of Phoenix, or City of Tempe.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the region had a fragmented transit system, with the majority of transit service provided by City of Phoenix (Phoenix Transit System). The Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority was created in 1985 with the passage of Proposition 300, a countywide, 20-year half-cent sales tax for freeways, with a small portion going towards public transit and the RPTA. As a political subdivision of the state of Arizona, the RPTA core mandate is to plan, develop and operate a regional transit system in Maricopa County.

In 1993, the name Valley Metro was adopted as the identity for the regional transit system in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Under the Valley Metro brand, local governments join to fund the Valley-wide transit system that citizens use today. Elected officials from local governments comprise the Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority Board of Directors. A board of elected officials comprised of mayors, council members and a Maricopa County supervisor oversees the RPTA. These agencies can join the RPTA by resolution of their governing bodies. Membership is open to all municipalities in Maricopa County and to the county government.

Though the RPTA's core mandate has not changed since its inception in 1985, the agency's mission was reaffirmed with the passage of Proposition 400 in 2004. With more than \$3 billion (2006 dollars) in funding coming to the RPTA from the half-cent sales tax, the Arizona legislature has mandated the agency execute the transit elements of the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The Valley Metro RPTA Board of Directors approved a solid direction for the agency in 2007. The mission, vision and goals provide a path for successful implementation of the projects and services set forth in the RTP.

*At Valley Metro, we develop and deliver an integrated regional transit system with excellence, in collaboration with member agencies and through public and private partnerships. In doing so, we improve the quality of life and the environment, and support economic development.*

Today, Valley Metro represents fixed route, ADA complementary paratransit, demand response for the general public, light rail, and vanpool transit services. These transit services operate under the unified name.

***Valley Metro Best Practice:*** Seamless Provision of Transit

To the customer, Valley Metro operates as a unified transit system in Maricopa County despite being operated by three agencies, using multiple private contractors, and funded by a regional tax and local taxes, representing 21 cities. All agencies use the same branding on all services (green and purple with Valley Metro logo). RPTA produces one printed transit book and system map for bus and rail services, available both in print and online. Additionally, the customer information phone number is the same for the entire system. Valley Metro also has a seamless fare structure for all services. Valley Metro accepts coins, cash, and transfers

***Valley Metro Best Practice:*** Regional Transportation Coordination

This region has been particularly successful in coordinating human services transportation. In 2009, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the lead agency for regional

transportation coordination, worked to update the Human Services Coordination Transportation Plan. In March 2009, the Federal Transit Administration bestowed the United We Ride Leadership Award for major urbanized areas to the MAG Human Services Coordination Transportation Planning Program.

The region has determined five major goals to work toward in the next few years:

- Transportation Ambassador Program.
- Standardized Driver Training.
- Standardized Coordination Policies.
- Need and Demographic Tracking.
- Travel Training for Older Adults and People with Disabilities.

**Valley Metro Best Practice:** *Regional Driver Training*

Of the five goals referenced above, the most notable for the East Texas Region is the standardized driver training. In Maricopa County, all agencies, including for profit and nonprofit organizations, have the opportunity to train their drivers with the newly developed standardized driver training program for a certificate of completion. The Arizona Department of Transportation expanded the online training portal to include the standardized driver-training course. In addition, the agency is working with the stakeholders to increase the number of hands-on trainings throughout the year.

*North by Northwest CONNECTOR Alliance (The Alliance)*

The Alliance is a partnership of five transit agencies in a five-county area of northwestern Oregon that began in 2010. The Alliance was formed to foster collaboration; improve transit connections; share resources; brand and market transit service in all five counties as a single service; and promote environmentally friendly conscious travel. The partners jointly applied for and were awarded a \$3.5 million grant to create for regional strategies to increase transit use by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

The Alliance manages the area's coordinated regional transit system, known as the North by Northwest CONNECTOR. The CONNECTOR is a partnership of Columbia County Rider, the Sunset Empire Transportation District, the Tillamook County Transportation District, Benton County Transit, and Lincoln County Transit. The CONNECTOR is a national model for interagency partnerships and the use of private-public strategies to promote transit. Figure 8 shows the communities in Northwest Oregon served by the CONNECTOR.



**Figure 8. Communities Served by The CONNECTOR.**

**The Alliance Best Practice: *Connections***

Together, Alliance partners have worked to improve transit connections between northwestern Oregon communities. This includes building community partnerships to increase transit ridership while promoting regional business and economic development opportunities and branding and marketing transit service in all five counties as a single seamless service. Together, the Alliance integrates transportation services, serves population and employment clusters, tourist attractions, and commuter and visitor markets, and provides connections to the metropolitan areas of Portland, Albany and Corvallis, Oregon; and Longview/Kelso, Washington.

**The Alliance Best Practice: *Seamless Service***

Strategic partnerships have allowed the Alliance to brand and market transit service as a single, seamless service across county lines. The Alliance took many steps to create unified service in the region. Centralization practices included creating a single name and logo; developing a centralized website; implementing co-branding at stops; and establishing a fare policy committee.

**The Alliance Best Practice: *North by Northwest Transportation Foundation***

The Alliance also has a unique partnership with the North by Northwest Transportation Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations separate from, but closely aligned with, the CONNECTOR Alliance. The Foundation assists with fundraising for CONNECTOR projects and programs and promoting regional transit programs. A board of community members representing businesses, higher education, and other civic interests from all five counties governs

the foundation. Implementing sustainable funding strategies for continued transit system development is a long-term goal of the foundation.

### **The Alliance Best Practice: *Marketing***

The group's ability to pool available advertising space among the five partner transit agencies enhances bus advertising efforts. Pooling advertising space allows the foundation to attract larger advertisers, maximizing potential revenue. The group also actively works to attract visitor information advertising through opportunities such as rack cards, posters, and links from its website. Such opportunities allow the alliance partners to promote transit ridership and local retailers at the same time, providing win-win revenue and economic opportunities for the region.

## **EASTEXCONNECTS STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS**

### **Overview**

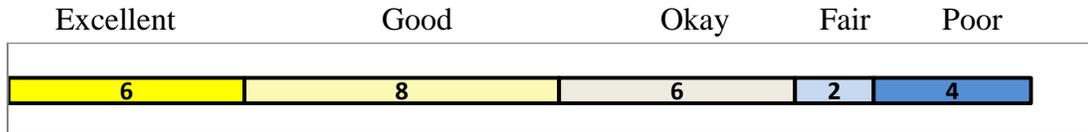
As part of project efforts to document existing conditions and current coordination efforts within the region, TTI staff met with members of the EasTexConnects Steering Committee during July and August 2013 to discuss regional transportation coordination in East Texas. Out of 29 Steering Committee members, TTI met in person or by conference call with 26 of the members, which is 90 percent of the membership. TTI was unsuccessful in scheduling time with two members and one member declined to meet. Researchers followed a discussion outline in each meeting or conference call to obtain answers to core questions. The interviews ranged from 30–60 minutes in duration. A copy of the discussion tool used for this portion of the project is found in Appendix F: Stakeholder Discussion Tool.

### **Summary of Responses**

In summary, 10 of the questions for discussion purposes were structured in nature (such as a 1 to 5 rating, yes/no, or agree/disagree). These questions were adapted from United We Ride's "*A Framework for Action, Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System: A Self-Assessment Tool for Communities*" (UWR Assessment Tool). While some respondents also shared examples and comments, TTI's primary focus was on obtaining structured responses during this portion of the discussions. Combined scores to these questions along with annotated statements and comments offered in response to these questions are found below. The complete report on the summary of responses is found in Appendix G: Stakeholder Meetings Summary of Responses.

## Annotated Responses to the 10 Questions Modeled after the UWR Assessment Tool

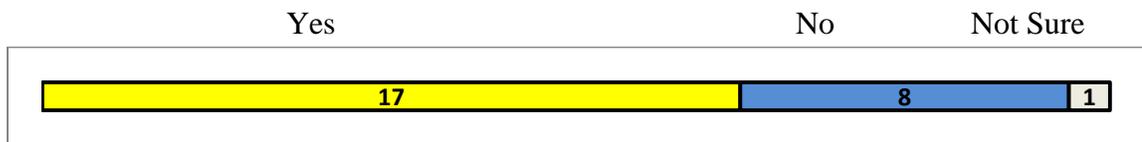
### 1. How would you rate the governing framework [EasTexConnects] that brings together providers, agencies, and users?



#### Comments:

- “Finally getting things done, positive results.”
- “Just need to work to make a big organization work. Everyone is competent.”
- “Members represent a lot of organizations that have a common bond: ‘coordination’ but there are different constituents and different priorities.”
- “I think we should have been further along by now. On paper looks good, there is a good framework, but are we actually making progress?”
- “Meet a lot, but not a lot accomplished. What are we doing?”

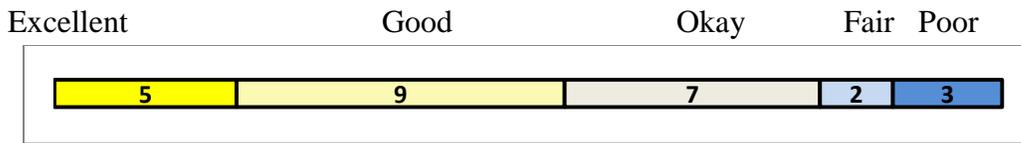
### 2. Are there clear opportunities that all support?



#### Comments:

- “Expansion of public transportation; there is universal buy-in that public transportation is worth the extra investment.”
- “Yes, for example, video and Interconnectivity Day.”
- “Sure everyone believes in seamless transportation, but breaks down between what and how. There are still gaps in service. We should focus on the passenger.”
- “Members need to be more than their own ‘mode’ advocate and learn to more effectively listen to other members. Currently, if something is not important to them they tune out.”
- “Maybe this could be studied a little more, or a discussion topic for the committee.”
- “I will say ‘No,’ I have not been involved where I heard we all had agreed on goals.”

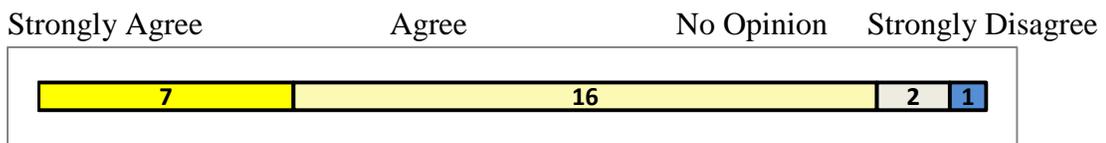
**3. How would you rate the sustained support for coordinated transportation planning among elected officials, agency administrators, and other community leaders?**



*Comments:*

- “Support is weak now, but if EasTexConnects gets functioning then support will come.”
- “Before I can rate support higher there would need to be more local funding from cities and counties.”
- “Could use more involvement from smaller counties.”
- “Elected officials may have different ideas of how to get there.”

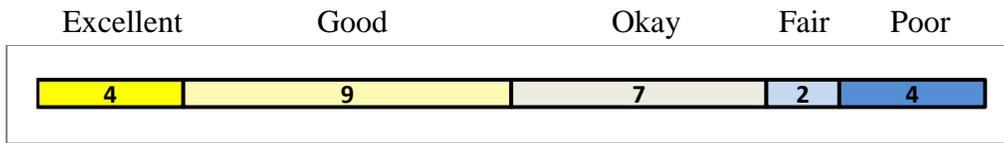
**4. Is there positive momentum in the region? Is there growing interest and commitment to coordinated public transit and human service transportation to maximize resources?**



*Comments:*

- “The positive momentum is driven by client and constituent demand.”
- “There was always an interest. Question is how to do better?”
- “Could be better – needs to be positive.”
- “Turf battles are too common – more transparency may help.”
- “There are many disagreements, but still momentum.”

**5. Please describe your overall evaluation of how well is the region doing in the area of making things happen by working together.**



*Comments:*

- “We work very well together. Good to air different ideas.”
- “Whole lot of progress. We need to continue working together.”
- “Very positive, when we get together and agree to get it done. Negative when we let the small stuff get us sidetracked.”
- “Roller coaster. Distractions, lose momentum. Spin-off issues. In last year, we have made progress in communication and education. There is so much more to do, for example, with veterans.”
- “Disagreements are taking a toll.”

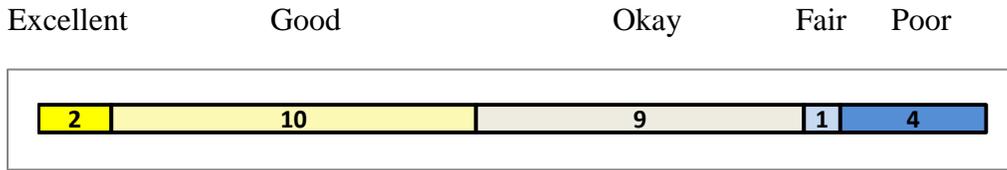
**6. Are there adequate resources and programs that fund transportation services?**



*Comments:*

- “More local funding needed.”
- “Yes, there are sufficient funds if use coordination to leverage. Funding is always tight; we have to work with what we have.”
- “So far, TxDOT [FTA] funds have been sufficient; risk that we get all of our resources from 1 source.”
- “No, because I do not think my county gets its fair share of resources.”
- “Tough to find local share.”
- “No county contributes funds for public transportation. City of Marshall and Kilgore College support rural transit services; City of Longview and City of Tyler support urban transit services.”
- “Can always use more. Not always enough emphasis on outlying communities.”

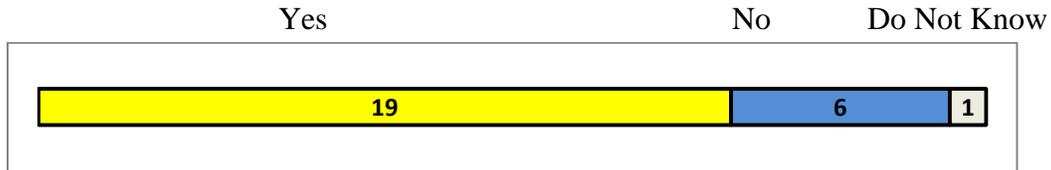
**7. How would you describe the region’s process to identify duplication of services, underused assets, and service gaps?**



*Comments:*

- “No duplication of services, providers do a good job of using assets, and service gaps exist but are hard to address due to lack of resources.”
- “Self-interest is okay, but sometimes overrides global intent/purpose.”
- “I think service should be bid to lowest cost operator in each county.”
- “Regional plan, only as good as implementation. Need action plan.”
- “Committee not always cohesive. Pieces of the puzzle but not the whole picture.”

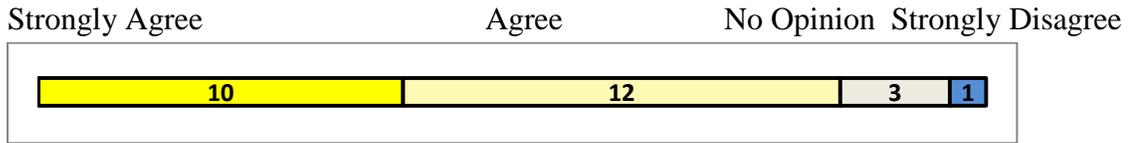
**8. Have community outreach and previous planning processes adequately involved the full complement of potential stakeholders?**



*Comments:*

- “Everyone has had opportunity to be at the table; providers have to be there but there is an inherent self-interest...”
- “And then some...need to try to limit committee to 24. Requires a commitment of a lot of time.”
- “Need more outreach, get message out to residents...”
- “The processes may involve too many stakeholders without direct interest in transit.”
- “We still need HHS agencies.”
- “Passengers are not involved. We could use technology to bring more people to the meetings. We need reminders of why we are here – need to bring focus back to riders.”

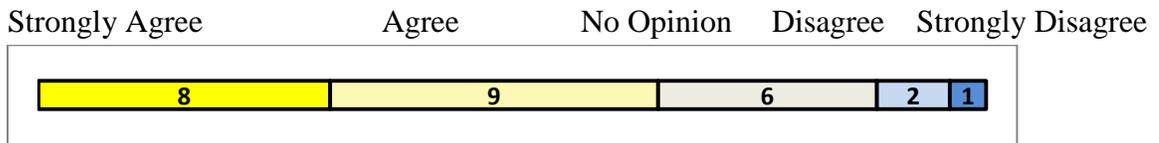
**9. The region should pursue a seamless payment system that promotes customer choice.**



*Comments:*

- “Sounds like a good idea for the rider.”
- “Simpler to use. Do not over complicate.”
- “Farebox revenues are very low, is it worth it?”
- “Needs to be investigated, depends on the technology, must be closely investigated, numbers fully vetted; sounds great but what are the details?”

**10. The region should pursue a single call center/dispatch for all providers to book demand-response trips.**



*Comments:*

- “Strongly agree need single call center for customers, like 211. Promote with a lot of public information.”
- “We need seamless call center to meet customer needs, but not central dispatch.”
- “Prefer ‘single point of entry, but no wrong door.’ Need more information, who all would be involved, what does it look like?”
- “There are pros and cons. Pros: more efficient. Cons: cultural issue, many people want person-to-person connection. Maybe one call center but not one operator [dispatcher].”
- “Need more information.”

## **EASTEXCONNECTS COORDINATION STRATEGIES WORKSHOP**

### **Overview**

On October 29, 2013, TTI staff conducted a workshop with EastTexConnects Steering Committee members to facilitate a discussion of options for enhancing coordination efforts and the delivery of public transportation across the 14-county region. The workshop was held at the Synergy Park Conference Center in Kilgore, Texas, and 21 people attended. The workshop focused on a variety of topics pertinent to effective coordination of public transportation and participants received a workbook. The workshop agenda and the workbook contents are found in Appendix H: EastTexConnects Coordination Strategies Workshop Materials.

### **Workshop Program Content**

The workshop began with an overview of accomplishments across the region related to EastTexConnects and the group's coordination efforts. While the list did not represent a comprehensive inventory of the region's many accomplishments since beginning regional coordination efforts in 2005, the high-level summary focused on accomplishments in four main areas, including:

- Improving the Customer Experience.
  - Branding of GoBus.
  - Longview Intermodal Center.
  - Longview Train Station Renovation.
  - Tyler: "Route Shout" and Travel Trainer.
  - Marshall Depot: Improved ADA Access.
  - Bus Shelters and Stops in Longview and Tyler.
- East Texas Innovations.
  - Regional Maintenance.
  - Same Software.
  - Non-traditional Partnerships.
  - Creative Service Expansions.
  - Intercity Rail.
  - Multimodal Coordination: Airports, RMA Participation, Inter-city Bus, and Amtrak.
- Customer Focus.
  - Veterans' Initiatives: "Basic Training" Brochure, Interconnectivity Day, and Access to Shreveport VA Facilities.
  - Updated Coordination Plan.
  - Customer Outreach: Regional Mobility Guide and PSA Efforts.
  - Award-Winning Efforts: Initiatives and Materials Have Received Multiple Awards and Accolades (Southwest Transit Association and National Association of Development Associations). ([www.etcog.org/default.aspx?c=609](http://www.etcog.org/default.aspx?c=609) October 15, 2013).

TTI staff provided a review of the stakeholder one-on-one meetings that were held in late summer and offered an overview of key themes that emerged from the discussions and stakeholder comments. This information may be found in greater detail in the section of the report immediately preceding the workshop, labeled “EasTexConnects Stakeholder Meetings” and also in Appendix G. The six case studies presented as part of this report were also discussed as part of the workshop’s program, with TTI staff highlighting best practices from each of the case studies and relating how these best practice could be applied to the delivery of public transportation in EasTexConnects 14-county region. Many of the best practices discussed as part of the workshop are covered in the section of this report labeled “PEER CASE STUDIES: Best Practices Among Case Studies” and are also covered in greater detail in Appendix E.

### **Breakout Sessions**

Another significant opportunity to identify and develop coordination strategies and priorities for the region was presented during the breakout sessions portion of the program. Four breakout sessions were led by TTI staff. Each of the sessions had some relationship to creating connections. The sessions included:

- Connecting with Customers and the Community.
- Connections: Enhancing the Customer Experience by Becoming Seamless.
- Connections between Data, Performance, and Service.
- Connections with Partners.

The last two breakout sessions noted above were combined and workshop participants were split into three groups. Facilitated brainstorming activities were conducted in each breakout and when the full group reconvened, the groups offered presentations to discuss ideas generated during the facilitated discussions. Twenty-four ideas were presented as potential strategies to enhance coordination efforts in East Texas, including:

- Call Center.
- Fare Medium.
- Fare Structure.
- Regional Trip Planning.
- Data Review and Improved Data Reporting.
- Dashboard(s) for Base Measures.
- Linking Uniform Performance Data and Dashboards.
- Connections for “New” Communities: Revisit 2008 Transfer Study Recommendations and Develop Next Steps.
- Review Potential Regional Operating Structures.
- Expanded Regional Transit Training.
- Diversification of Funding Sources.

- Expanding Partnerships.
  - Major Employers.
  - State (and Local) Agencies.
  - Universities and Community Colleges.
- Fuller Participation by Health and Human Service Agencies.
- Expanding Public Information/Education Efforts.
- Support of PSA Deployment.
- Update Existing Materials.
- Creating a Speakers Bureau.
- Reaching Key Audiences.
- Meeting Needs of Growing Senior Population.
- Internal Communication and Internal Customer Service: Enhanced Information Sharing.
- New Member Orientation and Resources (Glossary of Key Transit Terms).
- EasTexConnects Website Expansion.

Further review of these topics and the notes of the breakout session discussions allowed TTI staff to consolidate some similar concepts, and the list of strategies to enhance coordination was refined to 16 strategies. The workshop concluded with an evaluation by participants. The evaluation results are found in Appendix I.

## **MOVING FORWARD: EASTTEXCONNECTS COORDINATION STRATEGIES**

TTI staff created a matrix highlighting various strategies for transportation providers in East Texas to serve the public more efficiently. Each strategy identifies the costs and benefits (risks and opportunities) of these strategies. The matrix contains goals, objectives, strategies, activities, lead EasTexConnects subcommittee responsible, timeframe for implementation (short-term, medium-term, and long-term), and next steps. For the purposes of this matrix, short-term is defined as less than one year, medium-term is defined as one to two years, and long-term is defined as more than two years. Some recommended strategies may contain recommendations within more than one timeframe and are noted as such within the matrix. Additionally, TTI staff developed a strategies recommendation worksheet for each strategy. In addition to criteria referenced in the matrix, these worksheets also contain additional background, expected outcomes, estimated fiscal impact, benefits, opportunities, risks, and related best practice(s) from case studies for each of the 16 strategies identified. The strategy sheets follow the matrix in this report.

The matrix was presented to the EasTexConnects Steering Committee on November 20, 2013, for review and comment at their normally scheduled meeting. The recommendations were received favorably by the Steering Committee. The committee immediately moved forward on the strategy recommendations, passing a motion unanimously to begin working on the strategy involving the development of a fare card medium in 2014.

This study researched options for the region to enhance coordination efforts and serve the public more efficiently. With the active input and involvement of stakeholders from across the region in individual stakeholder meetings and the EasTexConnects Coordination Strategies Workshop, TTI was able to develop a matrix of 16 recommended strategies to enhance coordination efforts in East Texas. TTI staff also reviewed prior study findings and provided six peer case studies as a best practices resource for the EasTexConnects Steering Committee as they begin considering next steps for the coordination strategies identified as part of this study. TTI appreciates the opportunity to assist EasTexConnects as they work to enhance coordination across the region and deliver public transportation to the citizens of East Texas in a responsive and efficient manner.