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Coordinated Public Transit-Health and Human Services Transportation Plan

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) has requested a service oriented update to the current *Capital Area Coordinated Public Transit-Health and Human Services Transportation Plan*. CAMPO and the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (RTCC) recognize that an update is needed that focuses on development of an operations component to the plan and is one that identifies strategies that help eliminate gaps in services. In other words, planning efforts should be directed toward implementing service. These potential services can include traditional fixed route and paratransit services, but should also include innovative designs such as flexible routes, dial-a-ride, service routes, as well as other approaches.

This Coordinated Plan is the latest iteration of the coordination process. Unlike previous years, this effort emphasizes the strategies and operational options and focuses less on process. The goal of this effort is to encourage the implementation of activities that foster improved public and human service transportation.

This plan for the Local Mobility Management Network (LMMN) 2A has been developed over the course of the past two years, with input from many interested stakeholders through an open planning process with six public meetings over the two years. These meetings, the review of existing services, demographic and land use analysis, and other details of the planning process are summarized in the beginning of this document. The detailed analyses conducted over the two year period and updated for this plan are documented in the appendices that follow.

The plan first discusses the state and federal planning requirements, followed by a summary of the Comprehensive Needs Review and the Inventory of Existing Resources. Section 2 discusses the vision, mission, and goals of the planning effort, followed by Section 3 a discussion of strategies and projects. Section 4 reviews the plan

details. Following the plan are the supporting technical memoranda presented as appendices.

A. Purpose of the Coordinated Plan

The purposes of this planning process update are twofold. The first is to continue moving forward with implementation of coordinated efforts. The RTCC's approach to mobility and transportation choices calls for local planning and local decisionmaking based on sound planning activities.

The second purpose is to meet the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) rules regarding development of a coordinated transportation plan for any locale to receive a variety of funds from the FTA, a very important resource for funding. Brief information on these FTA funding programs, and on the required coordinated planning process, are provided in the following section and additional information is included in Appendix A.

1. State Coordination Requirements

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers the Section 5310, 5311, 5311(f), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), New Freedom, and Rideshare Programs for the State. TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (PTN), manages these funding programs that are affected by the Coordinated plan.

TxDOT has provided support to the regions in the development of their plans.

2. Federal Coordinated Transportation Plan Elements/Requirements

FTA guidance defines a coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan as one that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

- *SAFETEA-LU* - In August 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), legislation that provides funding for highway and transit programs. SAFETEA-LU includes new planning requirements for Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Section 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)), and Section 5317 (New Freedom) Programs, requiring that projects funded through these programs "must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit- human services transportation plan." This provision is aimed at improving transportation services for persons with

disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes, and ensuring that communities are coordinating transportation resources provided through multiple Federal programs.

- *Section 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities)* - Financial assistance for purchasing capital equipment to be used to transport the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- *Section 5311 (Non-Urbanized or Rural Area)* - financial assistance to enhance the access of people in non-urbanized (rural) areas for any needs and provide for the participation of private transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation (Section 5311(f)) to the maximum extent feasible.
- *Section 5316 (JARC)* - The JARC Program provides funding for developing new or expanded transportation services that connect low income persons to jobs and other employment related services, and to transport residents of urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.
- *Section 5317 (New Freedom)* - The New Freedom Program provides funding to assist individuals with disabilities to access and use transportation services, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services. Projects funded through the New Freedom Program must be both new and go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

B. Summary of the Comprehensive Assessment of the Public's Unmet Transportation Needs Review and Inventory of Existing Resources

These summaries describe the unmet needs and the existing resources. For those seeking greater detail, the Appendices that follow will describe the entire process and all of the results.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

The first part of this section reviews the public's unmet transportation needs in the ten-county Capital area. This includes quantitative analysis of demographic data as well as identification of unmet needs (qualitative) through discussions with service providers, human service agencies and other community stakeholders, community surveys, public meetings, and a round-up of needs identified in previous RTCC planning efforts.

Description of the Geographic Area. The Capital Area encompasses the ten counties in central Texas that belong to the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG): Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson (Figure 1). Five of these counties (Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson) are included in the Austin - Round Rock - San Marcos Metropolitan Statistical Area as defined by the United States Census Bureau, and make up the CAMPO planning area. Together with Burnet County (the Marble Falls Micropolitan Statistical Area), these six counties comprise the Austin - Round Rock - Marble Falls Consolidated Statistical Area.

Regional Demographic Profile. A key component of the needs assessment involves identifying where people live who are most likely to need public and specialized transportation services. A first step is identifying where people are concentrated across the region, specifically population density (Figure 2) which often dictates the type of service to be operated. This demographic profile then focuses on groups that are most likely to have limited mobility options due to age (youths and elderly), disability, limited financial resources, and/or lack of access to an automobile (Figure 3).

Clearly, based on demographic characteristics, the greatest level of need is in the I-35 corridor, where the largest population densities and highest population can be found. In rural counties, the greatest densities and need are found in the larger towns in the study area, with remote rural areas having a lower level of total population needs (Figure 4).

Origin and Destination Data. An important part of the analysis of unmet needs is determining where people need to travel. This includes major employment centers, medical centers, and educational facilities. Clearly the vast majority of the major origins and destinations are in the I-35 corridor, much of which is currently unserved by any transit system (Round Rock, Pflugerville, Cedar Park, West Lake Hills, Kyle and Buda) (Figure 5). In particular Round Rock has become a major regional destination (Dell, La Fronterra, Major retail north of downtown, coupled with universities and hospitals). These north Round Rock destinations can most definitely benefit from transit as they are beyond walking distance for residents without a car. In rural areas routine medical, personal business and shopping needs are addressed in the primary town or city in each county.

Health and Human Service Agencies and Programs Needs. In addition to the assessment of quantitative data, a critical component of the transportation needs assessment was to gain input from a variety of health and human service organizations and workforce development agencies, since the people these agencies serve typically

encounter mobility challenges. Interviews and or surveys were conducted with stakeholders from several key agencies to gain their input and to obtain appropriate reports or studies completed by their agencies.

These agencies confirmed the results of the demographics review, that is, the greatest needs are in the I-35 corridor and the greatest unmet needs are in the Round Rock and Pflugerville areas.

Summary of RTCC Public Survey Results. A total of 482 surveys were completed for the RTCC public survey. The surveys were administered by RTCC members on buses, at human service agencies, and online. Of the 494 surveys, 256 of respondents stated that there is a location in the capital area that they cannot get to without driving. Destinations throughout the service area were perceived to be unreachable by individuals and segments of the general public. These surveys also confirmed previous findings that the major needs are in the cities and towns that do not have public transportation. Yet at the same time there are indications/perceptions that there are lingering needs in the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) and Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) service areas.

Summary of Assessment of Needs, Inefficiencies, and Service Gaps. There were a number of needs that stood out. These include:

1. Without question the greatest unmet needs are in the Round Rock/Pflugerville/Southern Williamson County area and other communities that are outside of both Capital Metro and CARTS service areas. This is due to a combination of very high population, many major destinations and no public transit service.
2. There were many concerns about unserved destinations in the Capital Metro service area, the inappropriateness of service for some seniors and the reduction of the ADA service area.
3. Higher service levels in rural areas were seen as a great need. Additional commuter service was also cited as a need.
4. A wide variety of coordination activities are being called for, including mentoring, education, one stop information center, consolidation of transportation resources, and other types of activities that can reduce costs and improve service.

Passenger Transportation Resources

This section describes the transportation services and other resources currently available in the region. In this technical memorandum the service area gaps are illustrated as well (Figure 6).

Public Transportation Providers

This section briefly describes the transportation programs currently operating in the region. For details please see Appendix B.

Capital Metro is the regional public transit system for the greater metropolitan Austin area. Capital Metro provides fixed route bus, commuter rail, paratransit, and ride share services in the area surrounding Austin. Capital Metro conducts numerous planning efforts, including market analyses for specific service areas, rail station and transit oriented development planning, feasibility studies, and intermodal facilities development.

CARTS, is a Rural Transit District that includes all of Bastrop, Burnet, Blanco, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, and Lee Counties and the non-urbanized areas of Travis and Williamson counties. CARTS provides fixed-route service in Bastrop and San Marcos, fixed schedule, commuter and demand-response as necessary, and contract services with the City of Round Rock and Capital Metro. In addition to annual planning activities related to budget development, CARTS engages in planning for specific service areas and facility development.

Texas State University Bobcat Tram Interurban Service provides “Campus Routes” and “City Routes” for Texas State students, faculty, staff, and visitors that are designed to alleviate campus parking demand and traffic congestion. Service is available based on the university schedule. Bobcat also operates commuter service from North Austin to San Marcos. This commuter service is open to the public.

Hill Country Transit District (HCT) operates demand-response services in Llano County. In addition under contract to CARTS, HCT operates the Medicaid transportation program in Llano. HCT also operates in eight other counties.

The City of Round Rock currently operates three small buses in demand-response service through a contract with CARTS. It should be emphasized that this is not a CARTS service as it is controlled by the City. Commuter and reverse commuter services are planned.

The Lone Star Rail District (LSTAR) was formed to develop rail service between Georgetown and San Antonio. This service is currently in the planning phase.

Intercity Bus and Rail There are four private intercity transit providers in the region (Amtrak, Greyhound, Arrow Trailways and Kerrville Bus Company).

Human Service Transportation

The region is also served by 38 “client focused” transportation providers or those transportation services that are limited to clients of human services, residents of particular communities, or specific demographic groups (based on age, for example). These services have been grouped into the following categories:

- Non-Emergency Medical Transportation – by far the largest human service transportation is currently operated by CARTS
- Workforce Transportation and Transportation Targeted to Low-Income Transit Dependent
- Services Targeted to Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities – including volunteer programs

Planning Organizations

TxDOT has funding oversight over state rural public transportation funding through the PTN. PTN, through its Public Transit Coordinators, work closely with transit systems.

CAMPO is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. The purpose of CAMPO is to coordinate regional transportation planning with counties, cities, Capital Metro, CARTS, TxDOT and others and to approve the use of federal transportation funds within the region.

CAPCOG was organized in 1970 to serve local governments in the ten-county region. The primary focus of CAPCOG is to serve as advocate, planner and coordinator of initiatives that, when undertaken on a regional basis, can be more effective and efficient.

The ***Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization*** (CARTPO) serves as a forum for elected officials to come together on transportation issues to recommend changes in policy and practice, advocate for legislation, recommend regional priorities, direct certain planning and data initiatives, oversee the federally-prescribed local consultation process, and collaborate with CAMPO.

The RTCC was formed as a result of a state requirement for statewide coordination of public transportation services between rural, suburban, and metro areas. The goal of this committee is to achieve a seamless public transportation system that results in efficiency, eliminates duplication, increases coordination, and addresses service gaps.

Summary: Transportation Resources

It should be noted that both CARTS and Capital Metro provide a very high level of service, based on ridership per capita, for comparable systems. There are, however, a number of gaps in the availability of public transit. These gaps are all centered around Austin and are comprised of those areas outside of the Capital Metro area, yet urbanized, and therefore not part of CARTS service area.

Round Rock is the fourth largest city in the state without public transit and the largest without at least a fully-funded specialized transportation service that meets the needs of elderly people and people with disabilities. Clearly, this city of 111,000 in population has the largest service gap in the region. Other major service gaps include Pflugerville, Cedar Park, Buda, Kyle, and West Lake Hills

C. Public Involvement Activities

There are three rounds of public involvement. The first round consisted of series of survey for the general public. A total of 482 surveys were completed for the RTCC public survey. The surveys were administered by RTCC members on buses, at human service agencies, and online. Of the 494 surveys, 256 of respondents stated that there is a location in the capital area that they cannot get to without driving.

Round two of the public involvement process consisted of nine public meetings. The meetings were held at various locations through the RTCC region in both rural and urban settings. The purpose of the this phase of public involvement was to elicit feedback from the public on the work that has been completed thus far in the process, in particular to gather and prioritize strategies to meet the transit needs in the region.

The meetings in Giddings, La Grange, and Lockhart were conducted in an open bus format, on a bus parked in front of the county courthouses on the town squares. These “meetings on a bus” were conducted to bring the meetings to the smaller communities and to get exposure to the general public that may not know about the RTCC transit planning process otherwise. During these meetings, participants were introduced to the coordinated planning process to date and asked to identify any needs and strategies in meeting those needs they may have.

SECTION 2: VISION, MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

RTCC Vision: To provide full mobility and access to healthcare, human services, employment, education, commerce, social, and community services for all persons in the region.

RTCC Mission: To foster the development of a seamless public transportation system that achieves efficiencies, eliminates duplication, increases coordination, and addresses service gaps.

RTCC Goals and Objectives: The Capital Area Regional Transit Coordination Committee does not directly implement transportation services, but instead provides coordination support to numerous agencies that do implement these services in the region. The RTCC intends to partner with transportation providers, health and human service agencies, and others to achieve the following Goals and Objectives:

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

1.1: Improve coordination among agencies and providers.

1.2: Work with transportation service providers and others to increase the level of service for existing transportation consumers.

1.3: Work with transportation service providers and others to serve currently unmet transportation needs.

1.4: Work with transportation service providers and others to develop action plans to explore the use of additional transportation resources made available through coordination to preserve and expand transportation services.

Goal 2: Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services for the public.

2.1: Identify, adopt, and implement measurement of common performance indicators for a coordinated public transit system.

2.2: Facilitate demonstration projects that improve the quality of transportation services.

2.3: Work with transportation service providers and others to identify, adopt, and implement minimum training, vehicle, service, operator, privacy, and other safety standards and policies for participants in the coordinated public transit system.

2.4: Work with transportation service providers to track and improve the performance of the coordinated public transit system on an on-going basis; and prepare an annual report on the state of the coordinated system.

2.5: Identify problem areas and improve bus stop and pathway accessibility and safety.

Goal 3: Secure formal state and local agency agreements and identify and address funding, regulatory, programmatic, attitudinal, and geographic barriers to implement coordinated transportation in the Capital Area.

3.1: Adopt and maintain a Coordinated Public Transit-Health and Human Services Transportation Plan for the Capital Area.

3.2: Establish formal written agreements among participating agencies and programs outlining the decision-making process for implementing a coordinated system.

3.3: Secure the resources necessary to implement coordinated transportation services in the Capital Area region.

3.4: Work with transportation service providers to adopt interlocal, interagency agreements on cost sharing, funding mechanisms, and arrangements for vehicle sharing.

3.5: Identify legislative and regulatory changes that could remove barriers and support coordinated public transportation services.

Goal 4: Increase the efficiency of transportation services for the public and human service clients.

4.1: Work with transportation service providers and others to develop processes to allow grouping of trips funded by multiple agencies or programs.

4.2: Work with transportation service providers and others to identify operational and business functions of services that can be combined or coordinated across agencies

4.3: Advocate for public and private sector agencies to make land use planning and facility location decisions based on availability and location of public transportation.

4.4: Work with transportation service providers and others to develop intermodal facilities that allow for seamless transfers between transportation providers.

Goal 5: Increase public awareness of mobility options and improve access to transportation services for the public.

5.1: Develop and continue to implement a multi-agency marketing plan and develop materials that advertise the availability of coordinated public transit services.

5.2: Gather public feedback on transportation coordination activities on a regular basis.

5.3: Provide targeted training and information materials about available transportation services.

5.4: Create a user-friendly, single-entry phone and website access for passenger information.

Goal 6: Further state and regional efforts to improve quality of life and reduce air pollution.

6.1: Work with transportation service providers and others to reduce vehicle-miles of travel through the consolidation of trips.

6.2: Purchase more efficient transit equipment and fuels to improve transit vehicle emission characteristics.

6.3: Promote the use of more efficient technologies through the consolidation of resources and education.

6.4: Reduce congestion by reducing the number of transit vehicles in service while carrying the same or greater number of person trips.

Performance Measures

Performance measurement is an important component of transportation programs and particularly a demonstration program, providing an assessment of the program's operation and its effectiveness in meeting its stated goals. Performance

measurement also supplies important information that can be used to inform and educate community partners and stakeholders on the progress of the program. Evaluation of a demonstration program additionally serves to assess the potential for transitioning the program from pilot to permanent, ongoing status.

The setting of goals and objectives was the first step in guiding the process. The second step is to identify the different types of quantitative and qualitative performance measures followed by setting of specific measures for each of the strategies to be developed.

Performance measures should be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Therefore, operating data such as trips provided, as well as input from users and operators, should be components of the evaluation process. These various techniques to measure performance are outlined in this chapter.

The Capital Area RTCC has identified the following indicators that will be monitored to assess the extent to which the coordinated public transportation system is achieving the goals of the RTCC Plan.

About the Performance Indicators: *The Capital Area Regional Transit Coordination Committee does not directly implement transportation services, but instead provides coordination support to numerous agencies that do implement these services in the region. The RTCC intends to track the performance of the Coordinated Regional Public Transportation System through the following System Performance Indicators. The RTCC may also develop additional performance measures to track coordination activities themselves.*

The region is achieving the goals of the RTCC Plan if....		
More service is provided to more people (RTCC Goal 1)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Annual Public Transportation Trips/ Capita	Survey of Providers in Resource Inventory	Increase
% of workers who use public transportation for commuting	American Community Survey	Increase
Number of persons with disabilities and elderly persons served	Capital Metro/CARTS	Increase
The system is accessible, seamless and understood (RTCC Goal 2 and 5)		
Indicator	Data Notes	Target
Number of Fully Accessible Bus Stops/ Total Number of Bus Stops	Capital Metro/CARTS	Increase
% of population within 3/4 mile of fixed route transit	ACS Population; CAMPO transit network	Increase
% of population within 5 miles of intermodal facility	ACS Population; CAMPO transit network	Increase

The region is fully leveraging available funding and partnerships for transit (RTCC Goal 3)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Federal Transit Administration Funding awarded in the Region	TxDOT, Capital Metro, CAMPO	Increase
Number of applications received in the RTCC region for JARC/New Freedom (urban and rural) and FTA 5310 Elderly and Disabled funding	TxDOT, CAMPO	Increase
The system is cost effective and efficient (RTCC Goal 4)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Average operating cost / public transit trip	Survey of Providers in Resource Inventory	Decrease / Limit Increase
The system benefits regional air quality and quality of life (RTCC Goal 6)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Vehicle Miles Traveled / Capita	TxdOT/CAMPO	Decrease
% of Low Emissions Vehicles in Fleet (Electric, LPG, CNG, LEDiesel, etc)	Capital Metro/CARTS	Increase

QUANTITATIVE DATA

All public transit systems that receive funds or benefit from the FTA's Urbanized Area Funding Program (Section 5307) or the rural transit program (Section 5311) are required to file an annual National Transportation Database (NTD) report. The data required for this report are defined in the annual NTD reporting manual for all transit modes. (The annual Reporting Manual is published each year and is available on the NTD website at www.ntdprogram.gov). When feasible, quantitative data should be based on the NTD terms and definitions.

Following are transit specific performance measures that can be applied to operational strategies. Each of these performance measures evaluate different aspects of a service as noted:

- Passenger Trips per Vehicle Hour or Vehicle Mile – These are key measures of productivity.
- Operating Cost per Vehicle Hour or Vehicle Mile – These measures determine the basic cost of providing service.

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- Operating Cost per Passenger Trip – This measure is a reflection of the cost per hour and the system productivity. The higher the productivity, the lower the cost per trip.
 - Safety Incidents per 100,000 Vehicle-Miles – A basic measure of safety.
 - On-Time Performance – A measure for determining the quality of service being provided.
 - Annual One-Way Trips per Capita – This measure helps depict the impact of the service in the community.

QUALITATIVE DATA

The RTCC should also collect qualitative data about the program on a periodic basis, obtaining feedback from users as well as from agencies and operators. This information will help assess the degree to which the project or demonstration program is meeting its goals. Qualitative data may also:

- Suggest revisions and improvements to the program.
- Help assess the impact of a strategy on the community, going beyond just the data and numbers.
- Provide information that can be used to report broader outcomes to elected officials, funding partners, and other key community stakeholders, and help to educate them on the importance and the overall benefits of coordinated transportation.

When obtaining and assessing the qualitative data, in general the following should be considered:

- **User Benefits** – Direct benefits to users from increased access to services and activities (i.e. medical services, employment, education facilities, shopping).
- **Economic Benefits** – Economic impact of expanding access to jobs shopping, and other community locations, as well as the expanded business opportunities for taxi providers.
- **Public Service Support** – Support for government agency activities and programs by allowing access to medical services to avoid more acute and expensive medical problems, helping reduce welfare dependency and

unemployment, and providing ability to live independently and reduce care facility costs.

- **Equity Benefits** – Increased economic and social opportunities for people who may be economically, physically and socially disadvantaged
- **Option Value** – Value people place on having a service available, even if they do not currently use it, i.e. during emergencies or when a family member suddenly can no longer drive.

SUMMARY – PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance monitoring of the implemented strategies is an important component of the planning process, allowing the RTCC, transit management, stakeholders, and participating jurisdictions to assess the services provided, the resources required to fund the program, and the users' response to the program. Performance monitoring for a demonstration program is particularly critical as it allows for adjustments and revisions to ensure the program is operating as intended. Decisions can then be made as to the transition of the program to ongoing status. When the strategies are developed they will address the performance data that should be collected, indicating the entity responsible for collecting the data, the frequency of data collection, and monthly and yearly reporting.

Performance assessment should also involve more qualitative review of the program. This should include methods to obtain feedback from users of the programs, such as user surveys, and input from the taxi companies and drivers participating in the program. Such information will supplement the quantitative assessment based on hard data.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Priority Areas of Need

The priority needs are outlined below, followed by strategies to address the needs. The priority areas of need, first identified in a previous report, are described here and these will form the basis for many of the potential strategies to be considered by the RTCC. These priorities were based on interviews with providers, human service agencies and stakeholders, meetings, surveys, the analysis of data, observation, and the consultant's knowledge of the service area.

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- a. **The Elements for Success** – Coordination requires three essential elements for success. They include: a good business deal, trust among the participants, and leadership. Leadership is an element that is lacking at this time. This priority need can be closely aligned with the Mobility Manager function.
 - b. **Service Outside the Transit System’s Service Area** - Without question the greatest unmet needs are in the communities that are outside of both Capital Metro and CARTS service areas (see Technical Memorandum No. 4). This need is particularly acute in the Round Rock/Pflugerville/Southern Williamson County area due to the large unserved population of this area, the very high concentration of major destinations and the lack of public transit service. Needs include:
 - i. Public transportation (all services below can be coordinated under public transportation)
 - ii. Expanded transportation for elderly and persons with a disability
 - iii. Commuter service to major destinations in the Round Rock/Georgetown area
 - iv. Coordinated human service transportation
 - c. **Maintain Transit in All Communities** – According to the 2010 Census the cities of Georgetown and San Marcos will move from a “Rural” status to a “Small Urban” status. As a result CARTS will no longer be able to serve these communities using the FTA funding for rural communities. These communities must decide how public transit service will exist, if at all, within their jurisdiction. In San Marcos a study committee including the Texas Transit Institute, CARTS, Texas State University, and the City of San Marcos has undertaken the task of what San Marcos will do in the future (there has been no decision to date):
 - i. Abandon the service
 - ii. Operate a separate system
 - iii. Consolidation of service with Texas State University
 - d. **Unserved Destinations and User Groups within Region** - There were many concerns about unserved destinations in the Capital Metro service area, the inappropriateness for some seniors and the reduction of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service area.
 - i. Accessibility pathways and stops was seen as an issue
 - ii. Transit should work closely with developers and human service agencies on locational awareness and responsibility for locating their transit sensitive facilities near a transit stop.

The surveys, interviews, and meetings indicate that some elderly persons have difficulty accessing fixed-route and are not using ADA paratransit. Some needs are being met in a variety of ways, including volunteers, service routes, and various human service agencies.

- e. **Expand Connectivity Across Jurisdictional Boundaries** – The public transit systems should continue to improve connectivity both within the region and to destinations outside the region.
- f. **Continue Coordination Efforts with Human Service Agencies** – Medicaid Transportation is far and away the largest human service transportation program. It dwarfs all other human service transportation programs combined as it includes over 90 percent of the human service transportation funding available for coordinated service
- g. **Mobility Management and Coordination Efforts** - A mobility management function can be used to coordinate services in a variety of areas. There are a variety of functions and areas of emphasis. One area of emphasis would be to work more with customers and focus on their needs. Another area of emphasis would be on coordinating services and facilitating coordination between all providers. Then again, the mobility manager could emphasize both. It is not absolute as the following needs can be accomplished without a mobility manager if all parties are willing and there is leadership:
 - i. One stop information center where people can get information on various services
 - ii. Provide centralized leadership and assist RTCC with partnerships
 - iii. Assist non-profit agencies with New Freedom and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program applications
 - iv. Coordinate land use issues and efforts
 - v. Mentoring/education - with human service transportation providers
 - vi. Coordinated training
 - vii. Coordinated maintenance
 - viii. Coordination/consolidation of transportation resources
 - ix. Coordinate volunteer networks

Potential Strategies, Projects, and Partnerships

Key Premise

Excellent public transportation is the best way to coordinate the majority of human service client transportation needs. Therefore efforts to support or improve public transportation should be fully supported by RTCC, human service agencies, and public transit systems as an essential element of coordinated transportation. Any coordination effort should start with maximizing the use of fixed-route services and fixed schedule services (in rural areas).

The use of public paratransit services by human service transportation programs should be appropriately compensated by those agencies. Additionally, any demands placed upon public transportation should include the funding necessary to support it. For example, efforts to expand service in rural areas come at a price: reducing headways from once a day to twice a day doubles the cost.

Key Themes

1. **The Overarching Goal** - *Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective high quality and safe transportation for our community.*
2. **Mobility and Opportunity** - Mobility and access to opportunity are fundamental needs in our society. Well-designed and well-managed public and human service transportation can maximize ridership and benefit all.
3. **Coordination – A Tool** - Coordination itself is not the goal; rather it is one of the significant tools we can use to meet the overarching goal. It is an important tool to improve efficiencies, but most definitely not the only tool.
4. **The Keys to Coordination** - As practitioners we know from experience that coordination almost always requires three things to ensure success:
 - *Leadership* – an entity and/or individual that champions the effort;
 - *Trust* – as in any relationship professional or otherwise, trust is essential to success;
 - *A Good Business Deal* – all sides must benefit from the relationship
5. **Realistic Service Design** - One of the unique challenges in these isolated areas is the low productivity (a very important term – typically defined as one way trips per vehicle hour) inherent in many of the service designs (most notably paratransit). Low productivity results into a high cost per trip and fewer trips.

Strategies, Programs, and Partnerships for Meeting the Goals of the RTCC

A series of strategies and pilot projects were developed for consideration by the RTCC. The strategies are based on the priority areas recognized above. Each strategy will include a discussion on the following:

- a. Impact on ridership
- b. Impact on Costs
- c. Achievement of Goals
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

The Committee is to select priorities which will be detailed in the final chapter on strategies.

Strategy No. 1: Expand Transit Service to the Entire Region - the Public Transit Gap

This strategy seeks to build support for public transportation in the areas between Capital Metro and CARTS. These include: Buda, Cedar Park, Georgetown, Kyle, Pflugerville, Rollingwood, Round Rock, and West Lake Hills. However, it should be noted that the emphasis among those responding to the needs portion of this study was in the Pflugerville, Round Rock and Georgetown area.

Strategy 1A. Work Toward a Solution to the Public Transit Gap - The RTCC should work to build a consensus to improve public transportation in these areas, with an emphasis on the Interstate 35 Corridor. Service can include: Commuter service into and out of Round Rock and local circulator service in each of the communities. Funding appears to be the driving force for making decisions, therefore the RTCC should focus on strategies designed to generate partners and revenue, and provide education and advocacy related to transit funding opportunities. These opportunities may include:

- Federal funding
 - State funding
 - Private sector advertising
 - Local government funding
 - Dedicated sales tax revenue
 - Human service agency funding/partnering
- a. Impact on ridership - There is no question that providing service in unserved areas will generate ridership. The Round Rock area in particular will generate significant ridership due to its large population base and the major

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- destinations: Medical, employment, shopping, and universities. These destinations are very significant and will generate good ridership numbers.
- b. Impact on costs – The costs associated with this task is RTCC stakeholder time and energy.
 - c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 1 – Preserve and expand public transit
 - Goal 3 – Securing agreements with human service agencies
 - Goal 6 – Improve quality of life
 - d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - Working toward eliminating the public transit gap
 - Can improve mobility and coordination
 - Significant ridership increases

Disadvantages:

 - This is a long and difficult process in the current economic and political environment
 - At this time there is no federal transit operating funds available for large urban areas such as Round Rock (part of the Austin metropolitan area).

Programs. Capital Metro has developed an “out of service area agreement policy,” in which they can directly contract with independent entities outside of their service area to provide public transit service. This policy has been enacted in Cedar Park where the Austin Community College campus has agreed to provide operating funds to have their campus served by Capital Metro. This tool has potential to solve the Public Transit Gap in other communities outside of the Capital Metro service area if they choose.

Partners. This is a program that is led by Capital Metro, however, all stakeholders can work with local governments to seek a solution. In fact, local participation is essential to educating local decision makers.

Potential Funding. Clearly local funding is essential to success in development of new services. However some projects that focus on commuters or persons with disabilities would be eligible for FTA Section 5316 (JARC) and Section 5317 (New Freedom) funding. Please note that these funds would be available for operating assistance (50 percent match) and/or capital funding (80 percent). Funding is available for up to three years. After that point, local funding would be necessary.

Strategy No. 2: Maintain and Increase Transit Service in the Region

As San Marcos, Georgetown and other communities transfer from rural to urban designation under the 2010 Census; they will lose access to regular CARTS community

transit service and will need to decide what they will do in the future. This transition may happen within the next year and at that point CARTS can no longer provide the service with FTA Section 5311 funds (rural area). The FTA funds will go directly to the city. In San Marcos, the potential for coordination with the much larger Texas State University transit system is great if the city decides to keep the service. If the city chooses to do nothing, then the service could be eliminated. Following are strategies designed to 1) help move forward the decision making process; and 2) if the city elects to continue the service, an implementation plan.

Strategy 2A. The RTCC Should Facilitate the Coordination and Implementation Process in San Marcos - The RTCC should provide support to the City and University in helping (leading) the planning and decision process to ensure the appropriate decisions are made regarding service in San Marcos. This is an action strategy that should take place if San Marcos decides to maintain service once it is no longer part of CARTS service area.

A preliminary report completed for the University and the City indicates that there are significant benefits to coordination/consolidation for both sides. Once the decision has been made to further coordinate services, the RTCC should provide support and assistance in the implementation planning and subsequent implementation phases. This could be in the form of consultant assistance, RTCC member assistance, and/or discussions with community leaders. An implementation and financial plan are still necessary to help guide the process (again leadership).

- a. Impact on ridership - Ridership neutral.
- b. Impact on Costs - The cost is the time of contributing RTCC members
- c. Achievement of Goals
 - Goal 1 - Preserve transportation service for the public
 - Goal 4 - Increase the efficiency of transportation services
 - Goal 6 - Furthering efforts to improve air quality
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - May lead to consolidated service
 - Can provide support to San Marcos
 - Lower cost of service for all
 - Take advantage of federal funding

Disadvantages:

 - May require some time from RTCC members
 - Requires institutional change which can be difficult

Programs. In the end, the City of San Marcos must make a decision if the city wants to continue with its fixed route (or any transit system) and if so, how to continue:

Operate a separate system or consolidate operations with Texas State University. Funding at this time includes FTA Section 5311 funding and local funds. Future funding would include Urbanized Funds (Section 5307) and a similar level of local funds.

Partnerships. The San Marcos City Council must make a decision, however they need support from the transit community in order to have the knowledge necessary to make the best decision. RTCC members should continue to provide advice and support. It is recommended that the study committee set up to review the planning process, continue.

Potential Funding. Funding for technical assistance and support can be minimal if stakeholders and transit experts are willing to donate time to assist the City. In regard to the transit system, funding will be at a similar level and if consolidated with TSU there are possibilities of reduced local funding through coordination.

Strategy 2B. The RTCC Should Facilitate the Coordination and Implementation Process in Georgetown -Unlike San Marcos, Georgetown does not have a fixed route service in place. CARTS operates limited service in Georgetown and when the city meets the 50,000 population threshold, rural funds will no longer be available. The RTCC should provide support to the City in helping (leading) the planning and decision process to ensure the appropriate decisions are made regarding service in Georgetown. This is an action strategy that should take place if Georgetown decides to maintain service once it is no longer part of CARTS service area.

- e. Impact on ridership – Ridership neutral.
- f. Impact on Costs – The cost is the time of contributing RTCC members
- g. Achievement of Goals
 - Goal 1 – Preserve transportation service for the public
 - Goal 4 – Increase the efficiency of transportation services
 - Goal 6 – Furthering efforts to improve air quality
- h. Advantages/Disadvantages
 - Advantages:**
 - May lead to consolidated service
 - Can provide support to Georgetown
 - Lower cost of service for all
 - Take advantage of federal funding
 - Disadvantages:**
 - May require some time from RTCC members
 - Requires institutional change which can be difficult

Programs. This effort is considerably different from the San Marcos scenario. In Georgetown there is no regular service and soon there will be no service at all when it is designated as an urbanized area. In the end, the City of San Marcos must make a decision if the city wants to continue with its fixed route (or any transit system) and if so, how to continue: Operate a separate system or consolidate operations with Texas State University. Funding at this time includes FTA Section 5311 funding and local funds. Future funding would include Urbanized Funds (Section 5307) and a similar level of local funds.

Partnerships. The Georgetown City Council is the only entity that can make a decision to implement transit. Local stakeholders must take the lead. Possible partners include Southwestern University (students and faculty have shown a significant interest in the past), human service agencies, medical facilities and local business that would benefit from a transit system. RTCC members should continue to provide advice and support.

Potential Funding. The cost of stakeholder involvement and organization is simply the time of the participants. In regard to service, at this time, there is no dedicated funding for Georgetown. If Georgetown becomes part of the Austin urbanized area this will continue, although the possibility of capital funds remains. If Georgetown is designated a separate urbanized area it would be available for operating and capital assistance.

Strategy No. 3: Address Unserved Destinations and User Groups within Existing Transit Service Areas

As noted in the priority area of needs, there are unserved destinations and user groups within the Capital Metro service area. To address these needs, a variety of strategies can be considered. These strategies involve identifying specific service needs that warrant new or extended fixed-route services, exploring the potential for transportation options beyond public transit services, and addressing land use issues to ensure that key destinations are located along existing fixed-route services.

Strategy No. 3A - Continue to Identify and Inventory Major Destinations within Capital Metro's Service Area, but Beyond Capital Metro's Fixed-Route Service - Capital Metro has conducted such an effort for its 2020 plan developed in 2010. This process should continue on an on-going basis as growth continues to be very high in many areas. The committee should work with Capital Metro to ensure this data base it is up to date and can be used to identify future priorities for possible improvements to the existing Capital Metro transit network.

- a. Impact on ridership - Providing extended fixed-route service to unserved areas will generate increased ridership, particularly when this expansion is

-
- based on an inventory of major destinations such as medical, employment, and shopping locations.
- b. Impact on costs – This strategy can be melded into ongoing service planning efforts by Capital Metro staff, so costs for the inventory should be minimal. Obviously, any service extension that results from the inventory will involve increased operating costs.
 - c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 1: Preserve and expand transportation services for the public and human service clients, especially those services that meet the critical needs of the transportation disadvantaged
 - Goal 2: Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services for the public
 - d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - By identifying major destinations outside current fixed-route services, service improvements can be made quickly when funding becomes available
 - Specific information can be provided to elected officials and funders to demonstrate transit needs

Disadvantages:

 - The only downside is that this process clearly points out locations that are unserved at a time when funding for transit services is not readily available to meet these needs, and therefore the information gathered will need to be updated regularly.

Programs. Capital Metro's efforts are an excellent start in their service area. This effort completed in 2010 should be updated on a biannual basis with support from a variety of partners. A committee with representation from a wide variety of stakeholders should be formed to identify unserved destinations. This effort can be led by Capital Metro, CAMPO or a mobility manager. It is aligned with Strategy 3E.

Partners. There should be a wide range of stakeholders involved in this effort. These should include: Capital Metro, human service agencies, medical providers and the Chamber of Commerce.

Potential Funding. Other than stakeholder time there is minimal costs associated with this effort.

Strategy No. 3B – Develop Approaches to Continue to Serve Customers with Disabilities beyond the ADA ¾ mile Service Zone. A variety of transportation options can be considered to serve people with disabilities who live outside the ¾ mile ADA paratransit area. These options include expansion of paratransit services,

improved use of human service transportation services, volunteer driver programs, and/or expanded support for private transportation services including accessible taxi services (user side subsidies). All potential services could be funded through New Freedom Program funds.

- a. Impact on ridership – This strategy would involve expanded transportation options, so therefore more trips would be provided. These services would fill a major gap and meet very specific mobility needs; however the nature of these services would not produce high ridership numbers that would be found in the provision of fixed-route transit services.
- b. Impact on costs – While all of the possible services noted in this strategy provide an important mobility option, there are obviously both operating and capital costs associated with each. These costs would vary from one service to another, and would need to be further examined as part of an assessment of which to move forward with initially.
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 1: Preserve and expand transportation services for the public and human service clients, especially those services that meet the critical needs of the transportation disadvantaged
 - Goal 2: Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services for the public
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - There would be expanded mobility options, particularly for people with disabilities that would allow residents to live more independently.
 - Greater mobility options would enable more people to access employment opportunities, and provide a positive economic by providing greater access to shopping and other key community locations.

Disadvantages:

 - Funding for these low density areas is not available at this time. New Freedom funds would have to be sought

Program. There is an opportunity here to expand on the subsidy program in place at this time using New Freedom Funding as there is currently only minimal availability for residents of these areas. This effort can be conducted by a number of entities including Capital Metro, a mobility manager or a human service organization. This could include a program for commuters that would need the service 5 days per week.

Partners. Partners can include Capital Metro, CAMPO, the mobility manager and the other stakeholders of the RTCC.

Potential Funding. The use of New Freedom or JARC funding through FTA Section 5316 and/or 5317 is a possibility. These programs can provide a FTA match up to 50 percent. Local funding should be used for the rest of the funding.

Strategy No 3C - Meeting Accessibility Needs of Seniors, Passengers with Special Medical Needs, and Persons With Disabilities. The review of needs indicated that the need for specialized transportation continues despite Capital Metro's fixed-route and ADA services, Medicaid transportation (eligibility required), and a large network of volunteer services geared for the elderly. Additional solutions call for: a strengthened volunteer network that minimizes the competition for volunteers, accessible vehicles, an expanded program to train persons to use Capital Metro's fixed route or ADA paratransit service and other capital equipment to support these services. FTA funding (Section 5310) is available for the provision of these services. Another, inexpensive approach would be for Capital Metro and CARTS to sell or lease for a nominal amount retired but reliable accessible vehicles.

In addition to new service, there are a number of activities that are or could be put in place to make it easier for these persons to ride existing services. These activities can include:

- Expanded travel training
 - Accessibility improvements
 - Bus stop improvements
-
- a. Impact on ridership - As demand for specialized service increases and as the Capital Area continues to age, ridership will continue to increase. These programs can also mitigate the impact on Capital Metro and CARTS by muting some accessible service needs.
 - b. Impact on Costs - The costs are minimal as the volunteer drivers can be obtained by the transit agency (in-kind match in some cases)
 - c. Achievement of Goals
 - Goal 1 - Expand transportation services
 - Goal 2 - Safety and quality
 - Goal 5 - Increased awareness of services
 - d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

- Fills a chronic need within the Capital Metro service area

-
- Will not need major efforts, many needs not filled can be met with simple low cost solutions

Disadvantages:

- Will require RTCC efforts to ensure continued coordination and no duplication of services

Programs. The first program would set up a formal arrangement to distribute used but serviceable accessible vehicles to human service agencies and volunteer groups (Faith in Action). A second program would include an expanded travel training for fixed route and ADA paratransit for elderly and persons with disabilities. The third program would include a survey of needed improvements to Capital Metro bus stops and pathways to ensure elderly and persons with disabilities can access the stops.

Partners. Partners for this effort would include:

- Volunteer Programs (Faith in Action, ARCIL, the American Cancer Society and others)
- VA and HHSC Agency Programs
- Capital Metro and CARTS – perhaps they can supply used but reliable and safe accessible vehicles for the volunteer networks. These transit systems can also train volunteers and provide maintenance through a mutually favorable agreement. Capital Metro can also participate in the bus stop inventory accessibility review.

Potential Funding. This is another set of programs with minimal costs other than stakeholder time. The one exception to this would be the bus stop and pathways assessment, which will require funding to perform the assessment. It is possible to access New Freedom funding to perform the bus stop/pathways assessment.

Strategy No. 3D - Expand Efforts to Improve the Coordinated Volunteer Network. The review of needs indicated that some seniors, persons with disabilities and passengers with special medical needs cannot effectively use public transit either in rural or urban areas, although according to the survey results, the needs are much greater in the urbanized areas including the Capital Metro service area and Round Rock. The volunteer network should be fully coordinated, strengthened, and encouraged through the use of technology, capital equipment, and other support. While the Faith in Action Network is well coordinated, there are other programs that utilize volunteers. These programs should coordinate with the Faith in Action Network to ensure that these entities are not competing for volunteers. Volunteers should be considered an integral component of transportation resources as it often assists those that fall “between the cracks.”

- a. Impact on ridership – Should have a modest increase in ridership
- b. Impact on costs – Costs may include vehicles, technology, and/or operating costs
- c. Achievement of goals –
 - Goal 1 – Preserve and expand transportation service
 - Goal 2 – Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services
 - Goal 4 – Increase the efficiency of transportation services
- d. Advantages/disadvantages
 - Advantages:**
 - Can improve service for those falling “between the cracks”
 - There are at least ten organizations in the Austin area that operate volunteer transportation efforts. Coordination can ensure there is no or very little duplication of this precious resource.

Program. The key here is to organize each of the volunteer programs to ensure that duplication and competition are minimized. This should start with a working group composed of all of the volunteer transportation programs. These organizations should meet periodically to ensure that these organizations are coordinated.

Partners. Partners can include:

- Faith in Action
- ARCIL
- American Cancer Society
- Other human service agencies
- Capital Metro
- CARTS

Potential Costs. The costs associated with this program include stakeholder time.

Strategy No 3E – Work with Developers, Human Service Agencies, and the Medical Community to Locate Facilities with Transit Availability in Mind. The placement of new shopping centers, residential communities, aging and disabilities services, and medical facilities without regard to consideration of existing public transit routes only compounds unmet transportation needs and severely hampers mobility options for people with limited access to an automobile. This is not just a transit agency issue – it is vital that all permitting entities, agencies and companies that are responsible for locating facilities that may serve or employ transit dependent persons, take into account where bus service is located or planned. By working hand-in-hand –

developers, agencies, the medical community, and Capital Metro – solutions to this problem can be developed. Capital Metro has developed a *Transit Ready Development Guide* that will be a useful tool in the implementation of this strategy. The RTCC should work with Capital Metro to disseminate the document. In addition it may be advisable to provide a summary document for human service agencies, medical facilities and other as to the importance of locating near transit in an accessible environment.

- a. Impact on ridership – While this strategy may not have significant short-term impact on ridership, transit-friendly land use patterns will greatly increase access to transit services and in the long run increase ridership.
- b. Impact on costs – The principle costs for this strategy is for the staff time needed to work with developers, human service agencies, medical facility staff, local planners, and others involved with future development in the region.
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 1: Preserve and expand transportation services for the public and human service clients, especially those services that meet the critical needs of the transportation disadvantaged
 - Goal 2: Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services for the public
 - Goal 3: Secure formal state and local agreements and address barriers
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - This strategy helps ensure that planning for new developments and locating various facilities includes consideration of transit services from the outset of the project, not as an afterthought that may makes service improvements and the placement of customer amenities (i.e. bus shelter) much more difficult

Disadvantages:

 - More staff hours will need to be devoted to allow time for reviewing and commenting on site plans and for attending meeting

Programs. This work will include:

- Review of preliminary site plans
- Commenting on proposed site plans
- Meetings with developers, planners, and others, and
- Follow-up on-site during construction to ensure proper placement of sidewalks, bus shelters, and other aspects of any new development that will impact use of public transit services in the region
- A brochure or guide to locating a facility

Partners. This includes:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC)
- Transit Operators
- Other human service agencies
- Developers
- Mobility Manager
- City of Austin SMART Housing Program

Potential Costs. The costs of these programs are predominately stakeholder time with printing costs associated with a brochure

Strategy No. 4: Medicaid Coordination

Medicaid transportation expenditures include between 80% - 90% of the available human service transportation funding. Therefore without coordinating Medicaid transportation, many of the advantages of coordination fade. From the initiation of Texas rural public transit programs in the early 1980s until 2006 there was an excellent coordinated relationship/partnering between rural transit and Medicaid Transportation. It was at exactly that time where the costs for the MTP program started to grow dramatically.

In 2006 MTP chose not to coordinate service nor facilitate the grouping of trips anymore, further driving up the cost of the service. It should be noted that coordination and grouping of trips is permitted under Medicaid law and regulation.

These strategies seek to bring RTCC to work with various entities to allow for coordination of the largest human service transportation program. The RTCC should attempt to engage HHSC at the Director level and offer to work with HHSC to develop a coordinated pilot program that helps all clients and customers as well as the state as a whole. These two strategies work best if they work in tandem. That is, develop an alternative solution as a pilot project and then engage HHSC management.

Strategy 4A - Seek Out Pilot Project to Demonstrate the Effectiveness and Power of Coordinated Services. The first step in this two part strategy is to develop a pilot program that:

- Keeps costs down through use of coordinated services and grouping of trips
- Provides for safe and quality service up to the standards of public transit
- Can be operated by CARTS in a businesslike manner

When advocating for a change, it is best to have a viable solution. Many of the elements of a solution would include the tools used in years past. These tools are still viable and make sense from a transportation perspective.

Strategy 4B - Engage Texas Health and Human Services Regarding the Medicaid Program. Emphasize grouping of trips and reducing costs (From 15.2006 - *Identify and Implement Opportunities for Shared Ride and Flexible Trip Scheduling*). The second step in the process can be to attempt to educate HHSC upper management regarding the safety, quality, and cost advantages of coordinating service with public transit.

- a. Impact on ridership - Great potential to improve productivity and free up service for more riders.
- b. Impact on Costs - Coordinated service and an emphasis on fixed route where feasible will significantly reduce costs
- c. Achievement of Goals -
 - Goal 3 - Secure state and local agreements
 - Goal 4 - Increase the efficiency of public and human service transportation
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

 - Will generate efficiencies and economies of scale
 - Lower cost service
 - Higher level of quality and safety
 - Improve transportation for all

Disadvantages:

 - Will be difficult to engage decision makers at HHSC

Programs. The Medicaid Transportation Program is rife with duplication of effort, inefficient service and high costs due to state management decisions to operate the service as a medical program rather than a transportation program. The education of HHSC management and the development of a pilot project to reduce costs and increase service quality will probably require consultant assistance to implement.

Applying transit solutions to this transportation problem and coordinating services with the higher quality public transit service would go a long way towards reducing costs. The theory is that the best way to coordinate is to provide quality public transit.

Partners. Partners would include CARTS, RTCC stakeholders and HHSC (if they are willing).

Potential Costs. The costs associated with this program include the development of a Medicaid Coordinated Plan for the Capital Area. These costs would be minimal.

Strategy No. 5: Pursue Mobility Management and Coordination Opportunities

While there was general consensus among stakeholders for the need to continuously coordinate and to identify opportunities to connect services, there were varying views towards the role of mobility management. The partners in this strategy include all RTCC members and stakeholders. Overall, the following strategies should be considered by the RTCC:

Strategy 5A - Determine Mobility Management Functions. These functions should all be considered as either separate projects taken on by the RTCC and individual members or through a mobility manager. What functions should be addressed and what entity will do them? The list of mobility management activities includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. **One Stop Information** - One stop information center and website where people can get information on various services.
2. **Customer Education** - Develop a comprehensive Customer Education and Marketing Program (From Strategy 8.2006 *Develop and Implement Comprehensive Customer Education and Marketing Program for the Region*).
3. **Leadership** - Provide centralized leadership and assist RTCC with partnerships.
4. **Technical Support** - Assist non-profit agencies with coordinated New Freedom and JARC Program applications.
5. **Facility location** - Coordinate land use issues.
6. **Mentoring Program** - Coordinate mentoring and education.
7. **Coordinated Training** - Coordinate training efforts between all operators of service.
8. **Regional Planning Activities** - Coordinate planning efforts and focus on regional connectivity.
9. **Customer Service** - Create Regional Standards for Customer Care (Strategy 9.2006).
10. **Group Procurement** - Developing economies of scale through group purchases (Strategy 19.2006).
11. **Self Sustaining** - Generate revenue and become self sustaining within 3 years.

It should be kept in mind that these functions can also be accomplished without a Mobility Manager, but it would require leadership and a commitment by the transit operators and key stakeholders.

Strategy 5B - Develop Process to Select a Mobility Manager. Assuming that the RTCC desires a mobility management function, the RTCC should select the type of entity where the mobility manager would be housed and their affiliation with an organization. Often these mobility managers work for:

- transit systems,
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (urban areas),
- Councils of Governments,
- in at least one state the DOT funds the Transit Association, which hires the mobility managers, or
- a mobility manager can be an independent entity with their own board.

The mobility manager can be an individual or it can be an entity with multiple persons fulfilling that function at different times.

Strategy 5C - Seek Funding to Implement the Mobility Manager. Both New Freedom and JARC Program funds can be used to support a mobility management function. If the RTCC desires to fund/seek a New Freedom or JARC grant (for up to 80% federal funding for up to three years) this strategy becomes an excellent option.

- a. Impact on ridership - The decision to implement a mobility manager function will have a positive impact on ridership.
- b. Impact on costs - The ultimate implementation of a mobility manager may include the costs associated with one professional level manager and support.
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 2 - Maintain and improve quality and safety
 - Goal 3 - Secure formal and informal agreements
 - Goal 4 - Increase the efficiency of transportation services
 - Goal 5 - Increase public awareness
 - Goal 6 - Further efforts to improve quality of life and reduce air pollution
- d. Advantages/disadvantages

Advantages:

 - Will go a long way toward optimizing public transportation coordination
 - Revenues generated by a mobility manager could exceed the cost

Disadvantages:

 - This is a level of institutional change that may be difficult to accomplish due to the widely varying needs of stakeholders

Programs. Mobility management is a concept that can implement not only the functions listed above, but can also implement or assist many of the other projects listed

in Strategies 1 – 4. This would fulfill the need for leadership. The key decision point for the RTCC will be as follows:

- The structure of the mobility manager – stand alone, within CAMPO or one of the transit systems
- The level of experience of the manager – the ability to lead is paramount
- The projects that the mobility manager would support (see the list above)

Partners. This program would include virtually all of the RTCC members, with active participation from the transit systems, CAMPO, volunteer organizations and human service transportation operators.

Potential Costs. The mobility manager costs will include salary and support for the manager. FTA JARC and New Freedom funding could be used to provide 80 percent of the costs for up to three years. Local match would be required. One of the roles of the mobility manager could be to generate funds to support the program.

Strategy 5D – Continue to Improve Connectivity between Transit Systems – From Strategy 3.2006 - *Expand Network of Shared Stops, Transfer Points, and Park-and-Ride Opportunities (CMTA)*. Expand the network of shared stops, transfer points, and park-and-rides under an agreement with CMTA, CARTS, and possibly local municipalities. This should also include connections to adjacent systems outside the service area. These would include: Hill Country Transit, Alamo Regional Transit and Colorado Valley Rural Transit.

Timed meets should be in effect at each of these transfer points – most importantly in rural areas with long headways. Without timed meets in these areas, the connection is meaningless. An expanded network of shared stops could help to create a more seamless transportation system and overcome jurisdictional boundaries among providers and would be made accessible per the Texas Accessibility Standards and ADA, so that customers with disabilities can make full use of the network.

This could include space at transfer facilities, accessible pathways, having the connecting service placed in each system’s schedule and map. Call centers would be cognizant of these connections.

- a. Impact on ridership – Improving connections between providers can help improve ridership.
- b. Impact on costs – Costs for this effort should be minimal if space is available for connecting vehicles.

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- c. Achievement of goals –
 - Goal 1 – Preserve and expand transportation.
 - Goal 4 – Increase efficiency of transportation.
 - d. Advantages/disadvantages
 - Advantages:**
 - Greater connectivity and service for all customers of transportation services
 - Can have a positive impact of having more human service clients use public transit

Program. Both CARTS and HCT serve the Kingsland area as it straddles both Llano and Burnet Counties. There is the potential for duplication of service. The objective of this pilot project is to reduce duplication of effort and ensure that customers receive the best, most efficient service. This could include one entity providing service for all Kingsland residents or HCT can take all requests for service to Llano while CARTS could serve destinations in Burnet County.

Partners. Participants will include CARTS and HCT.

Potential Costs. There are virtually no costs associated with this effort. It is simply coordinating the two operators and informing customers of the expanded service opportunities.

Strategy 5E – Continue to Overcome Barriers. From Strategy 1.2006 *Consider and Recommend Mechanisms to Overcome Jurisdictional and Boundary Issues (CAMPO)*. Research has shown that most of the barriers associated with coordinated transportation are perceived, attitudinal and often self imposed barriers, often due to a lack of understanding of the regulations. The most difficult barriers however are associated with the provision and the funding of service in areas outside of the CARTS or Capital Metro service areas. These barriers can be overcome with the proper amount of education and cooperation.

Identify how to best overcome barriers caused by jurisdictional boundaries through local solutions and/or legislative remedies such as enabling local jurisdictions to exceed the local sales tax cap for purposes of providing transit service, or some other mechanism to assist in making transit services uniformly available throughout the region.

- a. Impact on ridership – Could have a major impact on ridership if boundary barriers are overcome

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- b. Impact on costs – The effort to break down the barriers will have an impact on costs in the future – new service, however the cost of breaking down the barriers is simply staff and RTCC member time associated with this effort.
 - c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 3 – Secure agreements and address barriers
 - d. Advantages/disadvantages

Advantages:

 - May be able to pave the way for future service in unserved or underserved areas
 - Can result in significant ridership increases if service is ultimately implemented

Program. The first step in the breaking down of barriers is an education process. It will be incumbent on all RTCC members to educate agencies, public officials and the public at large to the need to eliminate attitudinal barriers. The mobility manager should develop a briefing paper outlining the attitudinal barriers and how they can be overcome.

Overcoming funding barriers in the areas currently unserved are addressed in Strategies 1 – 3, above.

Partners. Participants will include all RTCC members.

Strategy 5F – Coordinate Technologies Where Possible. Most important is the use of a universal farecard, or acceptance of each transit system’s card. This is not nearly as easy as it sounds. CARTS committed to its technology in 2003, while CMTA committed to different technology years later. While these efforts should be pursued, it will be a very difficult process if it can be done at all. This effort, if pursued, should start with a discussion of what resources it would take to generate a compatible platform that would accept either card.

Other technology implementations should be planned together as the best time to coordinate technology is before the specifications and RFP are developed. Partners would include Capital Metro and CARTS.

- a. Impact on ridership – No significant impact on ridership
- b. Impact on costs – Costs may be very high to implement. Studying the effort will not be expensive
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 4 – Increase the efficiency of transportation services
- d. Advantages/disadvantages

Advantages:

 - Allows for seamless travel

- Greater ease for customers

Disadvantages:

- May be difficult and expensive to merge system

Program. Currently the two major transportation providers are set in their technology options. Unfortunately these systems are not compatible with the exception of the software. It is recommended that CARTS, Hill Country Transit and Capital Metro – Metro Access technology staff initiate a software users group to learn from each other and coordinate where possible.

Partners. Capital Metro, Hill Country Transit and CARTS

Potential Costs. There are no costs associated with this program.

Strategy No. 5G: Formalize Mentoring Opportunities. Recognizing that CARTS is already highly coordinated. CARTS, Capital Metro, and the human service agencies that provide transportation should continue to seek out opportunities to partner at a small scale. CARTS and/or Capital Metro can also serve as a mentor for these agencies and at a minimum, assist in procurement of vehicles, maintenance, and other activities.

- a. Impact on ridership – This strategy has the opportunity to increase ridership on public transit services through identifying trips currently provided through human service agencies that could be part of an expanded public transit route or service.
- b. Impact on costs – Partnership opportunities through this strategy may simply involve the use of funds that human service agencies currently use to provide transportation directly for the people they serve to instead be used to contract services with CARTS.
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 2 – Maintain and improve the quality and safety of transportation services
 - Goal 3: Secure formal arrangements to implement coordinated transportation
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

- Transportation services currently available only to human service agency clients could be provided as part of general public services, expanding mobility options for a greater number of residents
- May be able to improve safety and quality of service

Disadvantages:

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- Human service agencies that currently provide transportation for their clients may need to implement additional budgetary processes to determine exactly how much they are actually spending on transportation so that these funds can then be used to contract with CARTS

Program. It will be up to the appropriate human service agencies to seek assistance in the mentoring program. Both Capital Metro and CARTS have a wealth of experience and knowledge that they can share. A brochure should be developed to inform the agencies.

Partners. Human service agencies, CARTS and Capital Metro.

Potential Costs. The costs of a mentoring program include staff time.

Strategy No. 5H: Expand Coordination of Student and Workforce Transportation. Through the review of needs it was identified that there is potential for private sector funds for transit service to specific locations. Capital Metro's Service Expansion Policy has shown success in Cedar Park in contracting service with Austin community College. Potential for employee shuttles, student shuttles and other employer or school funded transportation contracts should be sought out. Major employers such as Austin Community College and regional vocational schools are all potential partners.

- a. Impact on ridership – This strategy will create a new level of ridership in the provision of new and acute services.
- b. Impact on cost – Operational costs should be covered by the partners. May require the purchase of new vehicles.
- c. Achievement of Goals
 - Goal 3 – Secure formal and informal agreements
 - Goal 6 – Further efforts to improve quality of life and reduce air pollution
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages

Advantages:

- Acute and targeted transportation services with high ridership will be provided, with operational costs covered creating new mobility options for employees and students.

Disadvantages:

- May prove difficult to engage partners.

Program. Capital Metro Expansion Policy can also be extended to CARTS throughout the service area. This program should be promoted by the RTCC using brochures and a speaker's bureau.

Partners. The RTCC, CARTS and Capital Metro

Potential Costs. The cost of the promotional campaign is essentially RTCC stakeholder time and the cost of brochures

SECTION 4 - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A. Planning for Comprehensive Services Across Funding Categories

The Federal regulations call for funding through the FTA Sections 5310, 536 and 5317 to be coordinated through this plan update. This plan calls for the use of a variety of funding sources as detailed in the strategies and project section above.

1. FTA-funded programs
 - i. JARC
 - ii. New Freedom
 - iii. Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities
 - iv. Urban Formula
 - v. Non-Urbanized Formula Programs
2. Health and Human Services Programs
3. Work force programs

B. Parallel/Coordinated Planning Processes

This section outlines the planning efforts in the Capital Area RTCC region that are occurring simultaneously to the Capital Area Transit-Health and Human Services Transportation Plan Update. For each process a summary describing recommendations, participants and level of coordination will be included depending on the stage each planning process is in and the information that is available.

For the most part, these efforts are being coordinated through this planning process and each of the participants has been informing others of the efforts.

Capital Metro All Systems Go! Plan Update

Capital Metro is updating its long-range transit plan known as All Systems Go!, the agency's regional long-range transportation plan to address the pressures of rapid regional population growth in the Greater Austin area. The All Systems Go! Plan includes a 25 year plan for transit investment by Capital Metro and reflects plans for several related regional services which would be operated by other providers, such as CARTS. Analogous to a future land use plan for transit, All Systems Go! provides a regional map showing planned future transit conditions. The plan calls for implementation of Capital MetroRail, Capital MetroRapid, expanded Local and Express bus services, more Park & Ride locations and possible future rail services in Central Texas.

Currently the planning for MetroRapid Bus Rapid Transit has been slated to begin. MetroRapid transit will be an express bus service running on major north/south corridors in central Austin. It will emulate many of the principals of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) but it will not operate in its own dedicated lane.

Capital Metro Paratransit Plan

Capital Metro is in the process of finalizing the update to its ADA Paratransit Plan, to reflect changes in policies which were adopted in September 2010. These changes included establishment of a more rigorous eligibility determination and appeals process, changes to the level of assistance service (curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and door-through-door) available to customers, scaling back of the geographic coverage area to reflect the minimum coverage required by the ADA, restructuring the taxi voucher program, and call center operations, and advanced reservations systems. The change to the service area was implemented in February 2011.

City of Austin Strategic Mobility Plan

The City of Austin strategic Mobility Plan is a coordinated planning effort with the City of Austin, CAMPO, TxDOT, Capital Metro and CARTS. The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan includes a number of initiatives by the City of Austin to develop mobility solutions that respond to Central Texas' needs and values. In addition to the various studies currently being conducted on Austin's proposed Urban Rail system, the planning phases include:

- Gap analysis and [project prioritization](#) to identify near-term transportation projects, from sidewalks to bike lanes to turn lanes to highway ramps, that will address current challenges, and
- Corridor planning to focus future investments so they can best connect people, routes and destinations in Austin and throughout Central Texas.

As part of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, the City Council in April adopted a new Project Prioritization Process (PPP) for the city's mobility investments. This model includes a number of criteria – known as "measures of effectiveness" or MOEs – that score potential projects based on how well they fulfill key community objectives, including:

- Efficiency
- Regional coordination
- Mobility choices
- Sustainable growth
- Investment and economic development
- Safety

-
- Environmental stewardship
 - Neighborhood connectivity

These objectives, and the MOEs that go with them, are weighted in the PPP based on community feedback received from the people of Austin during the ASMP process, including at Austin Mobility Forums and via the first ASMP online survey. The PPP was used to evaluate 474 projects in 2011, derived from a list of more than 2,000 gaps in the Austin mobility network, as identified by citizens, city staff, and Austin's partner agencies in Central Texas. This evaluation was then used to develop the City's 2010 Mobility Priorities, to be considered for inclusion in a proposed 2010 mobility bond election.

Going forward, the city of Austin as well as other transportation planners in Central Texas can use the ASMP PPP to help guide mobility investments as we tackle the long-term transportation challenges facing our growing region

Advance Rail Planning and Alternatives Analysis - City of Round Rock

Working with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Capital Metro and CAMPO, the City of Round Rock has investigated the feasibility of constructing a regional rail connection between Round Rock, Georgetown and Pflugerville and Downtown Austin by linking to the Capital Metro MetroRail Red Line. A fatal flaw analysis has already been completed highlighting funding challenges and mobility opportunities. The next phase of the planning process is to plan and analyze various route alternatives.

Round Rock Transit Planning

The City of Round Rock receives FTA Section 5307 funding (which supports public transit services in urbanized areas). Currently, these funds are used to support CARTS demand-response service. In anticipation of initiating transit services, the City was granted additional federal grantee status that enables it to access \$910,254 of Section 5307 funds. While the City currently has no transit-related infrastructure, it has approved development of a downtown intermodal transit and parking facility. From this downtown facility, commuters will have an opportunity to park their vehicles and access a connector shuttle that will provide express service to the nearest CapMetro Park and Ride. Additional public transportation projects that are being considered by the City include a second park and ride facility to provide an additional connector shuttle with service to a future CapMetro MetroRail station and a downtown shuttle circulator. Staff is also looking at a possible future fixed route system.

San Marcos Task Force for the Coordination of Public Transportation

The purpose of this Task Force is to determine if there is an opportunity to coordinate public transportation services in San Marcos, evaluate operating and financial alternatives for

coordinated transit services, and identify the advantages of these alternatives from the perspectives of the stakeholders, including the City of San Marcos, Texas State University and CARTS. Currently the task force is examining public transit alternatives in the wake of San Marcos growing to over 50,000 in population. As a result the city loses its “rural” status and CARTS will no longer be able to provide service to the city using federal dollars devoted to rural public transportation. To keep the current level of service or to fund service alternatives a new source of revenue must be established.

Lone Star Rail District

Lone Star Rail District and North Central Texas Council of Governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in April 2011. NCTCOG, the council of governments and metropolitan planning organization for the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, is active in passenger and freight rail planning in north Texas and is working with the Rail District to cooperate on long-range rail planning efforts between the Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, and San Antonio metropolitan areas. The [MOU](#) provides a formal mechanism to coordinate rail planning with TxDOT and other stakeholders and to collaborate on connectivity between the systems.

C. Staff Structure and Process

1. **Lead Agency Role** - The ongoing management of the coordination process is currently conducted by CAMPO as the lead agency. Staffing consists of a senior planner with professional staff support.

Future plans may call for the mobility manager to take over the lead function, however that will be decided in the future by the RTCC. The mobility manager would be responsible for organizing meetings, leading coordination efforts and provide staff support for the RTCC.

2. **RTCC Involvement** - The RTCC will continue to function as it currently does. The RTCC will continue to meet on a regular basis and will be charged with supporting the transportation programs and projects implemented by CAMPO, the mobility manager, transit systems and human service agencies.

3. **Methods of Lead Agency to Engage the RTCC and Other Stakeholders** - The existing structure will continue where the RTCC will meet on a regular basis (quarterly) to review activities, determine strategy, approve projects, recommend JARC, New Freedom and other programs under the umbrella of the RTCC. This will be accomplished by regular meetings, public meetings and a newsletter.

4. **Update of Plan** - While there are no specific Federal guidelines for updates to the plan, the RTCC and the lead agency will conduct updates as needed to

ensure the projects approved by the RTCC are in the plan. Efforts should now focus on implementing the plans and projects , while minimizing the focus on processes.

5. Leveraging Resources- The need for matching funds is the key to leveraging of resources. The Section 5310, 5316 and 5317 programs all require local match. These matching funds can come from local municipalities, transit systems, TxDOT and the private sector through sponsorship programs or in the case where the private sector is a direct recipient or beneficiary of the funds.

6. JARC/New Freedom Competitive Selection Process and Criteria - The process used to select projects in the urbanized area will be open and transparent. The RTCC will select and prioritize projects annually. As funding becomes available, projects will be initiated based on the priorities selected by the RTCC and the availability of matching funds.

The process in rural areas will allow the RTCC to prioritize potential projects designated for rural areas using rural funding. TxDOT selects projects for rural areas using a closed door process, however the RTCC urges TxDOT to use the priorities selected through this process.

D. Leveraging Resources

To be completed

E. JARC/New Freedom Competitive Selection Process and Criteria

To be completed