

Executive Summary

Assessment of Transportation Needs

This technical memorandum presents a comprehensive assessment of 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 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 Regional Transit Coordination Committee (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. 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 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.

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.

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. 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, Kyle and Buda). 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 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 Pflugerville, and Cedar Park areas.

Summary of RTCC Public Survey Results

A total of 494 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, 271 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 Metro and CARTS service areas.

Summary: Assessment of Needs, Inefficiencies and Service Gaps

There were a number of needs that stood out as unserved. These include:

1. Without question the greatest unmet destinations reported 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 limited public transit service.
2. There were many concerns about unserved destinations within 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.

Figure 1: Overall Need by Percentage of Potentially Transit Dependent Persons.

This map shows a summary ranking based on the percentage of potentially transit dependent persons in each Census block group.

