

June 15, 2011

Technical Memorandum No. 5:

Development of Potential Strategies for the Coordinated Transportation Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

Based on the results of the needs assessment, inventory of resources and gap analysis developed previously, and in consideration of the mission, visions, goals, and objectives, the consultant identified priority areas for additional services and activities. These areas provided the basis for the potential coordination strategies presented here.

The intent of this memorandum is to present a range of alternative strategies for the RTCC's consideration. Once the RTCC has decided which strategies to include in the Plan, the consultants will build further details into those selected strategies and pilot projects for the plan. This will include: implementation guidance, partners and key participants, staffing, funding, and governance structure.

The strategies are geared for activities that can be accomplished by the RTCC and its partners and does not propose to tell cities, transit systems or human service agencies what to do. The focus here is on a course of action that will result in a desired outcome. In many cases the role of the RTCC is to facilitate coordination within the region, many of the strategies reflect that.

The Need for Leadership

As has been discussed previously, success will be dependent on leadership at the regional level and at the strategy/project level. The RTCC should address this issue at the regional level. Leadership at the local level will be project dependent, however no project should move forward without the appropriate leadership or "champion."

Developing Strategies and Partnerships

As a starting point in the development of strategies, this technical memorandum first reviewed the strategies developed for the 2006 Coordinated Plan. Some of these strategies have been completed, some are no longer relevant and many are included in this next round. The second step is to identify the priority areas of needs. These priorities guided the development of the strategies which is the third component of this memorandum. Once comments have been received and priorities selected, the consultants will complete the strategies with implementation planning, partnering opportunities, staffing, funding, and other details.

II. REVIEW OF STRATEGIES FROM 2006

The strategies from the 2006 plan are reviewed here and will be eliminated (if completed), added to the 2011 plan as is, or amended and included in the new list.

1. *Consider and Recommend Mechanisms to Overcome Jurisdictional and Boundary Issues (CAMPO)* - 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 urban transit service, or some other mechanism to assist in making transit services uniformly available throughout the region. **This strategy should continue.**
2. *Investigate Feasibility of Single Point Consumer Access (CARTS)* - Assess the feasibility of implementing a single point consumer access program within the Capital Area. This is also referred to as “one-stop shopping.” The Single Point Access (SPA) is envisioned as a central dispatching function for the region. This concept could be developed over a period of time beginning with centralized marketing and information sources (such as a website) that encompass all public transportation providers serving all public transportation programs including airport transportation, taxis, intercity bus, as well as passenger and commuter rail. **This strategy will be modified to include a one stop information center.**
3. *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. An expanded network of shared stops could help to create a more seamless transportation system and help to overcome jurisdictional boundaries among providers and would be made accessible per the Texas

- Accessibility Standards and ADA, so that customers with a disability could make full use of the network. **This strategy continues.**
4. *Remove Funding “Silos” and Restrictive Requirements (TxDOT)* – Undertake a statewide effort to review, coordinate, and/or consolidate regulations and requirements for transportation services among involved State agencies. Current efforts of this study are centered in the Capital Area region and although federal programs and requirements are an issue, the most likely efforts to result in success would be at the State level. **Medicaid continues to act on its own. Efforts are underway to accomplish this strategy.**
 5. *Coordinate Formal Rural Transit and Intercity Bus Interline Relationships (CARTS)* – Coordinate effective feeder services to enable the seamless transfer of passengers between the rural feeder service and the intercity bus service through interline relationships. **This has been accomplished.**
 6. *Identify Funding for Continuation and Enhancement of Coordination Activities (CAMPO)* – Identify state and federal funding that can be provided as an incentive for regional transit providers to implement identified coordination programs and activities. **This has been accomplished.**
 7. *Review and Revise Regulations and Requirements for Client Eligibility Across State Agencies and Programs (CAN)* – Undertake a statewide effort to review, revise and/or consolidate regulations and requirements for transportation services among involved State agencies with a goal of overcoming the coordination barriers that result from current client eligibility requirements. **This will be revised in light of activities by the Texas Transit Association.**
 8. *Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Customer Education and Marketing Program for the Region (CMTA)* – Develop and implement a comprehensive customer education and marketing program. This program would increase customer awareness for all transportation options available in the Capital Area. This effort would include Public Service Announcements (PSA) on radio, TV, bus shelters, buses, etc., plus promotion through agencies and providers, website, informational phone line, and direct mail. However, since many customers do not have access to some of the conventional media due to disability, language, or not owning a TV or computer, all possible ways to communicate would need to be considered. **This will be consolidated with other strategies.**
 9. *Create Regional Standards for Customer Care (CAN)* – Create standards of customer care that all providers can agree to. Coordinate existing and future

- interlinking/transit bus route types and systems (express with circulator with CARTS, etc). i.e., when you get off at a stop, your next bus follows soon after and is nearby. **This will be consolidated with other strategies.**
10. *Review Transportation Rules, Regulations, and Policies Across All Involved State Agencies (TxDOT)* – Advocate for a specific legislative mandate to identify the applicable rules, regulations, and policies of all State agencies involved in the transport of clients with the goal to eliminate unnecessary conflicting and exclusionary regulations that inhibit or effectively prohibit coordination of transit services within the region. **Texas Transit Association is working on the Medicaid issue.**
 11. *Implement and Expand the Use of an Automated Fare Card System (CARTS)* – Expand existing and implement new automated farecard systems for a greater number of transit providers in the region. Any citizen who regularly uses public transit could be issued a farecard that would be read by a terminal installed in every vehicle (or hand held version for different types of vehicles). Data on the card would include the person’s information and the funding agency for the ride. The funding agency would receive a report or bill at the end of a designated period and pay the provider accordingly, or preprogrammed accounts could be accessed in the system. **This effort will continue.**
 12. *Develop Requirements for and Implement an Inter-Operable Data Collection Program Involving all Transit Agencies/Providers (TxDOT)* – Determine needs and implement a transportation data collection program. Data collection is a crucial part of transportation coordination, but agencies have different data and system requirements. This project would identify common data elements that exist across all transportation agencies along with a recommended process for assimilating the data. **TXDOT and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) currently have data collection systems in place.**
 13. *Include Transit Coordination as an Element of the Regional Transportation Planning Process (CAMPO)* – Integrate transit coordination into the federal and state planning processes. For coordinated transit to become a sustained strategy as stated in HB 3588 and SAFETEA-LU, it must be institutionalized into the regular transportation planning processes of the Capital Area MPO and TxDOT. Public transportation is included as an element in CAMPO’s Long Range Transportation Plan. In addition, the Long Range Plan has been developed through a systems-based approach that relies heavily on input from the region’s public transportation providers. Integrating human service-transit coordination into the federally mandated planning process

- could include developing a framework for selecting federally-funded transit projects that ensures projects will meet the needs of users, particularly those with special needs. **On-going.**
14. *Utilize Existing Available Information to Identify Geographical and Temporal Gaps in Services within the Region (CAPCOG)* – Create a comprehensive map and database of the transportation demand characteristics to identify gaps, overlaps, client characteristics, and temporal characteristics in a geographic manner. **Gaps have been identified. This task has been completed.**
 15. *Identify and Implement Opportunities for Shared Ride and Flexible Trip Scheduling (CMTA)* – Identify opportunities for trip flexibility and increase the use of shared rides. Providing the greatest number of rides for each vehicle’s trip is at the crux of the transit coordination effort. However, determining how to put people using different agencies’ funds into one vehicle, or stringing a medical trip to a grocery run to a fun outing is complicated. The RTCC would appoint a committee of provider staff and the agency would need to establish a baseline measure for the number of trips required to serve the public. Also, the service for the aging needs to be flexible. Asking representatives and members to find out what types of trip flexibility and shared rides are appropriate, and how they could be managed. **This will be modified to focus on Medicaid Transportation.**
 16. *Develop and Implement a Uniform Cost Allocation Model for Agencies and Providers in the Region (CARTS)* – Using transit industry standards, identify the elements of costs to provide service and develop the basis for the calculation of costs in order to identify true costs of service, and furnish a common standard for agreement between agencies. **CARTS has identified its true costs.**
 17. *Develop Standardized Driver Requirements and Training (CAPCOG)* – Develop a modular training program designed to meet the needs of transportation providers. **This strategy is complete as all three of the transit systems have excellent training programs. Efforts will be focused on developing a mentoring/training program.**
 18. *Streamline the Requirements and Elements of a Data Collection and Reporting System that Supports Coordination Across All Public Transportation Providers (CAPCOG)* – Define and create a single reporting system that can collect and distribute the information and data as may be required by each provider. **Two sets of reports are in place. This strategy has been accomplished.**

19. *Investigate and Implement the Centralized Procurement of Vehicles, Fuel, Parts, and Transportation Support Infrastructure (CMTA)* - Assuming that transportation providers have common vehicles, fuel, parts, and infrastructure needs; organizational funds might be leveraged to acquire better products at a lower cost. Centralized procurement has the additional benefit of removing institutional barriers to coordination (e.g. common vehicles encourage ride sharing, etc.). **This strategy will be part of a new mobility manager strategy.**

III. 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.

- a. **The Need for Leadership** - 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 (Medicaid)
- c. **Maintain Transit in All Communities** - As the City of San Marcos's transit program transfers from rural transit under CARTS control to small urban service under the City's control, San Marcos must decide what it will do in the future:

- 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.
- g. **Mobility Management and Coordination Efforts** - A mobility management function can be used to coordinate services in a variety of areas. It is not absolute as the following needs can be accomplished without a mobility manager if all parties are willing and there is leadership:
- iii. One stop information center where people can get information on various services
 - iv. Provide centralized leadership and assist RTCC with partnerships
 - v. Assist non-profit agencies with New Freedom and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program applications
 - vi. Coordinate land use issues and efforts
 - vii. Mentoring/education - with human service transportation providers
 - viii. Coordinated training
 - ix. Coordinated maintenance
 - x. Coordination/consolidation of transportation resources
 - xi. Coordinate volunteer networks

IV. POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Key premise: Excellent public transportation is the best way to address and 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.

The RTCC is asked to select their priority strategies from this listing, which includes those strategies from the original plan that are still relevant. Those selected will be placed in the draft plan to be delivered shortly after all comments have been received. That draft will also include: implementation guidance, potential partners, staffing, funding, and governance structure (as appropriate).

Strategies and Programs 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. 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 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).

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

This priority area is an important step that must be addressed in the near future as San Marcos transitions into a small urban area (for FTA funding purposes). This will 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. 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

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 - Identify and Inventory Major Destinations within Capital Metro's Service Area, but Beyond Capital Metro's Fixed-Route Service - While the coordinated transportation planning effort does not involve a detailed transit planning process, it can be the basis to identify future priorities for possible improvements to the existing Capital Metro transit network. This process would begin with an inventory of major trip-producing locations that are just outside current routes, as well as the pathways leading up to these destinations. This information can then be used by Capital Metro staff to determine if a new or extended route is warranted.

- 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.

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

Strategy No 3C - Meeting Accessibility Needs of Seniors - The review of needs indicated that the need for senior 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, 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 \$1) retired but reliable accessible vehicles.

Partners for this effort would include:

- Volunteer Programs (Faith in Action and others)
 - 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.
- a. Impact on ridership - As demand for specialized senior service increases and as Austin continues to age, ridership will continue to increase. These programs can also reduce 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

Strategy No 3D – Work with Developers, Human Service Agencies, and the Medical Community to Locate Facilities within the Service Area – 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 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.

Partners:

- Chambers of Commerce
 - Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC)
 - Transit Operators
 - Other human service agencies
 - Developers
 - Others as appropriate
- 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. 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

- 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

Strategy No. 3D - Coordinate Service in Kingsland - Both CARTS and Hill Country Transit (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.

Participants include CARTS and Hill Country Transit.

- a. Impact on ridership - While the impact of improved coordination in Kingsland may not generate significant increases in ridership in Kingsland, it will free up some service to generate new riders in other areas.
- b. Impact on costs - Like any coordination effort, this strategy has the potential to save monies through reducing duplication of services. This funding could then be used to expand service in unserved or underserved areas.
- c. Achievement of goals
 - Goal 1 - Preserve and expand services
 - Goal 4 - Increase efficiencies in transportation services for the public
- d. Advantages/Disadvantages
 - Advantages:**
 - Eliminates duplication of services in Kingsland, allowing resources to be used in other areas

Disadvantages:

- May impact customers familiar with a specific system and who may need to use a different provider

Strategy No. 4: Continue to Seek Opportunities to Coordinate Services

Many of the high profile coordination activities have been completed, while others have little chance of success. There are other smaller scale activities that can be coordinated as well and those are addressed here and in Strategy No.

Strategy No. 4B: 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 on commuter service and/or expansion of local service. CARTS and/or Capital Metro can also serve as a mentor for these agencies and at a minimum train drivers to 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:

- 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

Strategy No. 5: 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 5A - 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 5B - 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. If this proves to be futile, the RTCC can have the option to pursue a legislative solution.

- 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

Strategy No. 6: 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 6A – 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 6B - 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 offices (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 6C - 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

Strategy 6D – 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. 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.
 - 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

Strategy 6E - 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.

Participants will include all RTCC members.

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

Strategy 6F - 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

Strategy 6G – Expand Efforts to Improve the Coordinated Volunteer Network and Service for Elderly Persons – The review of needs indicated that some seniors 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. Volunteers should be considered an integral component of transportation resources as it often assists those that fall “between the cracks.”

Partners can include:

- Faith in Action
 - ARCIL
 - American Cancer Society
 - Other human service agencies
- 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.

Strategy No. 6H: 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.

- d. 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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:**
 - 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

NEXT STEPS

The decision regarding which strategies to accept in the plan begins at this point. After reviewing the strategies with the public and stakeholders and receiving input, the RTCC will be required to select the potential strategies that are most relevant and that address the needs.

Once comments have been received by the RTCC, the consultant team will finalize this chapter and expand upon the selected strategies with an implementation plan, staffing, funding, and governance issues. In addition, the lead and participating entities and partners will be discussed.