

**Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan
RCC Workshop #2 | June 18, 2026, 1 pm
Summary**

Attendees:

Carey Amthor (Friends for Life)
Russell Devorsky (HOTCOG)
Misty Hendon (HOTCOG)
Kathy Chambers (Moore & Associates)
Jefferson Gunn (HOT National Federation of the Blind)
Heather Travers (McLennan County Health Services)
Rep Pledger (HOTCOG)
James Jarmon (Meals on Wheels Waco)
Andy Davis (HOTCOG)

Zoom Attendees:

Stephanie Roberts (Moore & Associates)
Serena Stevenson (Waco Transit)
Jim Moore (Moore & Associates)
Jason Pettegrow (HOTBHN)

Carey Amthor: Question: Are all of these goals attainable? Ex: is there enough/sufficient local match

Question: if the Counties are providing additional funds, are they comfortable with the transportation provider? Are they considering it worthwhile? Do these contributions give actual more funds?

Rep - Answer: "gap fill" allowed for us to pull more Fed funds. For this fiscal year, we had four counties contribute funds for local match.

Goals #5 – increase awareness

In reading the description, I interpreted this to mean to education the general public. Not just the current users. Advocate for transit – even if they don't actually use it.

Getting the public's attention

Commentary.

When we rebranded – we got so much more recognition and brand awareness

Judge Brassell – biggest contribution. Comments re: supporting transit.

Five new judges come January 2027 – massive transition

Goal 1.0: Ensure sustainability of the transportation network through local support.	
Strategy 1.1: Maintain county-specific data for all rural counties.	Priority: Medium
Comment: Blue Transit collects some info – they track pick up location but not drop off location. Don't track those rides that are not able to be negotiated. Assessing demand. Not just declines – option if the person does not want the options available.	

Better tracking of where people are going. Are there trends between two locations. Comments: High priority. Serena: McLennan County – we can provide hot maps of where people are traveling. Can help with regional planning. Willing to provide any info available. Useful to have when planning.	
Strategy 1.2: Effectively communicate the public transit message throughout the region.	Priority: High
Comment: Raising awareness of how public transit works in the community. No comments	
Strategy 1.3: Increase FTA Section 5311 funding by increasing the local match.	Priority: High
Comment: More focused on Blue Transit. Not currently using all 5311 funds. Limited due to matching abilities. Every non 5311 dollar they get – unlocks additional 5311 funds Medi caid – if Blue Transit decided to make these trips. Could unlock 5311 funds. Was recommended in the prior Plan. Something for Blue Transit to consider Question: If additional funds came from the County – Where is the margin of how much Blue Transit to grow? Margin of where we are at and where we could be? Answer: Rep not able to provide number. Q; What is the growth potential? Political reality. Q: do we want to ask the public for more money/increase taxes to fund transit. “Transit is heavily subsidized.” Q: what do we need from the Counties to move the needle? (duck tails with the other strategies) – increasing the awareness and engaging the stakeholders Understanding how transit works and how funding works	
Goal 2.0: Improve the reliability of service within rural counties.	
Strategy 2.1: Adjust service days/hours to provide more reliable Blue Transit service.	Priority: Medium
Comment: Rep has made some changes – only going to outlining Counties to Waco on certain days. Purpose of strategy is we want people to rely on getting a ride on Blue Transit. Blue Transit service is to be the most reliable possible. Serena: What does Blue Transit have? Recorded phone lines? No mechanism for “missed trips”. Is there	

technology? Or funding gap?

Rep:

Someone wanted a trip to Waco from Limestone on Tuesday. We travel on M/W/F. Client only wanted Tuesday. (more like trips not provided – not denied trips)

Serena: Do you have an “unavailable option” so that they can be reviewed later. Present to County representatives – we could show them where the demand is that we cannot currently meet.

“trip not provided”

The other five counties (not McLennan) don’t have the funds/financials

Serena: we work hard at advertising and Medicaid trips. Need to have the coverage and demand.

Need to get creative.

Q: How do you make decision on where to add service or make service changes.

Rep: we did data/research?

Need to keep record of what “we are not doing” to justify asking the counties and stakeholders for more money.

Strategy 2.2: Evaluate demand for scheduled service within communities/counties.	Priority: Medium
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Comment:

“Scheduled service” this could be fixed-route. Or community circulator. Does not require a reservation. If we determine there is sufficient demand. Even one day a week. Depends on where the demand is. Goes back to collecting data.

No comments

Strategy 2.3: Evaluate demand for inter-county scheduled service.	Priority: Medium
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Comment:

Similar to the above. In between the rural counties and in between the rural counties and McLennan.

Blue Transit has certain days it provides this service – defined service day/schedule.

No comments

Strategy 2.4: Consider housing Blue Transit vehicles in the county they serve to minimize deadhead travel and potentially increase availability.	Priority: Low
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Comment:

Rep: Hill County stays in Hill County. We have some that do that. Not all.

“Misperception” that folks say they used to see vehicles in their county – now they don’t.

Rep: we have moved the locations. People may not be aware where the vehicles are or stored. Ties into maintenance of vehicles.

No comments

Strategy 2.5: Consider implementing county-specific service (including intra- and inter-county).	Priority: High
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Comment:

Blue Transit may want to consider.

No comments	
Strategy 2.6: Determine which transportation provider is responsible for serving Golinda and Valley Mills, which span the border between McLennan County and one of the rural counties.	Priority: High
Comment: Came out of comments from the outreach efforts. Specific to Golinda. They don't know who to call. Q to Rep and Serena? How is it handled for your service? We use Spare software – based on our perimeters. If outside our area – we direct them to contact Blue Transit. Mindful of the different service hours, days, etc. Rep: dispatching software set up in a similar way. Locations/map reviewed. **Kathy: We may need to tweak this strategy. To clarify what information is available online and to the public. Golinda is split Most folks know exactly what County they live in (but not what service is available to them)	
Goal 3.0: Create partnerships to enhance regional mobility.	
Strategy 3.1: Engage stakeholders (especially medical providers and local elected officials) for local support.	Priority: High
Comment: Focus on the awareness of public transit and the challenges people face. Access to healthcare is one of the biggest reason people need transit. Need to make medical providers aware of this. Engage them to financial support – local contributions. Local elected officials – they can be effective transit advocates During this Plan we engaged stakeholders. Needs to continue after the Plan is complete for the next 5 years No comments	
Strategy 3.2: Conduct outreach to medical providers regarding patients who use public or NEMT transportation for travel to appointments.	Priority: Medium
Comment: Take raising awareness one step further. Understand the constraints of public transit and NEMT Ex: if they know a patient is traveling by transit or NEMT, the medical provider can better plan the appointment/assist with scheduling No comments	
Strategy 3.3: Partner with transit operators outside the primary service area (where available) to offer connections (transfers) to key destinations.	Priority: Medium
Comment: When one of the rural vehicles goes outside of its primary service area, we have lost that vehicle. Look for opportunities to partner with agencies that serve that County. To facilitate the trip for a rider.	

Ex: Anderson County covered by ETCOG who has a robust rural transit. Ways to collaborate or partner.

Question: ** could not hear online ** Carey Amthor noted that there are 13 counties bordering the HOTCOG region, not that there is much reason to travel to all of them. But it is hard to connect. Rep noted that Blue Transit does provide transportation into adjacent counties outside the primary service area, but only a modest number of trips.

KC: Open communication channels with other rural transit providers. In other regions. We include this same Rec in ETCOG and BVCOG's Plans. Boost the communication between the regions

Mr. Gunn – tried to travel to other regions – trying to get to Austin – difficult time coordinating service

Goal 4.0: Expand transportation provider capacity to meet the needs of rural communities.

Strategy 4.1: Expand service capacity/options based on funding from a specific area/county.	Priority: Medium
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Comment:

Ex: Not just funding the existing transit providers. What about other entities to provide service.

No comments

Strategy 4.2: Educate and recruit human and social services providers in an effort to expand the pool of qualified Section 5310 providers to better meet community needs.	Priority: Low
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Comment:

5310 – funds for senior & disabled services. HSS could qualify for the funds. They choose not to because of the Admin burden.

Rep: TxDOT has done some outreach for 5310 funding

Serena: We are in the mid-cycle. They asked around for stakeholder names. To get more people involved.

Serena: 5310 program in Waco is a great thing. We assist Meals on Wheels. As transit provider, we are responsible to ensure the money is expended down/spent. If there is a shortage of operators or service not used, it looks bad on the transit provider since we are the recipient. We have to do the paperwork and reporting. Need to have the staff.

KC: rec has to be included in this Plan for the 5310 applicant to get funding.

Historically not a lot of interest in 5310 in the area

Strategy 4.3: Introduce a volunteer driver program and/or mileage reimbursement program (pay-your-pal) in the HOTCOG region to improve mobility, especially for seniors and persons with disabilities.	Priority: Medium
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Comment:

Does not build on public transportation.

There would need to be a lead agency to administer the program. Recruit volunteers, match the rider and driver, etc. Qualify individuals, disperse reimbursements, etc.

Can be done regionally or locally. Takes a champion.

Q: **can't hear comments in the room** What staff is needed for this? Carey Amthor asked Rep what level of staff would be needed to administer this type of program. Also if that could be considered an in-kind match.

Rep: Volunteer drivers who drive agency vehicles.

Other option: pool of volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles

With the current funding sources HOTCOG has – I don't see how we could make these work

Q: if volunteer driver uses their own vehicle, would that impact the funding draw down.

"Friends for life" – volunteer drivers to take people to grocery stores, etc.

KC: may not be something the public transit providers do. Could be a stakeholder or social service org in the community to run the programs.

Ex: if done in Marlin – connect to public transit. Could be a win-win in terms of pulling down funding.

NOTE: KC to research and provide good examples of who is doing this successfully

MTC??

From Google - The **Lake County Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA)** — also known as **Lake Links** — uses the "Pay-Your-Pal" volunteer driver program with **Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities** funding. We have info on them from the last Lake audit. There is also a volunteer driver program in the NC CAMPO region that we met with and one in San Diego (Jewish senior program?) that I spoke with a number of years ago.

Strategy 4.4: Recruit and retain a sufficient driver pool to provide the full level of service for Waco Transit and McLennan Rural Transit District.

Priority: Low

Comment:

Serena: we implemented an automated application process. Used to do it manually. "Track It" – expedite the hiring

We are currently adequately staffed.

KC: Change the wording of the strategy. To "CONTINUE" to recruit and retain

Strategy 4.5: Explore the introduction of a vanpool program that can provide regular transportation between locations (such as for work and school).

Priority: Low

Comment:

No comments

Goal 5.0: Increase awareness of available transportation services.

Strategy 5.1: Improve the service information available online and in print (especially with respect to rural transportation).

Priority: High

Comment:

Blue Transit information has improved since we started this project. Gaps in information of transit between the counties. Need to ensure comprehensive info is available some place.

Help to manage expectations.

No comments

Strategy 5.2: Develop train-the-trainer materials so that travel training can be conducted by local organizations.	Priority: Medium
Comment: In a rural area – focus on the on-demand service. Where to call. Where can I go and when. Most effective when done by a local organization. What HOTCOG can do is train the trainer. Then the trainer can take that info back to the communities and the population they serve.	
Strategy 5.3: Improve bus stop infrastructure in Waco.	Priority: Low
Comment: Came up through discussions. Specifically, need for shade at bus stops in Waco. Waco Transit does use Flag stops. Which means they can pick up anywhere it is safe to stop. Look at active stops or frequent request stops locations that do not currently have shade. Where does it make sense to add in a shelter or shade covering. Bus Stop Improvement Plan – Waco Transit has one Serena: Issues: lack of sidewalks – City infrastructure. Street issues. Shade structure may not be the most important. It may be a concrete pad. Or adding a sidewalk altogether. Serena: would like to see “sidewalk” specified. Not just bench and shelters. Need concrete pads. And sidewalks. City short fall. KC: I will reorganize this section to make sure that sidewalk and concrete landing pad have a greater emphasis. Not the benches and shelter first.	