
HEART OF TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Fort Parker State Park, Mexico, Texas

***Serving Our Citizens and Communities
For Fifty-Nine Years***

**HEART OF TEXAS
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
MISSION STATEMENT**

"To benefit the citizens of the Heart of Texas Region by serving as the catalyst through which local governments cooperatively identify needs and necessary resources, develop and implement solutions, eliminate duplication and ensure the efficient and accountable use of public resources, promote economic prosperity and improve the quality of life within the Region."

From the HOTCOG President 2025

Serving as President of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments has been an honor and a privilege. The year went by so fast it seems like only yesterday we were thanking past President Smith for his Leadership.

In years past I have served as the Mayor of Mexia, President of the Mexia ISD and Vice President of the Mexia EDC. One point that I must make is how important it is for Cities, Schools and any Board to pick the BEST Administrative Leader you can find. City Council's look for a City Manager. School Boards seek a Superintendent. Economic Development Boards hire an EDC Director.



*Richard Duncan
Limestone County Judge*

During this past year I have learned that the HOTCOG Executive Committee has done just that. Russell Devorsky goes above and beyond to ensure that the HOTCOG (1) is the example for other COG's, (2) he also hires the most qualified employees and (3) works hard to make sure that the HOTCOG runs as a well-oiled machine.

I want to thank each of you for your support and work this past year and may 2026 be the best year ever.

Richard Duncan

From the Executive Director

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) is fortunate to have an exceptional Executive Board whose leadership and commitment guide our regional mission.

On behalf of myself and the entire HOTCOG staff, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to work alongside you in advancing the goals and priorities of our region. Your dedication to public service and regional



Russell Devorsky

collaboration continues to strengthen the work we do on behalf of the communities we serve.

Leadership is often described as a complex and multifaceted concept. While leadership styles may differ depending on the organization, the team, and the environment in which decisions are made, certain fundamental qualities consistently distinguish effective leaders. Through our work with the Executive Board, several characteristics have stood out as hallmarks of strong leadership. Integrity is the foundation of effective leadership. Leaders who demonstrate honesty, accountability, and reliability earn the trust and respect of those they serve. Particularly during challenging economic times, individuals and organizations look to leaders who uphold their commitments and operate with transparency.

Equally important is compassion. Successful leaders recognize that people are the most valuable asset of any organization. By demonstrating genuine concern for employees, partners, and the communities they represent, leaders build lasting relationships that strengthen both organizations and regions.

Another essential trait is the ability to foster a shared vision and purpose. Effective leaders help others understand both the direction and the importance of the work being undertaken. By clearly communicating goals and encouraging collaboration, they inspire individuals to contribute meaningfully to shared objectives.

Strong leaders also prioritize empowerment and engagement. They cultivate an environment in which team members feel valued, encouraged to contribute ideas, and recognized for their efforts. By actively engaging others in decision-making and problem-solving, leaders strengthen both organizational performance and team morale.

A key element of leadership is the ability to leverage the strengths of individuals. Effective leaders understand that each person brings unique talents and perspectives. By recognizing those strengths and placing individuals in positions where they can succeed, leaders create opportunities for growth while strengthening the organization as a whole.

Finally, successful leaders understand the importance of celebration and recognition. In today's demanding professional environment, acknowledging achievements and celebrating progress helps sustain motivation, build morale, and maintain a healthy and productive workplace culture.

From the Executive Director (cont.)

Every leader brings a unique leadership style shaped by experience, personality, and perspective. The most effective leaders, however, remain self-aware and adaptable, recognizing that the approaches that motivate one individual may not resonate with another. By remaining flexible and responsive, leaders create an environment where individuals and organizations can thrive.

The members of the HOTCOG Executive Board consistently demonstrate these leadership qualities. Your guidance, commitment, and collaborative approach play a vital role in advancing our regional initiatives and strengthening the communities we serve.

On behalf of the entire HOTCOG staff, thank you for your continued leadership, partnership, and dedication to the Heart of Texas region.

Russell Devorsky



Honorable Justin Lewis was appointed in February 2025 by Governor Greg Abbott to serve as Judge of the 66th Judicial District Court and was sworn in on April 4th. Judge Lewis has served as Hill County Judge since 2007 and served as President of the HOTCOG Board in 2016.

Honorable Linda Grant retired as Freestone County Judge on September 15, 2025 after serving as County Judge over 25 years. Judge Grant served as President of the HOTCOG Board in 2001 and 2021.



Officers 2025

President

*The Honorable Richard Duncan
County Judge, Limestone County*

Vice-President

*The Honorable Jimmy Rogers
Councilmember, City of Robinson*

Secretary-Treasurer

*The Honorable Cindy Vanlandingham
County Judge, Bosque County*

Members

*The Honorable Shane Brassell
County Judge, Hill County*

*The Honorable Scott Felton
County Judge, McLennan County*

*The Honorable Geary Smith
Mayor, City of Mexia*

*The Honorable Jim Holmes
Mayor, City of Waco*

*The Honorable Lloyd Lane
County Judge, Freestone County*

*The Honorable Jay Elliott
County Judge, Falls County*

*The Honorable Jim Smith
Commissioner, McLennan County*

*The Honorable Nita Wuebker
Commissioner, Falls County*

*The Honorable Calvin Rueter
Special Districts*

*The Honorable Mandy Chavers
County Treasurer, Freestone Co.*

*The Honorable Janice Sanders
Mayor, City of Whitney*

*The Honorable Andrea Barefield
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Waco*

*The Honorable Alice Rodriguez (May2025)
Councilmember, City of Waco*

*The Honorable Terry Townley
Commissioner, Bosque County*

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2025

211 – ADRC - Transportation – September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025

Area Agency on Aging - October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025

The Health and Human Services Division (HHS) is one of two operational divisions of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments. The division consists of four service departments that provide a variety of services to eligible individuals and family members.

- Area Agency on Aging of the Heart of Texas (AAA)
- Heart of Texas Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Heart of Texas Area Information Center (2-1-1)
- Heart of Texas Rural Transit District (RTD)

The Health & Human Services Division is directed by John Vorderkunz, Director of Health and Human Services. Mr. Vorderkunz manages the AAA and ADRC, while Amy Rossow & Rep Pledger manage 211 & RTD respectively; Donnis Cowan provides administrative support to the entire division.

- *Area Agency on Aging / Aging & Disability Resource Center – John Vorderkunz*
- *Heart of Texas 211 - Amy Rossow*
- *Rural Transit District – Rep Pledger*
- *Administrative Support – Donnis Cowan*

The HHS Division had a successful year from the perspective of individuals served (one-on-one contacts, calls, trips, events, and facility visits). All contract deliverables and requirements were met. Every employee should be proud of their efforts **89,271** individuals were assisted from our six-county service area with another **8,961** individuals served from outside our region. The total of **98,232** individuals served is a testimonial to the dedication and commitment of the staff. It is recognized, acknowledged, and appreciated that each employee at HOTCOG contributed in a significant way to the overall success of the Health & Human Services Division.



John Vorderkunz, Health and Human Services Director



The total value of services provided by the combined programs in the Health and Human Services Division was **\$4,265,023**. Total clients, contacts, calls, trips, and facility visits provided by the four programs totaled **98,232**.

The data below provides the distribution in HOTCOG's Region:

Bosque	\$262,652	2,248
Falls	\$555,802	10,036
Freestone	\$288,834	2,850
Hill	\$558,754	9,064
Limestone	\$736,739	12,094
McLennan	<u>\$1,650,515</u>	<u>53,281</u>
Subtotal	\$4,114,097	89,573
Out of Region	<u>\$140,433</u>	<u>8,961</u>
GRAND TOTAL	\$4,254,530	98,534

HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)

The Health and Human Services Advisory Council (HHSAC) is a voluntary group of citizens appointed by the HOTCOG Executive Committee to serve in an advisory capacity to the Health and Human Services Division.

Membership includes individuals representing the needs of health and human service consumers including older persons, minority individuals, persons with disabilities, caregivers, advocates for health and human service provider organizations, advocates for transportation provider organizations, advocates for support service organizations, local elected officials, the public, and persons with leadership experience.



Pictured: Health and Human Services Committee members and staff

The Council is made up of twenty-five voting representatives (three from Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone Counties and ten from McLennan County). The Council also includes our elected Texas Silver Haired Legislators (TSHL) representing the HOTCOG service area. In addition, resource representatives are asked to serve because of their special knowledge or experience in health and human service policies and issues. Resource representatives serving in

this capacity may be from within or outside the HOTCOG service area and may include representatives from agencies receiving funds from HOTCOG.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA)

The AAA is 1 of 28 Area Agency on Aging contractors designated statewide by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services.



The AAA provides access to needed social services, effective screening and assessment of individual needs, and advocacy for older people (age 60 and older) in our six-county region. Access services are provided to older people and their family members or other caregivers.

Services provided directly by AAA staff include three core programs - benefits counseling, care coordination/caregiver support coordination, and LTC ombudsman services.

The AAA also contracts with service providers throughout the region to provide in-home care, minor residential repair, durable medical equipment, health education programs, and nutrition services (congregate and home-delivered meals). This year due to additional funding related to COVID-19 the AAA provided a few tub/shower conversions to a walk-in shower. The conversions made a tremendous difference and impacted individuals and families in ways we could never have provided before.

- **ADMINISTRATION**

Activities to ensure the development and implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated system to serve older adults and family caregivers within the AAA's planning and service area. Responsibilities include being the focal point for aging services; providing advocacy for older people in their service area; evaluating regional strengths and local resources; identifying service gaps, including people with the greatest economic and social need; developing and implementing an area plan based on the OAA; procuring services funded with federal and state funds; negotiating and managing contracts; reporting; reimbursement; accounting; auditing; monitoring; and quality assurance.

\$127,840 in Administrative Services

\$31,960 Required 25% Local Match

- **BENEFITS COUNSELING PROGRAM**

The Benefits Counseling Program is directly administered by AAA staff and provides one-on-one legal assistance services to persons age 60 and older and to any adult Medicare recipient regardless of age. Individualized counseling is offered to those in need of assistance with Medicare Part D Prescription Drug programs, Supplemental Insurance, Medicaid estate planning, advanced planning for retirement, health care services, Medicare preventive services, consumer issues, and preparation of Advanced Directives. The program also provides group legal awareness presentations and group education for all ages through



Rose Contreras

community presentations and special events to promote health and wellness, safety, and legal education.

Staff: John Vorderkunz – Director
 Jan Enders – Special Projects and Outreach Specialist
 Rose Contreras – Senior Benefits Counselor

Legal Assistance - provides counseling to individuals assisting them with Medicare Part D, Medicare benefits, Medicare Advantage appeals, Social Security questions, and other benefit-related questions.

Clients Age 60 and Older 116 clients \$47,437 in services

Legal Awareness - provides public events where information and documents explaining programs, benefits, and services are distributed to the attendees.

Outreach 35,787 contacts \$140,255 in services



2nd Annual Protect Yourself Fraud Forum - Pictured left: Staff member, Jan Enders, representing Area Agency on Aging and Senior Medicare Patrol; right: Mr. Eduardo Berdegue, Divine Homecare Services.



Bosque County Health Fair, Meridian, Texas

• **CARE COORDINATION PROGRAM**

The Care Coordination Program is directly administered by AAA staff and empowers senior citizens age 60 and older and their family caregivers to maintain their independence, freedom, and dignity by identifying needs and arranging social services required for living independently. The program is broad-based and includes a variety of related short-term support service opportunities which can include homemaker, personal assistance care, respite relief for caregivers, home repairs/modifications, durable medical equipment, and other services, depending on funding.

Staff: John Vorderkunz – Director
 Jan Enders – Special Programs
 Donnis Cowan – Contract Quality Assurance Specialist
 Tiffany Garrett – Sr. Program Coordinator/Dementia Care Specialist
 Rose Contreras – Care Coordinator

Care Coordination Serving Age 60,

Caregiver Support Coordination Serving Caregivers - case managers assess the needs of the client and their caregivers. Based on needs the AAA staff plan, arrange, and coordinate services. Services that can be provided are homemaker services, personal assistance, home repairs and/or modifications, health maintenance services, and respite for their caregivers.

324 clients	\$116,917 in services
162 caregivers	\$93,712 in services

Homemaker – a case manager arranges for short-term services to assist clients with light house cleaning, errands, and meal preparation.

2 clients	\$998 in services
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Personal Assistance – a case manager arranges for short-term services to assist clients with bathing, dressing, toileting, light to moderate house cleaning, and meal preparation. This covers hands-on assistance in all activities of daily living.

389 clients	\$181,557 in services
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Respite – a case manager arranges for short-term relief for caregivers. Services are provided in the client's home environment on a short-term, temporary basis while the caregiver is unavailable or needs relief. This service also allows the caregiver to take care of themselves, so they are better able to sustain care for their loved one over an extended period.

60 clients	\$43,261 in services
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Residential Repair – a case manager focuses primarily on contracted repairs, and modifications that improve accessibility, structure, safety, and weatherization of the home for low-income homeowners age 60 and older and their caregivers that are living in unsafe and/or unhealthy environments.

44 clients	\$26,675 in services
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Health Maintenance – a case manager arranges for the purchase of durable medical equipment that enables clients to be more independent and assist them with their daily activities.

28 clients	\$4,060 in services
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Information, Referral and Assistance – individuals age 60 and older and their caregivers call to inquire about community resources. Services provided by AAAHOT are coordinated with the appropriate staff. Services that AAAHOT does not offer are referred to the appropriate community service providers outside of AAAHOT.

328 calls

\$93,869 in services

Evidence-Based Programs – Evidence-based programs are health-related programs based on research. They offer proven ways to promote good or improved health and prevent disease among older adults. These programs are tested models or interventions into practical, effective community programs that can provide proven health benefits to participants.

The AAA contracts with facilitators to conduct programs including A Matter of Balance, Caregiver Stress Busting for Dementia, Caregiver Stress Busting for Chronic Illnesses, and REACH-TX to individuals age 60 and older and their caregivers.

95 clients

\$47,351 in services

Outreach - A service that provides information to groups of current and potential participants on the resources and services available for older adults in their communities.

Activities include providing information at senior fairs, handing out publications, answering questions, and initiating targeted mass media campaigns, including targeted internet websites.

1,295 contacts

\$6,022 in services

Public Information Services - Interaction with a person initiated by the AAA to identify potential participants (or their caregivers) and to encourage them to use OAA services and benefits.

14,070 contacts

\$55,445 in services



Tiffany Soto, Area Agency on Aging Senior Program Coordinator, prepares for the Senior Citizen Healthcare Fair at the Golden Trails Senior Living Center, West, Texas



• **CONTRACT SERVICES**

Contract Services are provided by subcontractors or vendors by contracts or vendor agreements managed by the AAA to serve the senior citizens of the region.

Staff: John Vorderkunz - Director
Donnis Cowan– Contract Quality Assurance Specialist



Donnis Cowan

Nutrition Program

The nutrition program is a core program of the AAA that is contracted rather than directly provided by AAA employees.

The AAA subcontracts with four (4) service providers throughout the region to provide nutritious meals to older citizens through congregate meal sites and/or home-delivered meals. The service providers are closely monitored to ensure compliance with all regulations concerning nutrition and program requirements. These providers operate 36 senior centers and nutrition sites located in the six-county region. The nutrition program is a key contributor to the health and well-being of older persons participating in the program. The program also provides social interaction that is critical to good mental and physical health for the recipients.

Nutrition Subrecipients:

Bosque County Senior Services	Susan Baker, Project Director
Meals on Wheels Waco	Estrellita Doolin, Executive Director
<i>(Serves Falls, Hill & McLennan counties)</i>	
Freestone County Senior Services	Stephanie Overall, Project Director
Limestone County Senior Services	Greta Russell, Project Director

In addition to providing meals at the congregate sites, the providers also prepare and deliver meals to the homes of isolated elderly who are unable to travel to the congregate sites and/or prepare meals for themselves. Home-delivered meals, commonly referred to as “Meals on Wheels,” provide critical daily nutrition requirements while allowing the delivery person to make daily contact with the home-bound elderly person.

Congregate Meals: - meals served in a group setting at senior centers
874 clients served
49,172 Congregate meals served
\$303,960 funding from AAA

Home Delivered Meals: - meals delivered to the homes of seniors
883 clients served
145,933 home-delivered meals served
\$670,305 funding from AAA



The individual subrecipients are funded by the AAA, but each provider is required to obtain additional funding from their local communities and clients for their specific program.

• **LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM**

The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program is directly administered by AAAHOT staff and is charged with the promotion of quality of care and quality of life for residents in 35 nursing facilities and 19 assisted living facilities with a total licensed capacity of 5,104 in the six-county service area. The program is managed by the State Ombudsman office and hosted by the local Area Agency on Aging.

Staff: Ursula Johnson - Managing Local Ombudsman
Certified Volunteer Ombudsmen (CVOs)

The mission of the Ombudsman Program is to improve the quality of life and care for residents of nursing facilities and ALFs by providing prompt, informal complaint resolution and promoting systemic change on behalf of residents' interests. The program is authorized through the Older Americans Act. Ombudsmen protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents.



Ursula Johnson

Staff and CVOs: Identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents that relate to action, inaction, or decisions that may adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents; (continued)

- Provide services to protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents;
- Provide residents with information about the Ombudsman Program, their benefits, rights, and services;
- Make regular visits to residents in facilities and respond to requests received in person, by telephone, mail, and email;
- Represent the interests of residents before governmental agencies, and pursue administrative, legal, and other remedies to protect residents; Advocate for system improvements to the media and state and federal decision-makers; and Coordinate with and promote citizen organizations and councils.

Staff and volunteers receive continuing education to stay abreast of trends and changes. Additionally, staff ombudsman attend regular update meetings provided by the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.



An important part of the Ombudsman program is to establish and maintain a good working relationship and effective communication with providers, residents, and HHSC Long-Term Care Regulatory surveyors. Ombudsmen staff participated in nursing and assisted living facility surveys in the region and routinely consulted with the complaint investigators.

389 Facility Visits \$181,577 Total Expenditures

AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER (ADRC)

Staff: John Vorderkunz - Director
Eric Hobbs – Senior Housing Navigator
Debbie Jones – Resource Navigator



ADRCs provide older individuals, individuals of any age with disabilities, family caregivers, veterans, and families with children with special needs, all without regard to income levels, *information and assistance* about local programs and resources as they relate to aging or living with a disability. ADRCs help those in need



Debbie Jones

navigate through a complicated and complex network of available support services with the primary purpose of helping individuals live within their community, if possible.



Eric Hobbs

ADRCs provide visible, trusted, comprehensive and streamlined access to long-term services and supports by establishing a “virtual no wrong door” model of information exchange, person and family-centered planning, and service provision.

The Heart of Texas ADRC is made up of six (6) operating partners:

- Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
- Heart of Texas Behavioral Health Center (HOTBHN)
- Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center (HOCTIL)
- Health and Human Services (HHS) – Local Long-Term Services and Supports
- Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)
- Heart of Texas 2-1-1 (2-1-1)

Referrals are made to appropriate agencies or service providers based on the needs of the caller. Multiple and complex cases may involve several service providers rather than just one. When more than one provider is involved, the Resource Navigator assists with the coordination of services provided between the agencies.

The ADRC staff is responsible for handling the “walk-ins” at the front lobby for those who come in with no appointment. An ADRC staff member will meet with the individual, obtain pertinent information, and connect them to the appropriate state agency and/or community resources.

All calls to the Heart of Texas ADRC terminate at 254-292-1855. This includes local calls as well as any calls originating in our six-county service area placed on the statewide toll-free line for ADRCs. Individuals of any age call to inquire about state, federal, and community resources.

The ADRC is actively involved in community efforts and information sharing between local social service providers including state agencies, local agencies, non-profits, and any organization providing social services in our six-county service area.

3,583 calls received by ADRC staff
\$185,779 Total Expenditures

HEART OF TEXAS AREA INFORMATION CENTER (2-1-1)

2-1-1 is 1 of 25 Area Information Centers (AICs) designated by the Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN). TIRN is part of a national initiative to provide information about health and human services to all callers regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, disability, or any other criteria.



Staff: Amy Rossow – AIC Manager & Emergency Management Coordinator
Joanna Whitehouse – Resource Manager
Belinda Arocha – Information and Referral Contact Specialist
Marcy Whiddon – Information and Referral Contact Specialist

2-1-1 is a “free” social service helpline answered by trained specialists who assist callers with their social services needs and after assessing their needs refer them to several service providers or agencies that may be able to assist them. The helpline is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Information and Referral Contact Specialists with multilingual capabilities available if needed.

2-1-1 staff provides assistance and information to callers concerning food, clothing, shelter, utility bill payment assistance, medical assistance, affordable childcare, eldercare, disaster relief and much more.

15,209 in-region calls received by 2-1-1 staff
32,129 out-of-region calls received by 2-1-1 staff
41,789 total calls received by 2-1-1
\$426,448 Total Expenditures



Amy Rossow



Belinda Arocha

2-1-1 renewed its contract with TIRN on 09/01/2022 for an initial two-year period with three one-year renewal options, with a possible additional one-year extension. This could take us to 08/31/2027 before another application is required, at HHSC's option. 2-1-1 consistently maintains service levels that meet or exceed state contract requirements. The Service level is defined as the length of time a caller waits in a queue before getting to an Information and Referral

Contact Specialist for assistance. In addition, each AIC is required to file quarterly reports to TIRN which reflect contract requirements.

The statewide Texas Information Referral Network (TIRN) of twenty-five AICs continues to assume increased visibility and importance because of their effectiveness and success in dealing with hurricanes and natural disasters. TIRN fills a substantial role in the Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan.



Marcy Whiddon



Joanna Whitehouse was named the Inform USA International Person of the Year Award in May 2025. Joanna has been an employee of HOTCOG for 14 years.



RURAL TRANSIT DISTRICT (RTD)



Staff: Rep Pledger – Manager
 Frances Ramirez – Transportation Specialist
 Misty Hendon – Transportation Admin
 Rachel Braswell – Transit Dispatching and Scheduling Technician

RTD or Blue Transit is 1 of 40 Rural Transit Districts designated statewide by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Transportation service is classified as “origin-to-destination” meaning the vehicle stops at the passenger’s address instead of the passenger being required to go to a pick-up location or hub of service.

HOTRTD is currently working on the RPTCP 5-year update, which is required by TxDOT. Moore & Associates was awarded the contract in July 2025, and we have an estimated completion date of September 2026. The website www.GetConnectedHot.com was created to inform stakeholders and riders about the plan, as well as gather input on ways to improve our services.

Rural transportation is provided Monday through Friday (the schedule varies) in the rural areas of the RTD *service area* consisting of **Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone counties**.

Rural transportation is provided using a vehicle from the pool of twenty-four (24) HOTCOG-owned vehicles with a seating capacity of up to twelve (12) passengers. The driver of each vehicle is a contract employee of the HOTRTD.

Rural transportation services are provided within or between five counties - **Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone counties**. **McLennan County** is not in the RTD service area and is not served by RTD.

HOTRTD experienced a decrease in trips for FY25 due to lack of funding. This issue has carried over into FY26 with trips decreasing an average of 60% for the first three months compared to this time last year. Funding issues have required HOTRTD to reduce driving staff by half.

29,559 In-region trips provided by HOTRTD (11% decrease)
\$1,455,578 Total Operational Expenditures (8% decrease)



Pictured front: Frances Ramirez, Misty Hendon Rep Pledger and Rachel Braswell



REGIONAL SERVICES

Regional Services Division is one of two operational divisions of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments.

The Regional Services Division includes two broad program areas. The emergency services area is made up of programs designed to preserve the safety of citizens and property, including 9-1-1, Homeland Security, Citizens Corps, and Criminal Justice. The planning and development services area is made up of programs including Solid Waste Planning, Community Development, and Economic Development.

The Regional Services Division consists of seven full time employees and one part-time, administering fifteen grant contracts and associated deliverables in six main program areas.



Pictured: Regional Services Staff: Left to right: Dorothy Jackson, Sarah Wines, Harold Ferguson, Falen Bohannon, Kristine Hill, Wayne Stovall, Lana Gudgel and Andy Davis.



9-1-1 Program

History

The 9-1-1 program was authorized in 1987, when HB 911 was signed into law establishing a funding structure to finance statewide 9-1-1 implementation. For more than thirty years, the program has been overseen by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC), implemented at the COG level, and grown in technical and capability to a sophisticated and powerful network. HOTCOG's 9-1-1 program delivers this service to Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone counties. McLennan County has its own separate emergency communications district and is not included in the HOTCOG regional 9-1-1 program.



Key Accomplishments of 2025

COG staff continues to collaborate with network consultants, equipment vendors and the TriCOG Alliance partnership, Brazos Valley COG (Bryan) and Central Texas ECD (Belton) and HOTCOG, to maintain a robust network. The TriCOG Alliance continues its partnership with Mission Critical Partners (MCP). MCP provides guidance to the group following a scope of work that includes assisting the TriCOG with tasks to include Project/Task Management, Continued GIS and Cybersecurity Support and development of a Regional Roadmap. 9-1-1 Call-handling equipment was installed throughout the Region, with the final acceptance of the project signed in November. The equipment was procured from Motorola using SB8 funds. Members of the TriCOG participate in regularly scheduled conference calls to discuss NGCS projects and planning for the future of the regional networks, including equipment installations. Project planning calls continue with Motorola Solutions Connectivity, Inc. Topics for the call include ongoing project deliverables and discussions for upcoming activities.

9-1-1 Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from each county and possessing a range of technical expertise, provides guidance and approval on issues related to the 9-1-1 program. Committee Members continue to be advocates for local control of the 9-1-1 program.

Strategic Planning

HOTCOG develops and submits the 9-1-1 Strategic Plan on a biennial basis. The plan contains local implementation levels and priorities; plan costs by county, level, and component; equipment worksheets for justification of need; system telephone network diagrams by county; and administrative budget information. It also clearly defines NGCS components such as Core Functions required to maintain the network in the Next Generation environment.

Rural Addressing

HOTCOG funds addressing maintenance activities in each county. The county Addressing Coordinators' duties include providing 9-1-1 addresses within the rural areas of the county, maintaining a local 9-1-1 database, GPS driveway and road collection, and submitting all updates to the COG.

Mapping/GIS/Database

HOTCOG maintains and utilizes the geographic information system (GIS) for the Region. The COG provides mapping activities including updating and maintaining street files, driveway

locations, emergency service provider boundaries, and cellular tower sites. The program distributed 192 printed maps to jurisdictions in the Region in FY 2025, along with 16 printed map books. Staff participates on several CSEC and Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) focus groups relating to Next Generation 9-1-1 mapping projects. HOTCOG staff works with county addressing coordinators, telephone companies, and post offices to obtain correct address information and eliminate errors in the 9-1-1 system.

Public Education / Training

HOTCOG provides public education activities throughout the Region including the distribution of 9-1-1 educational materials. Awareness of 9-1-1 is key to getting help in an emergency. Cell Phone Sally, the 9-1-1 mascot, teaches children the proper use of the 9-1-1 emergency number. She is presented on items such as brochures, pencils, bookmarks, coloring books, and is featured in the 9-1-1 DVD entitled: “Getting Help is Easy” which has been distributed to schools within the Region. There is also an assortment of publications and educational items carrying 9-1-1 messages such as “Help Us Help You” and “Call when you can, text 9-1-1 when you can’t,” geared toward adults and seniors. During FY 2025, 42,183 public education items were distributed in the Region. Call takers also have access to refresher TTY training through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). This training is offered semi-annually and is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to assure that all 9-1-1 answering centers provide direct, equal access to their services for people with hearing disabilities. National Public Safety Telecommunications Week, April 13-19th, all telecommunicators in the HOTCOG Region were honored. HOTCOG staff presented beach towels and solar chargers to the region’s Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) staff to recognize and thank them for their dedication in protecting and serving our communities. The items were imprinted with the message, “9-1-1, You Make a Difference.”

Staff: Kristine Hill, 9-1-1 Coordinator
Sarah Wines, 9-1-1 GIS Coordinator



National Public Safety
Telecommunicators Week –
Hillsboro Police Department



25 Years of Service Awards -
HOTCOG Staff Sarah Wines and
Kristine Hill with Commission on State
Emergency Communications (CSEC)
Executive Director Andrew Friedrichs



National Public Safety
Telecommunicators Week –
Hill County Sheriff’s Office

Emergency Preparedness/Homeland Security

General

In 2025, the Emergency Preparedness/Homeland Security Program continued to support local jurisdictions and emergency response agencies by assisting and maintaining partnerships that enhance planning, cooperation, coordination, training, exercises, communications, and response throughout the Heart of Texas Council of Governments Region (HOTCOG). The HOTCOG Staff continues to provide grant management and technical assistance to agencies and jurisdictions within the region and serves as an interface between local jurisdictions and state and federal agencies.



Hill County Communications Tower in Penelope built with State Radio Infrastructure Grant Funds

Key Accomplishments of 2025

- HOTCOG staff and CATRAC facilitated a Tabletop Emergency Exercise for local first responders. The exercise included mass casualties and critical infrastructure scenarios that tested the readiness and response capabilities of local officials.
- HOTCOG assisted Falls County officials with recovery efforts when a severe storm caused a power outage to the Sheriff's Department Communications Equipment. Staff used left over grant funds to purchase Dispatch Consoles and communications software as well as replacement of (2) Backup Generators at communications tower sites in Lott and Reagan.
- HOTCOG staff, in partnership the cities of Robinson, Wortham, Hewitt, Clifton, and Meridian assisted in National Night Out activities providing citizens information of HOTCOG programs.



HOTCOG staff participating in National Night Out in Bosque County



Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (EPAC)

The committee, comprised of key stakeholders and responders from within the region's homeland security, emergency management, law enforcement, fire, and response communities, develops regional goals and makes recommendations to the HOTCOG Executive Committee on the distribution of regional SHSP grant funds.

EPAC members listen to a presentation from the National Weather Service during EPAC Meeting.

State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)

The State Homeland Security Program grant administered by the Office of the Governor (OOG) provides regional funds for homeland security, terrorism prevention, emergency operations, planning, and the purchase of specialized equipment to enhance the capability of local agencies to prevent and respond to incidents of terrorism. The HOTCOG Region received \$512,334 in 2023 State Homeland Security Program grants.



McLennan County Bomb Squad received \$108,000 in grant funds from SHSP



Lightning lights up the sky over the Baylor University Campus in Waco

Emergency Notification System

HOTCOG staff continues the administration of the Regional Emergency Notification System (ENS) and added VOIP Phone Numbers to our county databases. When danger threatens, this regional system allows quick notification from local users and officials to alert the general public and special response groups by sending mass telephone notices, as well as text messages and emails. COG staff encourages citizens to register cellular phone numbers, text, and email information at www.HOTReady.com.

Citizen Corps Program (CCP)

The Citizen Corps Program provides the training, knowledge and equipment necessary for community members to ensure the safety and well-being of themselves, their families and their communities during both times of stability and times of emergency. Most notable achievement in 2025, the Mart High School Teen CERT program assisted the Hill County CERT Team with emergency water distribution in Marlin.

Staff:

Wayne Stovall, Homeland Security Manager
Andy Davis, Emergency Preparedness Planner
Harold Ferguson, Emergency Preparedness Planner



HOTCOG Staff with members of the University High School Teen CERT Program and their advisors

Criminal Justice Planning / Training

Lana Gudgel, Criminal Justice Planner / Regional Training Program Coordinator

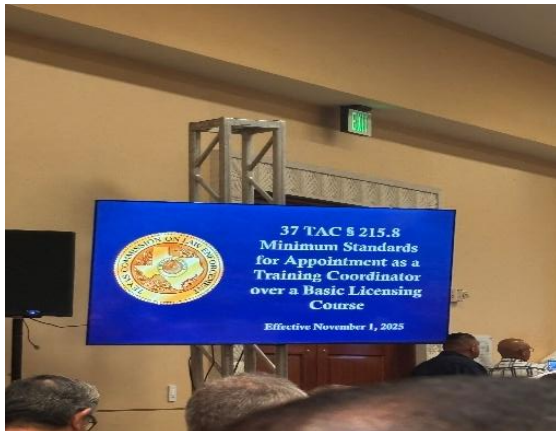
General

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments Criminal Justice Program coordinates criminal justice planning and implementation activities within the six-county region. As part of the coordination, HOTCOG staff assists counties with developing plans and strategies that address the region's needs.

The staff continues to provide grant management, technical assistance, and continuing education to agencies and jurisdictions within the region. The staff has continued rewriting our Community Plans for each County. The staff conducted five in-person meetings with the community planners from each county to review and revise the current community plans.

Regional Law Enforcement Training Program

HOTCOG Staff maintains records and satisfies training requirements of TCOLE-certification of a training program. During the past year, our program has expanded training classes to include Advanced Report Writing, LGBTQ+ Awareness, Resilient Response: Policing Trauma, Understanding and Planning for School Bombing Incidents, Surviving Bombing Incidents for Educators, Law Enforcement Grant Writing 101, and Advanced Instructor Course. Training Coordinator Lana Gudgel successfully completed the Advance Instructor Course to be certified as an Advanced Instructor for TCOLE.



*TCOLE Conference,
McAllen, Texas
September 2025*



*Staff Member, Lana Gudgel,
Training Coordinator*



*ALERT Training, Falls County
2025*



Basic Instructor Training, ESEC, 2025

Our most requested courses continue to be the Basic Instructor Course and De-Escalation Training, taught in-house by our Training Program Coordinator.

The Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy Grant Program supports this program.

10256Hours | 444 Students | 65+ Agencies | 48 Classes

Through the Regional Law Enforcement Training Program, officers across the region received high-quality instruction.

Law Enforcement Training Advisory Committee



The Law Enforcement Training Advisory Committee met two times during the past year to discuss training needs and issues throughout our region. These discussions centered around current events nationwide and Austin legislative changes.

LETAC sets the direction and provides oversight for the region and the training offered by the Regional Law Enforcement Training Program.

Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC)



The committee is comprised of 21 key stakeholders and responders from within the region's law enforcement, juvenile justice, probation, mental health care, local government, and the public.

This group develops regional goals and makes recommendations to the HOTCOG Executive Committee on the distribution of criminal justice grant funds. By using a region-focused approach, this committee shares information and supports all agencies in our region.

Criminal Justice Grants

During the last grant cycle, HOTCOG staff worked with numerous agencies to secure \$1,086,000 in Criminal Justice grant funding for the Heart of Texas region. This funding was provided under the General Victim Assistance Program, Violence Against Women Act, and State Criminal Justice Planning Funds - Juvenile Justice & Truancy Prevention Grant Program. In addition, the HOTCOG Juvenile Justice and Delinquency program contracts with each of the six counties to reimburse the Juvenile Probation Departments for eligible expenses on a pro-rata basis.

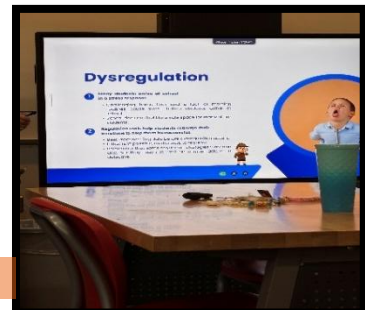
\$2,027,673.50

HOTCOG worked with CJAC and numerous local agencies to secure criminal justice grant funding for the region.

In FY2025 HOTCOG applied for and received grant funds to start a regional Crisis Intervention Team. The goal of this project was to create a Crisis Intervention Team to provide support to agencies in the region in the event of a critical incident. This team also provides specialized training to all first responders in the region at no cost to the agencies. This project provided Crisis Intervention Training to 10 regional officers. This program also provided the Autism and Law Enforcement Training for 10 regional officers. The team is currently working on the creation of emergency response guidebook for patrol officers with contact information for agencies that provide emergency shelter, mental health counseling, SANE/SAFE examiners, Red Cross, United Way, 211 services information and victims services. This guide will be printed on an easy-to-access index card as well as being made available on the HOTCOG webpage.



*Autism and Law
Enforcement Class 2025*



Step Up Texas 2025

Bomb Making Awareness Program (BMAP)

In FY2025 HOTCOG applied for and received grant funds to start a BMAP project in our region. The goal of the BMAP is to raise awareness in both the public and Law Enforcement regarding the common household chemicals that can be used to make homemade explosive devices. Our CJ Planner and the Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Manager attended the Prevention of Bombing Incidents in Socorro, NM. Our HS Planner also attended the Response to Bombing Incidents in Socorro, NM. Following these trainings, our planner and program manager began conducting public awareness classes in the region as well as hosting Homemade Explosive Device Awareness, Recognition, and Response. HOTCOG has hosted three training courses and trained 58 individuals. HOTCOG also applied for funding to continue this project in FY 2026, the award for this has not yet been received.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Community Development Fund

History

The CDBG Program (formerly under the Texas Department of Rural Affairs aka TDRA) was created by the 77th Legislature to develop policy specifically addressing economic and quality of life issues affecting small and rural communities across Texas. Administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), grant dollars are awarded for Community Development projects in two-year intervals.

In the past each of Texas' 24 regional councils, including HOTCOG, had a Regional Review Committee (RRC). Each RRC was comprised of 12 local elected officials, appointed by the Texas Department of Agriculture. The role of each Regional Review Committee was to participate in the process for determining regional scoring priorities for projects funded through the Texas CDBG's Community Development Fund, and was responsible for developing the objective scoring criteria. Now there is a State Unified Scoring Committee. Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is the state's agency facilitator of the CDBG funds.

TDA has given history of why they moved from having 24 RRC's to one SUSC.

Texas CDBG grant fund was created in the early 1980s. RRC was established to assist with scoring applications within each region. Problems came about because RRC's frequently used **subjective** criteria to score projects on factors that could not be readily captured by statistics. Early 2000's HUD issued a finding requiring the process to be more **objective** so that applicants could clearly understand and anticipate how an application would be scored. This allowed all communities a chance at funding. TDA reported that Local RRC participation was low (Board members failing to meet quorum and caused timing issues for grantees).

In 2018, 12 RRC public hearings were attended by the bare minimum number of members, and 11 were unable to make quorum without the use of proxy attendees in place of members. In 2019 TDA began plans to replace the RRC process with a unified scoring process that preserves regional input. Unified Scoring Committee is composed of 24 members. The members are composed of a representative from each Council of Governments or Planning Commission within the State of Texas. The USC is responsible for developing the objective scoring factors for all regions used to prioritize applicants. The USC must establish the numerical value of the points assigned to each scoring factor.

Key Accomplishments of 2025

The most important Community Development accomplishments of 2025 was hosting TDA Kickoff meeting for the regions grant recipients.

Technical Assistance

Through the Community Economic Development Program, HOTCOG also provides general technical assistance regarding community and economic development including Texas Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) procedures, application requirements and specific community development program activities such as housing workshops, infrastructure provision and financing workshops, grant writing workshops, planning and zoning seminars, and general needs assessment assistance. Staff conducted workshop for the HOTCOG board on requirements of this program.

Technical Assistance and Training

Community Development training offered by the HOTCOG in Fiscal Year Ending 2025 for required community outreach for CDBG grants such as Fair Housing as prescribed by HUD and TDA. Technical assistance activities included research projects on behalf of our communities, with the greatest number of requests for assistance identifying grants and other sources of funding for community development projects plus basic operating procedures for municipal governments.

Staff:

- Dorthy Jackson, Regional and Economic Development Manager
- Falen Bohannon, Environmental & Economic Development Coordinator



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Heart of Texas Economic Development District (HOTEDD)



History of the Heart of Texas Economic Development District (HOTEDD)

The Heart of Texas was formerly part of the Central Texas Economic Development District (CTEDD). Following the dissolution of the Central Texas Economic Development District in 2000, there was a lack of regional economic development coordination. The many organizations, local governments, individuals, and private industries involved in economic development recognized the need for a comprehensive strategy to enhance and guide economic growth and reduce poverty in the region. This led the HOTCOG to establish an Economic Development District in 2003 with the first Board being seated in January of 2004. The Economic Development District is a stand-alone entity and not a part of HOTCOG, although the two entities partner in serving the Region.



Bosque County Judge, Cindy Vanlandingham, Chair 2025

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments provides administrative and economic development staff support for the Heart of Texas Economic Development District. The following report details the HOTCOG Economic Development Program, which operates on behalf of the EDD.

Key Accomplishments in 2025

The most important Economic Development accomplishments of 2025 include:

General Land Office (GLO) CDBG-MIT RCP Grants

In 2025, HOTCOG continued to administer the City of Mexia's General Land Office (GLO) CDBG-MIT Regional Mitigation Program (RCP) grant for the development of a comprehensive plan. Throughout the year, HOTCOG assisted the City with the development and release of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to procure a qualified planning consultant, ensuring all required components outlined by GLO-such as hazard risk identification, population and housing projections, land use analysis, infrastructure assessment, and capital improvement planning-would be incorporated into the final scope of work. HOTCOG coordinated closely with city staff and GLO representatives to ensure full compliance with 2 CRF 200 procurement standards and GLO's programmatic requirements. Ongoing grant administration efforts included guidance on contract development, documentation, and reporting, as well as continued support to ensure the comprehensive plan will meet all regulatory expectations related to transportation, community facilities, and additional environmental or economic studies. Due to GLO's interpretation of applicable federal regulations, the City of Mexia continues to engage HOTCOG for full grant administration services.



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

In 2025, HOTCOG successfully completed the 2025–2030 Comprehensive Economic

Development Strategy (CEDS), fulfilling the primary responsibility of the HOT Economic Development District (HOTEDD), which has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration since 2007. The finalized CEDS document received formal approval from the Economic Development Administration and has been fully incorporated into HOTCOG's web-based CEDS platform to enhance regional accessibility and transparency. As part of this effort, HOTCOG also completed updates to the online mapping system to expand regional data resources, including the addition of food pantry locations throughout the district and updated ESRI-based datasets such as population indicators and other community profile information. These improvements strengthen the region's ability to align economic development priorities with EDA requirements and support informed planning and project development across the Heart of Texas region.

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

The Heart of Texas Economic Development District, Inc. (HOTEDD) has been awarded funds from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA)-Rural Development's (RD) Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) Program to make loans to rural small businesses at affordable rates.

The specific purpose of the RLF is to support small local businesses in our rural communities so that they can grow, create jobs, and diversify our regional economy. Specifically, the HOTEDD RBEG RLF Program seeks to assist qualified small and emerging businesses (less than 50 employees) in the rural Heart of Texas including Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone and rural McLennan Counties.

In June of 2013, HOTEDD made its first loan to Red Caboose Winery & Vineyard in Meridian, Texas (Bosque County).



In April of 2014, a second grant was awarded by USDA growing the HOTEDD RLF to over \$254,000.00.

In 2015, HOTEDD provided loans, totaling over \$160,000, to three small businesses using both grant funds and revolved funds: Net1 Connect (Rural Broadband Internet Provider in Southern McLennan and Eastern Falls Counties), Moody Hardware (local hardware store in Moody, Texas-McLennan County), and Chic-a-Doodles (Resale Super Center) of Mexia, Texas in Limestone County.

The Heart of Texas Economic Development District, Inc. (HOTEDD) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) operates under the guidance of the USDA-RD Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program (RBEG) and the HOTEDD USDA-RD RBEG Revolving Loan Fund Plan approved April 11, 2012.

HOTEDD staff completed application of a grant through the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) for the Small and Microenterprise Revolving Fund (SMRF) in partnership with Falls County. The grant was awarded in 2017. With HOTCOG staff

assistance the HOTEDD Board was able to approve two revolving loans in the Falls County community: Kent Cultivations DBA Rosebud's Artesian Alley (adding coffee bar in Rosebud), and KNV Investments (Fitness Gym in Marlin). 2025 activity in both Revolving Loans have been limited. While there was inquiries about the Loan Program, many businesses didn't qualify or felt that the requirements was too daunting.



HOTEDD WEBSITE

Staff updates website and monitors new information to be added.

Regional Marketing

In 2025, the HOTEDD Regional Marketing Committee funded promotional items to be distributed throughout the Region.

Regional Support Activities & Technical Assistance

HOTCOG staff provides technical support, financial and administrative reporting, record keeping and membership information for the District and its committees. HOTCOG serves as a community resource by offering technical assistance in the areas of demographic statistics to assist the economic development jurisdictions of the region in the recruitment of business and industry. HOTCOG staff maintains federal, state, and local economic development information, and participates in area economic development forums and community economic development programs. Several rural communities received extensive technical support this year due to Staff's knowledge of day to day operations of municipal government.

Public Outreach, Education and Training

HOTEDD Staff continues to fulfill its role as a regional economic development training and information resource. Staff visits with elected officials, community leaders and community committees to support economic development projects, small business development, and Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant applications. Plus the Newly Elected Officials training for all newly elected officials in the region and for those who wish to sharpen their knowledge even if they are not newly elected officials.

EDA Grant Administration



In 2025, HOTCOG successfully completed and closed out both EDA Public Works grants previously administered for the Texas State Technical College High Tech Training Center and the City of Fairfield's Old Mexia-Fairfield Road Project, officially concluding all reporting and compliance requirements with the Economic Development



Administration. This year, EDA also announced the availability of Disaster funding, and HOTCOG—through the efforts of Dorthy Jackson—is actively assisting regional communities and institutions in developing competitive applications for this funding opportunity. Support is currently being provided to the City of Clifton, City of Hillsboro,

Hill College, City of Hubbard, and the City of Marlin. Application development and required documentation are underway for each entity, and submissions are expected once all eligibility and project components are finalized.

Training Events

Virtual event for newly elected officials and faith based organizations was conducted in 2025.

Staff will provide EDC training to any entity that requests it.

Staff:

- Dorthy Jackson, Regional and Economic Development Manager
- Falen Bohannon, Environmental & Economic Development Coordinator

NADO Award for Solid Waste Program Regional Innovation in Combating Illegal Dumping



The Heart of Texas Council of Governments received the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) award for the Solid Waste Program for the development of a regionally coordinated initiative known as the COG-Managed Solid Waste Events to help communities across all six counties address illegal dumping, improve environmental health, and eliminate barriers to accessing state cleanup funds. Pictured l to r: Falen Bohannon, Russell Devorsky and Dorthy Jackson

SOLID WASTE PROGRAM

History

The Solid Waste Program began as a result of legislation which stipulated that each Council of Governments in the State of Texas develop a Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (RSWMP) for its respective area. The HOTCOG Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) implements the items in the plan, reviews and updates the plan every 4 years or as needed and administers the Solid Waste Grant Program for the region. The most recent plan was approved in January 2014.



Key Accomplishments of 2025

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) determined that all funding allocations for FY 2025 will be used for COG Managed Projects throughout the region. There were 12 projects completed in the region. McLennan County, Falls County, Hill County, Bosque County, and Limestone County, all participated in at least one Community Collection Event. Each event has an opportunity to take advantage of 2 tire trailers and up to 4 roll-off dumpsters. Every participant had extremely successful events. Each event ensured that tons of waste was diverted from the landfill and was able to be recycled in the proper way. These events also help citizens of their town clean up blight that enhanced the look of the community.



Hill County Community Collection Tire Event

Solid Waste Funding

The HOTCOG receives funding for the Regional Solid Waste Grants Program from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). These funds are generated from the tipping fees collected at landfill sites across the state (the tipping fee is what the public is charged to discard their waste at a landfill). Staff are also required to provide and keep an updated Closed Landfill Inventory that is available to the public upon request.

Public Outreach, Education and Training

HOTCOG provides technical assistance concerning all aspects of solid waste management. Staff has disseminated information regarding grant funding and training opportunities to local governments and has met with local officials in the region to provide assistance in obtaining funds.

Staff attended and provided outreach materials to community members at numerous recycling events throughout 2025 and handed out giveaways that showed off the 100% recycled materials available to make end products with. Staff continues to participate actively with Sustainable Resource Practices Advisory Board meeting, attending meetings monthly.

Air Quality Program

History

The HOTCOG Air Quality program began in January of 2010 as a result of the region being designated a “near nonattainment region” by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The TCEQ “Rider 7 Program” is the source of direction and funding for the important work of helping communities stay below the nonattainment ozone target measure. The program began with a great sense of urgency, as expected changes in air quality standards threatened to lead to a status of “nonattainment” for a part or possibly the entire HOTCOG Region. The public health and political ramifications of high ozone layers always make this issue a top concern.



Key Accomplishments of 2025

HOTCOG has received funding from the Texas Legislature under the Rider7 air quality program to run technical studies to help get a better understanding of the needs and responsibilities of the HOTCOG region. The purpose of the program is to improve local air quality by reducing emissions.

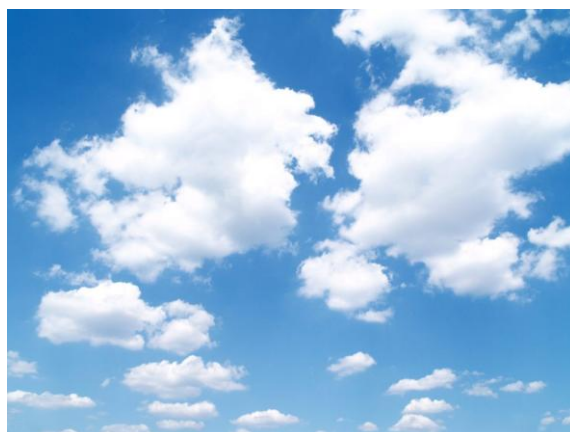
Environmental experts at Environ presented a summary of the Conceptual Model Update Report to the HOTCOG Air Quality Advisory Committee that shows current and estimated emission activities in the region. Environ also completed the Emission Inventory Review and has continued model performance evaluations for the latest TCEQ CAMx run for the entire 2025 ozone season.

Public Outreach

Staff continues to maintain the BreatheEasyWaco.org web site, promote public education and community outreach activities, and oversee the development of reports and other tools for analysis.

Staff:

Falen Bohannon-Environmental Planner & Economic Development Coordinator



ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services is responsible for the internal and external services for all HOTCOG program areas. Responsibilities include accounting, budgeting, financial management and reporting, personnel/payroll, benefits administration, purchasing, records management, website content and overall facilities management.

Administrative Services also provides support services as needed to implement programs in accordance with grant and contract agreements, and each year publishes the Regional Directory for the HOTCOG six county region.

HOTCOG's website, <https://hotcog.org/> is continually updated to include information about the region and the services we provide. The Transparency and Reports page has the Annual Report, Annual Financial Reports, Annual Budget, Annual Local Debit Report and other links. Please visit our website and take a look around the region.

Each year all 24 regional planning commissions (RPCs) in Texas are required by Chapters 391 of the Texas Local Government Code to annually report to the State Auditor their financial, productivity, performance and salary information for the past year. HOTCOG submits those reports by December 31st of each year. The State auditor reviews and analyzes the submitted reports and annual audits to determine whether the 24 RPCs submitted statutorily required information. HOTCOG was determined to have met those requirements.

In addition, HOTCOG's outside auditors issued an unmodified or "clean" report that had no findings or questioned costs for Federal and State Awards.

The Administrative Services department organizes and conducts staff training during the year. Trainings include such topics as ethics training and wellness programs for employees. Staff completed the Cyber Security Training Certification for 2025 as mandated by the State of Texas in accordance with HB3834.



Pictured l to r: Administration staff, Brad Wyatt, Michelle Vasquez, Mary McDow and Emily Orner



Bridget Barrera

Throughout the year several employee holiday events and the annual picnic were held to provide fun and relaxation. These events are not only a way to get to know each other but also to get to know our families and promote team building for our organization.

As always, the Administrative Services goal is to do whatever is necessary to give the best support for the operations of HOTCOG during the year.

In December 2025, after forty-six years of serving as the Deputy Executive Director of Administration and Finance, John Minnix retired from the Heart of Texas Council of Governments.



Pictured: John and his wife, Jenny and far left with HOTCOG staff

Staff Picnic, May 2025



STAFF PICNIC 2025



*The Heart of Texas Economic Development District Meeting,
December 2025*



Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Summary of Fund Availability and Proposed
FY 2024-2025 Program Expenditures

Fund Availability**Local**

HOTCOG Dues	\$ 62,032	
Local Govt./HOTEDD Program Match	147,792	
Rent-Workforce Building	484,336	
HOTEDD Management Fee	17,535	
Interest Income	15,000	
Miscellaneous Income	6,000	
Local Govt. Program Income and Inkind Match	495,700	
		1,228,395

Federal/State

Federal/State Administered Grants	8,543,556	
		8,543,556

Total Available Funds

9,771,951

Less: Program Income/Inkind Match

495,700

Net Available Funds for FY 2024-2025

9,276,251

Less: Delegate Agency/Contractual Costs

4,226,036

Net Available Operating Funds FY 2024-2025\$ 5,050,215**Program Expenditures**

Council Management and Administration	1,512,605
Aging Services	5,461,613
Regional Services	3,738,435

Total Proposed Dept. Expenditures

10,712,653

Less: Transfers to Indirect Cost Pool

1,258,001

Total Proposed Expenditures

9,454,652

Less: Program Income/Inkind Match

495,700

Net Proposed Expenditures for FY 2024-2025

8,958,952

Less: Delegate Agency/Contractual Costs

4,226,036

Net Proposed Operating Expenditures FY 2024-2025\$ 4,732,915**Transfers Out-(Due to HOTEDD)**

(290,817)

Net Surplus\$ 26,482

Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Summary of Revenues and Expenditures
Proposed FY 2024-2025 Line Item Expenditures

Revenue

Local	1,207,395
Federal/State Administered	8,543,556
Other	<u>21,000</u>

Total Revenue**\$ 9,771,951****Line Item Expenditures**

Salaries	1,566,898
Benefits	819,831
Travel	73,730
Equipment	1,161,761
Supplies	28,950
Space	311,102
Communications	45,543
Copier/Printing	8,380
Computer	60,500
Postage	7,842
Audit	35,500
Other	463,200
Indirect	1,196,628
Debt Service-WF Bldg	57,681
Insurance/Maintenance/Other-WF Bldg	92,000
Management Fees	61,373
Program Income/Inkind Match	495,700
Delegate Agency/Contractual Costs	<u>4,226,036</u>

Total Proposed Expenditures

10,712,655

Less: Transfers for Indirect Cost Pool

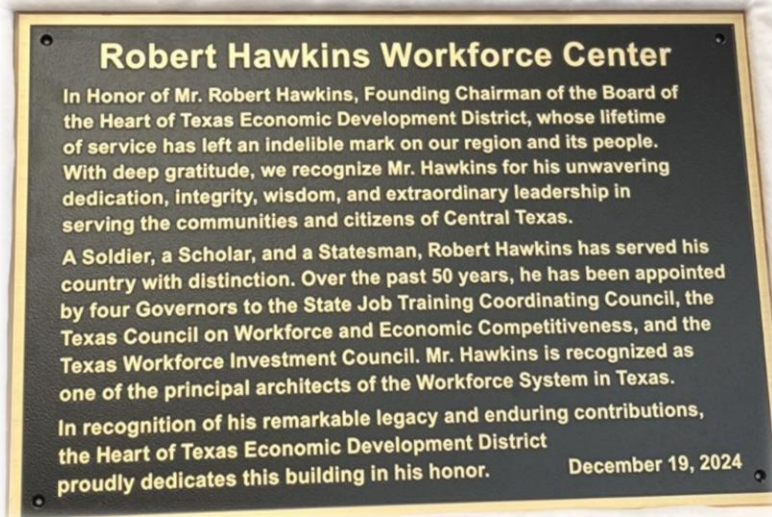
1,258,001**Net Proposed Expenditures****\$ 9,454,653****Transfers Out-(Due to HOTEDD)**

(290,817)

Net Surplus**\$ 26,482**

Number of Employees: 31

On May 22, 2025, the Heart of Texas Economic Development District Board unveiled the new name of the Workforce Center honoring Mr. Robert Hawkins, who has spent 50 years fighting for worker's rights.



Pictured at left is Mr. Robert Hawkins and City of Waco Mayor Jim Holmes at the Heart of Texas Workforce Building for the dedication ceremony.