

Five Year - Coordinated Public Transit-Health and Human Service Transportation Plan



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South Texas Development Council



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Chapter 1

Introduction

The South Texas Development Council (STDC) requested a service oriented update to the 2011 South Texas Area Coordinated Transit Plan. STDC and the project committee recognize that an update was needed that focuses on strategies that help eliminate gaps in services.

Planning efforts are directed toward effectively and efficiently increasing service through coordination, with an emphasis on transit dependent and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 populations and veterans. These categories include:

- Older adults
- Persons with disabilities
- Low income residents
- Zero car households
- Youths
- Veterans
- Residents with limited English speaking proficiency

Potential services can include traditional fixed-route, fixed-schedule, flex-route and paratransit services, while also including coordination strategies such as mobility management, designed to improve service for customers.

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

This plan has been developed over the course of the past three months, with input from many interested stakeholders through an open planning process, including three rounds of public meetings.

Chapter 1 discusses the background to the study, the requirements and the purpose of the process. Subsequent chapters are as follows:

- Chapter 2 – Review of Existing Services: Reviews the wide variety of services in the region.
- Chapter 3 – Review of Needs in the Region and Gap Analysis: Reviews demographics and travel patterns. It also emphasizes transit dependent

populations (elderly, persons with disabilities, low income, zero-car households), veterans, and Title VI populations including those with a language barrier. The Gap analysis uses the quantitative review from the needs review and comments received from stakeholders and the public in round one of the meetings to determine gaps in service, i.e., unmet needs. The emphasis in the gap analysis is target populations that would gain from coordinated activities – elderly, persons with disabilities, low income, zero-car households, youths, veterans, and non-English speaking persons. These gaps are addressed in detail in the draft plan.

- Chapter 4 – The Plan: Strategies and Pilot Projects: Incorporates all input collected during the public outreach. Includes all selected strategies that will benefit veterans and transit dependent populations (as described above). Discusses state and federal planning requirements, followed by the key coordination premise and goals of the plan.

PURPOSE OF THE COORDINATED PLAN

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#) (Pub. L. No. 114-94) into law—FAST continued the coordinated transportation planning requirements for the Section 5310 Program administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The purpose of the Section 5310 Program is to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities. Section 5310 funding goes toward programs that serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.

This Coordinated Plan is designed to meet the coordinated transportation planning requirements. The plan incorporates the four required elements:

1. An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private and nonprofit).
2. An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners, or on more sophisticated data collection efforts that identify gaps in service.
3. Strategies, activities and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, and opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.
4. Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

The purpose of this planning process was twofold. The first was to continue moving forward with implementation of existing coordinated efforts. The project committee's approach to mobility and transportation choices calls for local planning and local decision-making based on sound planning activities. The second purpose was to meet the requirements of the FTA's rules regarding development of a coordinated transportation plan for any locale to receive funds from the FTA, a very important resource for funding.

State Coordination Requirements

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers the Section 5310, 5311, 5311(f) and Rideshare Programs for the State of Texas. TxDOT's Public Transportation Division manages these funding programs that are affected by the coordinated planning process.

KEY COORDINATION PREMISE

Excellent public transportation is the best way to address and coordinate the majority of transit dependent and human service client transportation needs.

Experience and research across the country in both urban and rural areas tells us that scheduled public transit is the best way to provide coordinated transit service as most transit dependent and human service clients can ride fixed-route/scheduled service or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service. The best way to support the needs of human service agency clients, veterans, transit dependent individuals and Title VI populations, as well as other priority groups of potential riders, is through excellent public transportation rather than expensive one-on-one specialized service (with exceptions).

When public transit systems are able to meet the majority of needs through the existing fixed-route/scheduled public transit network, then human service agency resources can be freed up to focus on the specialized needs of their most difficult to serve clients – true coordination.

VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Outlining the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the plan is an essential step in developing the updated Regional Transportation Coordination Plan. Goals were first established in 2006 as part of the Regional Transportation Coordination Plan prepared by the project committee.

Based on this, the project committee developed a final draft of the Goals and Objectives in 2011, which for the most part, the committee believes are still the goals needed to guide the service. It is anticipated that this language could be further modified in the plan based on input from the public.

The goals were revised for this update in acknowledgement that some goals and/or objectives:

- May have been completed,
- Are no longer relevant to the project committee or
- Are in need of a revision/update.

The vision, mission, goals and objectives serve as a framework for identification of performance measures and strategies. The project committee decided to keep the vision statement and the mission as is. Members felt they worked hard to craft the vision, mission and goals, and while much progress is being made, the goals set in 2011 should for the most part still guide this effort. They are discussed in the following narrative.

Plan Vision

Residents (including the general public and human service clientele) and visitors to the four-county South Texas Planning Region will be able to move throughout the region safely, reliably, efficiently, and affordably by using a seamless network of public and private facilities and services that are easy to comprehend, responsive to individual travel needs, and easy to access.

Plan Mission

Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective high quality and safe transportation for our community.

Goals and Objectives

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

Goal 1: Enhance the quality of the customer's travel experience.

Goal 2: Expand the availability of services to those who are unserved.

Goal 3: Increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Goal 4: Investigate new sources of local revenue for public transit through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service.

Goal 5: Establish and sustain communications and decision-making mechanisms among sponsors and stakeholders to guide effective implementation of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan.

Goal 6: Improve the image of transit across the region.

Summary

While there has been significant movement forward in meeting the 2011 goals, the committee felt that they were still valid as there is still much to be accomplished. During the public outreach process, new needs presented themselves on the outskirts of the Laredo area. It is evident that these goals remain important to completing the Vision and Mission.

Chapter 2

Inventory of Transportation Services

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the transportation services and other resources currently available in the South Texas region, which includes Jim Hogg, Starr, Webb, and Zapata Counties. The inventory of resources is organized as follows:

- Planning Organizations – Agencies responsible for transportation planning in the region, including state, regional, and local organizations.
- Public Transportation Providers – Operators of fixed-route, flex-route, and demand-response transportation services that are open to the general public, that are funded under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 (urbanized) and 5311 (rural) programs.
- Human Service Transportation Providers – Public and private non-profit organizations that provide transportation to specific populations, such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and people with low income. This category includes services funded by the FTA Section 5310 program and the Texas Medicaid Transportation Program.
- Private, For-Profit Transportation Providers – Operators of contracted or private-pay services, intercity bus lines, and taxi companies are inventoried in this section.

PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

The following planning agencies have responsibilities for planning transportation in the South Texas region:

- South Texas Development Council (STDC)
- Laredo Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) / Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

South Texas Development Council (STDC)

STDC is the regional planning commission for Webb, Jim Hogg, Starr, and Zapata Counties, organized under Chapter 391, Local Government Code. A council of governments is a political subdivision of the state. The primary focus of STDC is to serve as advocate, planner, and coordinator of initiatives that, when undertaken on a regional basis, can be more effective and efficient. These include homeland security, elderly assistance, law enforcement training, criminal justice planning, solid waste management, health services outreach and assistance, infrastructure development, economic analysis, transportation and regional planning, community and economic development, census data, and HIV services.

The STDC facilitates the coordination of public transportation services through regional planning. STDC works with transit operators to: improve to the delivery of transportation services; generate efficiencies in operation; increase levels of service; encourage cooperation and coordination; and develop the regional coordination plan which outlines services and projects implemented in the STDC region. STDC is the lead agency in this planning effort. The South Texas Planning Region Public Transportation Coordination Plan was initially developed in 2006 and updated in 2009.

Through its administration of Area Agency on Aging funding, STDC also sponsors human service transportation. More information is provided on these services later in this document under Human Service Transportation Providers.

Laredo Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) / Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Laredo Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Laredo metropolitan area (including all of the cities of Laredo and Rio Bravo and parts of Webb County). The Laredo MPO is governed by a Policy Committee comprised of the Mayor of the City of Laredo (chairperson), three Laredo City Council persons, the Webb County Judge, two Webb County Commissioners, the TxDOT Laredo District Engineer, and the Director of the Transportation Planning Department. Ex-officio members include the State Senator for District 21, State Representative for District 42 and State Representative for District 31.

LUTS/Laredo MPO developed and updates the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Texas Urban Mobility Plan (TUMP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the metro area. It is also currently sponsoring the update of the Laredo Five Year Transit Development Plan.

Laredo Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2015-2040

The Laredo Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2015-2040 (LMTP) identified following challenges for public transit:

- Growing demand as a result of a growing transit-dependent population, especially in growth areas in South Laredo.
- A need for more frequent service and longer service hours in Laredo.
- Rising operating costs.
- Decreases in federal and state operation funding assistance and increased need for local funding.
- A growing elderly population in need of specialized transportation services that are costly to provide by public transit operations.

Recent public transit planning studies for are summarized in the LMTP:

- The 2009 *Laredo Five Year Transit Development Plan (TDP)* – An update to this plan is currently under way. The 2009 TDP provided El Metro with recommendations for improvements to services, fares, operates, marketing, technology, and facilities.
- *Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study* – Completed in 2011, this study assessed the feasibility of implementing bus rapid transit (BRT) in Laredo and recommended a preferred scenario with implementation phases.
- *El Lift Assessment Technical Report* – This document made recommendations for improving the El Lift ADA paratransit service provided by El Metro, including updates to policies, eligibility criteria, and operating characteristics and procedures. As described in the MTP, El Metro implemented many of the recommendations.
- The 2009 *South Texas Planning Region Public Transportation Coordination Plan.*, which the current project is updating.

The MTP recommends the following additional strategies for public transit:

- Continually Reevaluate Transit Operations – includes measuring performance at the route level and continuing to employ best practices to increase operational efficiency.
- System Preservation and Maintenance – includes preventive maintenance, replacing vehicles at the end of their useful lives, constructing a new maintenance facility planned near the intersection of Bartlett Avenue and Jacaman Road.
- Land Use and Development Considerations – recommends supporting land use design standards, policies, and principles which promote more pedestrian and transit friendly developments and more sustainable growth patterns.
- Transit Amenities – includes enhanced transit centers, bus shelters, bicycle racks on buses, and enhanced information such as signage and real-time bus information.
- Integrating Transit Considerations with Designing Roadway Improvements – including roadway design, pedestrian infrastructure, and bus pull-out locations.

- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for Transit – building in El Metro’s already implemented ITS technology, includes AVL-GPS technology for El Lift vehicles and additional security equipment for buses.
- Coordination among Transit Entities – includes collaboration among transit service providers, implementing recommendations from the 2009 *South Texas Planning Region Public Transportation Coordination Plan*, and evaluating opportunity to partner with El Aguila rural transit service to establish time transfers at a transfer station on US Highway 83.
- Marketing – recommends developing a comprehensive marketing program to promote transit usage.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

TxDOT is the state agency responsible for construction and maintenance of all interstate, U.S, state highways, ranch-to-market, and farm-to-market roads movement of people and goods. The state is organized in 25 geographic districts, each responsible for local highway design and maintenance, right-of-way acquisition, construction oversight, and transportation planning. The South Texas planning region spans two TxDOT Districts: Jim Hogg, Starr and Zapata Counties are in the TxDOT Pharr District, while Webb County is in the TxDOT Laredo District.

TxDOT has funding oversight for state public transportation funding through the Public Transportation Division (PTN). PTN, through its Public Transit Coordinators, works closely with transit systems. TxDOT manages, provides oversight, and disperses funding for FTA grants to rural and small urbanized areas, and selected Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grants such as:

- FTA Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation program funds public transportation capital, planning, operating and administrative projects in rural areas (population under 50,000).
- FTA Section 5311(f) Rural Intercity Bus (ICB) program funds projects that strengthen the connection between rural areas and the larger regional or national intercity bus system. ICB also supports the system's infrastructure through planning, marketing assistance and capital investment in facilities and vehicles.
- FTA Section 5307 Small Urban Public Transportation program funds public transportation capital, planning, and operating projects in small urbanized areas (population 50,000 to 200,000). In large urbanized areas (over 200,000), FTA directly awards funds to designated recipients.

- FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program funds projects that improve accessibility and mobility for seniors and people with disabilities. TxDOT awards funds to nonprofit organizations and local public entities serving rural and small urban areas. In large urbanized areas in Texas, FTA awards funds to other designated recipients. Additional information about the Section 5310 funding program is provided later in the document under “Human Service Transportation Providers.”
- FTA Section 5303 and 5304 Planning and Research programs provide funds to metropolitan planning organizations for transit or highway planning and awards TxDOT monies for statewide transit planning and research.
- FTA Section 5339(b) Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Program is aimed to improve the condition of the nation’s public transportation bus fleets, expand transportation access to employment, educational, and healthcare facilities, and to improve mobility options in rural and urban areas throughout the country. In accordance with the statutory requirement that FTA must “consider the age and condition of buses, bus fleets, related equipment, and bus-related facilities”, FTA will prioritize projects that demonstrate how they will address significant repair and maintenance needs, improve the safety of transit systems, deploy connective projects that include advanced technologies to connect bus systems with other networks, and support the creation of ladders of opportunity.
- FHWA Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds construction of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects in population areas less than 200,000.

Previously, TxDOT also administered the former FTA Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and 5317 New Freedom programs; however, these two FTA programs were eliminated with the passage of MAP-21 and have largely been phased out.

In the South Texas region, Laredo is the only urbanized area. It became a large urbanized area with the 2010 Census.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

The following publicly-funded, public transportation operators currently provide services in the South Texas Region:

- El Metro – City of Laredo / Laredo Transit Management Inc.
- El Aguila Rural Transit System – Webb County Community Action Agency
- Valley Metro – Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
- Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc. (REAL Inc.)

To obtain information about public transit services funded by TxDOT, the consultant team conducted a brief survey and reviewed service information available through each of their websites, and the financial and operating data available through TxDOT, Texas Transit Institute and the National Transit Database. Table 2-1 presents a summary of the public transit services in each county of the South Texas region.

Table 2-1: Summary of Public Transit Services in the South Texas Region

County	Provider	Communities Served	Service Type	Service Hours	Fares
Webb	El Metro	Laredo	Fixed routes and ADA paratransit	Mon – Sat: 6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. Sun: 7:00 a.m.- 8:30 p.m.	\$1.50 – Regular \$1.25 – students \$0.50 – children ages 5-11 \$0.75 – Medicare cardholders Free – children under 5 \$0.35 – seniors and individuals with disabilities during peak hours \$0.25 – transfers
Webb	El Aguila	Rural Webb County, with fixed routes connecting Bruni, Mirando City, Oilton, Pueblo Nuevo, El Cenizo, and Rio Bravo with Laredo	Fixed routes and curb-to-curb demand response	<u>Fixed routes:</u> Mon – Sat: 5:45 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Sun: 7:30-10:30 a.m. & 3:30-6:45 p.m. <u>Demand-response:</u> Mon – Fri: 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<u>Fixed routes:</u> \$1.50 – Regular \$0.75 – Seniors, people with disabilities \$0.50 – college students Free – children under 5 <u>Demand-response:</u> \$1.00
Starr	Valley Metro	Alto Bonito, La Grulla, Garciasville, La Casita, Rio Grande City, Midway, La Rosita, Garceno, Escobares, Roma, Los Saenz, Fronton; also service from Starr County to Lower Rio Grande Valley destinations	Flex route or curb-to-curb demand response, with 24 hour advanced reservation	Mon – Fri: 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<u>Flex-route:</u> \$1.00 – Regular \$0.50 – Seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, Medicare card-holders, students Free – UTRGV students, children under age 7, transfers <u>Demand-response:</u> \$3.00-\$10.00
Zapata	Valley Metro	San Ygnacio, Ramireno, Zapata, Siesta Shores, Lopeno and Falcon; also service from Zapata County to Laredo, Roma or Rio Grande	Curb-to-curb demand-response with 24 hour advance reservation	Mon - Fri: 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	\$3.00-\$10.00
Jim Hogg	REAL Rural Transit	Jim Hogg County	Demand Response	Mon - Fri: 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Vary on Origin to destination but range from \$2 to \$20

El Metro - City of Laredo / Laredo Transit Management Inc.

Laredo Transit Management Inc. (El Metro) is the public transit system of the City of Laredo. El Metro's mission is to promote and provide high quality, cost-effective public transportation services that address the needs and demands of the citizens of Laredo, Texas. A department within the City of Laredo government, El Metro is both an urban transit district (UTD) under Texas Transportation Code (TTC) Chapter 458, as well as a municipal transit department with a local sales tax dedicated to transit. El Metro is governed by the nine-member Laredo Mass Transit Board, which is comprised of the members of the City Council.

The City currently contracts with First Transit to manage the daily operations of El Metro, which includes 22 fixed routes and El Lift Paratransit Service, and covers much of the City of Laredo. El Metro employs about 180 individuals, and has an in-house driver training program.

The fixed route system map is shown in Figure 2-1. Fixed routes operate Monday through Saturday between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Some routes also operate Sundays between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.

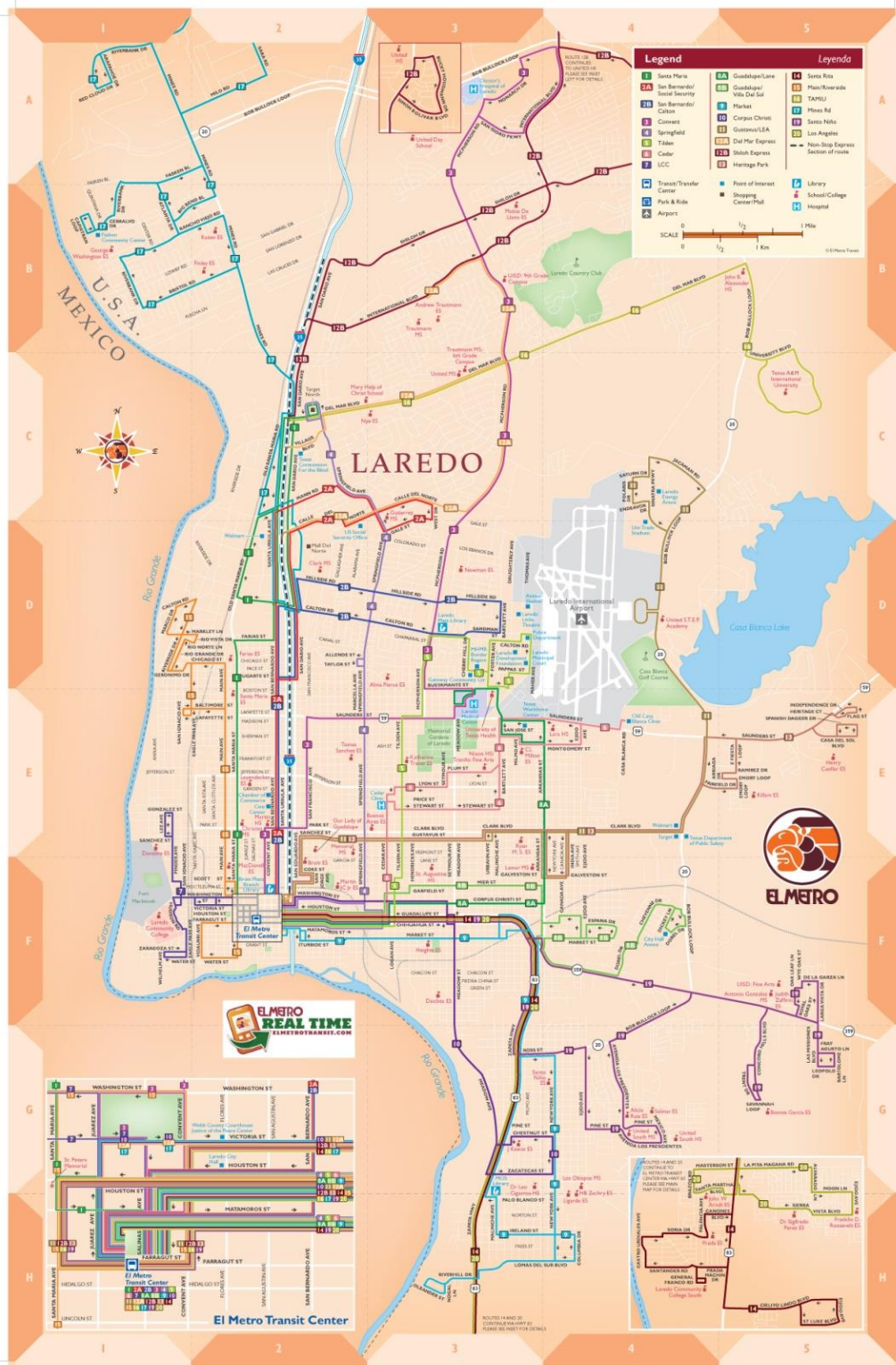
Fixed route fares are \$1.50 for general riders, \$1.25 for students with valid school ID, \$0.50 for children ages 5 to 11, free for children under 5, \$0.75 for Medicare cardholders, and, during peak hours only, \$0.35 for seniors and individuals with disabilities with El Metro reduced fare ID. Peak hours are Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; outside of these hours, seniors and people with disabilities pay the regular fare. Transfers between routes are \$0.25.

El Lift is the paratransit service required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to complement fixed routes provided by public entities such as the City. As such, El Lift provides shared, origin to destination public transportation to people with disabilities who are unable to use El Metro's fixed route buses because of their disability. El Lift operates Monday through Saturday, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. In order to use this service, individuals must apply for eligibility certification, with recertification required every two years. El Lift rides may be scheduled by calling one to seven days in advance, between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (seven days a week). Fares are \$1.00 per trip, with no charge for personal care attendants.

The El Metro fleet is made up of 46 transit coaches, 18 paratransit vans, 3 minivans, 2 small buses, and a trolley bus. All 70 vehicles are wheelchair accessible, and larger buses are equipped with bicycle racks that allow cyclists to bring their bikes along when they travel. El Lift offers travel training to help individuals with disabilities learn to ride the accessible fixed route bus service.

In FY 2016, El Metro provided more than 3.1 million passenger trips.

Figure 2-1 – El Metro System Map



Source: El Metro website, http://elmetrotransit.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Laredo-System-Map_160928.pdf, as accessed 1/17/17

The El Metro Transit Center, the main transfer point in the fixed route transit system, is located at 1301 Farragut in downtown Laredo. The El Metro Transit Center is also served by El Aguila (Webb County Community Action Agency) and Greyhound, both described later in this document. El Metro's administrative and customer service offices are located at the Transit Center. The Transit Center also includes a five-level, 412-space parking garage, providing visitors to downtown Laredo with both a park and ride facility as well as the ability to park and shop. Parking fees provide a source of revenue for the transit system.

El Metro's FY 2016 budget totaled about \$14.8 million. The system is funded by local sales tax, the FTA Section 5307 urban formula grant program, passenger fares, TxDOT state operating grant funds, and local revenues including advertising, vending, donations, and reimbursements. Capital projects such as the purchase of new buses are also supported by FTA grants with local match funding.

Additionally, El Metro is the designated recipient of FTA Section 5310 transit funds for Laredo urbanized area. In this role, El Metro puts out an annual call for projects, to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, from local governments and private non-profit organizations. The human service transportation services supported by the Section 5310 program are described later in this document.

El Metro management indicated a need for additional bus service to residential areas, which have grown tremendously in the last decade, but which cannot currently be served due to limited funding. Additionally, there is a need for two more transfer stations, in the northern and southern parts of the city. El Metro also needs to replace 6 buses and 4 vans within the next few years.

El Aguila Rural Transit System – Webb County Community Action Agency

The Webb County Community Action Agency (WCCAA) is a rural transit district authorized by TTC Chapter 458. Through its El Aguila Rural Transit System, WCCAA provides transportation services in the rural areas of Webb County. El Aguila operates fixed route bus service connecting Laredo with Bruni, Mirando City, Oilton, and Pueblo Nuevo in the eastern county, and El Cenizo and Rio Bravo in the southern county. The El Aguila Rural Transit System also operates demand-response service throughout rural Webb County.

The Pueblo Nuevo, Mirando, Oilton, and Bruni route operates one round trip each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, departing Bruni at 8:00 a.m. and arriving in Laredo at 9:45 a.m. This route then departs Laredo at 1:30 p.m. and arrives in Bruni at 2:45 p.m. The Rio Bravo and El Cenizo route operates 8 round trips per day, between Monday through Saturday and four round trips per day on Sundays, connecting these two communities with Laredo. The first Monday through Saturday trip departs Laredo at 5:45 a.m. and the last trip returns to Laredo at 8:00 p.m. On Sundays, the first trip departs Laredo at 7:30 a.m. and the last trip returns to

Laredo at 6:45 p.m. El Aguila stops at the El Metro Transit Center in Laredo, which allows for connections with El Metro as well as Greyhound.

Fares for these routes are \$1.50 for the general public, \$0.75 for seniors and individuals with disabilities with ID, \$0.50 for college students with ID, and free for children aged 4 and under. An “intercity” fare of \$0.25 is charged for service within a specific community (referred to as intra-city or inner-city service in other regions). Tickets can be purchased at El Aguila’s office at Jarvis Plaza, at 4801 Daughtery Street in downtown Laredo, as well as at grocery vendors in Rio Bravo and El Cenizo.

El Aguila provides general public demand response service Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. This service operates on a curb-to-curb basis from passengers’ homes to medical facilities and personal appointments. The fare for this service is \$1.00 each way.

El Aguila operates a fleet of 22 vehicles. The buses operated in fixed route service seat between 25 and 33 passengers.

In FY 2016, El Aguila Rural Transit provided a total 80,729 one-way passenger trips with a total budget of \$776,406. Funding sources include FTA Sections 5310 and 5311, State Section 5311, passenger fares, and local contributions.

In 2015, WCCAA conducted a community needs assessment. Based on a community survey tally, transportation was the highest need identified, ranking above assistance in gaining employment, family support, education, and health insurance.

Valley Metro - Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC), based in Weslaco, provides urban and rural public transportation in the Lower Rio Grande Valley as well as Starr and Zapata Counties through its transit department, Valley Metro.

Valley Metro only recently assumed responsibility for rural transit services in Starr and Zapata Counties, following the de-establishment of the former Community Action Council of South Texas in June 2015. Valley Metro currently operates demand-response services in both of these counties, and flex route services in Starr County.

The Starr County service includes Valley Metro Routes 61 and 62. These routes operate Monday thru Friday 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. They both have timed transfers at the main hub in Downtown Rio Grande City and connect to the JagExpress Service (South Texas College) which also connects to their main campuses in Hidalgo County (JagExpress is a commuter service). The route serves the communities of Alto Bonito, La Grulla, Garciasville, La Casita, Rio Grande City, Midway, La Rosita, Garceno, Escobares, Roma, Los Saenz, and Fronton.

Demand response service is also provided from Starr County to destinations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Valley Metro also operates the JagExpress under contract with South Texas College. JagExpress is a mini system that connects all of the South Texas College campuses from Hidalgo County to Starr County, it connects the following campuses:

- Mid Valley Campus In Weslaco
- Nursing Allied Health in McAllen
- Technology Campus in McAllen
- Pecan Campus (Main Campus) in McAllen
- Starr County Campus In Rio Grande City
- La Joya Teaching Center in La Joya.

The routes that provide these services are commuter routes in that they have limited stops and are mainly used as an express service.

The Zapata County service operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and serves the communities of San Ygnacio, Ramireno, Zapata, Siesta Shores, Lopeno and Falcon. Demand response service is also provided from Zapata County to Laredo, Roma or Rio Grande.

Each of these services requires a 24 hour advance reservation. Fares for demand response service range from \$3.00 to \$10.00. Fares for flex route service are \$1.00 for adults (regular fare), \$0.50 for students, seniors aged 60 or more, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. Transfers from one bus to another are free. Children under 7 ride free, as do students from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Transfers to other Valley Metro routes are also free.

Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc.

Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc. (REAL Inc.) is a non-profit organization with a mission to provide safe, caring and quality community-centered services for seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public by assisting them and their families in maintaining an independent and fulfilling life. REAL Inc.'s programs include adult day care, home health care, housing, and transportation. REAL Inc. is a rural transit district (RTD) authorized under TTC Chapter 458. REAL Transit serves rural San Patricio County and all of Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Live Oak, and Refugio Counties. REAL Transit operates demand-response service for the general public throughout the service area as well as contract human service transportation in some areas.

REAL Inc. only recently assumed responsibility for rural transit services in Jim Hogg County, following the de-establishment of the former Community Action Council of South Texas in June 2015. REAL Inc. serves all communities in Jim Hogg County with demand response

service from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Fares vary on origin to destination but range from \$2 to \$20 depending on distance traveled.

REAL has an operating budget of \$1.5 million with two percent coming from fare revenue, thirteen percent from local sources and eighty five percent coming from state and federal grant programs. They provide over 5 trips per revenue hour on average.

HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

This section inventories transportation services that are limited to clients of human services, residents of particular communities, or specific demographic groups (based on age, for example), provided by public or private non-profit organizations. Table 2-2 provides an overview of client-focused transportation services identified in the South Texas region. Information sources include responses to the Transportation Resources and Needs Survey (conducted as part of this project), TxDOT data on Section 5310 subrecipients, previous planning studies, and Internet research. This section begins with an introduction to two major funding programs for human service transportation: Section 5310 and the Texas Medicaid Program.

Table 2-2: Human Service Agency Transportation Providers in the South Texas Region

Organization Name	Primary Services Provided by the Organization	Approach to Client Transportation Assistance	Characteristics of Clients Who Can Use Transportation Services	Trip Purposes Served	Transportation Service Area	Service Hours	Number of Vehicles in Fleet	Transportation Funding Sources
Texas Medicaid Transportation Program	Funding for Medicaid services and transportation	Contracts with transportation providers (LeFleur is the broker in South Texas)	Medicaid eligible	Medical appointments	Statewide	Daily	unknown for region	Medicaid
Border Area Nutrition Council	Meals for seniors - congregate home delivered	Operates agency vehicles	Age 60+	Nutrition, grocery shopping, medical appointments, social / recreational	City of Laredo and Webb County	Mon-Fri	unknown	Section 5310
Jim Hogg County	County government; transportation is provided by Social Services and the Veterans Service Office	Operates agency vehicles	Economically disadvantaged, seniors, veterans	Medical appointments	unknown	unknown	unknown	Section 5310
Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center	Physical, occupational, and speech therapy rehabilitative services	Operates agency vehicles	People with disabilities needing physical, occupational, or speech therapy	Therapy appointments	Within Laredo city limits and surrounding counties	Mon-Fri	3	program service fees and net incidental revenue
Starr County	County government	Unknown; Valley Transit operates general public transit service	Economically disadvantaged, seniors, veterans	Nutrition, medical appointments, social / recreational	Starr County with Limited Service into McAllen and Edinburg	Mon-Fri	5	Section 5310
Webb County - Elderly Nutrition Program	Senior nutrition transportation	unknown	Seniors (55+)	Nutrition	unknown	unknown	unknown	Title III, local, donations

Table 2-2: Human Service Agency Transportation Providers in the South Texas Region

Organization Name	Primary Services Provided by the Organization	Approach to Client Transportation Assistance	Characteristics of Clients Who Can Use Transportation Services	Trip Purposes Served	Transportation Service Area	Service Hours	Number of Vehicles in Fleet	Transportation Funding Sources
Webb County - Indigent Program	Temporary financial assistance and support	Provides financial assistance for transportation	Individuals with disabilities and families with no other means	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	Unknown
Webb County - Veterans Affairs	Services for veterans	Operates agency vehicle	Veterans	Medical appointments	unknown	unknown	1	County
Zapata County - Elderly Transportation Program	Senior nutrition and transportation program	Operate agency vehicles	Seniors (60+)	Nutrition, medical, shopping, personal errands, religious	Zapata County with trips to Laredo	Nutrition: Mon-Fri See Table 2-3 for other trip purposes	unknown	Title III, local, donations, Section 5310
Zapata County - Indigent Program	Temporary financial assistance and support	Provides financial assistance for transportation	Individuals with disabilities and families with no other means	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	Unknown
Zapata County - Veteran Transportation (DAV Network)	Support for veterans	Volunteer-operated van service	Veterans with disabilities	medical	Zapata and San Ygnacio to Laredo; Zapata and Falcon to Harlingen	Mon & Wed to Laredo, Thu to Harlingen	1	Unknown

Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Grant Program

The Section 5310 – Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program is authorized under the provisions set forth in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), which was enacted on July 6, 2012, and reauthorized under the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which was signed into law on December 4, 2015.

Section 5310 provides formula funding to states to assist private nonprofit groups in meeting transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Funds are apportioned based on the population for these two groups in each state. Formula funds are apportioned to direct FTA recipients, who then award subrecipient grants for local projects.

In Texas, TxDOT is the recipient for Section 5310 funding for rural and small urban areas. For each large urban area, a designated recipient is chosen by the governor.

For the Laredo urbanized area, the City of Laredo is the designated recipient. The Laredo MPO FY 2017 -2020 TIP includes \$162,313 in Section 5310 funding each year. Section 5310 projects programmed in the TIP are use of funds each year by the City of Laredo for improving mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options, both capital investment and operating assistance. The FY 2016 Federal allocation to Laredo, in the FY 2015-2018 TIP, was \$166,448, programed for use by the City for seniors and people with disabilities. In January 2017, the City awarded Webb County/El Aguila a Section 5310 grant for \$72,000 to purchase a new 18- to 22-passenger bus.

In recent years, rural Section 5310 funds from TxDOT have been awarded to the Border Area Nutrition Council, Jim Hogg County, Starr County Rural Transportation, and Zapata County.

FTA affords Section 5310 recipients flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funding, such as formula-based, competitive or discretionary. The locally-determined process is documented in a state/program management plan. Subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, and/or operators of public transportation.

Texas Medical Transportation Program

The Texas Medical Transportation Program (MTP) is a program of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). This program funds transportation services to medically-necessary non-emergency healthcare appointments to Medicaid recipients without

another means of transportation. Assistance is provided through bus tickets, mileage reimbursement, or pickup in a vehicle.

The MTP service is the largest human service transportation program in the region and the state, as it is about ten times the size of all other human service transportation programs (available for coordination) in the state combined. For rural areas across the state, it is the largest passenger transportation funding source of any kind. This service is not currently coordinated with local public transit (other than through the purchase of bus tickets).

The South Texas planning region is located within HSSC's Medicaid Transportation Organization (MTO) Region 10 – South Texas, a 19-county region. LeFleur Transportation of Texas, Inc. is the contracted MTO provider for MTO Region 10 as well as Region 1 – Panhandle (41 counties), and is responsible for all non-emergency medical transportation in these areas. LeFleur provides other transportation services as well; more information about the company can be found under “Private For-Profit Transportation Service Providers.” In Region 10, eligible rides through the MTP for routine medical appointments must be scheduled at least two business days in advance. Appointments beyond a county that borders the client's county of residence must be scheduled at least five business days in advance.

According to *State of Texas Medical Transportation Program Rate Setting State Fiscal Year 2016* (p. 21), HHSC MTP Client Services costs in the Region 10 MPO totaled nearly \$27.2 million in FY 2014 for service in all 19 counties in this region. The projected FY2016 Client Services costs for Region 10 in this document were over \$30.7 million.

Border Area Nutrition Council

The Border Area Nutrition Council (B.A.N.C.) provides essential meals, transportation, and recreational services to people aged 60 years or more who reside in the incorporated area of the City of Laredo and Webb County. B.A.N.C. is a private non-profit organization that is sponsored by the South Texas Development Council, which serves as the region's Area Agency on Aging.

B.A.N.C. provides congregate meals at 12 senior centers in Laredo, plus three rural senior centers located in Mirando City, Oilton, and Rio Bravo. The agency also provides home delivered meals to eligible home-bound individuals.

B.A.N.C. operates curb-to-curb transportation for its participants, transporting seniors and people with disabilities to and from their homes to social activity events, grocery shopping, payment of bills, medical appointments, and a variety of other destinations. Transportation is available Monday through Friday.

B.A.N.C. operates agency-owned vans, including one wheelchair-accessible vehicle. The organization anticipates acquiring two new vehicles in the next few years. Drivers are trained in defensive driving.

Information on previous-year budget and funding was, although the survey indicated that not enough monies allocated to salaries are an unmet transportation need. B.A.N.C. has been a Section 5310 subrecipient in the past.

B.A.N.C. does not coordinate transportation with other human service agencies, although they indicated that they have tried.

Jim Hogg County

Jim Hogg County is a Section 5310 subrecipient and operates transportation services through its Social Services program and Veterans Service office. Social service transportation, for low income and older adult residents, is provided for local and out of town medical appointments. Jim Hogg County's Veterans Service office operates a van to transport veterans to medical services.

No survey response for Jim Hogg County was submitted and there is very little information online regarding transportation services.

Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center

The Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center is a private, nonprofit organization that provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy rehabilitative services. The Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation has three wheelchair-accessible vehicles used to transport clients, from Laredo and surrounding counties, to therapy appointments on weekdays. The organization anticipates that all three vehicles will need replacement in the next few years. The organization's transportation expenses in FY 2016 totaled \$65,080, funded by program service fees and net incidental revenue. A total of 2,133 one-way passenger trips were provided during this period. The Ruthe B. Cowl Rehabilitation Center is a new Section 5310 subrecipient.

Starr County

Based on data available in TxDOT reports on Section 5310 subrecipients, Zapata County Rural Transportation operates five vehicles and in FY 2015 provided a total of 11,318 one-way passenger trips and 55,067 revenue vehicle miles (total operating expenses were not available for that year). Until June 2015, Starr County rural public transportation services were provided by the former Community Action Council of South Texas. Since this organization was de-established, Valley Metro operates rural demand-response and flex-route public transportation services in Starr County, described in the "Public Transportation" section of

this document. Information about current human service transportation in Starr County was not found on the county's website and they did not respond to requests for information.

Webb County

The Webb County Community Action Agency, in addition to operating El Aguila (described under "Public Transportation"), provides senior transportation as part of the Elderly Nutrition Program. They are also a 5310 recipient.

Webb County Indigent Care Assistance provides emergency financial assistance for transportation to people with disabilities and families who cannot work and have no other means of support.

Webb County also provides veterans transportation. The Veterans Affairs Office recently revived its Veterans Transportation Program, providing transportation to dialysis, the VA Medical Clinic, and other medical transportation needs, with limited county funding. (From September 2015 to October 2016, the county's veteran's transportation services were provided out of the office of one of the County Commissioners, after the Veterans Affairs Office lost state funding for the program.)

No survey response was received from Webb County Community Action Agency outside of El Aguila's response.

Zapata County

Zapata County provides transportation for seniors, for people with disabilities, families who are indigent, and for veterans under at least three different programs.

The Elderly Transportation Program of the Zapata County Nutrition Program provides transportation to eligible participants (ages 60 or more) to other areas to obtain medical services and other needs. In addition, transportation is provided to congregate meals. Nutrition Centers in Zapata, San Ygnacio and Falcon provide daily noontime lunches from Monday through Friday to eligible participants. Service characteristics of the Zapata County Elderly Transportation Program are summarized in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3: Zapata County Elderly Transportation Program Service Characteristics

Trip Destination	Days of Service	Trip Purposes	Suggested Donation
Laredo	Tuesdays & Thursdays	Medical appointment and personal errands	\$4.00
Rio Grande City	Once a Month	Personal errands	\$4.00
San Juan	Once a Month	Visit cathedral	\$7.00
Local trips	Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays	Shopping, clinic, drug store, bank, utility payments	\$1.50

Source: http://www.co.zapata.tx.us/default.aspx?Zapata_County/County.Nutrition, as accessed 1/20/17.

Zapata County’s website also indicates that the Indigent Program provides transportation financial assistance to individuals with disabilities and families who cannot work and have no other means of support. This assistance is temporary until the individuals qualify for other resources.

Zapata County Veteran Services program participates in the Disabled American Veterans Volunteer Transportation Network, transporting veterans with disabilities to medical services. Van service is operated by volunteer drivers. The van services the Laredo Outpatient clinic on Mondays and Thursdays, departing the Zapata County Courthouse at 8:00 a.m., stopping in San Ygnacio at 8:30, and arriving in Laredo at 10:00 a.m. On Wednesdays, the van serves the Harlingen Outpatient Clinic and the Harlingen Health Care Center, departing from the Zapata County Courthouse at 7:00 a.m., stopping in Falcon at 7:30, and arriving in Harlingen at 10:00 a.m.

Based on data available in TxDOT reports on Section 5310 subrecipients, Zapata County operates three vehicles and in FY 2015 provided a total of 7,757 one-way passenger trips with total operating expenses of \$21,173. Until June 2015, Zapata County rural public transportation services were provided by the former Community Action Council of South Texas Valley Metro. Since this organization was de-established, Valley Metro operates rural demand-response public transportation services in Zapata County, described in the “Public Transportation” section of this document.

Zapata County’s FY 2016-17 budget includes the following transportation programs:

- Information & Assistance, Fund #37 Department #645 – provides transportation to eligible participants to other areas to obtain medical services and other needs. Total program budget is \$81,237, including personnel wages and benefits, fuel and lubricants, and maintenance and repairs, funded by grant money (\$21,000), program income (\$2,500), and County contribution (\$57,737).
- Nutrition Center, Fund #38, Departments #647 and #649 include to expenditures to bring eligible participants to the nutrition center and maintain vehicles.

No survey response for Zapata County was received

PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

LeFleur Transportation of Texas, Inc.

As previously mentioned, LeFleur Transportation of Texas, Inc. is the Medicaid transportation provider for the South Texas region as well as other regions. Based in San Antonio, LeFleur specializes in providing non-emergency passenger transportation services of any size to government agencies and private organizations.

LeFleur's geographic service area spans South Texas, Central Texas, and the Panhandle. In addition to Medicaid transportation, LeFleur provides transportation services other destinations, including adult day care, social services, senior center/nutrition services, shopping, social/recreational, employment, and education. In FY 2016, LeFleur provided around 600,000 one-way passenger trips. The company operates a fleet of 195 vans, 175 minivans, and 10 sedans. About 44 percent of its fleet is wheelchair-accessible.

LeFleur indicated that Medicare recipients that do not qualify for Medicaid transportation and do not have easy access to public transportation are an unmet need.

LeFleur coordinates with rural transportation services in the Alamo region through the Alamo Area Council of Governments' Call-A-Ride-4-Vets program.

Valley Transit / Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Valley Transit Company (VTC), a subsidiary of Greyhound Lines, serves South Central Texas and Northern Mexico with intercity, charter, tour, airport shuttle, transit operations, and express package delivery. VTC's scheduled intercity bus services are part of the Greyhound network. VTC has a long history of providing local and regional service in South Texas. Three routes now serve Laredo:

- Table 490: San Antonio – Brownsville – Matamoros, Mexico: Stops in Laredo in route to and from Alice and McAllen (one route trip each day).
- Table 498: Laredo – McAllen – Harlingen - Brownsville – Matamoros, Mexico: One round trip per day from and to Laredo, with stops in Zapata, Roma and Rio Grande City.
- Table 486: Laredo – San Antonio – Houston: Two round trips per day between Laredo and San Antonio.

In the past, VTC has been a TxDOT/FTA Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus program subrecipient.

Other Intercity and Charter Bus Companies

Four other intercity bus operators were identified as serving Laredo with scheduled service:

- Americanos USA, LLC - Provides service throughout Texas and across the United States with daily connections into Mexico via its affiliates. (Part of Greyhound Mexico)
- Omnibus-Express – Serves Laredo as well as other points along the Rio Grande, in Mexico, Texas, and several other states in the southeast.
- Tornado Bus Company - Provides service throughout Texas and the southeastern United States with daily connections to Mexico via Sistema Estrella Blanca Bus Lines.
- Turimex Internacional - Provides service throughout Texas, the southeastern United States, and northern Mexico.

Additionally, the following charter bus operators have an address in the South Texas region:

- Autobuses Latinos
- Cougar Bus Lines Ltd
- Tornado Tours, Inc.
- US Coachways
- 956Tours / Laredo Charter Buses & Tour Bus Rental

Taxi Companies

Eleven taxi companies were identified in Laredo:

- A-1 Taxi
- AC Taxi Service
- Alas Taxi
- Garza's Taxi
- Hinojosa's Taxi
- Laredo Yellow Cab
- Morocco Taxi
- Red Fox Taxi
- Red Top Taxi
- Sabinas Taxi
- Tops Taxi

Only one other taxi service was identified in the four-county region:

- Rainbow Express Taxi Service, Rio Grande City

Chapter 3: Comprehensive Needs and Gap Analysis

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an analysis of unmet needs (gap analysis), current and future population trends in the South Texas Region, as well as an analysis of the demographics of population groups that often depend on transportation options beyond an automobile. Data sources for this analysis include the 2010 U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2009-2013 5-year estimates. Additionally, a narrative description of human service agencies in the region and an assessment of transportation inefficiencies are included in this section as part of the gap analysis.

This demographic analysis, coupled with input from a public survey effort, public meetings and regional stakeholders, and the review of existing services (Chapter 2) is used to identify areas in the region where service gaps exist. Gaps can be geographic in nature, for trip purpose, or by user group.

The outreach component of this analysis consisted of a variety of efforts:

- Individual meetings with regional stakeholders focusing on transportation providers and human service representatives.
- A survey was distributed to current transit riders and members of the public targeting groups such as people with disabilities, low income households, senior adults and veterans.
- Four public meetings were held, one in each county in the region again targeting groups such as people with disabilities, low income households, senior adults and veterans.

Results of these efforts are described in this chapter along with a review of public transit in order to identify gaps in service.

POPULATION ANALYSIS

The following section examines the current population density in the South Texas Region and future population projections for the region.

Population

Table 3-1 shows the U.S. Census population counts for counties in the South Texas region from 1990-2010. During this timeframe Webb County experienced the greatest population percent increase in the region, an increase from 133,239 residents to 250,304 (an 88 percent increase). Jim Hogg County experienced the lowest population percent increase (3.7 percent). During this time frame (1990-2010) all counties in the region experienced overall population growth. As a whole the region population increased almost 97 percent over the last three census decades. Webb County experienced significant growth as the most urban county in the region.

Table 3-1: Historical Populations

Place	1990 Pop.	2000 Pop.	2010 Pop.	1990-2000 % Change	2000-2010 % Change	1990-2010 % Change
Jim Hogg	5,109	5,281	5,300	3.4%	0.4%	3.7%
Starr	40,518	53,597	60,968	32.3%	13.8%	50.1%
Webb	133,239	193,117	250,304	44.9%	29.6%	87.9%
Zapata	9,279	12,182	14,018	31.3%	15.1%	51.1%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-1 illustrates the region's total population at the census block group level. To supplement this map a population density analysis will be shown below.

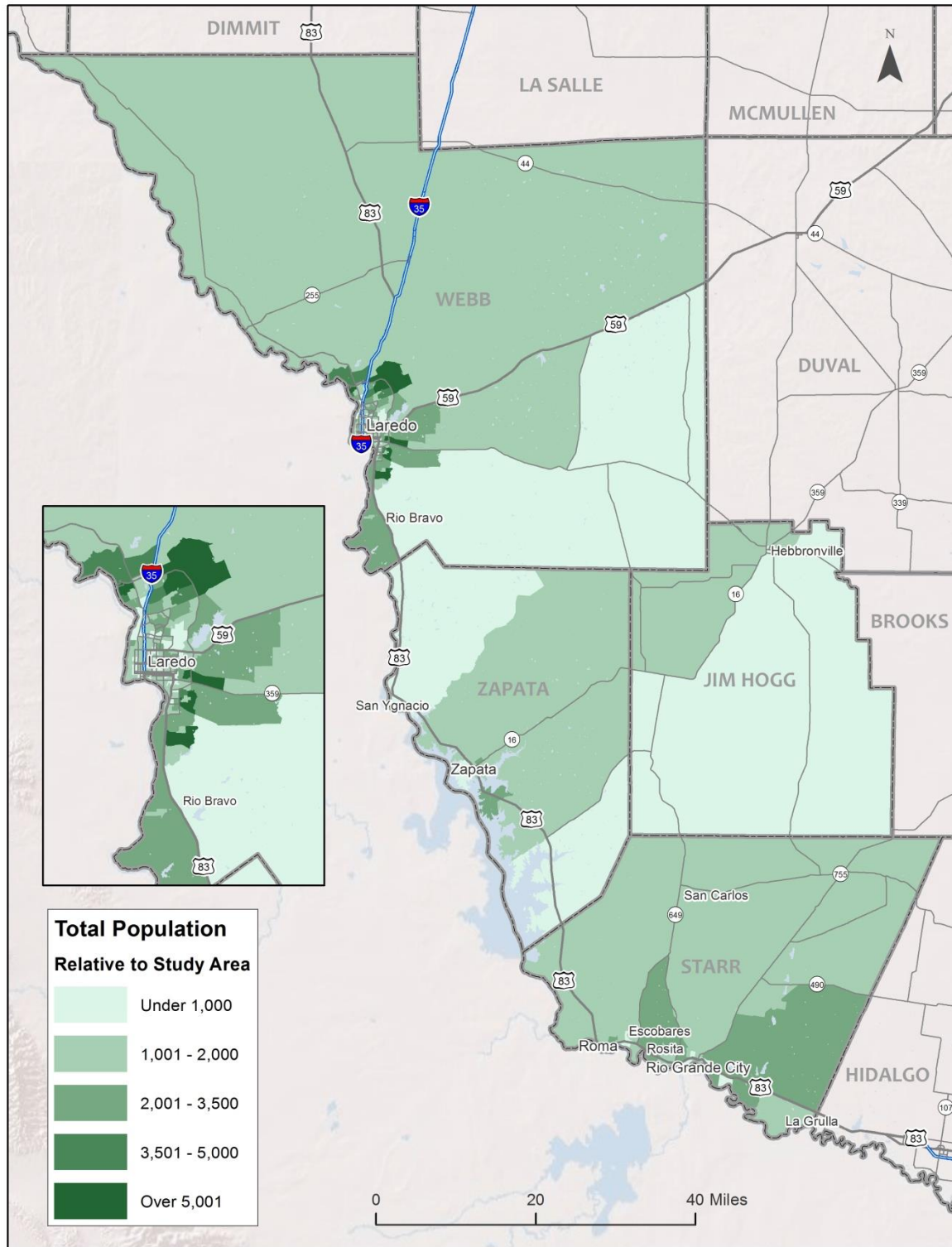
Table 3-2 features recent population estimates from the ACS. The data shows that since 2010 Webb, Starr and Zapata County have experienced steady growth while Jim Hogg County has declined in population slightly. Webb County is the fastest growing county during this period.

Table 3-2: Recent Population Trends

Place	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010-2014 % Change
Jim Hogg	5,300	5,275	5,256	5,221	5,245	-1.0%
Starr	60,968	61,763	62,023	62,509	63,149	3.6%
Webb	250,304	255,639	260,015	263,015	267,018	6.7%
Zapata	14,018	14,210	14,250	14,373	14,374	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-1: 2010 Census Population by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Population Density

One of the most important factors in determining the most appropriate transportation mode for a community is population density. Population density is often used as an indicator of the type of public transit services that are feasible within a study area. Typically an area with a density of 1,000 persons per square mile will be able to sustain some form of daily fixed route transit service. An area with a population density below 1,000 persons per square mile may be a better candidate for some form of fixed schedule or demand response services.

Figure 3-2 shows the region's population density at the census block group level. Not surprisingly the most densely populated areas are in the City of Laredo, the urbanized portion of Webb County. Additionally, areas in the region that have pockets of small cities with population density above 1,000 persons per square mile include Rio Grande City, Roma and Zapata.

Population Forecast

Future forecasts for the region anticipate significant population growth¹. The overall region is expected to experience just over a 54 percent growth rate during the period from 2014 to 2040. During this period the region is expected to grow 356,782 persons to 549,811 persons, an increase of about 193,029 persons. The largest population growth is expected in Webb County. It is anticipated that the population of Webb County will grow from 271,124 to 429,823 by 2040, a 59 percent increase. Starr and Zapata County are also anticipated to see significant population increases within this timeframe. Conversely, the population of Jim Hogg County is projected to grow marginally between 2020 and 2040. Table 3-3 provides the forecasted population growth for the region out to 2040.

Table 3-3: Population Forecasts

County	2014	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Jim Hogg	5,521	5,826	6,064	6,288	6,495	6,697
Starr	64,984	71,198	76,313	81,023	85,462	89,949
Webb	271,124	305,881	336,426	367,576	398,740	429,823
Zapata	15,153	16,925	18,447	19,983	21,589	23,342
Total Region	356,782	399,830	437,250	474,870	512,286	549,811

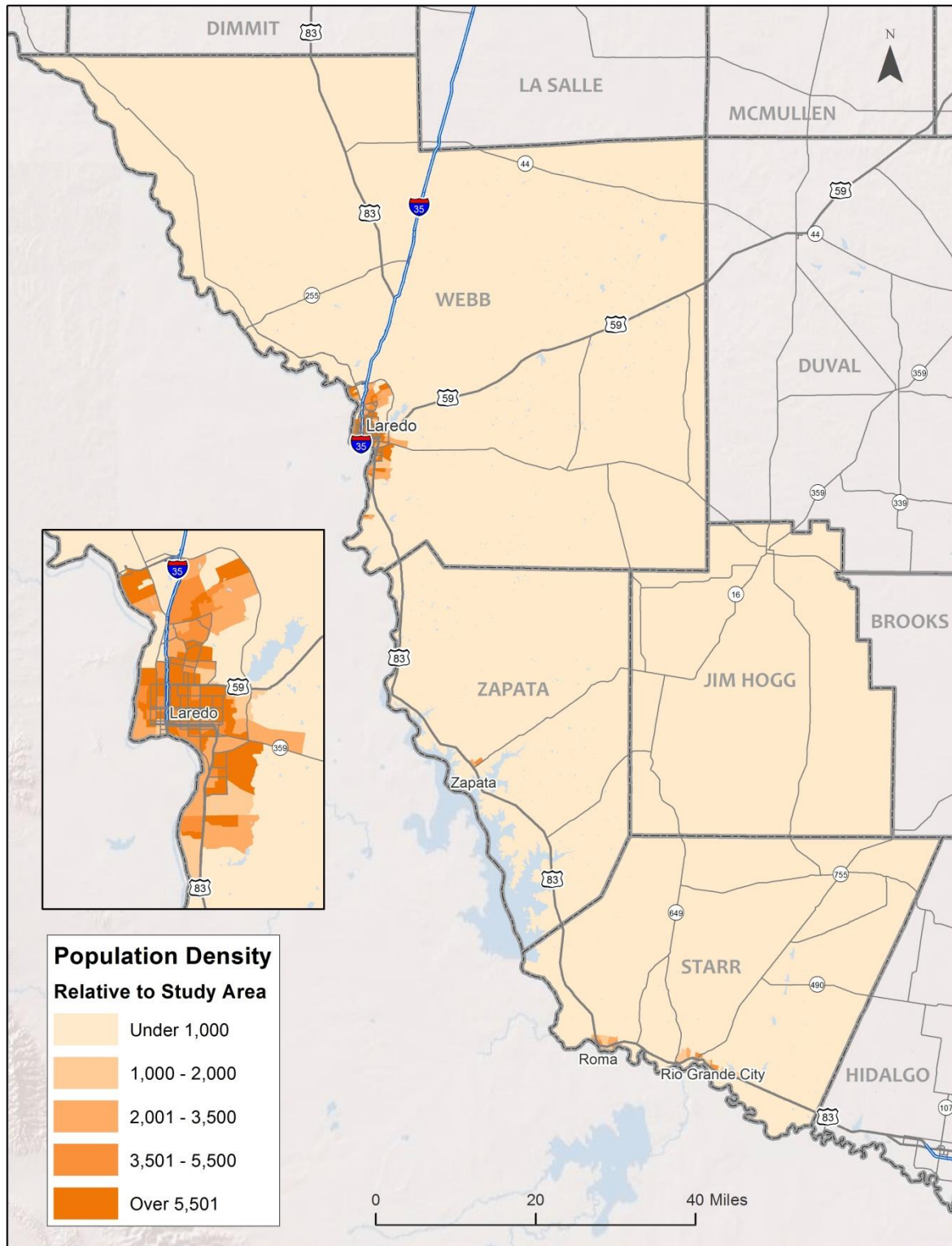
Source: Texas Demographic Center

TRANSIT DEPENDENT POPULATIONS

Public transportation needs are defined in part by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to be dependent on transit

¹ Texas Demographic Center; Population Projections for the South Texas Region

Figure 3-2: 2010 Census Population Density



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

services. This includes individuals who may not have access to a personal vehicle or are unable to drive themselves due to age or income status. The results of this demographic analysis highlight those census block groups of the service area with the greatest need for transportation.

For the purpose of developing a relative process of ranking socioeconomic need, block groups are classified relative to the service area as a whole using a five-tiered scale of “very low” to “very high.” A block group classified as “very low” can still have a significant number of potentially transit dependent persons; as “very low” is a relative term and indicates the block group is well below the service area’s average of transit dependent persons. At the other end of the spectrum, “very high” means greater than twice the service area’s average. The exact specifications for each score are summarized below in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4: Relative Ranking Definitions for Transit Dependent Populations

Amount of Vulnerable Persons or Households	Score
Less than and equal to the service area’s average	Very Low
Above the average and up to 1.33 times the average	Low
Above 1.33 times the average and up to 1.67 times the average	Moderate
Above 1.67 times the average and up to two times the average	High
Above two times the average	Very High

The need for public transportation is often derived by recognizing the size and location of segments of the population most dependent on transit services. Transit dependency can be a result of many factors. Some of these include no access to a personal vehicle, a disability that prevents a person from operating a personal vehicle, age, and low income. Establishing the location of transit dependent populations aid in the identification and evaluation of the potential gaps in transit services.

The Transit Dependence Index (TDI) is an aggregate measure displaying relative concentrations of transit dependent populations. Five factors make up the TDI calculation including: population density, autoless households, elderly populations (age 65 and over), youth populations (ages 10-17), and below poverty populations.

In addition to population density, the factors above represent specific socioeconomic characteristics of the region’s residents. For each factor, individual block groups were classified according to the frequency of the vulnerable population relative to the county average. The factors were then put into the TDI equation to determine the relative transit dependence of each block group.

The relative classification system utilizes averages in ranking populations. For example, areas with less than the average transit dependent population fall into the “very low” classification, where areas that are more than twice the average will be classified as “very high.” The

classifications “low, moderate, and high” all fall between the average and twice the average. These classifications are divided into thirds.

Figure 3-3 displays the TDI rankings for the region. According to the TDI, the urbanized area in Laredo, Rio Grande City and Roma show “high” and “very high” transit needs according to density. A majority of the region has “very low” transit need according to the TDI.

The Transit Dependence Index Percent (TDIP) provides an alternative analysis to the TDI measure. It is similar to the TDI measure however it excludes the population density factor. The TDIP for each block group in the study area was calculated based on autoless households, elderly populations, youth populations, and below poverty populations. By removing the population density factor the TDIP is able to measure the degree of vulnerability. It represents the percentage of the population within the block group with the above socioeconomic characteristics, and it follows the TDI’s five-tiered categorization of very low to very high. However, it does not highlight the block groups that are likely to have higher concentrations of vulnerable populations only because of their population density. Figure 3-4, shows transit need based on the percentage. According to the TDIP block groups in Laredo, rural Webb County east of Laredo, Rio Bravo and Rio Grande City have high to very high percentages of transit dependent persons.

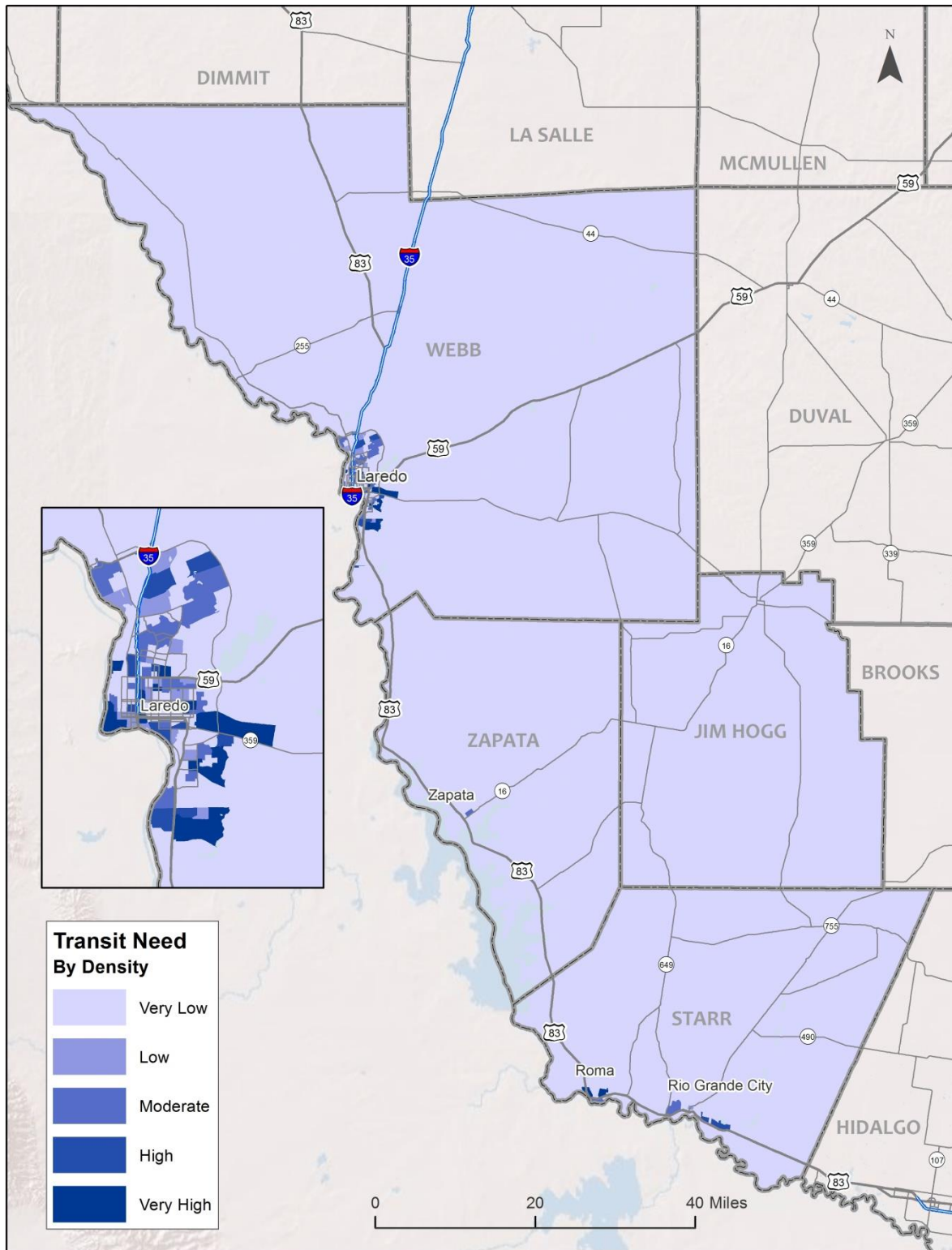
Senior Adult Population

One of the socioeconomic group’s analyzed by the TDI and TDIP indices is the senior adult population, which are individuals 65 years and older. Persons in this age group may begin to decrease their use of a personal vehicle and rely more heavily on public transit. Figure 3-5 shows the relative concentration of seniors in the region. The rural portions adjacent to Laredo, Hebbronville and Roma have very high senior populations relative to the rest of the study area.

Individuals with Disabilities

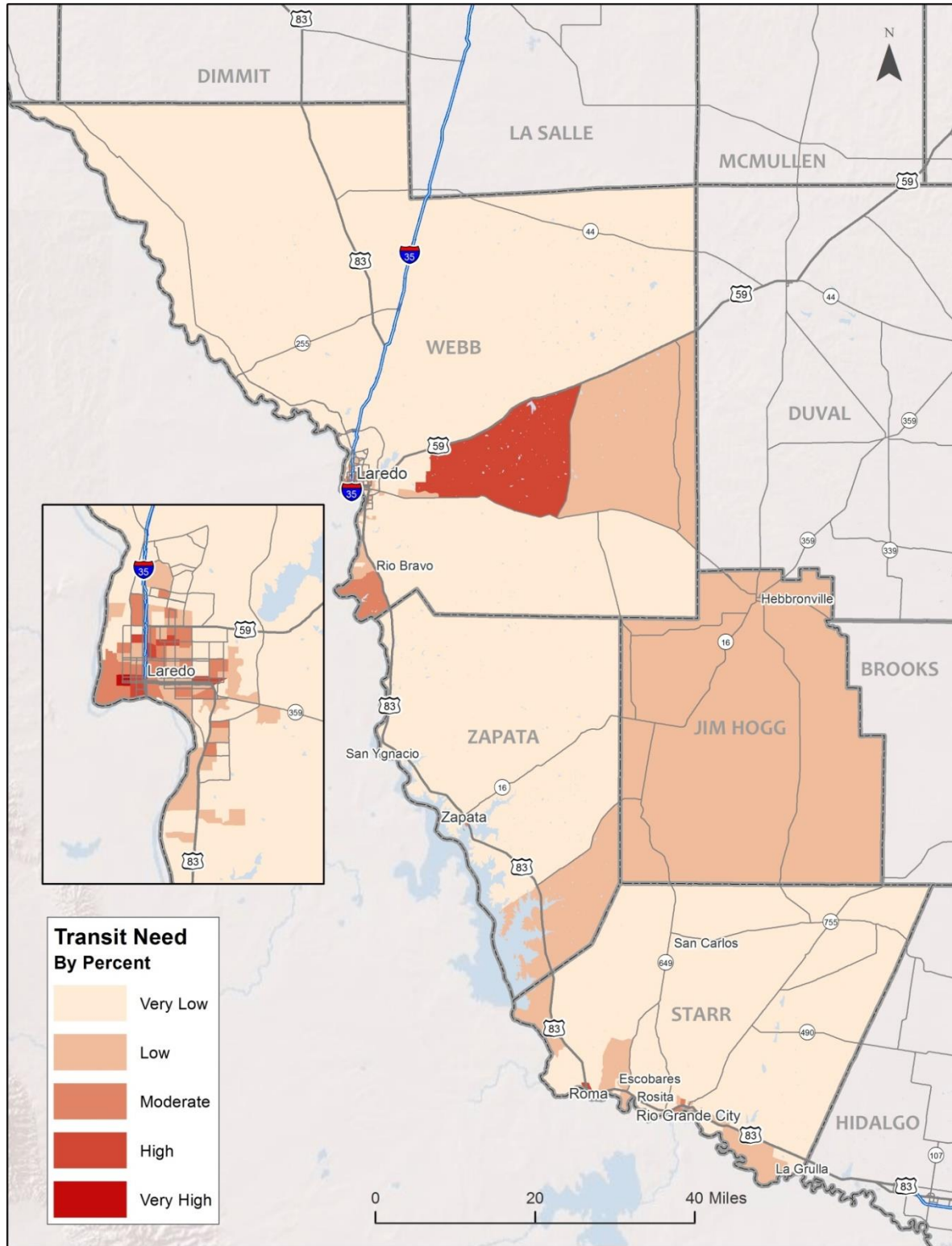
Figure 3-6 illustrates the individuals with disabilities in the South Texas Region. The American Community Survey was used to obtain data for the disabled population at the census tract level. Persons who have disabilities that prevent them or make it more difficult to own and operate a personal vehicle often rely on public transit for their transportation needs. Many areas along the Highway 83 corridor have high populations of people with disabilities. This includes portions of Laredo, Rio Bravo, Zapata, Roma and Rio Grande City.

Figure 3-3: Transit Dependence Index Density



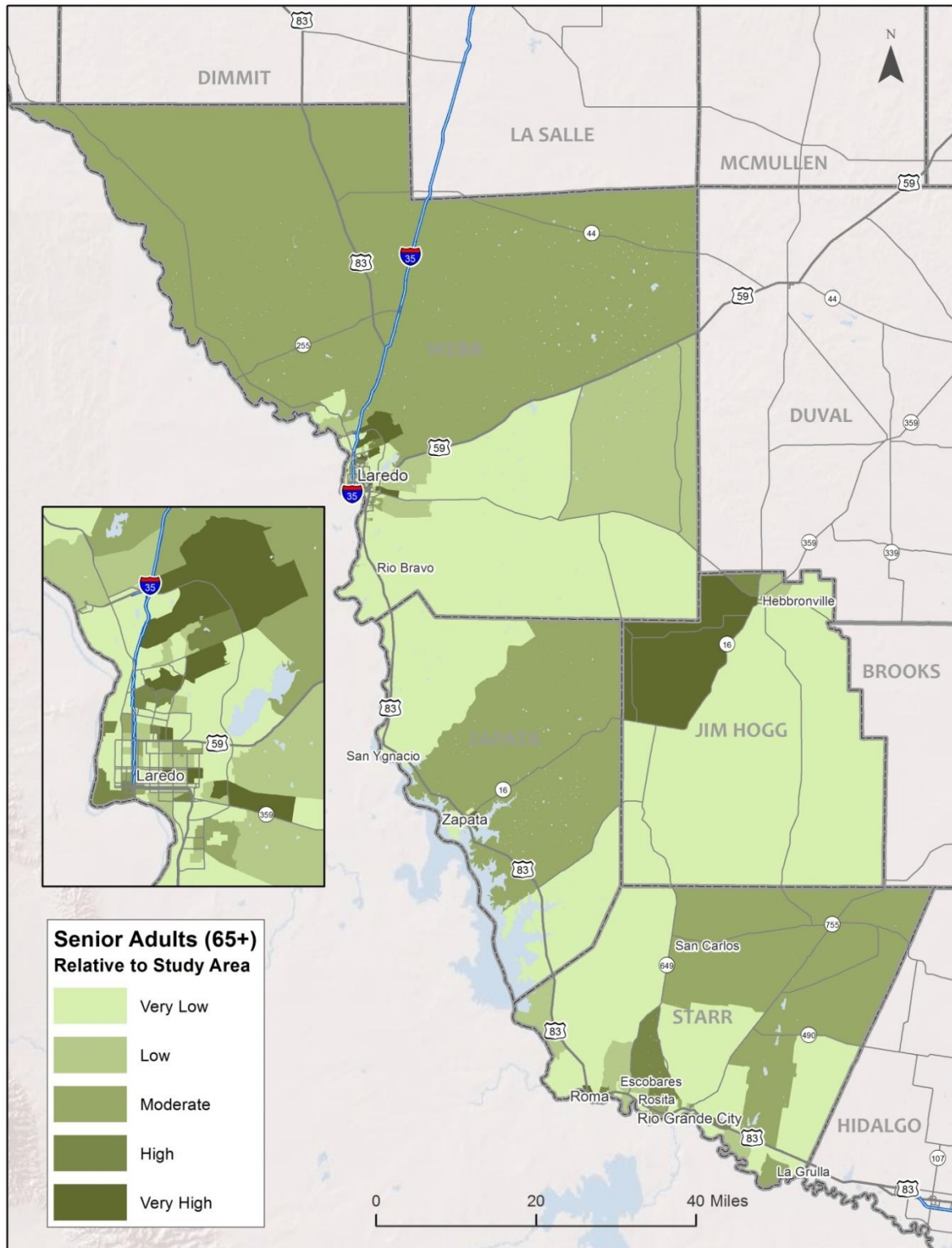
Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-4: Transit Dependence Index Percentage



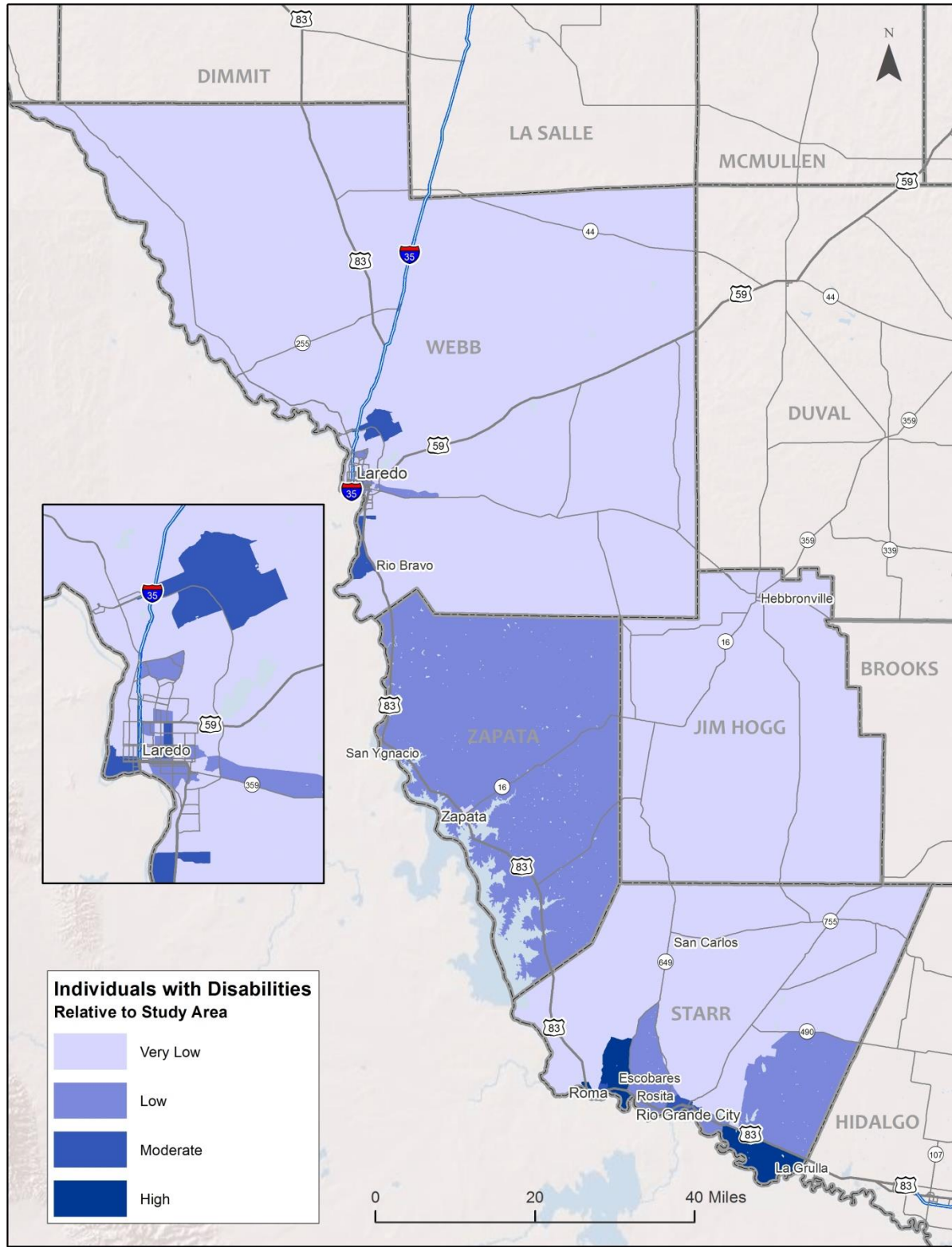
Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-5: Distribution of Senior Population by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-6: Distribution of Individuals with Disabilities by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Zero Car Households

Households without at least one personal vehicle are more likely to depend on the mobility offered by public transit. Although autoless households are reflected in both the TDI and TDIP measures, displaying this segment of the population separately is important since many land uses in the region are at distances too far for non-motorized travel. Figure 3-7 displays the relative number of autoless households. Areas with very high numbers of autoless households include the many block groups in and around Laredo, Rio Bravo, Hebbbronville, Roma and Rio Grande City.

Youth Population

The youth population is often used as an identifier of transit dependent population. Persons ages 10 to 17 either cannot drive or are just beginning to drive and often do not have a personal automobile accessible to them. For this population, public transit is often the means that offers mobility. Figure 3-8 illustrates the concentrations of youth populations relative to the study area. The concentration of youth is spread throughout the region. Areas with the highest youth populations relative to the study area include in and adjacent to Laredo, Rio Bravo, San Ygnacio, Roma, Rio Bravo, and Hebbbronville.

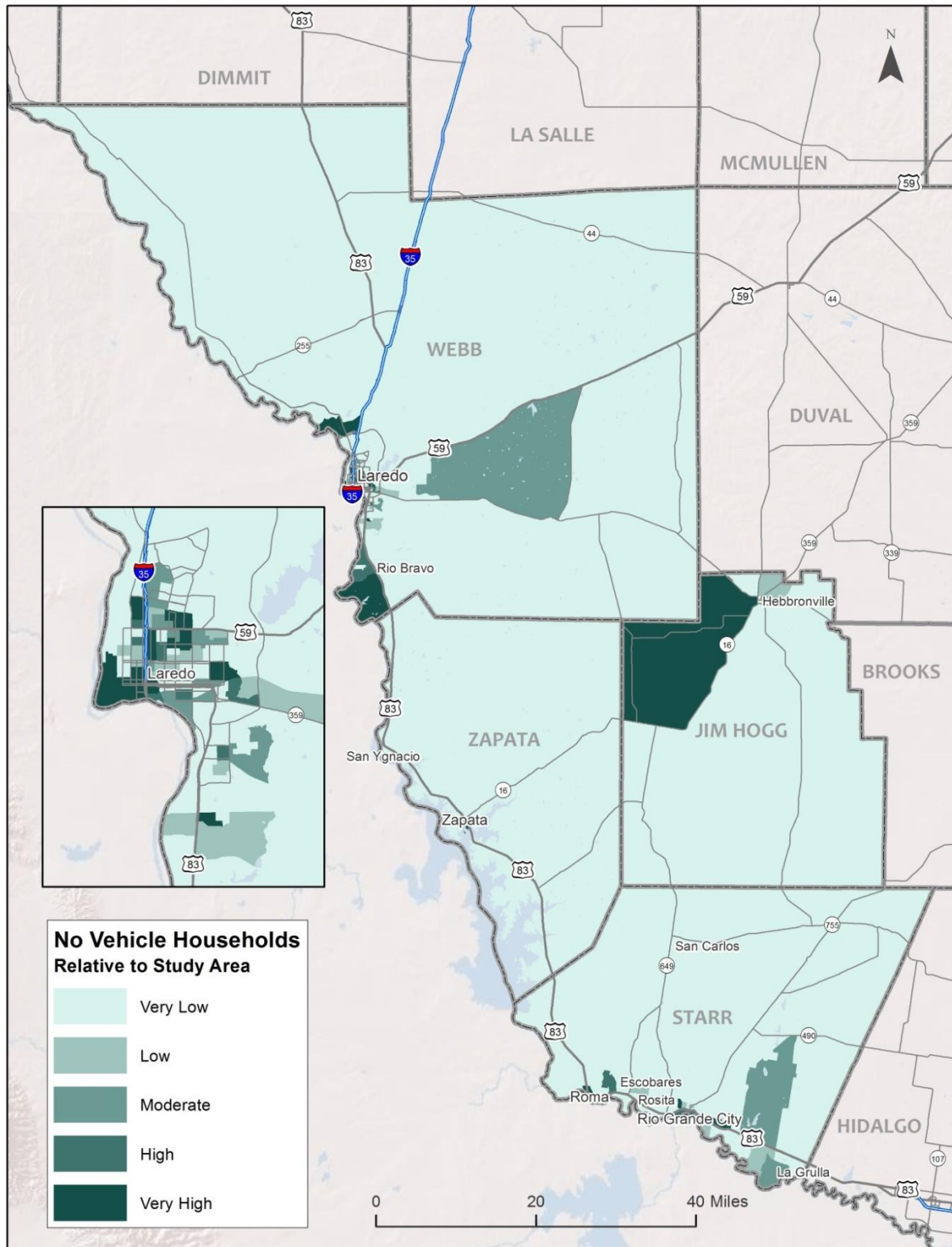
TITLE VI DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal subsidies. This includes agencies providing federally funded public transportation. The following section examines the minority and below poverty level populations in the South Texas Region.

Minority Population

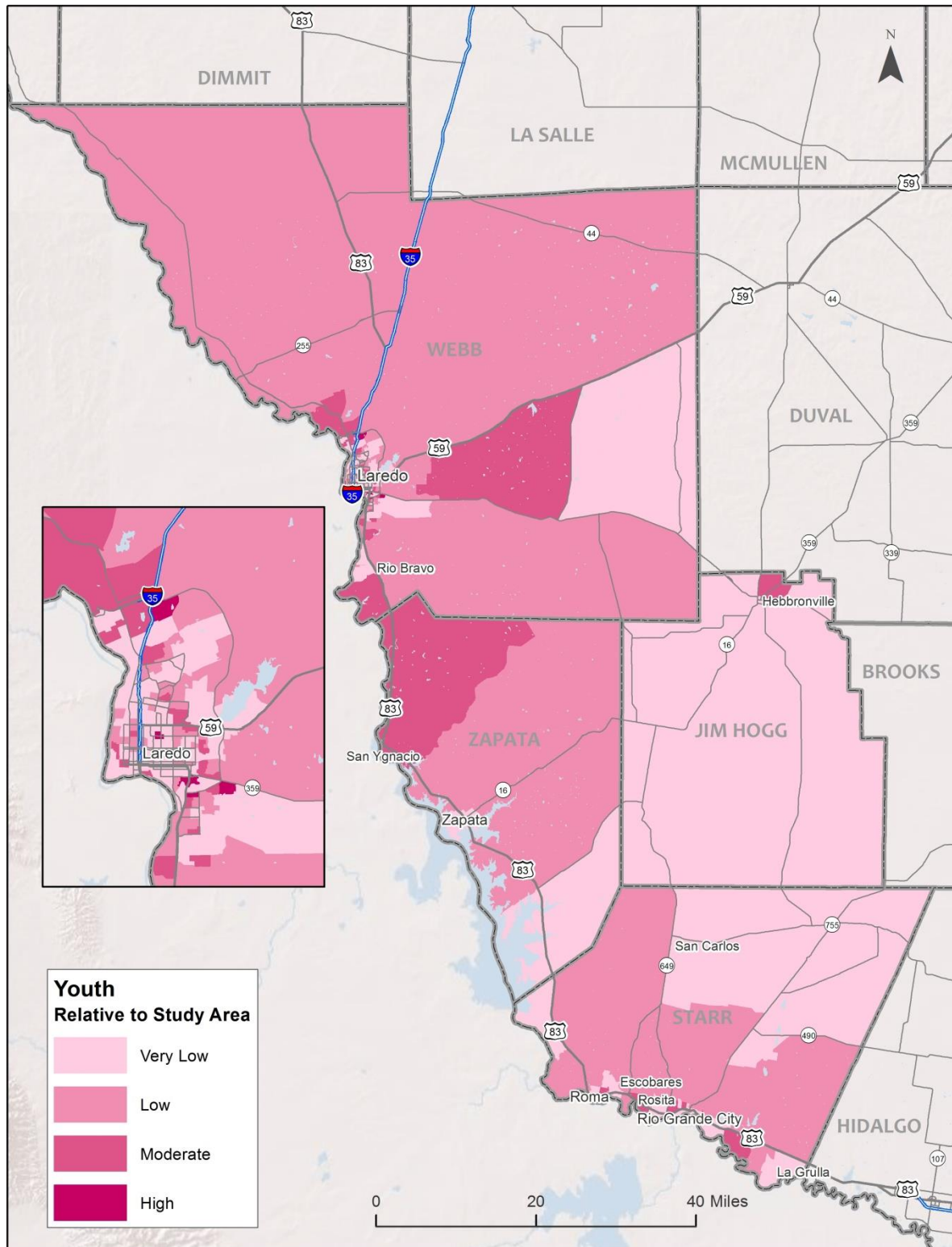
It is important to ensure that areas with an above average percentage of racial and/or ethnic minorities are not negatively impacted by any proposed alterations to existing public transportation services. For Title VI the analysis is focused on areas that are above the study area average in minority population. It is important to note that the South Texas region is overwhelmingly a minority region and that any transit new transit services would be serving a majority population of minority residents. Figure 3-9 illustrates the concentration of minority populations in the study area. As shown, large portion of Starr County, and around Laredo, Rio Bravo and Hebbbronville have above average minority populations.

Figure 3-7: Distribution of Autoless Households by Block Group



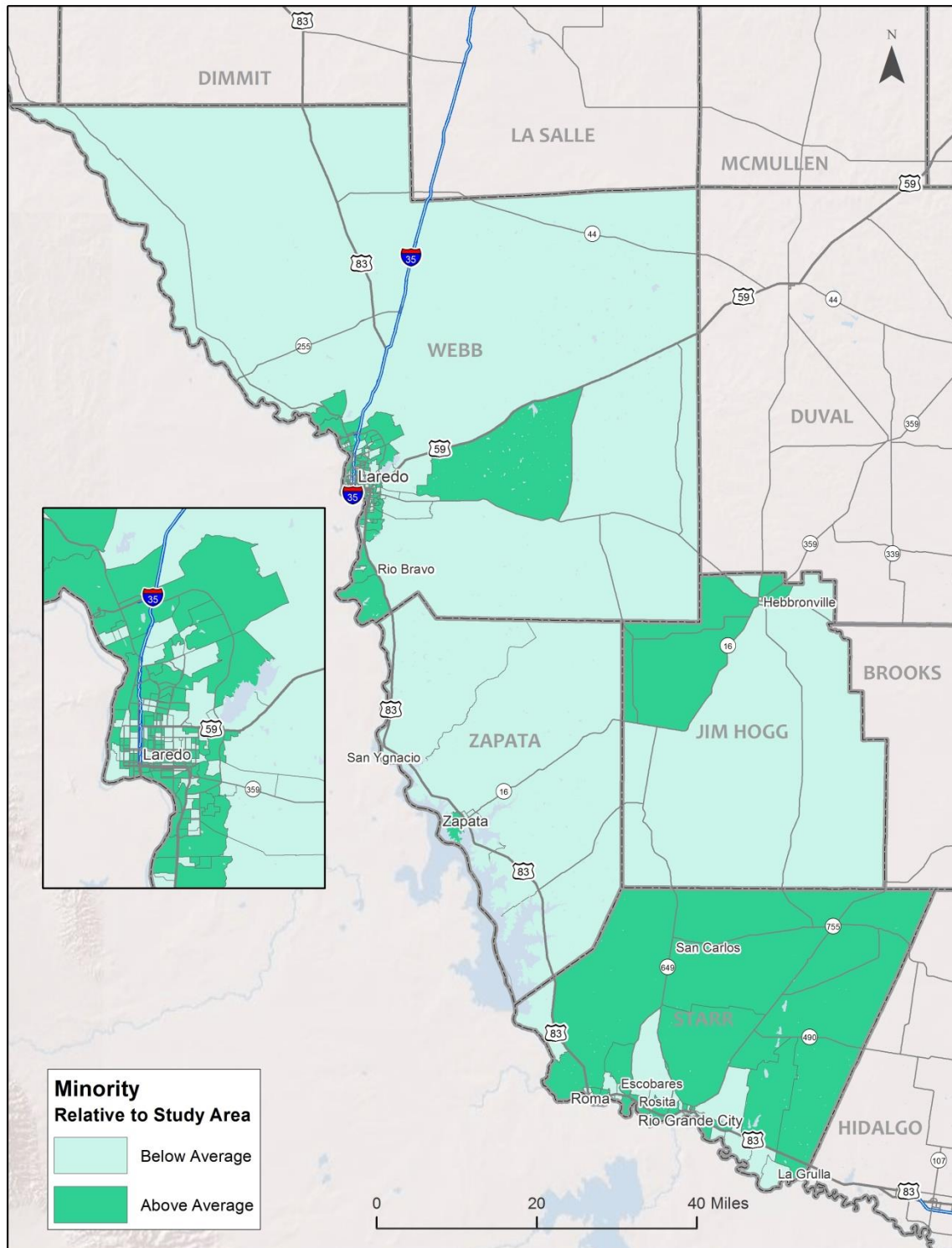
Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-8: Distribution of Youth Population (Aged 10 to 17) by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Figure 3-9: Distribution of the Minority Population



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

Below Poverty Populations

The second group included in the Title VI analysis represents those individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level. This segment of the populations may find it a financial burden to own and maintain a personal vehicle, thus relying on public transit as their primary means of transportation. Figure 3-10 depicts the concentration of the population above or below the average relative to the study area. Much like the minority population analysis Title VI analysis looks at areas above and below the study area average for low income residents. What is important to note is that a significant portion of the South Texas region is predominantly low income and any new transit services would be serving a majority of low income residents. Many rural block groups in all four counties have above average populations living below the poverty line. Block groups in the cities of Laredo, Rio Bravo, Hebbronville, San Ygnacio, Zapata, Roma, and Rio Grande City have block groups with above average populations living below the poverty level.

Limited-English Proficiency

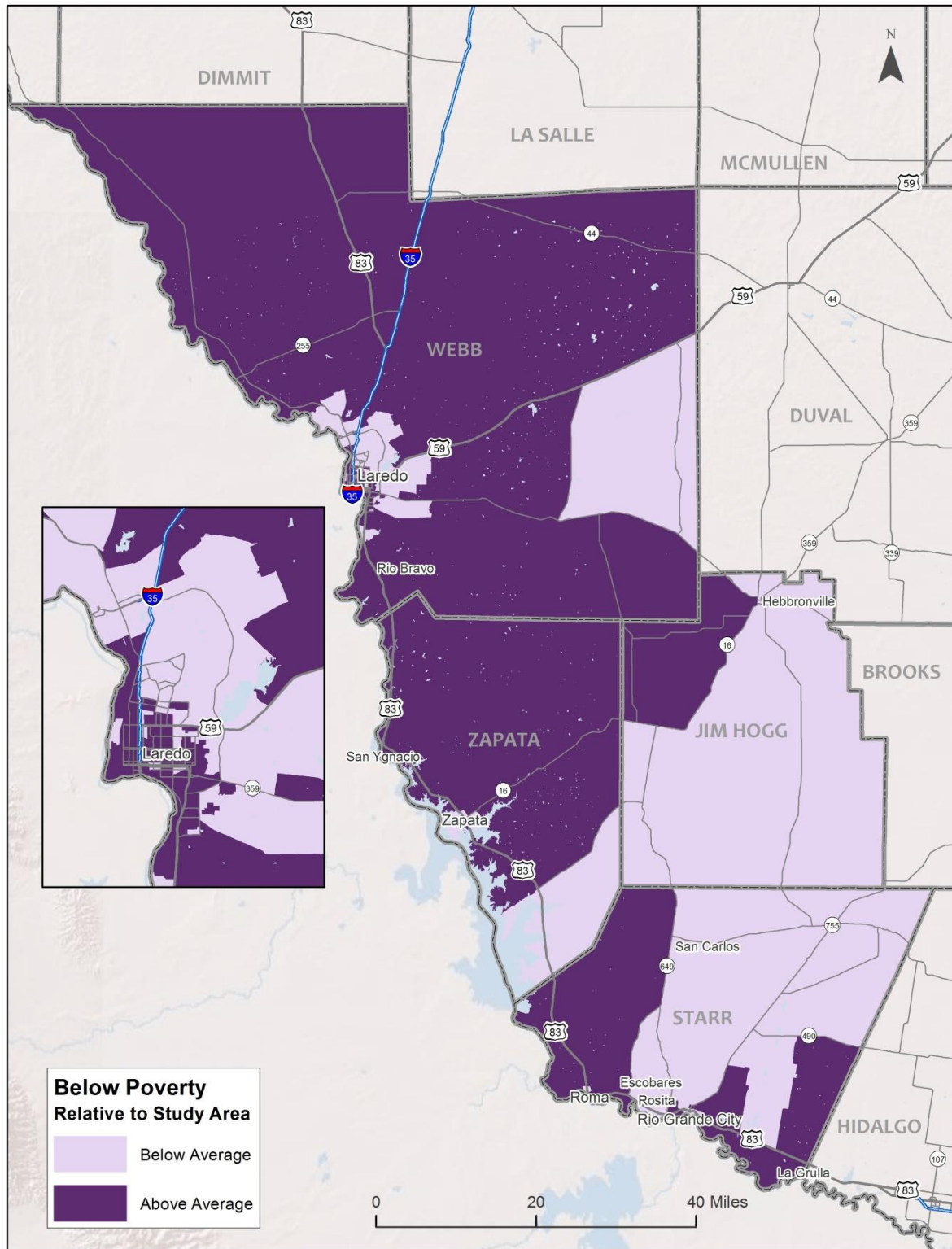
In addition to providing public transportation for a diversity of socioeconomic groups, it is also important to serve and disseminate information to those of different linguistic backgrounds. As shown in Table 3-5 the South Texas Region residents predominately speak Spanish. Jim Hogg County has the highest percent of English only speakers (25 percent). Of those who primarily speak languages other than English the majority is able to speak English “very well” or “well”.

Table 3-5: Limited English Proficiency

County	Jim Hogg		Starr		Webb		Zapata	
Age 5 years and up	4,958		55,883		233,758		12,673	
Languages Spoken	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
English	1,253	25%	3,126	6%	20,544	8.8%	1,682	13.3%
Speak Non-English	3,705	75%	52,757	94%	213,214	91.2%	10,990	86.7%
Spanish	3,681	74.2%	52,471	93.9%	211,775	91%	10,989	87%
Indo-European Languages	24	0.5%	121	0.2%	567	0.2%	1	0.01%
Asian/Pacific Languages	0	...	161	0.3%	840	0.4%	0	...
Other Languages	0	...	4	0.0%	32	0.01%	0	...
Ability to Speak English	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
"Very Well" or "Well"	3,343	67.4%	35,933	64.3%	156,937	67.1%	8,024	63.3%
"Not Well" or "Not at All"	362	7.3%	16,824	30.1%	56,277	24%	2,967	23%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014), Table B16004.

Figure 3-10: Distribution of Individuals Living Below the Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census and American Community Survey

LAND USE PROFILE

Regional Trip Generators

Identifying regional trip generators serves to complement the previous demographic analysis by indicating where transit services may be most needed. Trip generators attract transit demand and include common origins and destinations. Examples include higher level educational facilities, major employers, regional medical facilities, and Veteran Affairs Facilities. Figure 3-11 provides a map of the regional trip generators in the South Texas Region. The trip generator categories are briefly detailed below.

Educational Facilities

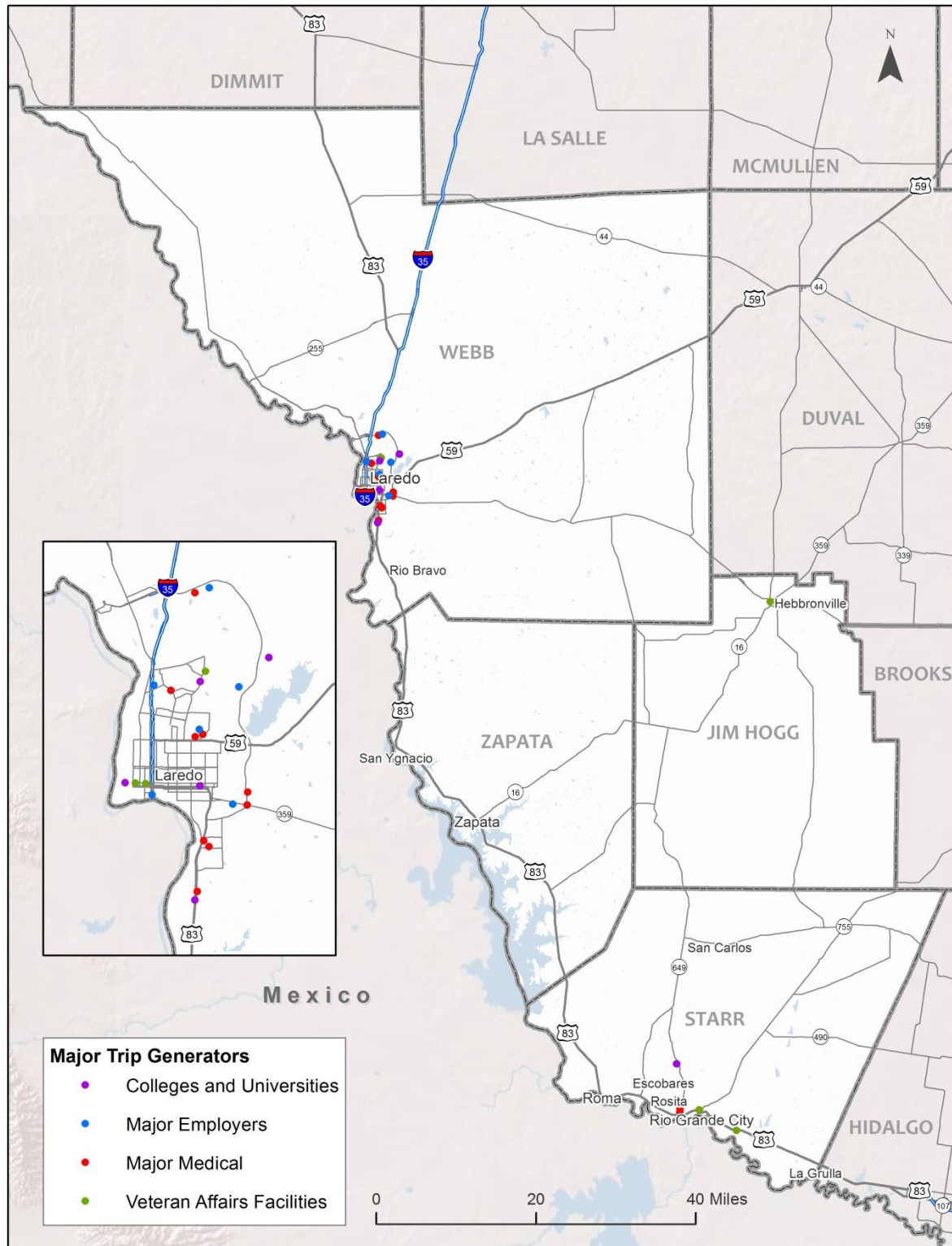
Many of the individuals that comprise the school age population are unable to afford or operate their own personal vehicle; therefore, it may be assumed that this segment of the population is one that is reliant upon public transportation. Additionally, many faculty and staff members are associated with these institutions as a place of employment. Some of the major educational facilities in the region include Laredo Community College, Texas A&M International University, and Brightwood College.

Major Employers

This section examines the top regional employers in the region (250+ employees). Providing transit services to major employment locations is advantageous to both the employee, as the individual is provided with direct access to their occupation and subsequent source of income, and the employer, as this entity will have assurance that their current or potential workforce will have diverse options of accessing the destination. Some of the major employers in the South Texas Region include:

- HEB
- Laredo Medical Center
- Walmart
- Convergys
- Doctors Hospital
- Laredo Energy Arena
- International Bank of Commerce
- Anderson Columbia
- Texas A&M International University
- Laredo Community College
- Border Regional Behavioral Health Center

Figure 3-11: Regional Trip Generators



Major Medical Facilities

Major medical facilities, classified as regional and general hospitals, represent a significant destination for users of public transportation. Older adults and persons with disabilities often rely more heavily upon the services offered by medical facilities than other population segments. Since this group represents a large fraction of the transit dependent population, it is imperative that these facilities are made accessible through public transit services. The major regional medical facilities in the South Texas Region include:

- Laredo Medical Center
- Doctors Hospital
- Laredo Specialty Hospital
- Providence Health Center
- VA Outpatient Clinic
- Starr County Memorial Hospital

Human Service Locations

Human service organizations often serve clients that are dependent on transportation services. These organizations can help low income residents, senior adults and/or people with disabilities. Throughout the South Texas Region there are human service locations that provide services such as food assistance, workforce assistance, health care, training, adult daycare, and other important human and social services.

Veteran Affairs Medical Facilities

The Department of Veterans Affairs oversees a network of medical centers and smaller community based services. Locating transportation to these facilities can be a major barrier for veterans who rely on services that these facilities provide. The South Texas Region is home to one VA Outpatient Clinic in Laredo, and a variety of Veterans Service offices.

Employment Travel Patterns

It is beneficial to account for the commuting patterns of residents within the region. Table 3-7 presents the results of the Census Bureau's Journey to Work data which provides location of employment (in county vs. out of county and in state vs. out of state) and means of transportation to work.

Table 3-7: Journey to Work Patterns

County	Jim Hogg		Starr		Webb		Zapata	
Workers Age 16 Years and Older	1,917		20,021		94,835		5,017	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
In State of Residence	1,917	100.0%	19,670	98.2%	94,006	99.1%	4,925	98.2%
In County of Residence	1,412	73.7%	15,537	77.6%	91,359	96.3%	4,121	82.1%
Outside County of Residence	505	26.3%	4,133	20.6%	2,647	2.8%	804	16.0%
Outside State of Residence	0	...	351	1.8%	829	0.9%	92	1.8%
Means of Transportation	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Car, Truck, or Van - drove alone	1,504	78.5%	14,263	71.2%	74,068	78.1%	3,947	78.7%
Car, Truck, or Van - carpooled	281	14.7%	3,376	16.9%	13,904	14.7%	743	14.8%
Public Transportation	0	0.0%	102	0.5%	1,138	1.2%	13	0.3%
Walked	99	5.2%	795	4.0%	1,490	1.6%	180	3.6%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	0	0.0%	285	1.4%	709	0.7%	40	0.8%
Worked at Home	33	1.7%	1,200	6.0%	3,526	3.7%	94	1.9%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2010-2014), Table B08130.

Regional Travel Patterns

Another source of data that provides an understanding of employee travel patterns is the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. LEHD uses a variety of data sets and surveys to characterize workforce data in the region. Table 3-8 provides the results of this analysis for the South Texas Region. The table shows the top five employment destinations for county residents. As shown, the top employment destination cities are the largest cities in each county.

This data confirms much of what was heard during the public outreach effort. There is a significant amount of employment travel into the City of Laredo from the counties of Webb, Zapata and Jim Hogg. Starr County employment outside of the county is drawn toward the McAllen area. In addition to the data shown in Table 3-8, the outreach effort and other transit planning efforts in the region have shown that there is a significant employment, human service and student transportation need in the Laredo area. Many of these locations provide opportunities for people with lower incomes and mobility issues that may be more likely to use public or human service transportation options. These residents often tend to fall into the transit dependent groups. There is currently a lack of substantive services that connect the rural outlying areas to Laredo.

The public outreach effort also identified that many rural residents in the region and urban residents that live outside of the areas that receive fixed route transit service that operated on one hour headways have difficulty using public transportation for employment purposes even though they may be dependent on these services.

Table 3-8: Regional Employment Travel Patterns (Top 5 Destinations)

Jim Hogg County			Webb County		
Place	#	%	Place	#	%
Hebbronville CDP	347	32.5%	Laredo City	72,358	79.0%
Laredo City	116	10.9%	San Antonio City	1,632	1.8%
Corpus Christi City	29	2.7%	Rio Bravo City	897	1.0%
Beeville City	28	2.6%	Corpus Christi City	845	0.9%
Las Lomitas CDP	21	2.0%	El Cenizo City	606	0.7%
All Others	527	49.3%	All Others	15,242	16.6%
Starr County			Zapata County		
Place	#	%	Place	#	%
Rio Grande City	2,261	16.3%	Laredo City	696	20.0%
Roma City	1,556	11.2%	Zapata CDP	506	14.6%
McAllen City	421	3.0%	Medina CDP	402	11.6%
Las Lomas CDP	420	3.0%	Siesta Shores CDP	107	3.1%
Mission City	391	2.8%	Corpus Christi City	88	2.5%
All Others	8,796	63.5%	All Others	1,674	48.2%

Source: Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2014.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Public and stakeholder outreach is an important part of any transportation needs assessment. The previous sections of this report have analyzed the quantitative, demographic and land use data relevant to transportation needs in the region. Even more important than this quantitative data is the qualitative data that is gathered through the outreach efforts. This plan used three primary strategies to get substantive input on transportation needs and service gaps in the South Texas region:

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Meetings
- Public, Stakeholder and Rider Surveys

These strategies targeted transit providers, community members, health and human service organizations, veteran organizations, community leaders and private businesses to assess unmet transportation needs particularly for individuals with disabilities, senior adults, individuals with low incomes, veterans, and children.

Stakeholder Interviews

The kickoff meeting for the South Texas Development Council (STDC) Coordinated Public Transit – Health and Human Services Transportation Plan was conducted on November 29, 2016. This meeting provided the opportunity to review the proposed work plan and discuss the priorities for the planning process with regional stakeholders, and to obtain their input on unmet transportation needs and gaps in the region.

In conjunction with the kickoff meeting individual interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to obtain their specific comments on what are their preferred outcomes to the planning process and on the transportation needs of their clients, customers and the people they serve. In addition to STDC staff the following agencies and organizations were interviewed:

- El Metro
- El Aguila Rural Transportation
- Jim Hogg County
- Texas A&M University Colonias Program
- Area Agency on Aging
- South Texas Development Council

The following section provides an overview of the key themes that were identified during the kickoff meeting discussions and the individual interviews. This information is combined with input obtained through the outreach process and the demographic analysis as part of an overall needs assessment.

Expanded Transportation Services

- There is a need for additional transportation options from the rural areas of the region to Laredo. While an overall concern, some specific needs expressed included transportation for young people in Jim Hogg and Zapata Counties that would enable access to education facilities in Laredo.
- There is new development occurring in the Laredo area outside the current El Metro service area. In particular there are new subdivisions being built on the west side of town and industrial parks opening on the north side that are not being served due to a lack of resources. Stakeholders expressed a vision for the future that would include additional routes that would fill these gaps.
- There is a major need for El Aguila to serve major destinations it currently passes without stopping such as major shopping and the Laredo Community College. Currently the El Aguila routes operate from rural areas to the transfer center in

downtown Laredo, where customers need to transfer (paying an extra fare) and sometimes backtrack to their destinations.

- Headways on El Metro routes are currently one hour or more. There is need to increase frequency on current services.
- Other regional transportation needs included transportation options between Jim Hogg County and college facilities in Kingsville.

Improved Coordination and Connectivity

- While there are regular meetings between El Metro and El Aguila Rural Transportation, there is no formal forum to facilitate discussions on broader coordination or connectivity opportunities between the various providers in the region. This forum was seen as particularly important with efforts to combine trips between outlying areas and Laredo.
- Several stakeholders expressed the need for multiple satellite hubs that would improve connections and reduce rider time on the bus between El Metro and El Aguila. Laredo Community College was noted as one possible hub location. These steps would also respond to the sprawl of residential, shopping, education, and employment sites throughout the Laredo area.
- Stakeholders also noted that there could be reduced ride times if El Aguila customers could access stops along their inbound trip from rural areas to downtown Laredo and the same on the return.
- The need for a central one-call mobility center was expressed. Through this center customers could call one number where staff would be knowledgeable of all transportation options in the region, and could schedule customers on the most appropriate and efficient mode of transportation.
- A coordinated fare structure is needed, possibly a regional pass, that would enable and facilitate transfers between the various providers in the region. Ideally through an integrated fare system customers could transfer seamlessly between services.
- In conjunction with expanded marketing and outreach efforts stakeholders expressed the need for greater coordination with doctor offices and healthcare providers. Some noted that one of the coordination efforts with the most beneficial results would be the scheduling of medical appointments that take into consideration transportation options. This would be especially important when providing transportation for dialysis treatment patients.

- Stakeholders expressed challenges coordinating with LeFleur Transportation that provides Medicaid funded Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), especially related to trips to dialysis treatment facilities. Understanding that the NEMT payment structure allows the broker to make a larger profit when not providing a trip, in essence rewarding poor service. Stakeholders noted that there are frequent reports of dialysis patients experiencing challenges with scheduling trips and needing to wait for long periods of time for their ride home after treatments. Some noted trip refusals as well. Some residents prefer to use El Aguila over NEMT transportation since their advance reservation process is much shorter, though this places a greater strain on providing transportation for non-Medicaid eligible customers.
- It was noted that while the plan that results from this process will be broad in nature and include possible coordination activities, the importance of the final plan related to the Section 5310 Program should not be lost.

Additional Transportation Options

- With the diverse and expansive geographic nature of the region there is a need for a variety of transportation options to meet the mobility needs of the region's residents. In particular the long trips that rural residents must endure for medical appointments were noted. Attempts at implementing volunteer driver and expanded rideshare programs that may provide more personal transportation services have been halted by insurance concerns.
- Currently buses have bike racks, and stakeholders reported they are used frequently. Building upon this a more formal bike share program could be considered.

Build Upon Previous Plans and Studies

- Stakeholders noted the need to incorporate previous plans and studies into the planning process. Those noted included the Transit Development Plan for El Metro currently underway, looking at routes, including some that have not been modified in twenty years. It also includes the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) plan.

Expanded Outreach Efforts

- While there are ongoing outreach efforts and interaction with community groups (PACE Coalition meetings were noted as one), there is still a need for expanded marketing and education activities to ensure community members are aware of the transportation options available to them.

- Stakeholders noted that limited education on available transportation services is particularly prevalent in rural areas of the region. Expanded outreach efforts are needed, especially to offset the preconceived notion that services are only available for older adults and people with disabilities.
- There is a need to educate medical offices and healthcare professionals on transportation options so that appointments can be coordinated with available services.

Funding Considerations

- In conjunction with the need for expanded transportation options that would fill gaps in service, regional stakeholders expressed concern over additional funding to support these services. There is both the need to expand services geographically into unserved areas, while at the same time there is a need to increase frequency on current public transit routes. The challenge is providing funding to support both needs.
- The need to expand partnerships with private industry was noted by regional stakeholders. Retailers and colleges in particular were noted as possible focus for these efforts that would request financial support for routes that serve their locations.
- If possible there is a desire for greater flexibility in the use of Section 5310 and 5311 funding.

Capital Improvements and Considerations

- One Section 5310 recipient noted that the greatest need through the program and the related planning process was for new vehicles to replace old ones in their fleet and for larger buses that could handle increased demand.
- The need for additional transfer hubs may necessitate the need for funding to make appropriate improvements to the infrastructure and for passenger amenities such as shelters and benches.
- Some agencies are using old buses that are far beyond their useful life. One consideration to reduce the overall vehicle fleet age in the region is transitioning buses from agencies with larger fleets (such as El Metro) when they receive new buses to agencies with fewer vehicles. In this way the provider with the smaller fleet will have a used vehicle, but one with less mileage than those in their current inventory.

Additional Considerations

- The updated plan that results from the project should focus on broader strategies and less on specific projects, so not to limit flexibility when determining services to fund in the future.

Public Meetings

To complement the targeted stakeholder interviews four public meetings were held to gather information on unmet public transportation needs. The locations and invites were geared toward the general public, individuals with disabilities, senior adults, individuals with low incomes, veterans, and children. The survey was distributed at each meeting and much of the survey analysis will reflect the meeting input. Meeting attendance can be found in Appendix A. The meetings were held at:

Webb County

Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location: Holding Institute, FACE Coalition Meeting, 1102 Santa Maria Laredo, Texas 78040

Jim Hogg County

Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Gateway Community Health Center, Inc., Conference Room, 473 State Hwy. 285, Hebbronville, Texas 78361

Starr County

Date: Thursday, February 2, 2017

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location: Rio Grande City Nutrition Center, 1307 San Benito St., Rio Grande City, Texas 78582

Zapata County

Date: Thursday, February 2, 2017

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Gateway Community Health Center, Inc. Conference Room, 210 N. Rathmell Ave., Zapata, Texas 78076

Meeting Comments

The following were verbal comments given at the meetings regarding strategies and unmet transportation need:

- There is a need for additional veteran transportation services in the region. The veteran transportation service is neither utilized nor convenient.
- Medical facilities in Coleton need additional transportation services. El Aguila buses should stop at all locations used by riders.
- There is a need for improved bus stop facilities near medical facilities.
- Major bus stop should have bike racks,
- Laredo should develop a bike share program working with the Mayor and Health Institute.
- Laredo is in need of improved sidewalk infrastructure.
- Additional scheduled service from Hebbronville to Laredo is desired.
- REAL should expand marketing efforts in Jim Hogg County.
- Regularly scheduled service in Zapata connecting to Laredo is desired for medical, shopping, and student trips.
- Former Rainbow Line vehicles are unused. Valley Metro should use them for parts, training or sell them to human service providers that only need to travel short distances (depending on the condition of the vehicles). DPS and Sherriff departments can use vehicles to transport human service clients when trips are requested by HHSC.
- There is no VA transportation in Rio Grande City. Veterans often need to go to McAllen or Harlingen outpatient clinics to receive care. The VA used to host mobile clinics in Rio Grande City but that program has been discontinued.
- Valley Metro needs to expand marketing efforts in Starr and Zapata County.
- County 5310 programs are struggling to fund operations.
- Rio Grande City and Roma are large enough to support an expanded local regularly scheduled service on the Highway 83 corridor.

Surveys

This plan is looking at two survey efforts. First El Metro and the Laredo MPO are conducting a survey for the Laredo Transit Plan happening in conjunction with the Five-Year Coordinated Plan. The Laredo Plan implemented two separate surveys: 1) Onboard Customer Survey and, 2) Ridership Survey. The Onboard Customer Survey was conducted as a self-administered survey that captured origin/destination and boarding/alighting locations, trip purpose, access/egress, demographics, and customer satisfaction questions. The Ridership Survey utilized smartphones, programmed with El Metro's transit network, to count the boarding and alighting activity at the stop level.

Laredo Transit Plan Survey Summary

The detailed finding of the Laredo Transit Plan survey will be available later this year. For this document we will cover a broad overview of the findings as they relate to the objectives of the coordinated planning process.

Almost half of the surveys were completed in Spanish and the vast majority of respondents were living in low income households and do not possess a driver's license. 97 percent of the respondents reported their ethnicity as Hispanic. Half of the respondents were employed. El Metro trips are predominantly used for employment, shopping and personal business. Many of the survey respondents would like to use google transit as a trip planner.

Coordinated Plan Public Survey

As part of the coordinated planning effort a public survey was completed. The survey was available in hard copy and online. Survey links were sent out to human service providers and hard copies were distributed to agencies to give to their clients. El Aguila provided the survey on-board their transit vehicles. A detailed analysis of the survey can be found in Appendix B. This section summarized the primary findings of the survey effort:

- A total of 139 surveys were completed in Spanish and English.
- When reviewing the report, it is important to note that the respondents varied demographically by county, which influenced the response by county.
- Not surprisingly, age and income levels appear to be motivators for public transit use. As an example, respondents from Starr County were more likely to use public transit than the other counties by far (78.6 percent of Starr county respondents were 65 years of age or older).
- Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 65+. Overall, most respondents were between the ages of 26-55 years of age. Most Starr County respondents (78.6 percent) were 65 years of age or older. Starr County and Zapata County had the highest number of retired respondents (33.3 percent and 42.9 percent). Starr County had the highest number of unemployed respondents (35.7 percent). Zapata County respondents had the lowest income levels (62.7 percent made \$14,999 or less in annual household income).
- Zapata County and Starr County were the only two counties with respondents that had household members that need special accommodations in order to travel.
- Over three quarters (77.3 percent) of all respondents drive themselves to work. Webb County and Jim Hogg County had the highest rate of people that drive themselves.
- Overall, two-thirds (61.6 percent) of all respondents drive themselves to medical appointments. For medical appointments, they are more likely to ride with friends/relatives than for work.
- Many respondents cited a need for transportation for medical visits. The need is for medical visits out of the area and in different towns, as well as in the area (county).

- On average, nearly two-thirds of the respondents drive themselves to social recreational outings. Overall, 70.9 percent of the respondents drive themselves to school.
- More than half of the respondents from the four counties were likely to drive themselves for shopping/errands.
- Overall, three fourths of the respondents (76.0 percent) use public transit less than once a month. Starr County respondents had the highest usage of public transit per month. Two-thirds of the respondents (66.6 percent) use public transit at least once a week.
- Webb County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work or after work, the trip takes too long with too many transfers and there is too much waiting.
- Jim Hogg County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work and the trip takes too long.
- Zapata County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available or they do not know if it is available.
- Starr County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available, they have limited mobility and that public transit is unreliable.
- Many Webb County, Jim Hogg County and Starr County respondents said that there is a need for improved transit:
 - Overall, more than half the respondents cited additional geographic areas, more direct routes, extended days and hours, and more frequent service as improvements that would motivate them to use public transportation.
 - Three-fourths of the respondents would use public transit if the quality were improved (100 percent of Starr County Respondents indicated that they would). Just 57.8 percent of Zapata County respondents said they would be motivated to use public transit if the quality were improved.
 - Improved on-time performance (36.5 percent) and additional shelters (36.5 percent) were cited as the most important areas that need improvement. For Starr County, 60.0 percent of respondents cited improved access to information as a needed improvement.
- Overall, respondents are likely to use public transit in the morning (51.9 percent). Zapata County was the exception, with 62.5 percent of the respondents using public transit mid-morning.
- Many of the respondents cited medical visits and shopping as major needs for public transit. Both issues require flexible schedules for public transit.

GAP ANALYSIS - RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section provides a brief assessment of service inefficiencies and service gaps that will be used in the development of strategies in the following coordination plan. The unmet need and

service gaps in South Texas are divided into two categories; 1) Coordination Needs, and 2) Service Needs

Coordination Needs and Recommendations

Regional Network of Services

Expanded coordinated efforts in the region can help increase the efficiency of services and expand the availability of services through economies of scale. Currently the region is fragmented in services. There are three rural (FTA Section 5311) provider and four rural FTA Section 5310 providers. Many of the county run 5310 programs are limited as the entities are only getting FTA funding for preventative maintenance. A strategy to have one entity set up a rural transit district for Zapata, Jim Hogg and Starr counties to secure 5310 funding and purchase service through contracts with the existing providers will give the region an 80/20 match for operations instead of preventative maintenance. This entity can also assist each operator with the procurement of new vehicles and brand the vehicles as a cohesive regional service. The goal is to operate regional service as a whole and provide additional operating funds so that services can be expanded. As the success grows services can be branded together (including 5311 providers and Webb county rural service) while each county and service provider maintains its program. Essentially the services become consolidated while the organizations remain intact.

Mobility Management

The development of a mobility management position can also help the region better coordinate service and help entities achieve coordination goals that they do not currently have time or resources for. These activities can include:

- One-Stop information clearinghouse for transit service information and trip planning
- Mentoring of human service providers with training, maintenance, vehicle procurement, etc.
- Service planning and regional interagency connections
- Travel training
- VA transportation coordination

Partnerships

The region needs to develop partnerships between the private sector, medical organizations, colleges and universities and transportation providers. Setting up business deals between these entities and transit providers can be mutually beneficial and produce increased local funds to expand services and use as match for federal allocations.

Infrastructure

Transit providers need to coordinate amongst themselves and with the city of Laredo to improve bus stop, sidewalk and transit infrastructure. Additional transfer locations may help increase ridership and reduce travel times of rural residents traveling into Laredo.

Other Coordination Activities

Expanded coordination of transit marketing, mentoring and training can help improve transit's image in the community, make residents aware of the menu of mobility options available and reduce costs through economies of scale.

Service Needs

Throughout this planning process several services needs have surfaced.

Rural Bus Stops

Rural transit customers in Webb County often have limited options to board and alight once their route travels into the El Metro service area. Rural residents requested expanded stops into Laredo particularly at the Walmart and near higher education facilities. Adding a stop has minimal costs and can make the service much more attractive to customers by cutting travel time up to 50 percent. Efforts to partner with colleges and Walmart should continue.

Rural services in Webb and Starr County should also look to add additional stop for origin locations. Much of the state highways have wide shoulders with space to accommodate a bus stop. Additional stops can help served unserved neighborhoods and colonias. Starr County between Roma and Rio Grande City can support a more robust fixed route service. Additional stops along Highway 83 on the current Starr County route can be a stepping stone to more local service.

Rural Routes and Connections

There is an expressed need for better connection into the urban areas from rural communities. This includes scheduled service from Hebronville and Zapata into Laredo.

Rio Grande City coordinated with transit in the past to provide public transit services serving schools in the area. These coordination efforts should be reestablished so that needed transit services can be expanded in the community.

User Group Needs

Each user transit and human service client group in the region has specific unmet needs related to transportation. Although the user groups are often viewed as separate (or view themselves as separate) the needs of each group, as identified in the demographic analysis and outreach process, are similar across the board. Whether a person is a senior citizen, has a disability, is a veteran, has a low income, or lives in a household without access to an automobile they all need greater access to mobility options to reach essential goods and services in the region and community. As part of the gap analysis we identify below each user group and the needs they have, but we approach the strategies to meet these needs with a key premise:

Excellent public transportation is the best way to address and coordinate the majority of senior, person with disabilities and human service client transportation needs.

The fact is, excellent public transportation options can and will meet the needs of all of these user groups. Any coordination effort should start with maximizing the use of higher productivity services such as fixed route services and fixed schedule services (in rural areas). Only those persons that can't use public transit (including ADA paratransit) in its many forms would be in need of special services. Efforts to support or improve public transportation should be fully supported by the committee, human service agencies, and public transit systems as an essential element of coordinated transportation.

The following is a summary of key transit and human service user groups in the region and the particular needs they have that this plan will address.

Senior Citizens

Older adults may begin to decrease their use of a personal vehicle and rely more heavily on public transit. A variety of strategies in the following chapter directly and indirectly address the following needs:

- Seniors in the rural areas and small towns have limited options to reach Laredo or the Lower Rio Grande Valley. There is a significant need to expand services to seniors in rural areas particularly in Zapata and Hebbronville.
- Seniors in Zapata and Hebbronville currently have options for early morning runs into Laredo, with medical trip getting preference. The need for expanded service for other trip purposes and times is noted.

Individuals with Disabilities

Persons who have disabilities that prevent them or make it more difficult to own and operate a personal vehicle often rely on public transit for their transportation needs. Many areas along the Highway 83 corridor have high populations of people with disabilities. This includes

portions of Laredo, Rio Bravo, Zapata, Roma and Rio Grande City. A variety of strategies in the following chapter directly and indirectly address the following needs:

- Many of the human service agencies working with these clients place a larger burden on paratransit services. These agencies have little funding available to purchase transportation but may be able to operate their own vehicle if properly equipped and with trained operators. This can save the paratransit provider, the agency and the client time and money.
- Many on the rural 5310 vehicles have limited space for non-ambulatory passengers. Better suited vehicles for these services can greatly increase the options for these individuals for regional mobility.

Veterans

Many of the veterans needing mobility and transportation services in the region are also senior citizens. Often these people need transportation beyond existing service areas to large Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals out of the region. The VA has reduced the availability of their mobile medical clinics with veterans in South Texas needing to get to the Lower Rio Grande Valley or Laredo for medical trips. The veterans do have limited access to the Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) that can help them with longer cross-jurisdictional trips.

Low Income Residents

South Texas is one of the poorest regions in the State of Texas. There was not a single member of the public engaged in the outreach process that was not living near or below the poverty line. Any transportation needs expressed by any group are also needs for low income individuals and households. Like other user groups the primary needs is for expanded and more convenient public transportation options.

Youth and Students

The youth population is often used as an identifier of transit dependent population. Persons ages 10 to 17 either cannot drive or are just beginning to drive and often do not have a personal automobile accessible to them. For this population, public transit is often the means that offers mobility. Many college and university students often lack access to personal automobiles. A variety of strategies in the following chapter directly and indirectly address the following needs:

- Schools in Rio Grande City used to have public transit service with Rainbow Lines. Valley Metro should engage the community leadership to reestablish these services.
- College students in Zapata needs transportation services to Laredo to access the educational facilities there.

Chapter 4: Planning for Comprehensive Services

INTRODUCTION

The South Texas Development Council (STDC) requested a service oriented update to the 2011 South Texas Public Transit – Human Service Transportation Plan. STDC and the project committee recognize that an update was needed to focus on strategies that help eliminate the gaps in services. The gaps in service mostly burden the transit dependent population – those without access or unable to drive a car (for example, elderly, persons with disabilities, low income individuals, zero car households, youths) as well as non-English speaking persons and veterans. In other words, planning efforts should be directed toward effectively and efficiently increasing service for transit dependent, veterans and Title VI populations (includes minorities, non-English speaking persons and low income individuals). Potential services can include traditional fixed-route and paratransit services as well as a variety of hybrid services and also include approaches such as mobility management, expanded volunteer driver program(s) and a variety of coordination strategies designed to expand and/or improve service for customers.

This coordinated plan is the latest phase of the coordination process and emphasizes strategies and operational options and focuses less on process oriented strategies. The goal of this effort is to encourage implementation of coordinated activities that foster improved public and human service transportation.

This plan has been developed over the past three months, with input from many interested stakeholders through an open planning process with two rounds of public meetings, a public survey, and stakeholder meetings. These meetings, the review of existing services, demographic and land use analysis, and details of the planning process are summarized in the previous chapter.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The key coordination premise will be introduced first, followed by a review of areas of need. The strategies will then be introduced. This will include a review of the 2011 strategies and their status. The Committee will be asked to select the strategies that they would like to continue to pursue and delete the strategies that have been completed or are no longer relevant. New strategies will then be introduced based on the gap analysis.

KEY COORDINATION PREMISE

Excellent public transportation is the best way to address and coordinate the majority of human service client transportation needs.

Experience across the country in both urban and rural areas tells us that scheduled public transit is the best way to provide coordinated transit service as most human service clients can ride fixed route/scheduled service or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit. This was discussed in detail in the previous memorandum and guides the development of strategies.

Any coordination effort should start with maximizing the use of higher productivity services such as fixed route services and fixed schedule services (in rural areas). Efforts to support or improve public transportation should be fully supported by the Committee, human service agencies, and public transit systems as an essential element of coordinated transportation.

At the same time, the use of public paratransit services by human service transportation programs should be appropriately compensated by those agencies. Any demands placed upon public paratransit by human service agencies should include the funding necessary to support them.

VISION MISSION AND GOALS

The Committee should review these goals to determine if they still meet the needs of the study area. The goals can remain as is, can be modified or deleted. In addition if the Committee has additional goals they should be introduced now.

The Overarching Mission

Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective high quality and safe transportation for our community.

Vision and Goals

While the vision, mission and goals are discussed in Chapter 1, they are repeated here for the readers benefit in reviewing the strategies.

Vision

Residents (including the general public and human service clientele) and visitors to the four-county South Texas Planning Region will be able to move throughout the region safely, reliably, efficiently, and affordably by using a seamless network of public and private facilities and services that are easy to comprehend, responsive to individual travel needs, and easy to access.

Goals

Goal 1: Enhance the quality of the customer's travel experience.

Goal 2: Expand the availability of services to those who are unserved.

Goal 3: Increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Goal 4: Investigate new sources of local revenue for public transit through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service.

Goal 5: Establish and sustain communications and decision-making mechanisms among sponsors and stakeholders to guide effective implementation of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan.

Goal 6: Improve the image of transit across the region.

KEY THEMES

Mobility and access to opportunity are fundamental needs in our society. Well-designed and well-managed public and human service transportation can maximize ridership and benefit all. These themes guide the focus of the strategies are. The Committee should review these themes to ensure they meet the community's needs.

1. **Bus Stops** – Buses should stop be where people live and want to go. Routes should not pass major destinations without having the option to stop. Both origin and destination based stops should be in place. This is a significant problem for El Aguila customers who do not want to pass their destination and then travel downtown to transfer to go back.
2. **Mobility Management** – A mobility management position can also help the region better coordinate service and help entities achieve coordination goals that they do not currently have time or resources for. This position can be funded at an 80/20 Federal/Local match and can include these activities:

- One-Stop information clearinghouse for transit service information and trip planning
 - Mentoring of human service providers with training, maintenance, vehicle procurement, etc.
 - Service planning and regional interagency connections
 - Travel training
 - VA transportation coordination
3. **Coordinated Regional Service** – In the region, there are at least seven providers who are funded in part through FTA and TxDOT funds. These services should be planned and coordinated in a manner that maximizes the customer’s options without duplication of effort.
 4. **The Keys to Coordination** - Coordination almost always requires three things to ensure success:
 - a. Leadership – an entity and/or individual that champions the effort;
 - b. Trust – as in any relationship professional or otherwise, trust is essential to success;
 - c. A Good Deal – all sides must benefit from the relationship
 5. **Customer Service – One Stop Center for Information** – An essential element of coordinated transportation and customer service is the proper information to give to the customers. For example, there are four different services operating either within or bringing people into Laredo. Customers must know that they have to telephone four systems to determine which system to use.
 6. **Coordination – A Tool** - Coordination itself is not the goal; rather it is one of the significant tools we can use to meet the overarching goal. It is an important tool to improve efficiencies, but most definitely not the only tool.
 7. **Realistic Service Design** - One of the unique challenges in the rural areas of the South Texas region, is the low productivity (a very important term – typically defined as one-way trips per revenue hour) inherent in paratransit/demand-response transportation. Low productivity results into a high cost per trip and fewer trips. Fixed route and fixed schedule service may be more advantageous.

COORDINATION/PLANNING STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

The strategies developed for this section are separated by coordination, service, and funding related activities. These are described in the following sections below.

Coordination Strategies

Coordination Strategy No. 1: Coordinated Facility Planning

The City of Laredo and El Metro have just completed a comprehensive transit plan that includes a variety of facility recommendations. One recommendation is to secure a site to plan and develop a south end transfer facility near some of the medical, shopping and college hubs in the area. This can serve as a timed meeting location for El Aguila services and El Metro, reducing the need for El Aguila to go into downtown. El Aguila can use these savings to reduce their headways on their rural routes or expand services into new areas if needed.

This effort will need to be coordinated amongst the City of Laredo, the transit systems, funding partners, and other stakeholders. Various FTA and TxDOT grant programs can be used for capital expenses. STDC may be able to secure funding assistance for planning and design. Local partnerships may help to procure sites. Additional operational funding partnership will be needed to expand services at the new transfer hub.

Potential Activities and Projects

The primary activity within the planning horizon of this document is to begin working with local partners and stakeholders to secure a site for the south side transfer facility. Potential partners can include (but are not limited to):

- City of Laredo
- El Metro
- El Aguila
- South Texas Development Council
- TxDOT
- Laredo Community College

Impact on Goals

The development of a south side transit facility with timed meets between systems will directly address Goals 1, 2 and 3.

Potential Costs/Benefits

While the costs of developing a substantive transit facility are significant many of these cost can be shared and mitigated through partnerships. The City or a stakeholder has land they would be willing to lease at an affordable rate. A variety of grant funding opportunities for transit, bike/pedestrian improvements, and planning are available to assist with these types of projects. In addition to capital funding, El Metro will need to seek partners for additional

operational funding to create new crosstown routes and increase frequency at the transit hub. The benefits include an increase in operational efficiency for the transit systems and increased mobility opportunity for transit customers. This strategy will greatly benefit individuals with disabilities and seniors using the Webb County Rural services increasing access and availability of service by reducing headways and coordinating transfers.

Coordination Strategy No. 2: Development of a Regional Mobility Manager

The South Texas Development Council (STDC), working with each of the providers, funding agencies, and other interested stakeholders will identify the regional Mobility Manager that will coordinate a wide variety of public and private transportation service in addition to acting as the regional rideshare manager for the four counties. The Mobility Manager can have a variety of planning and administrative/financial activities to perform. The activities selected for the Mobility Manager will be determined by the on-going coordination Committee. These activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Planning and identifying needs and solutions
- Seeking public and private funding
- Coordinating the various operators in the Laredo area
- Coordinating human service transportation
- Conducting rideshare efforts
- Organizing and staffing various committees in urban and rural areas
- Working closely with operators to avoid duplication and waste.
- Developing partnerships and sponsorships

The Mobility Manager can also assist in the distribution of vehicles retired by a transit operator (but still quite serviceable) to local volunteer and human service organizations.

Potential Activities and Projects

There are two major elements to this strategy. First, Mobility Management should involve coordination activities among transit systems and human service agencies. A region with a diverse set of transit providers can be a daunting challenge for a rider to ensure they are aware of the myriad options. The list of mobility management activities includes the following:

Coordination Activities

- Leadership - Provide centralized leadership and assist regional providers and stakeholders with partnerships.
- Leadership in the move to fund transit to ensure seamless network of transit services

- Coordination and technical support - Assist non-profit agencies with coordination activities and provide support and retired vehicles where appropriate.
- Coordinated training - Coordinate training efforts between all operators of service.
- Regional planning activities - Coordinate planning efforts and focus on regional connectivity.
- Customer service - Create regional standards for customer care.
- Coordination of fare structure – Rationalize fares across the region.
- Group procurement - Develop economies of scale through group purchases. Currently El Metro needs 17 new buses. Many of their busses have exceeded their useful age and the maintenance costs to keep them on the road are unsustainable. El Aguila will need 8-10 busses. While these buses have significant capital costs they will greatly help pay for themselves in reduced costs per mile.
- Monitor and coordinate regional planning efforts - Organize and staff committees in urban and rural areas.
- Coordination of Veteran transportation services as well as services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Public Information

- One stop information - One stop information center and website where riders can get information on services. In a service area with many transit operators, one stop information and traveler apps are critical.
- Customer marketing and education - Develop a comprehensive customer education and marketing program.
- Ridesharing – Vanpool and carpool services can fill in many service gaps in South Texas. One entity should function as the rideshare coordinator.

Impact on Goals

Mobility management can directly address goals 1 through 6.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Mobility management can be conducted in a number of ways. These can include hiring one formal independent mobility manager or a shared mobility management team made up of existing staff of multiple agencies to keep out-of-pocket costs low and perhaps save money through economies of scale. These activities will be of significant value to the transit dependent population – elderly, persons with disabilities, youths, low income and zero car households, as well as Title VI populations and veterans. Seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans groups all indicated a lack of awareness and understanding on how to access public transit to get to where they are going, and mobility management through transit marketing, mentoring, and training will help make residents aware of the menu of mobility options available would serve to meet the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities and veterans groups.

Coordination Strategy No. 3: Formalize Coordination Working Group

The key participants in the region should continue to work together in a formalized setting allowing all participants and other interested parties to participate. A committee should be formed to include: all major operators, funding agencies, private sector transit providers, other agencies, and consumers. Also, every effort should be made to include local political and/or business leaders.

These groups can greatly improve coordinated activities in the region as stakeholders have time to discuss issues and opportunities in an open forum. While TxDOT is proposing to eliminate funding for these committee activities (while still emphasizing the coordinating planning process) it is important to seek the limited amount of support necessary to complete this strategy.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Formalized coordination group meetings – These meetings and be quarterly or bi-quarterly and should focus on coordination activities and efforts in the region.

Impact on Goals

This strategy directly addresses Goal 5 by establishing formal open communication channels amongst stakeholders and decision makers in the region.

Potential Costs/Benefits

While TxDOT has hinted that they will no longer support these groups, the cost of holding quarterly meetings can be shared amongst the primary stakeholders. The benefits include an increase in coordinated activity.

Coordination Strategy No. 4: Work with Human Service Partners – Developing a Mentoring Program

While some agencies and organizations with small scale operations will not want to be involved in a large-scale coordination effort; there are areas where these agencies can benefit from coordination. These transit services, typically in support of other programs, include one and two van adult day care operators, senior centers, veterans groups, hospital shuttles, as well as other entities. These transportation services have stated that they have no interest in relinquishing their service to a larger system. In fact, it is important that these agencies maintain their identities because their strength comes from their passion, dedication, and volunteerism, which would disappear in a coordinated network. This plan wants to encourage that passion by nurturing the agencies and allowing them to flourish.

With that understood, there are a number of areas where these small agencies can benefit from coordination. El Metro and El Aguila will initiate a mentoring and support program encouraging small agencies to seek advice, support, training, or even vehicles. Specifically, these efforts may include small agency participation in programs developed by the transit systems such as: driver training, maintenance, insurance, and vehicle replacement programs. These efforts can result in immediate safety and performance dividends to those small one or two vehicle services.

The vehicle replacement program will have the transit agencies transfer or lease (for a minimal amount) vehicles being retired that are still in good condition, to a non-profit where the intentions are for the second agency to continue to provide transportation. The receiving agency would be required to train its drivers through the larger system's training program and utilize the transit system's maintenance programs. Minimal funding is required to initiate these activities through the Mobility Manager. The agency receiving the vehicle would report ridership, maintenance, and other documentation to the transit system. This program will allow more service to be provided to more people in the service area.

This strategy also includes the effort of El Metro and El Aguila working closely with the Webb County Area AAA to target elderly populations in need of transit services throughout their service areas. These efforts are intended to improve mobility for elderly and persons with disabilities that have mobility limitations.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Vehicles - Retired small transit vehicles that still meet safety standards can be given to these entities and the transit system can provide training, basic route planning and maintenance support. In return, these entities will do their own transportation, reducing or eliminating their use of ADA paratransit.
2. Travel Training Programs – Many human service clients can ride fixed route, often all that is needed is a travel training program. These programs can quickly pay dividends by

helping individuals navigate and use fixed route services and not rely on paratransit, where feasible.

Impact on Goals

Coordination with human service agencies meets Goal 2 and 3 by expanding the availability of services and increasing the effectiveness of transit funding mechanisms.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Costs associated with this task are minimal, yet the benefits are significant. The objective is to get human service clients to use an appropriate mode that is less expensive than ADA paratransit (the most expensive service on a per trip basis in the entire world of transit).

Travel training typically costs \$100 per person. Assuming an average paratransit cost of \$25 per one way trip, it would take two round trips on fixed-route to recoup the investment. Diverting trips from paratransit to an agency operated vehicle also saves money and reduces ADA ridership, something that all transit systems strive to do – divert trips to less expensive, yet still appropriate modes. Travel training activities will be of significant value to the transit dependent population – elderly, persons with disabilities, youths, low income and zero car households, as well as Title VI populations and veterans.

Coordination Strategy No. 5: Improve Coordination and Support a Seamless Family of Public Transportation Services

While El Metro and El Aguila do an excellent job of coordinating services technologies and fares are not yet compatible. REAL and Valley Metro are not yet coordinating services. Each system and locale should strive to be a part of one seamless network of services in the region. The idea is to coordinate and consolidate the services without consolidating the organizations. This way the transit user sees a regional network and each entity maintains its autonomy.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Continue to Improve Connectivity between Transit Systems - Expand the network of shared stops, transfer points, and park-and-rides under agreements between the systems. This should include connections between REAL, Jim Hogg County and El Aguila to bring residents needing services connecting Hebbbronville to Laredo.
2. Coordinate Fares Where Possible – El Metro is currently planning the development of a pass (monthly/weekly) system. El Aguila and El Metro should seek to coordinate transferring and thru ticketing so that customers only have to pay one fare and transfers are seamless.

Impact on Goals

The effort to create one seamless network of services addresses goals 1 through 6.

Potential Costs/Benefits

The costs include staff time and effort, while the benefits include increased connectivity and improvements in the safety and professionalism of human service transportation programs. Seamless connections improve the availability of mobility services for all residents including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and veterans.

For example, transit services provided by Jim Hogg County are only available for Elderly and/or Disabled Individuals with morning services a few days of week to Laredo. Morning trips impede elderly and individuals with disabilities to schedule afternoon medical trips. Coordination with El Aguila which provides fixed route services in the morning and afternoon to Bruni, could potentially provide afternoon return trips to Bruni, and reduce travel distance and time by Jim Hogg Transit Services to Bruni (13.3 miles). Seamless services for elderly and/or disabled passengers can lead to a broader range of transit options.

Service Strategies

Without question, the best way to coordinate services is to provide quality public transit as most persons with disabilities can use public transit if properly planned. The majority of the input received, as part of this planning process, indicated that regional connectivity is the key need. People in Zapata needing to go to Laredo; and people in Rio Grande City needing to go to Hidalgo County. Many persons pointed out that they need daily service for work, school, and many other needs.

These strategies call for continuing to build the regional network through:

- Routes that do not end at jurisdictional lines
- Timed meets to connecting systems
- Sharing of bus stops
- Redirecting service to where people want to go.

The network of public transit needed in the South Texas region would serve all members of the public and target job access services for human service agency clients as well as residents of colonias and other low income residents.

Service Strategy No. 1: Coordinated Long Distance Schedules and Ridesharing

This task expands opportunities for seniors and others giving more access to Laredo (or McAllen area). The three rural providers in Starr, Jim Hogg, and Zapata Counties will coordinate service to Laredo and McAllen. Rather than having two or three operators going on the same day, these providers can share in this service and schedule one vehicle each day of the week, giving customers a much higher quality service that is more dependable.

Through agreements, each system can book on the other based on the ground rules established prior to implementation of the program. A cost allocation formula can be worked out for payment to each other for trips provided. This would allow each system to retain control, while each system becomes more productive, lowering the cost per trip for all systems.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Continue to Improve Connectivity between Transit Systems - Expand the network of shared stops, transfer points, and park-and-rides under agreements between the systems. This should include connections between REAL, Jim Hogg County and El Aguila to bring residents needing services connecting Hebbbronville to Laredo.
2. Begin development of a ridesharing program for rural residents to access employment centers.

Impact on Goals

This expansion of service would directly address goals 2 and 3.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Rideshare programs are low cost (staff time) and vanpools by definition pay for themselves. Subsidies are often available from local government and businesses that benefit from vanpool programs. This program can be contracted to a private firm experienced in managing these programs or conducted in house at one of the transit systems. Ride share programs can be of great benefit to lower income residents trying to access employment locations or college students needing mobility options to get to educational facilities. Long distance route coordination can be of great benefit to existing rural transit customers, most of whom are seniors and low income residents by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing services.

Service Strategy No. 2: Rural Bus Stop Connectivity

This activity should be implemented first as the cost will be very low in relation to the benefits for customers and rural systems. Rural transit customers can greatly benefit through the increase in shared stops between El Metro and El Aguila. El Aguila can operate their service as “alighting only” for the inbound portion of their routes and “boarding only” for the outbound portion while in El Metro’s service area. This type of closed door agreement is common in other transit systems across the country.

As mentioned in Coordination Strategy No. 1 a south side transfer facility can result in many efficiency gains for El Aguila and more opportunities for better connection between El Metro and El Aguila.

Rural services in Webb and Starr County should also look to add additional stops for origin locations. Much of the state highways have wide shoulders with space to accommodate a bus stop. Additional stops can help provide service in unserved locations, neighborhoods and colonias at virtually no cost. Starr County between Roma and Rio Grande City can support a more robust fixed route service. Additional stops along Highway 83 on the current Starr County route can be a stepping stone to more local service.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Develop an agreement between El Metro and El Aguila to share stops with a modified closed door policy to better serve passengers and improve the connection between systems
2. Support efforts to develop a south side transit center.
3. Increase the number of available stops along U.S. Highway 83 in the Roma – Rio Grande City Corridor.

Impact on Goals

This strategy would directly address goals 1 and 2.

Potential Costs/Benefits

The cost of increasing bus stops is minimal. Transit schedules may need to be tweaked. Additional signs and poles may need to be placed. This strategy can help provide increased access to essential services and local businesses to rural residents. Most of the rural residents that would be impacted by this strategy are either seniors and/or have low incomes.

Service Strategy No. 3: Rural Services

The objective here is to improve efficiency and effectiveness in rural areas. After coordinated schedules have been identified and implemented, the coordination working group will look at group driver training, maintenance assistance, and other support.

There is an expressed need for better connection into the urban areas from rural communities. This includes scheduled service from Hebbronville and Zapata into Laredo. This strategy calls for the development of fixed schedule services connecting the towns in South Texas to the major educational facilities, medical centers and employment sites. The fixed schedule service is curb-to-curb service that connects areas on a scheduled basis. For example: a service from Zapata into Laredo on Tuesday and Thursday of each week.

Additionally, Rio Grande City coordinated with transit in the past to provide public transit services to schools in the area. These coordination efforts should be reestablished so that needed transit services can be expanded in the community.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Seek opportunities to have timed meets between El Metro, REAL, Valley Metro and El Aguila to decrease the distances each service has to travel
2. Look to develop the after school routes in the Rio Grande City area that Rainbow Lines previously operated.
3. Seek avenues to go fare-free for Starr county services
4. Seek to replace rural demand response service in Zapata with fixed route service.

Impact on Goals

Improving rural services addresses goal 2 of this plan.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Connectivity issues occur throughout the service area when going from one jurisdiction to another. Improving connectivity through planning improvements and route changes can be modest if timed and coordinated. This strategy would directly impact youth and students by providing additional service options in Rio Grande City. Fare free services would be a boon to low income residents, individuals with disabilities and seniors. Replacing demand response service with fixed routes will be of benefit to all user groups including seniors, individuals with disabilities and veterans.

Demand response services are subject to scheduling and limited seating on planned trips in the rural areas which can lead to cancelled or missed appointments for elderly and individuals with disabilities because they are unable to obtain a ride. Fixed route services would increase the availability of transit options for elderly and disabled individuals to schedule trips based on their individual needs and schedules.

Service Strategy No. 4: Fixed Route / Fixed Schedules to Colonias

Considering the increasing population in the rural areas of Webb County, a review of increased fixed route services to the colonias is in order. In future years, as demand and ridership increase, there may be opportunity to provide fixed schedule service to new areas within Webb County. El Aguila will seek funding to ensure that these communities have access to these services in Webb County. In addition, the other counties should review their needs annually as well and apply for these funding sources as the need becomes evident.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Work with colonias advocacy groups and other partners to secure funding to service additional colonias in the region.

Impact on Goals

Connection to new colonias meets goals 2 and 4 of this plan.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Costs of this service will be dependent on the costs per hour of the systems providing the expanded service. Increasing access to colonias residents can greatly improve the economic mobility of the community. All of these residents live below the poverty level and an increase in service will be of great value to the lower income user group.

Service Strategy No. 5: Urban Service

The Laredo metro area is growing rapidly with corresponding growth occurring in the colonias and the city. Laredo should be seeking funding to ensure that these communities and other growing areas receive service throughout the five- year horizon of the service plan. Any new bus or van service will require additional capital and operating funding and partnerships with El Metro.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Seek funding partners to help reduce headways and expand routes to areas of growing demand.
2. Develop a bus stop improvement program inventorying bus stops and determining which stops are in the highest need for pedestrian and infrastructure improvements.

Impact on Goals

This strategy addresses goals 1, 2, 4, and 6

Potential Costs/Benefits

The cost of exploring these activities consists of administrative time and effort. El Metro provides excellent service and improving their services will greatly benefit Laredo residents.

Service Strategy No. 6: Commuter, Job Training, Education, and Medical Service

The demographic review and analysis of travel patterns, surveys of operators, public meetings and discussions with other stakeholders reveals an agreement that more commuter opportunities into Laredo and Hidalgo County should be in place for work, training, school and medical service. Outside of Webb County where El Aguila does provide some service and along Highway 83 in Rio Grande City, there are no corridors that can sustain a bus. It is recommended that vanpools be promoted and marketed and if ridership increases in the future, the vanpool can be turned into a fixed-route.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Seek vanpool projects in an effort to improve air quality, reduce congestion, and provide transportation alternatives to the general population and workforce of the South Texas region.
2. Seek ridesharing opportunities at colonias, working with local advocates and entities to organize vanpools. Work closely with major employers to identify potential vanpools.

Impact on Goals

This strategy addresses goals 1, 2, 4, and 6

Potential Costs/Benefits

Rideshare programs are low cost (staff time) and vanpools by definition pay for themselves. Subsidies are often available from local government and businesses that benefit from vanpool programs. This program can be contracted to a private firm experienced in managing these programs or conducted in house at one of the transit systems or STDC. Van pools and ridesharing can greatly benefit low income residents and students seeking access to employment and educational opportunities.

Service Strategy No. 7: Shopper Shuttles

With peak hour vehicles available for other services during midday, it may be possible to offer shopper shuttle services to sponsors willing to support the transit system. The shopper shuttle targets neighborhoods with high numbers of transit dependent populations, typically elderly and persons with disabilities and frequent destinations (e.g. Wal-Mart, HEB, and medical centers), and can be very effective during off peak hours. Often these arrangements pay for themselves through funding from the retailers, who in return, receive the business, advertising/promotion, and they get involved in a positive way with their communities.

There are numerous examples (in Texas and across the country) of this type of service being successful with supermarkets and discount “big boxes.” Typically, shuttles target transit dependent persons (elderly, disabled, and low- income persons) in their neighborhoods. Service is usually for shopping and medical.

Potential Activities and Projects

Shopper shuttles

With peak hour vehicles available for other services during mid-day, it may be possible to offer shopper shuttle services to sponsors willing to support the transit system. The shopper shuttle targets neighborhoods with high numbers of transit dependent populations and frequent destinations (e.g. Walmart, HEB, and medical centers), and can be effective during off peak hours. Often these arrangements pay for themselves through funding from retailers, who in return, receive business, advertising/promotion, and get involved in a positive way with their communities. There are numerous examples (in Texas and across the country) of this type of service being successful with supermarkets and discount “big boxes.” Typically shuttles target transit dependent population – elderly, persons with disabilities, youths, low income and zero car households, as well as Title VI populations and veterans in their neighborhoods. Service is usually for shopping and medical and is an excellent way to coordinate service to the Veterans Administration hospitals and clinics.

Impact on Goals

This strategy addresses goals 1 through 6.

Potential Costs/Benefits

Based on data reported by each of the transit systems, the cost to implement new service will be between \$57 and \$80 per revenue hour, depending on type of service, size of vehicle and other factors. With shoppers shuttles it may be feasible to contract with local businesses to offset all or part of the costs. In particular transit dependent population – elderly, persons with disabilities, youths, low income and zero car households, as well as Title VI populations and veterans will benefit from this service. Shopper shuttles can be of great value to seniors and individuals with disabilities by increasing access to essential services in the community.

Access to supermarkets and discount “big box” stores is beneficial for elderly and individuals with disabilities as they are able to shop for groceries and fill their prescriptions in the same location.

Financial Strategies

In the previous section and in the gap analysis, it became evident that funding for transportation services in the region is limited. The financial strategies focus on coordinating grant allocation efforts to maximize the available funding to 5310 providers and for public transit to engage in substantive partnerships in the community.

Financing Strategy No. 1: Coordinate 5310 Services in the Region

Expanded coordinated efforts in the region can help increase the efficiency of services and expand the availability of services through economies of scale. Currently service in the region is fragmented. There are three rural (FTA Section 5311) providers and four rural FTA Section 5310 providers. Many of the county managed 5310 programs are limited as the entities are only getting FTA funding for preventative maintenance.

A strategy to have one entity set up a rural transit district for Zapata, Jim Hogg and Starr counties to secure 5310 funding and purchase service through contracts with the existing providers will give the region an 80/20 match for operations instead of preventative maintenance. This entity can also assist each operator with the procurement of new vehicles and brand the vehicles as a cohesive regional service. The goal is to operate regional service as a whole and provide additional operating funds so that services can be expanded. As the success grows services can be branded together (including 5311 providers and Webb county rural service) while each county and service provider maintains its program. Essentially the services become consolidated while the organizations remain intact.

Potential Activities and Projects

1. Allow a regional entity to submit a grant for purchase of service for FTA 5310 funding and develop contracts with the existing service providers to operate their 5310 programs

Impact on Goals

This strategy increases the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery (Goal 3).

Potential Costs/Benefits

This strategy will reduce the administrative burden of 5310 providers in the region and allow them to use the grant funding more effectively to administer their services. The 5310 program is geared toward seniors and individuals with disabilities. Making the funding available through this program more flexible and increasing the money available will increase the services available to these user groups. This is an important strategy in serving seniors and individuals with disabilities particularly those in the rural areas with limited mobility options.

Financing Strategy No. 2: Develop a Partnership/Sponsorship Program

Transit has a long history of providing advertising on and in buses for additional revenue for the system. Some rural systems have engaged in advertising over the years, but a sponsorship program is more than simply advertising. Instead of the usual selling of just one form of advertising, the system should sell sponsorship packages. Since sponsorship and advertising funds are an important source of local funding, this program should be implemented first, in order to determine the level of funding that can be attained. The local operators will work together to develop a sponsorship program designed to interest private businesses in sponsoring service and purchasing advertising on buses, websites, and written materials. The sponsorship program will allow for varying levels of funding support.

Potential Activities and Projects

A sponsorship or partnership program should be designed to sell a service to both public and private sponsors. Possible services for sale can include the following:

Sponsorship Services at Any Level

- Recognized as a sponsor on the regional how to ride guide, trip planner, system map schedule and web site.
- Sponsored by.... on all system literature and advertising.
- Decal on side or back of bus.
- Dedicated shuttle.
- Special promotions sponsorship such as free fare day.

Higher Level Sponsorship Services

- Company logo on system maps.
- Placing of a shelter for customers and/or employees.
- Placing of a stop conducive to customers and/or employees. This could include going into a parking lot and stopping next to the facility.
- Route named for sponsor.
- Bus Wrap.

If properly packaged, these services have considerable value to businesses such as:

- Large retailers – Walmart and HEB are excellent examples, malls and big box stores are others.
- Medical facilities – There are a number of examples of wrapped buses for medical centers, medical groups, and pharmacies.
- Large local based businesses – Major employers, colleges and universities.
- Small local based companies – Any local company can participate at a number of levels.
- Television, radio stations, and local newspapers – There are opportunities with these organizations. They can give transit systems valuable advertising.

Develop Sponsorship Levels and Packages

After determining what will be for sale, the following activities are recommended to be accomplished:

- Price items – Attach value to each item for sale. Check with firms that wrap buses to determine the cost of a wrap. Items should be priced competitively with similar types of advertisements, such as billboards, television and radio advertising. Think big! Both large and small firms should have opportunities. Set up multi-year packages for semi-permanent advertising such as bus wraps, shelter and bench signs.
- Develop sponsorship packages – After pricing services to be provided, transit systems should put them in sponsorship packages to maximize revenue. Each level of sponsorship should have a name to it. For example; gold, silver, bronze, or a name to connote transit. Examples can include:
 - High End Sponsor (Five star, platinum) – The value of these services is significant. High end services should only go to sponsors willing to pay over \$10,000 per year (with 3 year contracts). Packages can be combined based on a customer/sponsors specific needs. High end services include bus wraps (or limited ad space), shelter in front of facility with advertising, route named after sponsor, routing conducive to sponsors business, and logo on system maps. Each of these services should be worth up to \$10,000 per year and more if they are combined.

- Mid-Level Sponsors – These sponsors should have access to a variety of packages that include advertising on a shelters, benches, and internal advertising. Decal on back of the bus, digital advertising on monitors, and name in the riders guide are also available. Opportunities can include sponsoring special promotions and free fare days.
- Entry Level Sponsor – Small local sponsors also have a place in sponsorship. Packages can include advertising on benches, and internal advertising. Special promotions should be priced for the entry level sponsor, and recognition as a sponsor should be on promotional material

Sponsorship Implementation Tasks

- Create promotional material – Develop materials to sell the sponsorships. Materials should be high quality.
- Recruit supporters – Community and political leaders can be recruited to help sell packages. Attempt to get local media outlets to assist.
- Sell sponsorships – After preparation has been completed, sales can be initiated. Both large and small sponsors should be sought. For larger firms, first attempts should be with local contacts. If attempts with large firms fail at the local level - contact regional or corporate offices.

Impact on Goals

This strategy is to investigate new sources of local revenue for public transit through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service. (Goal 4).

Potential Costs/Benefits

With an aggressive, professional sales approach this program has the potential to generate significant unencumbered cash for the organization. Vehicles serving as rolling billboards can generate more than \$1,000 per month per vehicle (after expenses). Additional sponsorships can generate \$100,000 or more annually depending on the agency and area served. Increasing funding for transportation services can allow for services to be expanded benefiting all user groups, transit dependent populations, including seniors, individuals with disabilities and veterans.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The strategies will be implemented over the five year horizon of this plan. The objective in this implementation plan is to introduce changes in a manner that maximizes ridership and funding. Services with the most ability to increase ridership, coupled with areas with the greatest need will be implemented first with an emphasis on serving the transit dependent population – elderly, persons with disabilities, youths, low income and zero car households, as well as Title VI populations and veterans, provided funding is available. Funding will drive implementation, however, as municipalities that provide local funding will gain priority status. As with all plans, these timelines are subject to change.

Year 1

In the first year, Mobility Management activities will take priority because so many future activities will depend on these functions being coordinated. Other activities will center on planning in support of the future services to be implemented. All stakeholder and operator committees will be formed as well.

- Mobility Management –stakeholders will organize work groups, seek funding, and determine who will perform which functions.
- Formalize Coordination Group.
- Seek agreements for shared bus stop usage
- Implement various low/no cost coordination activities:
 - Human service vehicle sharing
 - Technical support to human service agencies
- Sponsorship Program – The program should be designed and planned in the first year.
- Coordinate connections and long distance routes between service providers
- Seek purchase of service contracts with Jim Hogg, Zapata and Starr county 5310 programs.
- Develop El Metro pass fare card systems
- Seek replacement vehicles for El Metro and El Aguila
- Develop fare free services in Starr County
- Develop Fixed routes in Zapata

Year 2

In the second year, Mobility Management functions will be implemented slowly. Planning and funding activities will continue and vehicle procurement will be initiated. This year will require careful planning and working with the local community leaders.

- Mobility Management - functions to include:
 - One stop information center – Apps, website and telephone support
 - Customer marketing and education – Coordinated
 - Shopper shuttle – Seek partners for service (e.g. HEB or Walmart)
- Human service coordination – Initiate activities of training, maintenance, and vehicle utilization.
- Develop fare coordination amongst El Aguila and El Metro
- Develop fixed route service in Zapata
- Implement revised Brownsville – South Padre Island service and implement Harlingen – South Padre Island service.
- Fixed-schedule service – Implement in selected areas in place of paratransit.
- Sponsorship program – This program should be implemented in Year 2

Year 3

In the third year, the Mobility Management activities will continue to grow. Local service in underserved areas will be started as local funding is available. Vehicles and technology will be procured for future years. Where appropriate, planning activities will continue. Much of the energy should be focused on implementation. In addition, the committee should continue to seek dedicated funding.

- Mobility Management:
 - Implement coordinated fare structure
 - Conduct other functions as appropriate
 - Monitor all service
- Initiate travel training for transit dependent groups in the region.
- Seek purchase of service contracts with Webb County 5310 programs.

Year 4

In Year 4, stakeholders will continue to attempt to secure funding for a regional transit network. A major emphasis should be on securing a dedicated funding base to ensure a sustainable network of transit services.

- Mobility Management – Ongoing activities
- Fixed-route – Implement fixed-route services as funding allows
- Shopper shuttle – Seek additional opportunities for service
- Continue working toward seamless transit service and connections

Year 5

This year should focus on measuring changes and planning for new services over the next five years.

- Mobility Management – Implement new planning initiative for the next five years

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report No. 124: *Guidebook for Measuring, Assessing, and Improving Performance of Demand-Response Transportation* and its rural companion report TCRP Report No. 136 *Guidebook for Rural Demand-Response Transportation: Measuring, Assessing, and Improving Performance* continue to serve as our guide for operational performance measures for demand response types of service. There are a number of basic concepts that will be used when setting of performance measures:

- Aligning performance measures to established vision, goals and objectives
- Aligning performance measures to strategies identified through the coordinated planning process
- Keeping performance measures simple and using a small number of measures. For example, TCRP Reports Nos. 124 and 136 recommend between 5 and 6 measures for rural and urban paratransit
- Measuring both:
 - Efficiency of services – “doing things right”
 - Effectiveness of services – “doing the right things”
- Ensuring each measure has a stated purpose
- Recognizing that data collection and analysis is expensive and time consuming;
- Measuring performance using as few indicators as needed. If it is not a problem, measure it on a sample basis as needed.

Quantitative Data

Following are transit specific performance measures that can be applied to operational strategies. Each performance measure evaluates different aspects of a service:

- Passenger trips per revenue hour or vehicle mile – These are key measures of productivity.
- Operating cost per revenue hour or vehicle mile – These measures determine the basic cost of providing service.
- Operating cost per passenger trip – This measure is a reflection of the cost per hour and system productivity. The higher the productivity, the lower the cost per trip.
- Safety incidents per 100,000 vehicle-miles – A basic measure of safety.

- On-time performance – A measure for determining the quality of service being provided.
- Annual one way trips per capita – This measure helps depict the impact of the service in the community.

Quantitative data related to non-operational strategies are not always applicable, however in many cases numbers can be used to measure success. For example, where a strategy may include developing a brochure to guide medical facilities in locating at or near a bus route, a quantitative measure can include the number of brochures distributed to the medical and human service communities. In addition, an outreach strategy that involves a mobility manager approach may include quantitative data on the number of phone contacts, the number of website hits, or the number of people who received travel training.

Qualitative Data

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

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

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

- User Benefits – Direct benefits to users from increased access to services and activities (i.e. medical services, employment, education facilities, and shopping).
- Economic Benefits – Economic impact of expanding access to jobs shopping, and community locations, as well as expanded business opportunities for taxi providers.
- Public Service Support – Support for government agency activities and programs by allowing access to medical services to avoid more acute and expensive medical problems, helping reduce welfare dependency and unemployment, and providing the ability to live independently and reduce care facility costs.
- Equity Benefits – Increased economic and social opportunities for people who may be economically, physically and socially disadvantaged.

- Option Value – Value people place on having a service available, even if they do not currently use it, i.e., during emergencies or when a family member can suddenly no longer drive.

Program Interviews

A possible technique for gathering both quantitative and qualitative information is to conduct project interviews. Interviews can be conducted in person or over the phone, and can provide a wide range of information that can be used to evaluate services originating from the coordinated transportation planning process.

Information and data obtained through the interview process can be used beyond the evaluation process. For instance, it can be used for peer-sharing efforts with other projects in the area, and to help identify opportunities for additional supports or trainings that may be needed to ensure success of the project.

User Feedback

Participants should have opportunities to give feedback and input on the program. There are several options available, and this input can be obtained through different techniques. A short user survey could be posted on the website of the administrator of the program. A written survey could be administered to users of the program as a mail-out, mail-back instrument.

Service quality information can also be obtained through a “secret shopper” method, whereby a designated representative(s) of the program administrator takes trips, with an objective of collecting specific information about the trip. It is important to recognize that such data are individual trips and the findings often cannot be attributed to the program as a whole. But “secret shopper” data can be useful to add to service quality information collected through other methods.

Monthly and Annual Reporting

The performance data identified should be summarized on a monthly basis and provided to involved and interested groups, including the participating jurisdictions and the coordination committee. After one year, the program should be reviewed in detail to determine areas in need of adjustment or revision.

Measuring the Performance of the System

About the Performance Indicators: The proposed Coordination Committee will not directly implement transportation services, but instead provide coordination support to numerous agencies that implement these services in the region. STDC intends to track the performance of

the Coordinated Regional Public Transportation System through the following System Performance Indicators. The committee may develop additional performance measures to track coordination activities.

The intent is to identify a consistent method for compiling the data across service providers, and to begin to collect and publicize data about system performance on an annual basis. The following measures are used to serve as a starting point for the refinement.

The region is achieving the goals of the South Texas Plan if...		
More service is provided to more people (Goal 2)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Annual Public Transportation Trips/ Capita	Survey of Providers in Resource Inventory	Increase
Percent of workers who use public transportation for commuting	American Community Survey	Increase
Number of veterans, persons with disabilities and elderly persons served	Transit Providers	Increase
The system is accessible, seamless and understood (Goals 1, 2, 3 and 6)		
Indicator	Data Notes	Target
Number of Fully Accessible Bus Stops/ Total Number of Bus Stops	El Metro	Increase
Percent of population within 3/4 mile of fixed route transit	ACS Population; MPO Transit network	Increase
Percent of population within 5 miles of intermodal facility	ACS Population; MPO Transit network	Increase
The region is fully leveraging available funding and partnerships for transit (Goal 4 and 5)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Federal Transit Administration Funding awarded in the Region	TxDOT, Transit Systems MPO	Increase
Number of applications received in the South Texas region for FTA 5310 Elderly and Disabled funding	TxDOT, MPO	Increase
The system is cost effective and efficient (Goal 3)		
Indicator	Data Source	Target
Average operating cost / public transit trip	Survey of Providers in Resource Inventory	Decrease / Limit Increase

Summary - Performance Measures

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

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

Appendix A

Public Meeting Attendance

Meeting: General Public Meeting Round 1

Date/Time: Thursday, February 1, 2017 – 11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: Holding Institute (FACE Coalition Meeting)

1102 Santa Maria, Laredo, TX

FACCE COALITION

FAMILY ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT STRATIGY

Holding Institute

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Sign-In Sheet

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Email/Phone #	Signature
Solis	Sofia	Head Start	HSSEKATH@yahoocom	[Signature]
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Guaman	Laura	Head Start	Floydhs1@yahoo.com	[Signature]
Bermea	Eduardo	Carroll Transit (Elkated)	eberuel@carroll-tx.us	[Signature]
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Batista	Annette	Maximus	annettebatista@maximus.com	* copy of presentation
Pulido	Anna Mg.	YTHSCSA GRACIAS TX.	956-740-7668	[Signature]
Garza	Zonia G	Methodist Head Start	956 206 0587	[Signature]

FACILE COALITION

FAMILY ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT SERVICES

Holding Institute

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Sign-In Sheet

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Email/Phone #	Signature
de los Santos	Jacqui	Le Fleur Transportation	jacquide los santos@le fleur.net	<i>[Signature]</i>
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FACCE COALITION

FAMILY ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT STRAIGHT

Holding Institute

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

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Decora	Irma	maximo	irmadecora@maximo.org	<i>Irma Decora</i>

FACILE COALITION

FAMILY ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY EMPowerment STRaTegY

Holding Institute

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Sign-In Sheet

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Email/Phone #	Signature
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FACCE COALITION

FAMILY ASSISTANCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRAIGHT

Holding Institute

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

Sign-In Sheet

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Email/Phone #	Signature
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Ceballos	David	Deiscol Health Plan	728.6330 david.gomez@cdchstx.org	
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Flones	Ucky	AHEC	712-0037	
Escobedo	Nohmy	AHEC	712-0037	
Rodriguez	Adelaida	AHEC	712-0037	
Medelun	Blazel	AHEC	11	
Barcia	Uda	AHEC	950-712-0037	
Rodriguez	Jose	AHEC	956 712-0037	
Criz	Rey	AHEC	712 0037	

Meeting: General Public Meeting Round 1

Date/Time: Thursday, February 1, 2017 – 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: Gateway Community Health Center (Conference Room)

473 State Hwy. 285 Hebronville, TX

2/1/2017

Name	Agency	Title	email address
Stephanie Garcia	REAL INC	Project Coordinator	Stephanie.garcia@realinc.org
Mary O'Neil	CLAK	Clerk	N/A
Sara Mast	N/A	Clerk	N/A
Omega Rocha	N/A	Clerk	
Joselyn Guardian	N.A	nurse	
Rose Jones		nurse	rcj54@aol.com
Patricia Valdes		Maintenance	
Juan E. Rodriguez	STDC	Pygm Dr	jerodriguez@stdc.co.tx.us
Martha B Hernandez	STDC	Reginal Service Plann	martha.hdz@stdc.co.tx.us
Bernad Paul	KFH	Planner	bpaul@kfh.org

Meeting: General Public Meeting Round 1

Date/Time: Thursday, February 2, 2017 – 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: Rio Grande City Nutrition Center

1307 San Benito St., Rio Grande City, TX

Rio Grand City Song in Sheet
Meal Center

Name / Nombre

Bennett Powell

Martina Garcia

Lupia Gonzales

Delia C. Cruz

Doraci Garcia

Elida Lopez

Janie Highby

Azuena Huajardo

Laura Macias

Josefina Salazar

Rosenda Salinas (Hosie)

Antonia Lopez

Roberto Zamora

ALMA LETICIA MOYA

Rosa A. Roberts

Ejroin Guerra

Maria L. Balderr

Socorro Alvarez

Lella Derrin

Rosa Eli Pantoja

Rhyan Gomez

Amund Cruz

Ana Sanchez

Edit Salmore

Denise Alvarez

Ester Ayala

Aida Jaldes

Ida Gonzalez

Juan Cruz

Melba Cruz

Meeting: General Public Meeting Round 1

Date/Time: Thursday, February 2, 2017 – 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**Location: Gateway Community Health Center (Conference Room)
210 N Rathmell Ave. Zapata, TX**

Name

Representing Agency

Telephone & Email Address

Capt. Tony Elizondo	Zapata County Sheriff's Office/ Office of Emergency Mgmt.	956-744-2038 tonyelizondo@Sheriff.co. Zapata.tx.us
Jose G. Alejandro	DPS/DEM	956-489-7000 jose.alejandro@dps.texas.gov
Mirella Hernandez	STOC	916-722-3795 mirellah@stoc.ca.gov
Sean E. Rodriguez	STOC	976-722-3995 jerodro@stoc.ca.gov
Bennett Powell	KFH Group	512-207-0651 bpowell@kfgroup.com

Telephone & Email Address

Representing Agency

Name

<i>Yael Ushera</i>		
<i>Shirley</i>		
<i>FL</i>		
<i>Shelagh</i>		
<i>Joanne D. Jones</i>		
<i>Margie Florio</i>		
<i>Nancy L. Brando</i>		
<i>Betty Johnson</i>		
<i>Mal R. J.</i>		
<i>Ethel Williams</i>		

South Texas Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan Meeting

Location: STC Starr County
 Date: 3-21-17

NAME	ZIP CODE	E-MAIL (optional)
Bennett Powell	78704	bpowell@kklmpaf.com
Melia Boama	78572	m.boama@costarr.tx.us
Marisol Dela Garza	78582	marisol@costarr.tx.us
Luis Per Garza	78582	lgarcia.457@southtexascolleges.edu

SOUTH TEXAS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Meeting: General Public Meeting Round 2 of RCTP

Date/Time: Tuesday, February 21, 2017, 3:00 p.m.

Location: Jim Hogg County Nutrition Center, 212 East Tilley Street Hebbronville, Texas 78361

Name	Title	Agency	Telephone	Email Address
Petra Garcia	Social Service Director	Jim Hogg Co	361-527-5835	Petra.garcia@co.jim-hogg.tx.us
Yvette B. Arredondo	Clerk	Jim Hogg Co.	361-231-0216	yvette.arredondo@ymail.com
Liardo Caba				
Zulema Cervera			956-319-6523	
Eva G. Delino				
Laura Herrera	Clerk	Jim Hogg Co.	(361) 231-1461	
Raquel Segovia	Comm. member	Jim Hogg	361-296-5045	Ms Raquel Segovia@gmail.com
Olga Carrion		Jim Hogg	361-231-1706	Olga Carrion
Martha Hernandez	Regional Services Planning	South Texas Development Council	956-722-3395	Martha.hdz@stcdc.org.tx.us
Juan E Rodriguez	Region Dir	STDC	(956) 722-3395	JRodriguez@stcdc.org.tx.us

Zapata County Independent School District
 At Risk, Parental Involvement and Counseling Department
 Community Outreach
 Dr. Cynthia L. Villarreal, Presenter

Feb 22, 2014

PARENT NAME Nombre del Padre/Madre	TELEPHONE # Numero de Telefono	STUDENT NAME Nombre del Estudiante	GRADE LEVEL Grado	SCHOOL NAME Nombre de la Escuela
Anei Towns	236-9203		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Jani Mendosa	489-1411	Rudy Salinas Jr	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Sawa Mantus	645-2064	Leila Mantus	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Connie Winkler	(956) 750 1360	Alesha & Eddie Winkler	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Sammy Luna	750-0013		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Alicia Rodriguez	956-750-1815	Jose L. Rodriguez	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Guadalupe Martinez	956-7014977	ANNIA Y GEIDYS	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Rosalinda Gumb	956-785-3493		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Cristina S. Cabales	334-7064	Roel y Daire Cabales	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Barbara Ponce	(956) 750-5304	Juan A. Martinez	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Dencia A. Martinez	956-750-0294	Juan A. Allen Martinez	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Esty Quezada	(956) 337-6973	Jaymi, Juan, Joey	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Martina Garcia Lazo	956/265-7746	Jose - Monisse Garcia	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Martha Hernandez	966-722-3886		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Tuanita Mijay	956-740-2632		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Mayra Paredes	206-5775	Kaylee & Joshua Paredes	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Rosano Adz	337-9935	Diego, Melissa, Alfred	PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
Juan E Rodriguez	(956) 280-3445		PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS
			PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	ALB ZNE ZSE VES ZMS ZHS

Dr. Cynthia L. Villarreal

Appendix B

Public Survey Analysis

South Texas Development Council Survey Findings Report

Presented to:

South Texas Development Council

*On behalf of the
KFH Group*



**SOUTH TEXAS
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

February 2017



SOUTHWEST PLANNING & MARKETING

PLANNING | MARKETING | RESEARCH | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

P.O. BOX 1506 | SANTA FE, NM 87504 | WWW.SOUTHWESTPLANNING.COM

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Executive Summary

- A total of 139 surveys were completed in Spanish and English.
- When reviewing the report, it is important to note that the respondents varied demographically by county, which influenced the response by county.
- Not surprisingly, age and income levels appear to be motivators for public transit use. As an example, respondents from Starr County were more likely to use public transit than the other counties by far (78.6% of Starr county respondents were 65 years of age or older).
- Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 65+. Overall, most respondents were between the ages of 26-55 years of age. Most Starr County respondents (78.6%) were 65 years of age or older. Starr County and Zapata County had the highest number of retired respondents (33.3% and 42.9%). Starr County had the highest number of unemployed respondents (35.7%). Zapata County respondents had the lowest income levels (62.7% made \$14,999 or less in annual household income).
- Zapata County and Starr County were the only two counties with respondents that had household members that need special accommodations in order to travel.
- Over three quarters (77.3%) of all respondents drive themselves to work. Webb County and Jim Hogg County had the highest rate of people that drive themselves.
- Overall, two-thirds (61.6%) of all respondents drive themselves to medical appointments. For medical appointments, they are more likely to ride with friends/relatives than for work.
- Many respondents cited a need for transportation for medical visits. The need is for medical visits out of the area and in different towns, as well as in the area (county).
- On average, nearly two-thirds of the respondents drive themselves to social recreational outings. Overall, 70.9% of the respondents drive themselves to school.
- More than half of the respondents from the four counties were likely to drive themselves for shopping/errands.
- Overall, three fourths of the respondents (76.0%) use public transit less than once a month. Starr County respondents had the highest usage of public transit per month. Two-thirds of the respondents (66.6%) use public transit at least once a week.
- Webb County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work or after work, the trip takes too long with too many transfers and there is too much waiting.

- Jim Hogg County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work and the trip takes too long.
- Zapata County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available or they do not know if it is available.
- Starr County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available, they have limited mobility and that public transit is unreliable.
- Many Webb County, Jim Hogg County and Starr County respondents said that there is a need for improved transit:
 - Overall, more than half the respondents cited additional geographic areas, more direct routes, extended days and hours, and more frequent service as improvements that would motivate them to use public transportation.
 - Three-fourths of the respondents would use public transit if the quality were improved (100% of Starr County Respondents indicated that they would). Just 57.8% of Zapata County respondents said they would be motivated to use public transit if the quality were improved.
 - Improved on-time performance (36.5%) and additional shelters (36.5%) were cited as the most important areas that need improvement. For Starr County, 60.0% of respondents cited improved access to information as a needed improvement.
- Overall, respondents are likely to use public transit in the morning (51.9%). Zapata County was the exception, with 62.5% of the respondents using public transit mid-morning.
- Many of the respondents cited medical visits and shopping as major needs for public transit. Both issues require flexible schedules for public transit.

Methodology

Southwest Planning & Marketing (SWPM) was contracted through the KFH Group to prepare and field transportation surveys to be administered both online and in person (paper copies). SWPM provided surveys in Spanish and English (see appendix A). SWPM provided online survey links, as well as the paper surveys.

A total of 139 surveys were completed. Open-ended responses provided for each question are found within the body of the report. All verbatim open-ended responses are found in Appendix B.

Response	Count	%
Webb County	20	14.4%
Jim Hogg	39	28.1%
Zapata County	59	42.4%
Starr County	16	11.5%
Other-Hidalgo	3	2.2%
Othe-Valverde	1	0.7%
Other-Williamson	1	0.7%
	139	100.0%

Findings

Overview

When reviewing the report, it is important to note that the respondents varied demographically by county, which influenced the response by county. Not surprisingly, age and income levels appear to be motivators for use of public transit. As an example, respondents from Starr County were more likely to use public transit than the other counties (78.6% of Starr county respondents were 65 years of age or older).

About the Respondents

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 65+. Overall, most respondents were between the ages of 26-55 years of age. Most Starr County respondents (78.6%) were 65 years of age or older. Starr County and Zapata County had the highest number of retired respondents (33.3% and 42.9%). Starr County had the highest number of unemployed respondents (35.7%). Zapata County respondents had the lowest income levels (62.7% made \$14,999 or less in annual household income).

Do you have a drivers' license?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Yes	93.3%	75.9%	87.0%	76.9%	84.0%

Please indicate your age group.					
Which of the following best describes your current employment status?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Employed, full-time	100.0%	30.0%	27.8%	7.1%	41.5%
Employed, part-time	0.0%	13.3%	5.6%	0.0%	5.4%
Retired	0.0%	23.3%	33.3%	42.9%	25.4%
Student, full-time	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	3.1%
Student, part-time	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	2.3%
Homemaker	0.0%	3.3%	7.4%	7.1%	4.6%
Unemployed	0.0%	13.3%	13.0%	35.7%	12.3%
Other	0.0%	20.0%	20.4%	21.4%	15.4%

Please check your approximate total annual household income from all sources					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Other; Specify
\$14,999 or less	7.7%	70.0%	62.7%	87.5%	55.9%
\$15,000-\$29,999	23.1%	26.7%	29.4%	12.5%	25.2%
\$30,000-\$44,999	38.5%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	9.0%
\$45,000-\$59,999	15.4%	0.0%	3.9%	0.0%	5.4%
\$60,000-\$74,999	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
\$75,000-\$99,999	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
\$100,000-\$124,999	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
\$125,000-\$149,999	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$150,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Special Accommodations in the Household

Zapata County and Starr County were the only two counties with respondents that had household members that needed special accommodations to travel.

Does anyone in your household need special accommodations in order to travel in a vehicle such as:					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Wheelchair access	0.0%	0.0%	31.6%	40.0%	22.5%
Ability to carry on a mobile chair or scooter	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	5.0%
Walkers or other physical supports	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	40.0%	15.0%
Other	0.0%	100.0%	57.9%	40.0%	65.0%

Primary Mode of Transportation

Mode of Transportation-Work

Overall, over three quarters (77.3%) of the respondents drive themselves to work. In Starr County, 33.3% drive themselves and 33.3% use public transit. Webb County and Jim Hogg County had the highest rate of people that drive themselves (88.2% and 83.3%, respectively). In Jim Hogg County, 28.8% of the respondents ride to work with family/friends.

Primary mode of transportation - Work					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Drive Myself	88.2%	52.4%	83.3%	33.3%	77.1%
Ride with Family/Friends	11.8%	28.6%	12.5%	0.0%	13.3%
Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	2.4%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	1.2%
Walk	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Taxi	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Other	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	33.3%	4.8%

Mode of Transportation-Medical

Overall, two-thirds (61.6%) of the respondents drive themselves to medical appointments. For medical appointments, they are more likely to ride with friends/relatives than for work. Jim Hogg and Zapata County had the highest percentage of people that rode with friends and relatives (46.9% and 42.0% respectively). In Starr County, 22.2% of respondents used public transit to attend medical appointments.

Primary mode of transportation - Medical					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Drive Myself	87.5%	46.9%	54.0%	55.6%	61.6%
Ride with Family/Friends	12.5%	46.9%	42.0%	22.2%	31.8%
Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	0.0%	3.1%	4.0%	22.2%	4.8%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Walk	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Taxi	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%

Mode of Transportation-Social Recreational

On average, nearly two-thirds (59.2%) of the respondents drive themselves to social recreational outings. In Jim Hogg County, over half of the respondents ride with family/friends for social/recreational outings (55.2%). One third (33.3%) of Starr County Respondents use Public Transit.

Primary mode of transportation - Social Recreational					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Drive Myself	93.3%	37.9%	54.3%	33.3%	59.2%
Ride with Family/Friends	6.7%	55.2%	45.7%	33.3%	35.9%
Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	2.9%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Walk	0.0%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Taxi	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Mode of Transportation-School

Overall, 70.9% of the respondents drive themselves to school. Starr County had the highest usage of public transit (40.0%).

Primary mode of transportation - School					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Drive Myself	93.3%	63.2%	72.7%	60.0%	70.9%
Ride with Family/Friends	6.7%	26.3%	27.3%	0.0%	17.7%
Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	2.5%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Walk	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Taxi	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%

Mode of Transportation-Shopping Errands

More than half of the respondents from the four counties are likely to drive themselves for shopping/errands. One quarter (25.0%) of Starr County respondents were likely to use public transit.

Primary mode of transportation - Shopping Errands					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Drive Myself	93.8%	58.6%	63.4%	50.0%	68.8%
Ride with Family/Friends	6.3%	41.4%	36.6%	25.0%	28.6%
Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	2.7%

Transportation Use-Frequency

Overall, three fourths of the respondents (76%) use public transit less than once a month. Starr County respondents had the highest usage of public transit. Two thirds of the respondents (66.6%) use public transit at least once a week.

How often do you use public transportation?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
4 times per week or more	6.3%	6.5%	6.4%	20.0%	8.3%
2-3 times per week	0.0%	3.2%	2.1%	33.3%	5.8%
Once a week	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	1.7%
2-3 times per month	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	6.7%	2.5%
Once a month	0.0%	6.5%	6.4%	13.3%	5.8%
Less than once a month	93.8%	83.9%	80.9%	13.3%	76.0%

Transportation Use-Time of Day

Overall, respondents are likely to use public transit in the morning (51.9%). Zapata County was the exception, with 62.5% of the respondents using public transit mid-morning.

What time do you generally use public transportation?				
	Morning Rush Hours (6-9)	Mid-Morning/Afternoon (9-3)	Evening Rush Hours (3-6)	Night (6-10)
Webb County	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Jim Hogg	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%
Zapata County	37.5%	62.5%	6.3%	12.5%
Starr County	85.7%	28.6%	7.1%	0.0%
Overall	51.9%	38.5%	17.3%	19.2%

Why Respondents Do Not Use Public Transit

Webb County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work or after work, the trip takes too long with too many transfers and there is too much waiting.

Jim Hogg County respondents do not use public transit because they need their car for work and the trip takes too long.

Zapata County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available or they do not know if it is available.

Starr County respondents do not use public transit because no service is available, they have limited mobility and that public transit is unreliable.

Why don't you currently use public transportation?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
No service is available near my home/work/ school	11.8%	23.1%	37.8%	53.8%	29.8%
Don't know if service is available and/or location of stops	0.0%	7.7%	21.6%	0.0%	12.5%
I have limited mobility and it is hard for me to use public transportation	0.0%	7.7%	8.1%	30.8%	8.7%
Need my car for work	58.8%	30.8%	13.5%	7.7%	25.0%
Need my car before and/or after work/school	70.6%	19.2%	8.1%	0.0%	22.1%
Need my car for emergencies/overtime	35.3%	11.5%	10.8%	7.7%	15.4%
It might not be safe/I don't feel safe	5.9%	3.8%	0.0%	7.7%	2.9%
Trip is too long/takes too much time	35.3%	23.1%	8.1%	7.7%	15.4%
Have to transfer/too many transfers	23.5%	3.8%	5.4%	0.0%	7.7%
Have to wait too long for the bus	23.5%	3.8%	8.1%	7.7%	11.5%
Public transportation in the area is uncomfortable	0.0%	3.8%	2.7%	7.7%	2.9%
Public transportation in the area is expensive	5.9%	0.0%	2.7%	7.7%	2.9%
Public transportation in the area is dirty	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Public transportation in area is unreliable/late	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	15.4%	4.8%
The hours of operation are too limited	11.8%	7.7%	10.8%	23.1%	12.5%
Public transportation is too expensive	5.9%	7.7%	5.4%	7.7%	5.8%
Other	11.8%	23.1%	24.3%	7.7%	19.2%
Other-Drive myself					
Other-Don't need it					
Other-No need for it					
Other-Family Members					
Other-No need					

Need for Improved Public Transit

Many Webb County, Jim Hogg County and Starr County respondents said that there is a need for improved transit. One third (36.2%) of Zapata County respondents did not know if there is a need for improved service, although many respondents identified a need in Zapata County for improved service in the open-ended comments.

Do you think there is a need for improved public transit services in the area?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Yes	88.2%	35.7%	61.7%	100.0%	71.7%
No	0.0%	21.4%	2.1%	0.0%	8.7%
Don't Know	11.8%	42.9%	36.2%	0.0%	19.7%

Where would you like to see additional or improved public transit services in the area?	
Verbatim Response	
Zapata	9
I would like to see this in Texas/Whole County	4
Rio Grande City, Texas	4
Rural areas	4
Centro	2
Jim Hogg - Anywhere in the Jim Hogg county area. It is needed to me all day for those whoa re unable to get rides.	2
More/Better buses	2
All areas, so people don't have to wait too long or take an hour to get to their destination	1
Around the hospitals parks	1
Close to TAMIV	1
connection to more available public medical oservices and/or hospitals	1
Edinberg-In the north part of Edinburg, Texas from University on up and closer to neighborhoods where apartments are nearby	1
Edinburg -I would like to see public transit route to UTRGV in Edinburg	1
Edinburg-I would like to see public transit route to UTRGV in Edinburg	1
Edinburg-In the north part of Edinburg, Texas from University on up and closer to neighborhoods where apartments are nearby	1
En town	1
Hebbonville	1
How about a metro station? Better bus and train stops.	1
In the area that service can be provided in general	1
It would be awesome if we had public transit services.	1
La Grulla , alto Bonita . La Victoria , 755 areas . Thank you !	1
McAllenTo store, doctor office, to McAllen doctor office or Harlington to see doctor	1
Merida st.	1
Peritas area	1
Ranchitas-Highway areass	1
Recreational and shopping	1
Sites close to Tamial and or Hospitals	1
South - Para el sur	1
South - Sur de Laredo	1
South area new subdivisions	1
Weslaco - 1102 Lilia Dr. Weslaco, Texas 78599	1
Weslaco -1102 Lilia Dr. Weslaco, Texas 78599	1

Motivation to Use Public Transit

Many respondents cited a need for transportation for medical visits. The need is for going to medical visits out of the area and in different towns, as well as within the area (county). Overall, more than half the respondents cited additional geographic areas, more direct routes, extended days and hours, and more frequent service as reasons they would use public transportation.

Use public transportation in the area if there were:					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Additional Geographic Areas	50.0%	55.0%	40.0%	100.0%	58.0%
More Direct Routes	81.8%	46.2%	21.7%	100.0%	58.7%
Days and Hours were Extended	71.4%	50.0%	29.2%	100.0%	58.7%
More Frequent Service	80.0%	56.3%	37.0%	100.0%	61.8%

Please list some areas you would use public transportation to get to if available	
Response	Count
Doctor/Hospital (local and out of town)	19
Store (Tinda) Grocery-shopping	7
Schools	5
Work-Trabajo	5
Everywhere - when needed	2
South area	2
1800 N. Texas Blvd, Weslaco, Texas 78599	1
Arca de Zapot	1
CentrB213:B254o	1
Centro	1
Church, job	1
Mau, North Side	1
Merida st.	1
To other towns specially if living outside a big city. It would be nice taking the train to go shopping for the day. Or have a drink	1
to public parks and boys and girls club for my son	1
Transportation to nearest urban areas	1
UTRGV Edinburg	1

Three-fourths of the respondents would use public transit if the quality were improved. For Starr County, 100.0% respondents indicated that they would use public transit if the quality were improved; for Zapata County, just 57.8% of respondents said they would be motivated to use public transit if the quality were improved. Improved on-time performance (36.5%) and additional shelters (36.5%) were cited as the most important areas that need improvement. Nearly two-thirds (60.0%) of respondents from Starr County cited improved access to information as a needed improvement.

Would you use public transportation in the area if service quality were improved?					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Yes	83.3%	73.7%	57.8%	100.0%	73.7%

If yes, please indicate what is needed to improve the service quality					
	Webb County	Jim Hogg	Zapata County	Starr County	Overall
Improved on-time performance	41.7%	10.0%	9.1%	90.0%	36.5%
Cleaner public transportation	33.3%	10.0%	13.6%	60.0%	23.8%
Safer transportation	16.7%	10.0%	13.6%	70.0%	23.8%
More helpful staff	16.7%	20.0%	40.9%	50.0%	30.2%
Additional shelters and benches	66.7%	10.0%	18.2%	50.0%	36.5%
Improved access to transit information	33.3%	40.0%	9.1%	60.0%	31.7%
More informative web site	0.0%	10.0%	4.5%	30.0%	12.7%
Other	8.3%	30.0%	45.5%	10.0%	25.4%

Verbatim Comments (Other)
Once transportation is available
more availability and variation of times...similar like bus times & air flight times.
Less expensive
Bus route
Services were available
Need the service 1st

Additional Verbatim Comments

Additional Comments - Verbatim Responses
Pro porcionax transportacion en la aria de zapata
Texas in general will benefit from better public transportation. We have lots of college students that would love this program and everyone working and stuck in traffic would love being able to sit back and relax after a long day at work.
Safety, limitations to self-owned car (mechanical car problems) economic (Fuel & Money) and also, the improvement of the enviorment
On the last question I had put other because there was no Not Applicable answer. But I really do feel bad when I see others walking from grocery store to their apartments and some times offer them a ride if I see them frequently, but it breaks my heart when they are older ladies in their 50s'.
We need it asap .
Our community would benefit from any added available transportation services being that we are a rural area with not much available near us.
If I didn't have a car, I would be in need of public transportation
Lo ug se citallos
Que haya tranchorto publias porque yo ray ademe illegible oficino de transporte illegible tomar el ilegible aqua no hay.
We need the transportation
More buses to ask to trips to see my dr. in McAllen
Urge el transporte purcio en general. Gracias
We need illegible transportation
Paved roads
En Rio Grande nesecitamas el transporte
Horario mas temprano para los que trabajan y rutas mas directas para el sur de laredo hacia el norte. No tener q
ue usar tanto transfer deruta.
More rates; safety. The bus not have to wait too long for the bus to get to the destination.
Stops need to be in lighted areas and have shelter from the sun as it is very HOT. Many of the people who use public transportation need more assistance to information and stops.
Would be nice for students to get a ride after school and be dropped off at home.
People from Iopeno san ygnacio and other suburban areas would benefit with these services
We need transportation here 1st
Pro porcionax transportacion en la aria de zapata
Texas in general will benefit from better public transportation. We have lots of college students that would love this program and everyone working and stuck in traffic would love being able to sit back and relax after a long day at work.
Safety, limitations to self-owned car (mechanical car problems) economic (Fuel & Money) and also, the improvement of the enviorment
We need it asap .

Appendix A – Survey Instrument(s)

English/Spanish



The South Texas Development Council would like to understand transit needs. Please take a few minutes to fill out our brief survey.

1. Please use the table below to indicate your current primary mode of transportation for the following trip purposes. Check the boxes that correspond with how you travel in the area.

	Drive Myself	Ride with Family/Friends	Public Transit (Bus/Train/Van Service)	Bicycle	Walk	Taxi	Other
Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social/Recreational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shopping/Errands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2a. How often do you use public transportation?

- 4 times per week or more
- 2-3 times per week
- Once a week
- 2-3 times per month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

▪ Need my car before and/or after work/school

- Need my car for emergencies/overtime
- It might not be safe/I don't feel safe
- Trip is too long/takes too much time
- Have to transfer/too many transfers
- Have to wait too long for the bus
- Public transportation in the area is uncomfortable

2b. What time do you generally use public transportation? (Check all that apply)

- Morning Rush Hours (6-9)
- Mid-Morning/Afternoon (9-3)
- Evening Rush Hours (3-6)
- Night (6-10)

▪ Public transportation in the area is expensive

- Public transportation in the area is dirty
- Public transportation in area is unreliable/late
- The hours of operation are too limited
- Public transportation is too expensive
- Other _____

2c. If you do not currently use public transportation, why? (Check all that apply)

- No service is available near my home/work/ school
- Don't know if service is available and/or location of stops
- I have limited mobility and it is hard for me to use public transportation
- Need my car for work

3a. Do you think there is a need for additional public transit services in the area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

3b. Do you think there is a need for improved public transit services in the area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

3c. Where would you like to see additional or improved public transit services in the area?

4. Would you use public transportation in the area if:

	Yes	No
Additional geographic areas/ neighborhoods were served?	·	·
There were more direct routes?	·	·
The days and hours of service were expanded?	·	·
There was more frequent service?	·	·

4a. Please list some areas you would use public transportation to get to if available?

5. Would you use public transportation in the area if service quality were improved?

- Yes
- No

5a. If yes, please indicate what is needed to improve the service quality. (Check all that apply)

- Improved on-time performance
- Cleaner public transportation
- Safer transportation
- More helpful staff
- Additional shelters and benches
- Improved access to transit information
- More informative web site
- Other _____

6. Please indicate your zip code of residence.

Zip Code: _____

7. Do you have a drivers' license?

- Yes
- No

8. Please indicate your age group.

- Under 12 years old
- 12-17 years old
- 18-25 years old
- 26-55 years old
- 56-64 years old
- 65 years old or older

9. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? (Check all that apply)

- Employed, full-time
- Employed, part-time
- Retired
- Student, full-time
- Student, part-time
- Homemaker
- Unemployed
- Other

10. Please check your approximate total annual household income from all sources?

- \$14,999 or less
- \$15,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$44,999
- \$45,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$124,999
- \$125,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

11. Does anyone in your household need special accommodations in order to travel in a vehicle such as:

- Wheelchair access
- Ability to carry on a mobile chair or scooter
- Walkers or other physical supports
- Other _____

12. Please add any comments regarding the need for improved public transportation in South Texas.





El consulado del desarrollo del sur de Texas quisiera entender sus necesidades de tránsito. Por favor tome unos minutos para completar nuestra breve encuesta.

1. Por favor, utilice la tabla siguiente para indicar su modo principal de transporte para los siguientes propósitos de viaje. Marque las casillas que se corresponden con cómo usted viaja en el área.

	Conducir solo/a	Conducir con familiares y amigos	Transporte público (servicio de autobús/tren/Van)	Bicicleta	A Pie	Taxi	Otros
Trabajo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Médicos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social / recreativo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escuela	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compras / mandados	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. ¿Actualmente utiliza transporte público regularmente?

- Sí
- No

2a. ¿Con qué frecuencia usa transporte público?

- 4 veces por semana o más
- 2-3 veces por semana
- Una vez por semana
- 2-3 veces por mes
- Una vez por mes
- Menos una vez al mes

2b. ¿A qué hora generalmente usa el transporte público? (Marque todos que aplican)

- Por la mañana horas de tráfico (6-9)
- Tarde (9-3)
- Horas de tráfico en la tarde (3-6)
- Noche (6-10)

2c. Si no utiliza transporte público, ¿por qué? (Marque todos que aplican)

- Ningún servicio está cerca de mi casa/trabajo/escuela
- No sé si el servicio está disponible o ubicación de paradas
- Mi movilidad es limitada y es difícil para mí utilizar el transporte público
- Necesito mi coche para el trabajo
- Necesito mi coche antes o después de la escuela de trabajo
- Necesito mi coche para emergencias/horas extras
- No es seguro / no me siento seguro
- El viaje es demasiado largo/toma demasiado tiempo
- Muchas de las transferencias
- Hay que esperar demasiado tiempo para el autobús
- El transporte público en la zona es incómodo
- El transporte público en la zona es caro

- El transporte público en la zona es sucio
- El transporte público en la zona es poco confiable
- Las horas de operación son muy limitadas
- Transporte público es caro
- Otros _____

3. ¿Creé que hay una necesidad de servicio adicional o mejor transporte público en el área?

- Sí
- No
- No sé

3a. ¿Dónde le gustaría ver servicios adicionales o mejor transporte público en la zona?

4. ¿Utilizarías transporte público en la zona, si:

	Si	No
Otras áreas geográficas o barrios fueran incluidos?	•	•
¿Había rutas más directas?	•	•
¿Se ampliaran los días y horas de servicio?	•	•
¿Había un servicio más frecuente?	•	•

4a. ¿Escriba algunas áreas que utilizaría transporte público para llegar, si este fuera disponible?

5. ¿Usaría transporte público en la zona si mejorarían la calidad del servicio?

- Si
- No

5a. Si sí, favor de indicar lo que se necesario para mejorar la calidad del servicio. (Marque todos que aplican)

- Mejor puntualidad
- Transporte público más limpio

- Transporte más seguro
- Más personal
- Bancos y refugios adicionales
- Un mejor acceso a la información de tránsito
- Sitio web más informativo
- Otros _____

6. Por favor indique su código postal de residencia.

Código postal: _____

7. ¿Tiene usted una licencia de conducir?

- Si
- No

8. Por favor indique su edad.

- Menores de 12 años
- 12-17 años
- 18-25 años
- 26-55 años
- 56-64 años
- 65 años o más

9. ¿Cuál de los siguientes mejor describe su situación laboral actualmente? (Marque todos que aplican)

- Empleados a tiempo completo
- Empleados a tiempo parcial
- Retirado
- Estudiante, tiempo completo
- Estudiante, tiempo parcial
- Ama de casa
- Desempleado/a
- Otro

10. Compruebe por favor su ingreso familiar por año de todas las fuentes.

- \$14,999 o menos
- \$15,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$44,999
- \$45,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$124,999
- \$125,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 o más

11. ¿Alguien en su hogar necesidad atención especial para viajar en un vehículo tales como:

- Silla de ruedas
 - Capacidad de transportar en una silla móvil
- o scooter

- Muletas u otros soportes físicos
- Otro_____

12. Agregue cualquier comentario acerca de la necesidad de mejorar transporte público en sur de Texas.

