

CHALLENGES: FINDING SOLUTIONS TO BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS THAT IMPACT THE GOALS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ALAMO AREA

Institutional Barriers

- Medicaid transportation is now fragmented – Duplication of services exists due to TxDOT’s decisions to bring in a “middle man”. This adds a new layer of duplication between the contractor(s) and TxDOT, with a negative impact on coordination of service.
- Institutional resistance to change/turf protection - among both human service agencies and transit systems, there is a reluctance to turn over service to another entity. This is one of the greatest barriers to coordination.

Funding Barriers

- Local level funding is an issue – New service requires proper local funding to match the FTA/State funds available. This will require new approaches to securing local funds.
- Service gaps – Bexar County, outside of the areas that VIA services is acknowledged to lack service. ART cannot serve the area because it is in VIA’s service area. There is no rural funding for these areas.

Understanding Coordination – Knowledge/Communication Constraints

- Coordination/communication of human service transportation – Communication is the key to success; the transportation providers must work closely with human service agencies to understand each other’s issues.
- Recognizing when coordination can and when it should not occur – Coordination is a tool to help further the goals discussed above.
- Coordination Activities Must Make Business Sense – Any attempts to coordinate service must make business sense.
- Human service agencies do not always see the value of coordination – Often choosing alternative methods that may be more effective and cost less (from their perspective).

- Human service out of pocket expenses – Often these expenses are minimal as costs are often shown as much lower than transit systems due to the hidden costs (e.g. A driver that is also general staff support and would be on the payroll whether or not they were driving).

Other Constraints

- Fragmented ITS Structure – There are four different demand response software packages in place in the region (three in Bexar County) – none compatible with each other. There is a need for ITS funding to revamp the paratransit infrastructure. Coordination will be greatly enhanced by technology that can link up the various transit providers.
- Image Building – Continue to improve the image of ART, which is often seen as a service for the elderly and disabled.
- Attracting drivers – This is a constant problem related to funding. ART cannot pay enough in some communities to attract drivers.
- VA Hospital – The VA is very difficult to work with. Return trips are problematic when passengers have to wait hours to see a doctor.
- Vehicle requirements. If state funding from TxDOT is involved, the vehicles must also meet state requirements for use of alternative fuels as defined by TxDOT. TxDOT does not recognize the use of other options such as clean fuels approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).