



TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM NO. II

DEEP EAST TEXAS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REGIONAL COORDINATION BARRIERS REPORT

Introduction

This memorandum, Deep East Texas Public Transportation Regional Coordination Barriers Report, provides an overview of **existing transportation services and coordination** efforts within the Deep East Texas Council of Government's (DETCOG) region. The purpose of this memorandum is to offer a broad understanding of what currently exists in terms of transportation services and coordination. It also discusses how each of these services can help to fill a specific need and how some of these services might be transitioned into a coordinated transportation framework to better serve residents in the Deep East Texas region. Currently, public transportation services are provided by either the region's designated transit provider – The District, or other health and human service providers in the 12-county Deep East Texas region: Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, and Tyler counties (*see Figure 1*). Although many of these services are targeted to specific sub-groups within the community, such as the elderly or low-income persons, they are part of a broader effort, not often recognized, that links people to activities, employment, shopping, and medical care. These services can become the building blocks for a comprehensive regional public transportation coordination program that provides mobility alternatives to citizens in need within the Deep East Texas region.



Figure 1 – Deep East Texas 12 Counties

This memorandum also identifies and examines existing **Barriers and Constraints** to coordinated public transportation. These barriers and constraints are either existing regulations/policies or challenges/problems/conflicts, which prevent public transportation coordination and therefore result in duplicated services, disconnected services, and even denial of services. The resulting service gaps are also identified in this memorandum, especially in communities which currently have no public transportation services. Ultimately, this document identifies **coordination opportunities** that potentially can benefit both transportation providers/health and human service providers as well as the citizens within the Deep East Texas region.

Methodology

Surveys and follow-up phone and face-to-face interviews were utilized to obtain valuable information regarding existing transportation services and coordination, Barriers and Constraints, and coordination opportunities. Two surveys were distributed throughout the Deep East Texas region. The first is the transportation providers' and health and human service providers' survey. The Goodman Corporation (TGC), working with the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), drafted and distributed the survey via www.surveymonkey.com and project website: www.detcogtransit.com to the transportation providers and health and human services providers in the Deep East Texas region. The second is the consumer survey which aims at obtaining opinions from consumers who currently use public transportation services. This survey was also distributed to those areas where there is no transportation services in order to identify service gaps. Surveys were available in both online format and hard copy format for those without internet access. Out of approximately 30 providers' surveys distributed, a total of 13 valid surveys (near 50%) were completed and returned. The agencies that responded to the providers' survey are listed below:

1. Area Agency of Deep East Texas
2. East Texas Support Services
3. Brazos Transit District (The District)
4. Escapes CARE, Inc.
5. Salvation Army Adult Day Center
6. Deep East Texas Foundation
7. Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas
8. Nacogdoches Treatment Center
9. East Texas Health Access Network
10. American Cancer Society
11. Tri-County Community Action
12. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Deep East Texas
13. Burke Center

The survey answers then were tabulated in the spreadsheets. The majority of survey questions have multiple-choice answers. The consultant team entered and counted number of responses to a particular choice and plotted the number of responses using bar charts. An analysis of the survey results gives some insight into the existing public transportation services and coordination in the Deep East Texas region. Follow-up phone and face-to-face interviews with specific

providers further revealed service overlaps and gaps, barriers and constraints to coordinate public transportation services, as well as shed light on potential coordination pilot projects.

Existing Public Transportation Service and Coordination Activities

Existing public transportation services in the Deep East Texas 12-county region are provided by the Brazos Transit District (The District – transit provider), Medicaid providers, Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) providers and other health and human service agencies.

Figure 2 shows the locations of major agencies. Some level of coordination among these agencies exists today, but is rather limited.

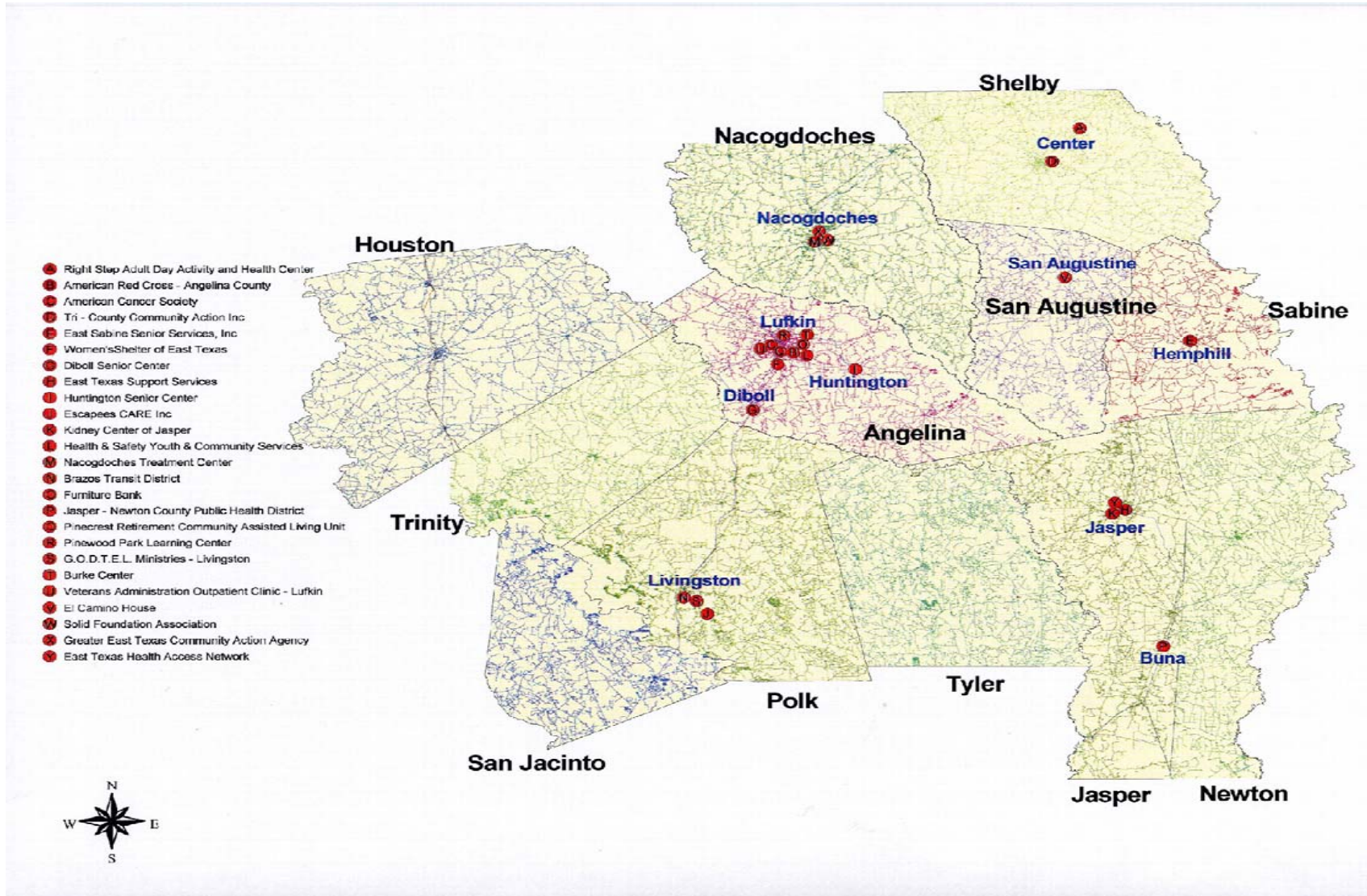


Figure 2 – Locations of Major Transportation and Health and Human Service Agencies in the Deep East Texas Region

Some general characteristics of existing public transportation services are summarized from the providers' survey and presented in the bar charts below:

1. When asked the question: Type(s) of clients served (check all that apply), the providers were given the following choices: General Public, Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, Students, Welfare to Work, Clients of Your Agency, Clients of other Agencies and Other. "Persons with disabilities", "General public", "Clients of a certain agency" and "Elderly" constitute the top four types of clients served by the area's transportation providers.

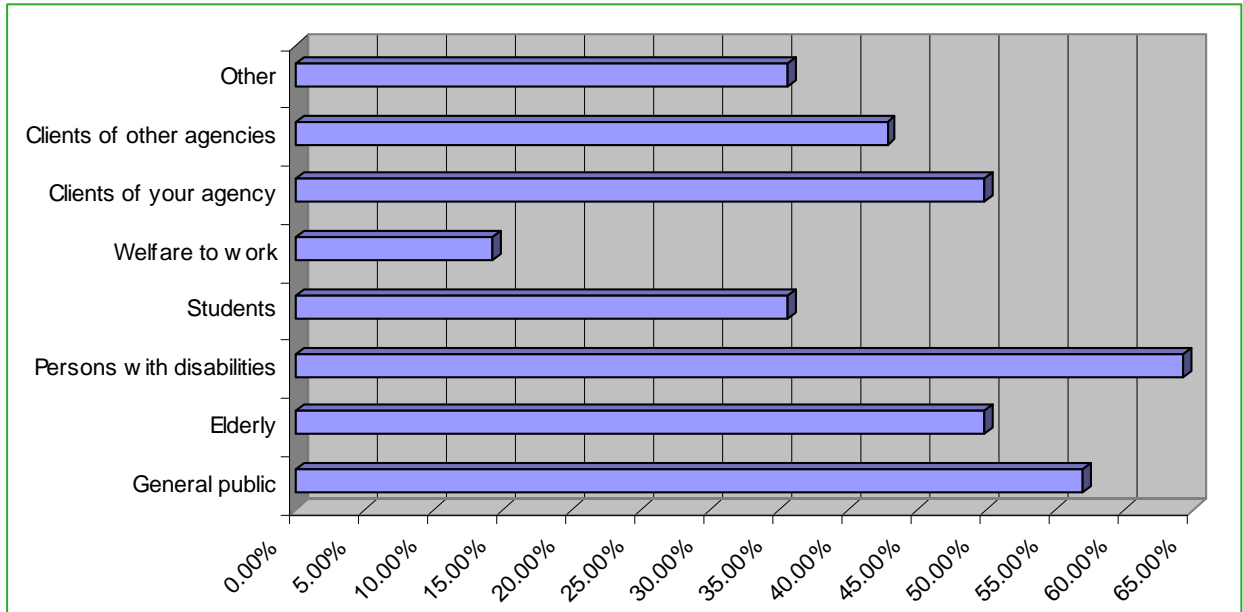


Figure 3 - Types of Clients Served

2. When asked the question: What trip purpose(s) does your service meet (check all that apply), the choices were: Work/seeking employment, Medical/dialysis, Education/job training, Shopping/personal business, Social/recreational, Nutrition, Congregate meals/group meal site, No trip purpose exclusions and Other. Trips for "Medical/dialysis", "Social/recreational", and "Congregate meals/group meal site" are the three most common trip purposes cited by providers.

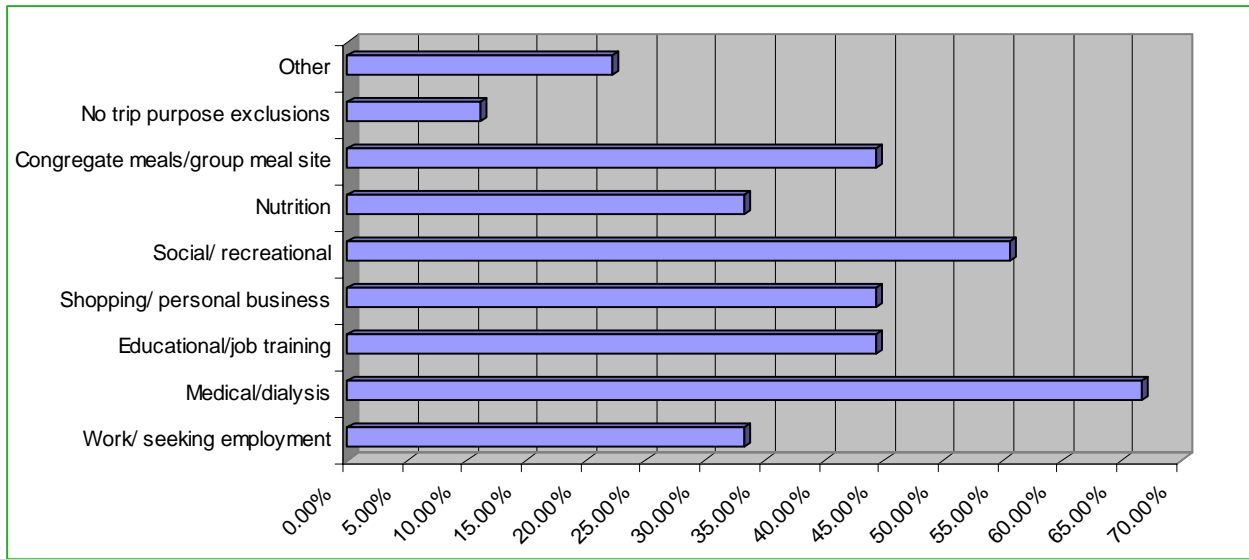


Figure 4 - Trip Purposes and Percentage of Trips

- When asked the question: Identify biggest constraints in providing & coordinating transportation services (Check all that apply), 60 percent of the responses indicated that Lack of funding to serve current need is their biggest constraint (*Figure 5*):

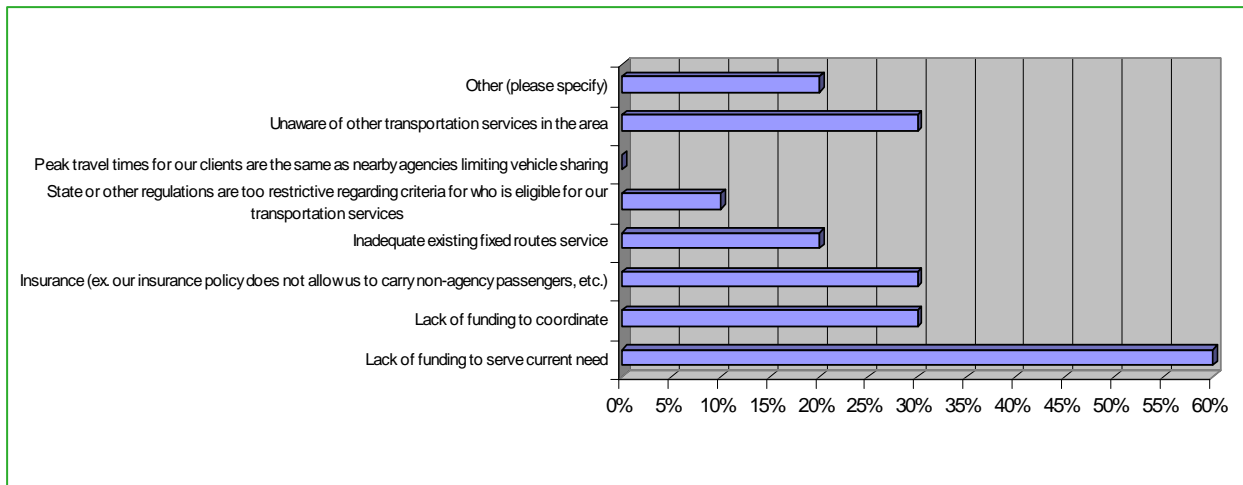


Figure 5 – Biggest Constraints in Providing and Coordinating Transportation Services

- Other major operational characteristics of existing public transportation services are: most agencies do not charge their clients a fare for services (66.7%); most agencies require advanced reservation for service (66.7%), of which, 50% of them the clients need to reserve trip more than 3 days in advance; and 85.7% of the agency drivers maintain two-way communications by cellular phone.

A more detailed description of existing transportation services and coordination activities is presented in the section below. Such detailed information were obtained through follow-up phone and face-to-face interviews.

Coordination through Funding

The District (formerly Brazos Transit District) has been providing transportation to the general public in East Texas for twenty-five (25) years. What began in 1974 under the auspices of the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency as a program to assist the elderly with transportation services to and from health care service providers in seven rural counties has evolved into the 88th largest transit system in North America.

The District is the largest public transportation provider in the Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG) region. Among DETCOG counties, it provides services in Angelina, Houston, Nacogdoches, Polk, San Jacinto, and Trinity counties. In Angelina County, The District operates four fixed routes in the city of Lufkin, one route between Lufkin and the city of Diboll, two complementary paratransit vehicles, and one fixed route between Angelina Community College and the Veterans Administration (VA) Clinic in Lufkin and Stephen F Austin College in the city of Nacogdoches. Similarly in Nacogdoches County, The District operates five fixed routes and two complementary paratransit services. In Houston County, The District offers 12 hours of service daily in the city of Crockett on a demand response basis. Polk County is the regional hub for the demand response services offered in Polk, San Jacinto, and Trinity counties.

The District currently coordinates with six of the 12 counties in the Deep East Texas region in that the six counties provide 25% of local funds annually and in return receive public transportation services provided by The District.

Each county and the status of the public transit program for the DETCOG 12-county region are described as follows¹:

Polk County – Local funds have been committed and paid since 1994. The County and cities contribute \$35,000 plus approximately \$35,000 in farebox to equal \$70,000 in local funds. The District implemented countywide Demand Response with regional connections within existing budget authority without the benefit of expansion funds requested.

San Jacinto County – Local funds have been committed and paid since 1994. The County and cities contribute \$12,000 plus approximately \$9,000 in farebox to equal \$21,000 in local funds. The District implemented countywide Demand Response with regional connections within existing budget authority without the benefit of expansion funds requested.

Trinity County – Local funds have been committed and paid since 1994. The County and cities contribute \$12,000 plus approximately \$5,000 in farebox to equal \$17,000 in local funds. The District implemented Demand Response with regional connections within existing budget authority without the benefit of expansion funds requested.

Angelina County – No local funds have ever been committed by the County. However, the cities of Lufkin and Diboll have committed and paid funds since 1988. The City of Lufkin contributes

¹ Source: The District

\$47,700 for city service plus approximately \$53,000 in farebox to equal \$100,000 in local funds. Regional connections are in place through the efforts of these two cities.

Nacogdoches County – The City of Nacogdoches has committed \$60,000 for Nacogdoches City service plus approximately \$35,000 in farebox to equal \$95,000 in local funds. Nacogdoches County has not provided any local match to date.

Houston County – While no local funds were committed for new service, The District had been carrying people from Madison and Leon counties into Houston County for needed services for some time. By redeploying resources in the existing service region The District was able to begin daily service not only into but inside of Houston County thus allowing people to obtain needed services in Crockett instead of having to be transported to facilities outside the county.

Shelby County – Local funds were committed but not paid in 1994, 1995 and 1996 by the county. The District received a portion of funds due in late 1995 for service provided in 1994 and 1995. In 1996 the county informed The District that their services were not needed. The City of Center committed and paid their pro-rata share during the same period. Due to the county's action and the inability to sustain the program with only the City of Center's participation, service was discontinued.

San Augustine County – Local funds were committed and paid in 1994 and 1995. The county could not commit to participating in subsequent years due to a budget shortfall. The City of San Augustine opted out of the regional program in 1996. Service was discontinued and the resources transferred to other counties in the program.

Sabine County – Local funds were committed and service initiated in 1999. At the request of the Sabine County Judge and Commissioners' Court, service was terminated after one month's service.

Jasper County – No local funds were requested or committed. It was indicated to The District that the county's transportation needs were being met by a private provider (East Texas Support Services).

Newton County – No local funds were requested or committed as The District had no formula funds to implement a program.

Tyler County – No local funds were requested or committed as The District had no formula funds to implement a program.

Table 1 summarizes the local contributions to public transportation services in the Deep East Texas region.

Table 1 – Local Contributions to Public Transportation Services		
County	Provider	County/City Annual Contribution
Angelina	The District	\$100,000 for city service
Houston	The District	\$15,000 (City of Crockett and County)
Nacogdoches	The District	\$95,000 (City of Nacogdoches)
Polk	The District	\$70,000 (Cities and County plus farebox)
San Jacinto	The District	\$12,000 (Cities and County plus farebox)
Trinity	The District	\$12,000 (Cities and County plus farebox)
Shelby	-	\$ -
San Augustine	-	\$ -
Sabine	-	\$ -
Jasper	-	\$ -
Newton	-	\$ -
Tyler	-	\$ -

As touched upon above, The District has provided some services in Jasper, Sabine, San Augustine, and Shelby counties in the past. In Jasper, The District operated a shuttle bus to the Pilgrim’s Pride processing plant for a short time. In Sabine, San Augustine, and Shelby, The District operated demand response services briefly before lack of local funding required them to pull back. The District hopes to restart services in these counties, if possible.

The District is working towards establishing a new service from the VA Clinic in Lufkin to the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston and the VA Clinic and the Texas Medical Center in Houston. This new service would originate in Lufkin and make stops in the city of Livingston (Polk County) and Liberty County before proceeding south to be able to pick up more patients along the way.

Coordination by Subcontracting with other Medicaid Providers

TxDOT awarded **East Texas Support Services** – a private, nonprofit health/human service agency – to provide medical transportation in Texas Regions 5, 6 and 14 (Deep East Texas region), a total of 35 counties including the 12 counties in the Deep East Texas region. The types of clients served by the East Texas Support Services include: Elderly, Persons with

disabilities, Students, Welfare to work, etc., all of whom must be Medicaid recipients. East Texas Support Services contends that Medicaid and other human service for public transportation services cannot be mixed according to federal law. East Texas Support Services currently coordinates services by subcontracting with other Medicaid providers in other areas, but it is the sole Medicaid provider for the Deep East Texas region.

Coordination through Vehicle Sharing

The **Area Agency on Aging (AAA) of Deep East Texas** is a health/human service agency funded by Federal Older Americans Act funds and the State to address the needs of older adults and their caregivers. Services provided by the Area Agency on Aging include: Benefit Counseling - Legal Assistance, Care Coordination - Case Management, Congregate Meals at Senior Centers, Information and Assistance Referral, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, etc. The providers' survey indicated that the Area Agency on Aging currently shares vehicles with other agencies in the Deep East Texas region. Similarly, **Women's Shelter of East Texas** shares two vans with **Burke Center** – the region's MHMR provider, Women's Shelter pays the salary to the drivers.

Coordination through Information Referral

The **East Texas Health Access Network (ETHAN)** is a non-profit, multi-county partnership between consumers, area hospitals, community clinics, public health department (Jasper-Newton Public Health Department), social service agencies, educators, city and county officials, faith-based organizations and other safety net providers service Jasper, Newton, Sabine, San Augustine, and Tyler counties. ETHAN does not provide transportation to the clients directly, however, ETHAN collaborates with community agencies to provide information and referral assistance to individuals seeking transportation, medical and dental care, access to prescription medications, home repairs, and other quality of life services. For example, ETHAN refers requests to East Texas Support Services for Medicaid transportation, as well as referring calls to Jasper-Newton Public Health Department to transport non-Medicaid persons to Beaumont/Galveston for medical treatment.

Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) Transportation in Deep East Texas Region

The Burke Center is the regional MHMR provider for Deep East Texas, including Shelby, Sabine, Houston, San Jacinto, Jasper, Newton, Tyler, Nacogdoches, Angelina, and Hardin counties. The Burke Center provides trips for a variety of purposes:

- To transport clients to and from MHMR facilities;
- To transport clients from residential facilities in group homes;
- To provide staff transportation in order to provide home-based services.

The Burke center has approximately 500 to 1,000 clients. It estimates that it transports 200 to 300 clients a day to and from their homes (100,000 to 125,000 per year).

The Burke center has a total of 104 vehicles, 90 to 95 of them are in use daily. Among the vehicles in the fleet are 15-passenger vans, 22-passenger buses, and sedans. Maintenance of these vehicles is contracted out. Funding for Burke Center is from TX Health and Human Services Agency and from East Texas Behavioral Resources, a private, non-profit organization.

Several years ago under a program sponsored by The District, the Burke Center shared the cost of vehicle maintenance with The District. The Burke Center used 8 to 10 vehicles owned by The District, and split repair cost with The District. This program discontinued about three years ago. The Burke Center's fleet is old, but because of limited funds, they can only replace vehicles in piece-meal fashion. Recently, through the State of Texas Co-operative Purchasing Program (administered by Texas State Building and Procurement Commission), the Burke Center was able to purchase one new van. One new van every 15 years is entirely insufficient to meet passenger demand.

Transportation for Veterans in Deep East Texas

The Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic Lufkin is one of the satellite offices of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs system. The VA clinic in Lufkin provides primary care, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and mental health services to veterans in 14 counties, including all 12 counties of the Deep East Texas region. The clinic has two vans purchased for it by the Temple Foundation: one 10-passenger van (89' Chevy) and one 7-passenger van handicap-accessible (02'). The VA clinic in Lufkin provides transportation to veterans to the Houston VA Medical Center for in-patient treatment using these two vans on a daily basis. During fiscal year 2005, the Lufkin VA clinic transported a total of 3,698 patients with the two vans.²

The VA clinic in Lufkin coordinates with the VA Medical Center in Houston when scheduling the trips. Veterans in the area usually have to schedule their trips two to three weeks in advance, with demand on Fridays especially higher due to a large number of the VA specialty clinics operating only on Fridays. Transportation to the Houston VA Medical Center is free to all the veterans. For veterans with personal transportation or other means of transportation to the VA facilities in Houston, a mileage reimbursement system (11 cents per mile) is available. Eligibility for this reimbursement program is predicated upon certain criteria (e.g., below certain income threshold or service-connected disability). Despite their best efforts and a variety of transportation alternatives, the Lufkin clinic's Transportation Coordinator reports that trip requests are frequently denied due to lack of van space. Because of inadequate parking at the clinic, patients are meeting the vans in a church parking lot off the loop to catch the ride.

Drivers for the Lufkin VA clinic are all volunteers, who are certified by the VA Medical Center Houston. Lufkin Daily newspaper helps recruit these volunteers by allowing the clinic to advertise for volunteer drivers for free. Volunteer drivers also run certain errands while they are waiting for the patients to be seen in Houston. For example, drivers will pick up and drop off mail, pick up medical supplies, and money bags (usually contain several hundred dollars).

² Source: Veterans Affairs Clinic, Lufkin

Currently Lufkin's VA clinic does not explicitly specify transportation expenses as a line item in their budget. Instead, it is part of the Houston VA Hospital budget. During Fiscal Year 2005, Lufkin's VA clinic spent \$14,145.45 for these important transportation services. The funds went for the mileage reimbursement program, fuel, repairs, and preventative maintenance of their vans and wheelchair lifts.

Employment Transportation in Deep East Texas

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas serves citizens of the 12-county Deep East Texas region by offering services designed to match people with jobs. Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas does not provide transportation services directly, but rather offers gas cards and bus tokens (for Angelina and Nacogdoches counties only) for people to buy if they need transportation to work. Sometimes the agency will pay for vehicle tire repair services to enable the mobility of their clients. To be eligible for any assistance provided by Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas, however, individuals must be eligible for and participating in one of the several federal and/or state funded employment and training programs offered by Workforce Solutions. Furthermore, these individuals must demonstrate, through a needs-assessment, that they have a specific need for transportation services. Years ago, Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas coordinated with East Texas Support Services on Welfare to Work transportation but that program was discontinued.

As for other employment-related transportation services in Deep East Texas region, The District did operate a shuttle bus to the Pilgrim's Pride processing plant in Jasper for a short time before lack of local funding required them to pull back. In the City of Center, Shelby County, significant demand exists for commuters to commute from border cities of Louisiana (Mansfield, Logansport, etc.) to work at Tyson Foods, Inc. Chicken Plant in Texas. Louisiana workers make up almost 40% of all the workers at Tyson Chicken Plant (*Table 2*).³

³ Source: Tyson Foods Inc. Chicken Plant.

Table 2 - Tyson Foods, Inc. Employee Commute Data

Employees from Louisiana							
	<i>1st Shift %</i>	<i>1st Shift # Employees</i>	<i>2nd Shift %</i>	<i>2nd Shift # Employees</i>	<i>3rd Shift %</i>	<i>3rd Shift # Employees</i>	<i>Total # Employees</i>
Bossier City			0.09%	1			1
Converse	0.19%	2	0.09%	1			3
Frierson			0.09%	1			1
Gloster	0.09%	9	0.85%	9			18
Grand Cane	0.47%	5	1.23%	13			18
Keatchie	0.38%	4	0.47%	5			9
Keithville	0.09%	1					1
Logansport	3.02%	32	3.39%	36	0.19%	2	68
Mansfield	10.08%	107	14.61%	155	0.09%	1	262
Many			0.28%	3			3
Natchitoches			0.09%	1			1
Pelican			0.28%	3			3
Pleasant Hill			0.28%	3			3
Shreveport			0.28%	3			3
Stonewall	0.28%	3			0.09%	1	4
Zwolle	0.09%	1					1
Total Employees		164		234		4	399
Employees from Texas							
	<i>1st Shift %</i>	<i>1st Shift # Employees</i>	<i>2nd Shift %</i>	<i>2nd Shift # Employees</i>	<i>3rd Shift %</i>	<i>3rd Shift # Employees</i>	<i>Total # Employees</i>
Bronson			0.19%	2			2
Burkeville					0.09%	1	1
Carthage	0.19%	2	0.09%	1			3
Center	16.21%	172	11.88%	126	3.20%	34	332
Dallas			0.09%	1			1
Frost			0.09%	1			1
Garrison	0.19%	2	0.28%	3			5
Hemphill			0.28%	3			3
Houston	0.09%	1					262
Joaquin	0.94%	10	0.75%	8	0.28%	3	21
Lufkin	0.09%	1					1
Milam	0.47%	5					5
Mt. Enterprise	0.09%	1					1
Nacogdoches	0.19%	2	1.41%	15	0.09%	1	18
San Augustine	5.37%	57	6.13%	65	0.47%	5	127
Shelbyville	2.73%	29	1.89%	20	0.47%	5	54
Tanaha	2.17%	23	0.66%	7	0.57%	6	36
Timpson	2.07%	22	1.41%	15	0.38%	4	41
Total Employees		327		267		59	653
	<i>1st Shift Start</i>		<i>2nd Shift Start</i>				
	5 a.m.		2 p.m.				
	6:40 a.m.		3:40 p.m.				
	8 a.m.		5 p.m.				

Currently a total of ten vans (10- to 16-passenger vans owned and operated by employees) run four shifts a day to make the 70-mile round trip. This program costs \$25 per employee per week paid by each employee who rides the vans. If the employee who happens to own the van is sick one the day, between 10 to 15 employees that ride that van will miss the work because they do not have other transportation alternatives. During interviews with Tyson managers, they indicated that the plant always has high turnover (92% for year 2005 vs. 64% for year 2004) because of employees' lack of transportation to work. The cost of replacing the employees is significant for the plant (approximately \$3,000 to replace an employee according to Tyson managers).

Conclusions

The preceding overview of the existing transportation coordination activities in the Deep East Texas region indicates that a very elementary level of coordination exists. Consequently, the region's public transportation provider and health/human service providers have struggled to meet many of the mobility needs of transportation-disadvantaged individuals in the region. A summary of statistics for major transportation providers in the Deep East Texas region is shown in *Table 3*.

Table 3 – Deep East Texas Transportation Providers Statistics

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Total Annual Passenger Trips</i>	<i>Annual Budget</i>	<i>No. of Vehicles in Service</i>	<i>Available to the General Public</i>
The District	6 counties in the DETCOG region - Angelina, Houston, Nacogdoches, Polk, San Jacinto, Trinity counties and 10 other counties	1,243,968	\$11,486,214	76 mini-buses and 4 cable car concepts (for 16-county region)	Yes
East Texas Support Services – Medicaid Provider	12 DETCOG counties and 21 other counties	All Medicaid clients	N/A	8 vans	No
Burke Center – MHMR Provider	11 DETCOG counties except Newton, and Hardin and Montgomery counties	Unknown	\$290,169	15 sedans, 59 vans, and 1 mini-bus	No
Area Agency of Deep East Texas	12 DETCOG counties	N/A	\$15,000	1 van	Yes, but age 60+ or dependent
East Texas Health Access Network	Jasper, Newton, Sabine, San Augustine and Tyler counties	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, but must reside in the service area
Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas	12 DETCOG counties	N/A	\$190,000	N/A	No
Deep East Texas Foundation	Jasper county	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, but must be elderly
Escapees CARE, Inc.	Mainly Livingston, with some service to Lufkin and Houston for medical appointments	1,045	N/A	2 vans, 1 mini-bus	No
Nacogdoches Treatment Center	The City of Nacogdoches	3,587	\$14,551.20	1 mini-bus, 1 standard bus	Yes, but must be elderly or persons with disabilities
American Cancer Society	12 DETCOG counties and Liberty County	N/A	N/A	Volunteer drivers only	No

Table 3 – Deep East Texas Transportation Providers Statistics (Cont.)

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Total Annual Passenger Trips</i>	<i>Annual Budget</i>	<i>No. of Vehicles in Service</i>	<i>Available to the General Public</i>
Salvation Army Adult Day Center	15 miles from the Center	3,656	\$19,956.98	2 vans, 1 mini-bus	No
Tri-county Community Action	10 counties	N/A	N/A	12 vans, 20 mini-buses	Persons with disabilities and students only
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Deep East Texas	12 DETCOG counties	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes

In addition to the surveys, follow-up phone calls and face-to-face interviews further revealed what Barriers and Constraints exist that prevent or hinder more coordinated public transportation services in the Deep East Texas region. These Barriers and Constraints are presented in the following section.

Barriers and Constraints

A barrier, by definition, is something that structurally blocks access or keeps something separate from another. A barrier in the context of coordinated regional transportation service can be a statute, regulations or policies that obstruct or prevent coordination of regional public transportation services. A constraint is a physical or other force that restricts freedom of action. A constraint in the context of regional transportation service includes: historical practices, misinformation, myths and assumptions, excuses, reluctance to tackle challenges, and institutional and personality conflicts. Barriers and Constraints have been identified through the public outreach process (surveys, meetings, follow-up phone and face-to-face interviews) with respect to improving transportation services and coordination throughout the Deep East Texas region. Identifying specific barriers and constraints allow for 1) an understanding the reasons and nature of the barrier and constraints; 2) an assessment of the challenges that prevent coordination from occurring; and 3) the ability to develop strategies to overcome the barriers and constraints.

Barriers to coordinate public transportation services include the following categories: funding barriers, regulatory barriers, and policy barriers. Categories of constraints include: operational, and political (includes perceived) constraints. Identifying the different types of barriers and constraints can help clarify many of the challenges with respect to enhancing existing transportation coordination. Barriers and constraints are discussed in detail in the following section.

Funding Barriers

- Lack of local funds prevents six of the 12 counties in the Deep East Texas region from having public transportation services. The District requires that each county provide 25% of the operating cost. Six counties in the eastern Deep East Texas region (Shelby, San Augustine, Sabine, Jasper, Newton and Tyler counties) are not able to pay the 25% operating cost, as a result, they do not have public transit service (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No.5*).
- Lack of ability to meet rising vehicle insurance cost precludes the ability to provide public transportation services. This inability has a particularly profound impact on smaller health/human service providers in rural areas. For those that do offer transportation services, vehicle insurance has become a very significant budget line item. For example:
 - Escapees CARE, Inc. spends \$5,000 per year for two vans, one 12-passenger minibus (lift equipped) and one jeep (all old donated vehicles) (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 3*).
 - Nacogdoches Treatment Center spends \$2,500 per year for one 11-passenger van, which only operates 2 hours per day, 5 days a week (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No.4*).
- Lack of funding to serve current need is the biggest constraint in providing and coordinating transportation services. This was reported from the Providers survey results. The District's loss of funding in recent years has resulted in the less frequent of service. They had to cut one service route in the City of Lufkin. Other agencies that indicated lack of funding include:
 - Burke Center (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No.7*)
 - Area Agency of Deep East Texas (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 10*)
 - East Texas Health Access Network (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 12*)
 - Deep East Texas Foundation (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No.11*)
 - Escapees CARE, Inc. (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 3*), and
 - VA Lufkin Clinic (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 8*)

Regulatory Barriers

Regulatory barriers can present very significant challenges to coordination as they are restricting according to rules and regulations, and removing them can be beyond the control of a single agency or the region. Unless these barriers are overcome, increased costs resulting from service inefficiencies, or reduced service quality may be the unfortunate outcome.

- Program requirements for health and human services can skew or limit service delivery for other purposes. Sometimes this type of regulatory barrier results in the clients' refusal to use the service because of the inconvenience it caused. For example, one client is transported for a medical appointment through one program but he or she wants to stop by the pharmacy or the grocery store afterwards, current regulations of most human and

social service programs prohibit “trip-chaining,” meaning an agency either cannot stop for other trip purposes or it can drop the client off but not be able to pick them back up again to take them back home (*Persons Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 2 & 13*).

- Health or social service programs often have specific requirements regarding the types of clientele to be served, making it hard for the general public transportation providers to coordinate with them, i.e. clients of one program cannot mix with clients of another program or the general public (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 5*).
- Transportation costs and benefits are not captured in the agency’s accounting system, making it difficult for such agency to coordinate with other agencies. This is particularly true for the VA Clinic in Lufkin. The Lufkin VA Clinic does not explicitly specify transportation expenses as a line item in its budget. Instead, it is part of the Houston VA Hospital budget. During Fiscal Year 2005, Lufkin’s VA clinic spent \$14,145.45 for mileage reimbursement program, fuel, repairs, and preventative maintenance of their vans and ADA wheelchair lifts. When the TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator in Lufkin proposed to the Lufkin VA Clinic a coordinated transportation program with The District (more detailed discussion in the Coordination Opportunities section), VA representatives raised the feasibility and legality concerns of transferring the existing funds for transportation purpose (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 8*).

Policy Barriers

Policy barriers are a set of plans or courses of action, as of a government, political party, or business, that obstruct the coordination of public transportation services. Policy barriers identified for the Deep East Texas region are listed as follows:

- Public transportation services are restricted to the counties within the service area of a social program. For example: Jasper-Newton Public Health Department cannot send vehicles to outside of Jasper and Newton counties to pick up a person who needs transportation; The VA Clinic has satellite offices in different counties, but for six eastern counties, only Tyler County has VA vehicles in Woodville, TX. VA policies do not allow its vehicles to cross county line thus the vehicles cannot reach those in need who reside outside of Tyler County (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 12*).
- The way the VA’s insurance policy is structured, the vans are not allowed to make stops from the time they pick up to the time they drop off, except the one-stop at McDonald’s in Livingston. VA patients living in the counties south of Lufkin have to find transportation north to Lufkin to catch a ride that goes south right through their home towns on Hwy 59 (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 8*).

Operational Constraints

- As indicated in the Providers’ survey, most agencies require advanced reservation for service (66.7%), of which, 50% of them the clients need to reserve trip more than 3 days in advance. This limits the flexibility of consumer travel and sometimes costs extra resources to meet persons’ non-emergency transportation needs. For example, The District operates Demand-Response service Monday through Friday of each week to City of Shepherd, San Jacinto County, TX. Service hours are from 5am till 7pm. Only 24-

hour advanced notice is required. Interviewing with the Mayor of Shepherd indicated that sometimes the City gets calls from the citizens for transportation on the days that The District doesn't operate service. At several occasions, the City's ambulances had to be used to transport citizens for non-emergency transportation services (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 14*).

- Some agencies do not have enough volunteer drivers or no volunteer driver is available when needed. Escapees CARE, Inc. provides 105 elderly and 40 disabled trips per month to the Dr's appointments, Walmart and other activity centers. But sometimes the agency does not have enough volunteers to provide transportation services. Another example is American Cancer Society, which serves 14 counties. When no volunteers or family members are available to take cancer patients for their treatment, they either have to go without being treated or they would be taken advantage of by somebody charging a premium of \$50 to \$75 for transportation (*Persons Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 1 & 3*).
- It is difficult to get up-to-date and complete information about what transportation services are currently available. At one of the five public meetings in Crockett, TX, the director of the Crockett Head Start Program indicated that she is not aware of the transportation services that The District provides. Had she known, she would've been able to inform her clients when some of them need transportation at times. At another public meeting in Lufkin, TX, one participant mentioned that 211 Center is an information center and it is currently under-utilized. The 211 Center could be one of the good information resources for the public to obtain transportation services.

Political Constraints

Perceptions and different values exist among agencies and individuals that will often inhibit the ability of transportation coordination even when its benefits can be clearly demonstrated.

- Each of the three largest transportation providers represents different constituents and interests with varying missions. **The District** is the public transportation provider in the Deep East Texas Council of Governments (DETCOG) region. It provides services to six of the 12 counties in the DETCOG region – Angelina, Houston, Nacogdoches, Polk, San Jacinto, and Trinity counties. **East Texas Support Services** is the Medicaid provider which provides medical transportation in 35 counties including the 12 counties in the Deep East Texas region. The **Burke Center** is the regional MHMR provider for Deep East Texas, including Shelby, Sabine, Houston, San Jacinto, Jasper, Newton, Tyler, Nacogdoches, Angelina, and Hardin counties. Interest in coordinating among the providers is low. Each has defined their service mission clearly, focuses upon their mission, and not aware of the kind of transportation services other agencies provide.
- Sometimes attitudes/perceptions make transportation coordination difficult. This is especially true for the eastern six counties in the DETCOG region (Tyler, Jasper, Newton, Sabine, San Augustine and Shelby counties). These counties do not have any transit service, even though there is great need from the public for transit services based on the feedback from the public meetings and consumer surveys. The general perception of those six counties is that The District is an outsider. Three counties – Shelby, Sabine and San Augustine – contracted with The District for short period of time, but

discontinued the partnership several years ago. Tyler, Jasper and Newton counties have never expressed any interest in having service provided by The District. An effort was made by the TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator in Beaumont to develop transit service for Tyler, Jasper and Newton counties but the service was not advanced beyond the planning stage.

- Turf issue is another significant constraint when it comes to transportation coordination. Agencies and organizations are proprietary and protective of the services they provide. Concerns exist that losing control of transportation services will undermine the quality of service provided to the client or customer. The District offered to provide senior centers transportation services several years ago but that proposal was not widely accepted. During the phone interviews, the consultant found that some senior centers would rather apply for 5310 funds to purchase vehicles and provide transportation themselves (*Person Identifying this Barrier: Appendix A No. 5*).

Coordination Opportunities

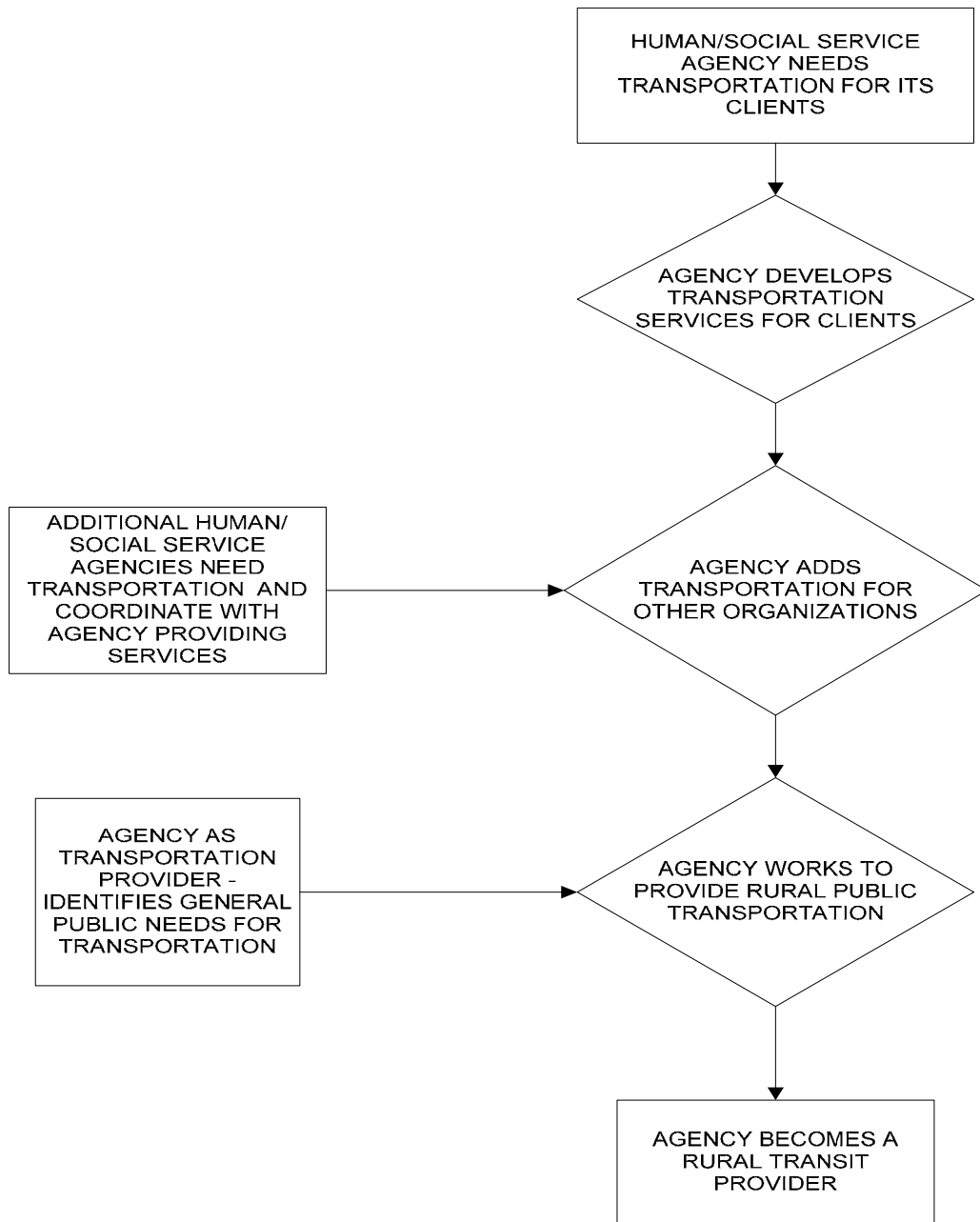
While barriers and constraints to coordination do exist, opportunities abound for coordination of public transportation services in the DETCOG region. There is not a single strategy or approach that will work to resolve all issues. Achieving higher level of coordination should develop as an incremental approach. Several opportunities that are recommended to move forward have emerged from this regional coordination planning process. Other coordination opportunities identified are only ideas or suggestions that may or may not be moved forward.

Recommended coordination opportunities include:

Recommended Opportunities No.1: Develop a regional transportation coalition/agency for six eastern counties in the DETCOG region. As it became obvious during the public outreach process that there is definitely a transportation gap for the six eastern counties – Shelby, San Augustine, Sabine, Jasper, Newton and Tyler counties. The District has already stretched its resources very thin within its current service area due to limited funding and vehicles. However, the other side of the sword is that finding local match for rural transit systems has always been very challenging. This Regional Public Transportation Coordination process mandated by TxDOT is a good opportunity to bring county and city officials, The District, health and human service providers together to address unmet transportation needs in rural areas of the six eastern counties in the DETCOG region. Rural public transit agencies are often the product of historical coordination efforts begun by health and human service agencies. For example, The District started as the Brazos Valley Community Action Agency, a health and human service agency providing transportation services to the elderly to and from health care facilities in seven rural counties. All three of the West Central Texas Council of Governments (WCTCOG) rural transit agencies have similar patterns of development⁴. *Figure 6* illustrates the process by which many human service transportation programs evolve into a rural transportation provider. Coordination as the means to increase service is central to the growth and development of rural transportation services.

⁴ Source: A & R Consulting.

Figure 6 – Development of a Rural Transportation Provider



Given the level of demand that exists, there is a strong opportunity for the formation of a rural transportation agency for the six eastern counties of the DETCOG region. This agency can evolve from an existing DETCOG agency, it can be a new agency that's part of DETCOG structure, or it can be independent. A Transportation Summit to bring local leaders, providers and the public together is being planned under the leadership of DETCOG. The Summit is tentatively set in October, 2006.

Recommended Opportunities No.2: The District coordinates with the VA Lufkin Clinic and counties for additional transportation needs from VA patients. This District, consultant

team and the TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator representing Lufkin have begun this dialog with the VA Lufkin Clinic. The initial proposal is described as follows:

- 1) The District provides a 30-passenger, ADA-equipped bus that runs a dedicated route from VA Lufkin to VA Houston hospitals daily;
- 2) The District has agreed to produce and customize Vet Pass for VA patients to use to board the bus or transfer trips;
- 3) The bus can pick up and drop off at newly constructed Jennings Station in Lufkin where sufficient parking is available;
- 4) The bus would not be restricted from additional pick-ups;
- 5) County Commissioners in Liberty and Montgomery counties have shown their support for this program by stating that veterans in their areas need transportation service that can be included in the program;
- 6) City of Conroe has approval to build a new VA Clinic for which the proposed service can be provided to the new facility;
- 7) This proposal allows easy expansion if the demand becomes greater by adding another bus;
- 8) The VA purchases the Vet Passes and distributes them to their patients to use. The VA Lufkin Clinic already agrees to market this alternative transportation service.

It is hoped that the proposed alternative transportation program will provide reliable, cost-effective transportation for Deep East Texas veterans to VA facilities in Houston. VA patients in surrounding counties will have an option of boarding a bus in Lufkin or Livingston. Representatives of the VA Lufkin Clinic indicated that they are interested in the proposal. They would market the Vet Pass to their patients. However, much work remains to be done to carry on this proposal. Representatives of The District, TxDOT, working with other governmental leaders would need to work through some details among which funding is critical.

Recommended Opportunities No.3: Tyson Foods, Inc. contracts with The District or the new rural provider for bus service as a means of providing dedicated transportation for its employees. The City of Center, TX, where Tyson Foods, Inc. is located, does not have any kind of public transportation service. Almost 40% of Tyson employees are from border cities in Louisiana who currently commute to Center using employee-owned vans. At the request of Tyson Foods managers and the Mayor of Center, the consultant team began examining alternative bus transportation. A rough preliminary calculation indicated that using dedicated buses would bring Tyson employees savings each month on transportation.

The information obtained from Tyson managers shows that majority of employees come from the first two shifts. Currently, 10 vans (10-16 passenger van, use 12 for the calculation here) make 35-mile one-way trips everyday, taking employees from LA to Tyson plant. It costs \$25 per employee per week.

- *Cost of Existing Van Transportation: \$25 per employee * 120 employees (10 vans carry 12 employee each) * 4 weeks per month = \$12,000 per month*
- *Cost of Alternative Bus Transportation using 3 buses (40-passenger bus), assuming \$65 per bus operating hour:*

*Daily: 3 buses * 2 way * 0.5 hour (one-way) * \$65 * 2 shifts = \$390*

*Weekly: \$390 * 7 = \$2,730*
*Monthly: \$2,730 * 4 = \$10,920 per month*

- *Cost Savings per Month: \$12,000 - \$10,920 = \$1,080*

Bus transportation would be more reliable than the current system since it is not dependent on the employees who own and operate the vans. Depending on how the agreement with the transit provider is set up, the financial burdens of maintaining the vans and fuel cost might be shifted to the transit providers and employers. Currently Tyson Foods, Inc. indicated that year 2005 the company had as high as 92% turnover and it cost the company \$3,500 to replace each employee. If the turnover rate could be reduced and money could be saved due to better and more reliable transportation, Tyson Foods is more than likely to share the cost of this alternative transportation with the transit provider. Additional funding could also come from NEW Freedom or JARC funds, which are anticipated to be available in FY 2007.

Other possible coordination opportunities include:

1. Coordinating vehicle preventative maintenance among transit providers and health and human service providers. As indicated in the Providers' Survey, Burke Center and Nacogdoches Treatment Center need help with vehicle preventative maintenance. The District has the capability to offer vehicle preventative maintenance service to other agencies. A cooperative agreement may be mutually beneficial to all agencies.
2. Coordinating routing and scheduling among transit providers and health and human service providers. Also indicated in the Providers' Survey, agencies such as Workforce Solutions of Deep East Texas need help with routing and scheduling transportation. Both Area Agency on Aging of Deep East Texas and The District have additional capability to offer that service. The advantage of such coordination would result in the most efficient use of technology and staff.
3. Joint marketing of transit services – developing a regional transportation website and regional transit information center. Surveys and interviews with the providers all indicated that currently there is lack of information sharing on transportation in the Deep East Texas region. Every agency is doing its own thing without knowing what else is available when they need help. Customers sometimes cannot get transportation service because of lack of information as well. Providing a joint effort to communicate all of the available transit services within the region could benefit all agencies as well as customers. This joint marketing effort could be expanded upon 211 Information Center that is currently in use, or it could result in a new and independent public transportation information center.

Appendix A: Person(s) Identifying Barrier Contact List

Agency Name	Contact Person	E-mail Address	Phone	Fax
1. American Cancer Society	Stella	Stella.dupree@cancer.org	936-634-2940	936-634-2792
2. East Texas Support Services	Teresa Janeaux	brucebrodnax@jas.net	409-384-7731	409-384-6741
3. Escapees CARE Inc.	Karen Caldwell	careinc@livingston.net	936-327-4256	936-327-6428
4. Nacogdoches Treatment Center	Kathy Strong	ntc@cox-internet.com	936-569-7173	936-569-1074
5. Brazos Transit District	Lyle Nelson	lyle@btd.org	936-327-0192	936-327-0194
6. Jasper-Newton County Public Health District	Lillie Robinson	Ironbinsonjncphd@hotmail.com	409-994-5921	409-994-4086
7. Burke Center	Larry Welker	larryw@burke-center.org	936-639-1141	936-634-8601
8. Veterans Administration Outpatient Clinic – Lufkin	Jeff Davis		936-633-2780	936-633-2747
9. DET Foundation	Monique Settler	casemanagementdet@yahoo.com		
10. AAA of Deep East Texas	Holly Anderson	handerson@detcog.org		
11. Workforce Solutions DET	Charlene Meadows	Charlene.meadows@twc.state.tx.us		
12. East Texas Health Access Network (ETHAN)	Glenda Moore	Glenda.moore@ethannetwork.org		
	Carlene Wilson	carlene.wilson@ethannetwork.org	409-384-2099	409-384-2211
13. Tri-County Head Start	Cynthia Howard Bolton		936-598-6315 * 15	
14. City of Shepherd	Obie Daniels, Mayor	mayor@shepherdtx.org	936-628-3305	