

Final Report to the Texas Department of Transportation

December 2006

For Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee

**As prepared by the Concho Valley Council of Governments, Lead Agent for the
Committee**

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- The Committee members who spent time away from their primary agency mission to work in a coalition of agencies that embraced the idea of coordination.
- The Board of the Concho Valley Council of Governments and their executive director, Jeffrey Sutton for supporting the Committee and their generosity in providing and managing resources to the work.
- The public who attended and participated in public meetings and the communities that hosted the meetings.
- The clients of our agencies and organizations for whom we have tried to respond to their needs and concerns regarding coordinated transportation.
- The staff of the City of San Angelo, Texas Department of Transportation, TTI, and the Goodman Corporation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 78th Legislature's HB 3588 Article 13 creates opportunities and incentives for the coordination of public transportation throughout the state. The legislation changed the definition of public transportation. Public transportation "provider" and "service" now includes all providers with few exceptions receiving public funds (federal/state/local) to provide transit services to their clients. This new definition incorporates transit related activities of health and human service agencies to their clients. Legislation by the 78th Legislature also changed the flow of public transportation funds. All funding for transit related activities now flows through one state agency the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). Additionally, the legislature requires various health and human services agencies to contract with the department for the provision of public transportation services. The legislation encourages regions to improve delivery of transportation services, cooperate and coordinate among agencies and programs, and requires the development of regional service plans.

Approximately 28,122 (21.2 % of the population) people in the Concho Valley live with a disability; 22,574 (15.9 %) live in poverty; over 21,718 (14.7 %) are seniors age 65 and above; and 33,528 are children under age 15. Many of these residents have special transportation needs that are underserved or unmet. As our committee begins to address the broad range of transportation issues in the Concho Valley, meeting the transportation needs of those that are unable to drive or purchase transportation due to a disability, income status, or their age must be included.¹

Coordination of special needs transportation services is a first and major step towards resolving the mobility challenges of Concho Valley residents. The goal of coordination is to achieve efficiencies in current services, and reinvest the cost savings into expanded special needs transportation.

The Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee is a diverse group voluntarily working together with the vision of providing mobility for the entire community. Historically, this area has coordinated very well regardless of the barriers that impede coordination. The preponderance of need and shrinking funding due to budget cuts and lack of population density has made the Concho Valley communities adept at making the most of very little. Yet, transportation remains insufficient to meet the need in the Concho Valley, however. Creativity and ingenuity is hampered by the lack of adequate funding.

The goals of the Committee are to develop coordinated transportation services and program that achieves improved delivery of transportation services, generates efficiencies in operation that can lead to increased levels of service, enhances customer service/satisfaction, and encourages cooperation and coordination

Currently, many social service programs that serve the elderly, children, poor, and people with disabilities either operate independent transportation programs, coordinate with public transportation providers, or have no transportation at all. The result is:

¹ Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer, <http://txsdc.utsa.edu/>, accessed April 24, 2006, information from the 2000 Census arranged to reflect the COG area.

- Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC) organizations providing transportation services that drain resources from their original mission; or
- People with unmet transportation needs.

Through more coordination, public and private transportation services can be provided more efficiently.

This document inventories the work of the Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee and the Regional Services Plan that was developed after months of research and analysis.

Tools used to gather information for this document include interviews with transportation providers, a survey of people with special transportation needs, use of existing documentation, input from existing advisory committees, and phone and web research.

The real work of the Committee has begun with the finalizing of the plan. The effort and time that it takes to create a plan is minimal to the work necessary to implement.

BACKGROUND

Regional Description

Overview

The Concho Valley Council of Governments (CVCOG) is one of 24 Council of Governments in Texas formed in 1967. It is a voluntary association of local governments from thirteen counties that prepares plans for physical and social development of the region, assists local governments in implementing plans and solving problems, reviews and comments on applications for federal and state grants-in-aid and solid waste permits, and contracts with local, state, and federal governments and other public and private agencies for services. It is one of the largest geographical planning areas within the state, larger than the state of Maryland.

The Concho Valley planning area encompasses 13 counties or 16,376 square miles and has a population of 148,212 people. The City of San Angelo is the county seat of Tom Green County. The city covers 59 square miles and has a population of 88,474 people, or about 1,500 people per square mile. Tom Green County covers 1,541 square miles and has a population of 104,010, or about 68 people per square mile. The majority of Concho Valley Transit District's (CVTD) system miles are within the rural areas of Tom Green and eleven neighboring counties. Historically, agriculture, ranching, and later the oil and gas industry played the most important roles in San Angelo's economy. Access to the Santa Fe, Kansas, and Orient railroads made the city into one of the leading cattle markets in Texas, the largest sheep market in the United States, and one of the leading inland wool and mohair markets in the nation.

San Angelo, Texas is located at the juncture of U.S. highways 87, 67, and 277 and State Highway 208. San Angelo is one of Texas' largest cities located off the U.S. interstate system. I-10 is approximately 64 miles to the south and I-20 is approximately 70 miles to the north. The closest neighboring major cities are Abilene (91 miles) and Midland-Odessa (132 miles). Other connections to San Angelo include rail and air. San Angelo is connected via rail by the Texas Pacific Transportation, Ltd. which connects the main U.S. rail corridors in Fort Worth to Presidio, Texas, and Ojinaga, Chihuahua, on the Mexican border. There is no passenger rail present in San Angelo. Mathis Airfield, located eight miles southwest of downtown San Angelo, processes almost 100,000 passengers annually on eight daily flights to Houston and Dallas. The Transit District has the lowest population density in the state (3.69 persons/sq mi).

Today, the economy is more diversified but still reflects its roots with agriculture and value-added commodities generating a \$573 million impact annually. However, by 2002, more than 95 manufacturing companies produced a wide variety of products including animal feed, apparel, iron and steel fabrication, and medical equipment and supplies.

Other important economic drivers include Goodfellow Air Force Base (\$236 million annual economic impact) and Angelo State University (\$187 million annual economic impact). Located southeast of downtown, Goodfellow Air Force Base (GAFB) is San Angelo's top employer with a workforce of almost 5,000. GAFB provides training to over 10,000 students each year. Half of GAFB's workforce is permanently employed

at the base; the other half is comprised of students who are temporarily stationed at the base to take courses in linguistics, intelligence, and fire fighting. Angelo State University (ASU), a four-year university with 41 academic and 21 graduate programs, is the City's fifth top employer with a workforce of 1,200. Situated on 268 acres, just west of downtown, ASU enrolls over 6,000 students annually. ASU draws about 40 percent of its student body from a 100-mile radius. About 20 percent of these students live on-campus, while the remaining students live either in private housing in San Angelo or commute to the campus.

Of great importance to CVTD's operations is San Angelo's role as a medical services hub. In San Angelo, of the ten largest employers, four are healthcare providers. The healthcare industry generates an estimated \$400 million economic impact annually. The city's two largest hospitals have been operating since the late 1920s and early 1930s. The 233-bed Shannon Medical Center was founded in 1932 and includes the Shannon West Texas Memorial Hospital and the Medical Plaza, the largest acute-care facility in the region. The 135-bed Angelo Community Hospital, now the San Angelo Community Medical Center, is the longest continually operated medical facility in the Concho Valley. Both of these facilities offer a wide array of medical care. Specialty hospitals include the River Crest Hospital, which opened in 1988 and provides behavioral health and chemical dependency care in an 80-bed facility. The Baptist Memorial Geriatric Hospital is the only geriatric hospital in West Texas providing long-term care. The West Texas Rehabilitation Center is a private, nonprofit corporation founded in 1953 as a treatment center for children with cerebral palsy and has since grown into a medical health facility for people with all types of disabilities. The 32-bed SCCI Hospital provides care to acutely ill people or those with complex conditions.

Because of ready access to medical services, a low cost-of-living and mild climate for much of the year, San Angelo has become widely known as a retirement center for the region. In 2004, nine retirement communities offered low-maintenance residences to older adults. It is this concentration of medical services within San Angelo, and the senior population that it serves, that largely drives the demand for CVTD's service and defines its ridership.

Demographics

The Concho Valley has a population of 148,212 people. The population breaks down in the following way:

Table 1--Census Data for the Concho Valley, Texas, and U.S.

	Concho Valley	Percent	Texas	Percent	US	Percent
Total population	148,212		20,851,820		281,421,906	
Median age (years)	35.57	(X)	32.3	(X)	35.3	(X)
Under 5 years	9,762	6.6%	1,624,628	7.8%	19,175,798	6.8%
18 years and over	109,663	74.0%	14,965,061	71.8%	209,128,094	74.3%
65 years and over	21,508	14.5%	2,072,532	9.9%	34,991,753	12.4%
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	15,879	10.7%	1,754,809	11.8%	26,403,703	12.7%
Disability status (population 5 years and over)	29,271	19.7%	3,605,542	19.2%	49,746,248	19.3%

In labor force (population 16 years and over)	68,938	46.5%	9,937,150	63.6%	138,820,935	63.9%
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 years and over)	20.73	(X)	25.4	(X)	25.5	(X)
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	\$31,341.08	(X)	\$39,927	(X)	\$41,994	(X)
Median family income in 1999 (dollars)	\$35,286.85	(X)	\$45,861	(X)	\$50,046	(X)
Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	\$15,355.15	(X)	\$19,617	(X)	\$21,587	(X)
Families below poverty level	5,205	11.9%	632,676	12.0%	6,620,945	9.2%
Individuals below poverty level	22,574	15.9%	3,117,609	15.4%	33,899,812	12.4%
COMMUTING TO WORK						
Workers 16 years and over	64,852		9,157,875		128,279,228	
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	50,268	77.5%	7,115,590	77.7%	97,102,050	75.7%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	8,259	12.7%	1,326,012	14.5%	15,634,051	12.2%
Public transportation (including taxicab)	246	0.4%	170,268	1.9%	6,067,703	4.7%
Walked	2,326	3.6%	173,670	1.9%	3,758,982	2.9%
Other means	823	1.3%	120,311	1.3%	1,532,219	1.2%
Worked at home	1,881	2.9%	252,024	2.8%	4,184,223	3.3%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	20.73	(X)	25.4	(X)	25.5	(X)
ESRD patients receiving life-sustaining treatments	120		22820			

Planning Partners

The planning partners and stakeholders in the process are:

Table 2--Stakeholders and Planning Committee Members of the Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee

Area	Organization	Contact Name	Planning Committee or Stakeholder
Public Transportation			
	Transit Lines		
	Thunderbird Transit	Don Scott	Planning Committee
	SASRRC	Margo Robles	Planning Committee
	Taxi Service		
	Yellow Cab	Betty Gallion	Stakeholder
	Red Ball		Stakeholder
	Checker	Betty Gallion	Stakeholder
	Bus Lines		
	Concho Coaches	Gary Harper	Stakeholder

	Kerrville Bus Lines	Edwin Elmer	Stakeholder
Human and Social Services (Medicaid transportation and transportation for low-income)			
	Alcohol & Drug	Gabe Garza	Planning Committee
	Dept Rehab Services	Dale Kennemer	Planning Committee
	TX. Health & Human Services	Terry Smith	Stakeholder
	TX Dept of Protective Services	Mike Matthews	Stakeholder
	TX Dept of Health Services	Judi Beagle	Stakeholder
	Division Of Blind Services	Cokey Millar	Stakeholder
	TX Dept of Aging and Disability	Dr. Philip Baugh	Stakeholder
Health and Mental Health Services (provide transportation for medical trips)			
	COSA Health Dept	Sandra Villarreal	Planning Committee
	La Esperanza Health Clinic	Elizabeth Cortez	Planning Committee
	Shannon Hospital	Linda Knighstep	Planning Committee
	MHMR	June Lafoy	Planning Committee
	Rural Ambulance Council	Rod Gardner	Planning Committee
Transportation for Seniors			
	Area Agency on Aging	Betty Ford	Planning Committee
	Adult Day Care	Marcy Bosquett	Planning Committee
	Nursing Homes and Senior Centers	James Pidgeon	Planning Committee
	Christian Village	Tammy Wayham	Planning Committee
Transportation for Students			
	Head Start	George Cormack	Planning Committee
	S.A.I.S.D	Roger Garcia	Stakeholder
	A.S.U.	Mindy Lusk	Stakeholder
Workforce Training or other Vocational Training			
	CV Work Force Development Board	Mary Kay Kuss	Planning Committee
	Howard College	Mary Tinsley	Stakeholder
Non-Profits/ Faith Based Organizations			
	United Way	Carol Harrison	Planning Committee
	Healthy Families San Angelo	Bernie Coffee	Stakeholder
	West Texas Rehabilitation Center	Barby Nobles	Stakeholder
	West Texas Boys Ranch	Doran Reynolds	Stakeholder
	Council of Churches		Stakeholder
Major Employers/Users of Transit			
	Goodfellow Air Force Base	Angela Costa	Planning Committee
	SAISD	Terry Bader	Stakeholder
	ASU	Mindy Lusk	Stakeholder
Consumer Advocate			
	Disabled	Lynn Brooks	Planning Committee

	Community	Jean Ryon	Stakeholder
Planning Officials			
	COSA Planning	Elizabeth Grindstaff	Stakeholder
	SAMPO	Elisa Smetana	Planning Committee
	CVCOG Planning	Rob Stephens	Planning Committee
	TXDOT	Tommy Robinson	Planning Committee
Elected Officials			
	CVCOG	Jeffrey Sutton	Stakeholder
	Coke County	Judge Roy Blair	Stakeholder
	Concho County	Judge Allen Amos	Planning Committee
	Crockett County	Judge John Jones	Stakeholder
	Irion County	Judge Leon Standard	Stakeholder
	Kimble County	Judge Delbert Roberts	Stakeholder
	McCulloch County	Judge Randy Young	Planning Committee
	Mason County	Judge Jerry Bearden	Stakeholder
	Menard County	Judge Richard Cordes	Stakeholder
	Reagan County	Judge Larry Isom	Stakeholder
	Schleicher County	Judge Johnny Griffin	Stakeholder
	Sterling County	Judge Robert Browne	Stakeholder
	Sutton County	Judge Carla Garner	Stakeholder
	Tom Green County	Judge Mike Brown	Stakeholder

Due to time constraints in the community, many of the stakeholders did not actively participate. Planning Committee members were active as much as their schedules allowed.

Current Public Transportation Services/Providers

Currently, there are eight traditional transit providers in the Concho Valley.

Table 3--Transportation Providers in the Concho Valley

Provider Name	Provider Type	Number of Counties Served	Fleet
<i>Public Organizations</i>			
Thunderbird Transit	Transit Lines	13	32 busses
SASRRC	Transit Lines	San Angelo city limits	18 busses, 2 vans
SAISD	School Transportation	SAISD boundaries	150 cars, 100 busses
<i>Private Organizations</i>			
Yellow Cab	Taxi Service	13	8 vans
Red Ball	Taxi Service	13	5 vans
Checker	Taxi Service	13	11 vans
Concho Coaches	Bus Lines	State wide	3 vans 3 busses
Kerrville Bus Lines	Bus Lines	State wide	150 busses

According to the “new definition”, many HHSC organizations have fleets to transport their consumers. Nursing homes must have a vehicle for transportation of their consumers.

Table 4--HB 3588 "New Definition" Transportation Providers

Provider Name	Cars	Vans	Busses
<i>Public Organizations</i>			
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council		5	
MHMR of the Concho Valley	15	9	
Hill Country MHMR		3	
<i>Private Organization</i>			
Adult Day Care		2	1
Christian Village		1	1
West Texas Boys Ranch		5	1
Baptist Memorial	1	2	
Nursing Homes		Most have 1 van	

Many organizations manage to meet transportation needs by contracting with traditional providers or relying on families/friends/case managers of the consumer to provide transportation. Some organizations have the funds for limited reimbursement with the expense of transportation. These monies are passed through to the agency as part of their program monies and are not identified as transportation dollars. Every organization accounts for the dollars, trips, and expenses of transportation in different ways. While the system may be flexible, the lack of knowledge or clarity of monies spent on transportation can impede planning by these groups. Coordination of transportation resources can free up these same program monies for more direct services.

History of Regional Coordination of Public Transportation

Past/continuing planning activities

Coordination efforts have been on-going during the tenure of the Regional Service Planning initiative. This is indicative of the culture of the Concho Valley. As stated in past reports, coordination has been a way of life for the area. The rural public transit system began as an Area Agency on Aging program and grew to become its own transit district. The City of San Angelo and the Concho Valley Transit District has completed its consolidation as of September 1, 2006. The consolidation has brought together urban, rural, paratransit, and Medicaid transportation under the umbrella of one agency.

Health and Human Service agencies have on going relationships with these transportation systems and utilize the services regularly. As of October 16, 2006, Adult Day Care has transferred its van and some of its transportation service to the newly formed Concho Valley Transit District (CVTD). The San Angelo Independent School District and the CVTD have begun to discuss and explore ways that the urban fixed route can help with school transportation.

The rural transportation system, Thunderbird Transit, has on-going support from the individual counties that they serve. The county governments contribute to the operational expenses of the system. From the public meeting held in June, it became clear that the Thunderbird needs to do more marketing in its twelve-county region. There is also an expressed desire by the citizens that attended for expanded service.

Past and current implemented projects/services

Multimodal Facility

The Concho Valley Rural Transit District (CVRTD) contracted with The Goodman Corporation (TGC) in November 2004 to conduct a feasibility study for a multi-modal terminal for the Concho Valley region and the City of San Angelo.

There currently is no multi-modal terminal serving the Concho Valley region. Intercity carriers, rural transportation providers, and local bus service are each staged from different facilities with little to no coordination of services. This lack of coordination is wasteful as redundant resources require on-going maintenance and support. As transit funding continues to become tighter, the strategic elimination of redundant resources can improve financial performance while maintaining or improving service.

Benefits will stem from the improved efficiency of the county's and city's transit system. By reducing redundancies in personnel, facilities, and equipment, the transit system could expand or improve service, add new services, or reduce its reliance on outside funding sources. The proposed facility creates a space where both of these agencies can work together more effectively. Without a shared facility, the opportunity to work together will be of limited scope and effect. The preliminary estimated impact of improved coordination/consolidation of service is \$380,732 annually.

The decision to consolidate the rural and the urban transit systems came out of this feasibility study. The newly formed CVTD is currently moving forward to the next phase of making the multimodal facility a reality.

Consolidation

In September 2003, consolidation of the City of San Angelo and Concho Valley Rural Transit District occurred. This consolidation created a new transit district—Concho Valley Transit District (CVTD). The board of the CVTD is composed of 12 county representatives and 3 city council members with city and COG staff advising the board. The consolidation was completed in a matter of months. The City and the COG are now dual grantees of the federal monies for the urban fixed route system. The COG transportation staff is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the urban system as well as the rural transportation system and the Medicaid Transportation Program.

Many of the issues examined the barriers and constraints in the Concho Valley centered in the two systems not working together in the past. The barriers submitted by this area were regulatory and funding issues that the Concho Valley will not be able to solve by itself. It will take a statewide effort of all the Regional Planning areas to effect change. The constraints that were submitted are something that could be changed on the local level. The consolidation holds the greatest promise for a solution to the constraints. The need for extended hours, treatment of passengers, and hour trips on the fixed route are systemic problems that will be addressed by the CVTD. The HHSC organizations have expressed a willingness to support and advise on changes that affect their clients.

The pressing issues of the CVTD post-consolidation include negotiating the reporting for funding streams, personnel issues, vehicle aging, maintenance, and replacement, and fixing the fixed route. The issue that most affects the work of the Regional Service Planning Committee is the fixed route. Currently it takes an hour to complete a bus route, with most trips taking 1 to 1 ½ hours to complete by the rider. Because the system in San Angelo shuts down at 6:00 pm, late shift workers cannot use the public transit system. Commuters because of system hours and infrequent trips to neighboring towns cannot use the rural system for transportation. It is plan of the CVTD to shorten trip times and extend operating hours. These changes require a great deal of money and time. The consolidation should free up some money to invest, but probably not enough to help county commuters at this time.

The newly formed CVTD has a lot to do in order to make the consolidation a success. The staff has been working diligently to improve the system. Over the last several months, Robert Stephens, the director, along with many others have been focused on transition steps and action plans that would bring the two entities together as one system. Work continues on making the multi-modal terminal a reality. Other initiatives include purchasing new buses with new logos, new routes that serve the community, and revamping of ADA application process. CVTD plans to improve in dispatching, customer service, and overall performance of the system.

Medicaid Transportation Program (MTP), Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310), and Rural Areas Transportation (Section 5311)

The Thunderbird Transit has been the sole provider for the MTP for many years. It performs this service in addition to providing public rural transportation for the Concho Valley service area. The rural areas operate on a fixed schedule; providing trips into San Angelo or Kerrville on a weekly basis. Medicaid transportation is one of the primary functions of the county public transportation system. The elderly population of the rural counties is at 14.5% and the disabled population is 19.7%. Much of the transportation needs of the counties are for medical appointments of its aging and disabled population.

The rural system does have great support and appreciation from the rural people it serves. Each county's service is different according to needs. For instance, Sutton County uses the Thunderbird to help transport children to Head Start and to school, while Irion County uses the Thunderbird for senior communal meals. Public transportation services to major population centers (San Angelo and/or Kerrville) occur once or twice a week, depending on county resident needs. Coordination between the MTP, 5310, and 5311 has been in place for many years and has worked very well for the Concho Valley.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Concho Valley Transit District receives reimbursement from the local AAA for transportation of seniors to nutrition centers. The old Concho Valley Rural Transit District grew out of this program. The CVRTD still bases much of their transit operation in the rural counties out to the senior centers. The City of San Angelo provided direct response service to seniors going to nutrition centers free of charge. The consolidation of the two programs has made it possible to coordinate the rural and urban transportation systems and increase efficiencies.

Other Transportation Agreements

The CVRTD has spearheaded and crafted many transportation agreements with nursing homes and assisted living facilities, as well as a few non-profit agencies. In the past, the CVRTD had agreements with the Workforce Center's Choices Programs. The program dissolved. Currently, the Workforce Center utilizes the ADA paratransit system for their disabled clients.

Since the consolidation, CVTD still continues to foster relationships with agencies and programs. The CVTD provides about 100,000 trips per year to its customers. The majority of its passengers are elderly people or people with mobility impairments that rely on CVTD to provide point-to-point service. Passengers may ride CVTD buses as part of a social services program (Head Start, Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, etc.), as part of its Medicaid-supported services, as a benefit of its residency in an assisted living development, as a student, or as a member of the general public.

Table 5--CVRTD Passengers

<i>Type of Passenger</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>% of Trips</i>
Over 60	Passenger over 60 w/no other program support	31%
Medicaid	Medicaid payment supports trip cost	11%
Baptist Memorial	Contracted service	Less than 1%
Plaza Del Sol	Contracted service	Less than 1%
Assisted Living	Contracted service	Less than 1%
Foster Grandparent	Area Agency on Aging contracted service	15%

Senior Companion	Area Agency on Aging contracted service	13%
Success by Six	Head Start contracted service	Less than 1%
Head Start	Head Start contracted service	Less than 1%
Student	Passengers enrolled in grades 1-12	5%
Public	All others	50%

REGIONAL SERVICE COORDINATION PLANNING

Planning Process & Work Plan Descriptions

Organization

The Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee is a diverse group voluntarily working together with the vision of providing mobility for the entire community. Historically, this area has coordinated very well regardless of the barriers that impede coordination. The preponderance of need and shrinking funding due to budget cuts and lack of population density has made the Concho Valley communities adept at making the most of very little. Yet, transportation remains insufficient to meet the need in the Concho Valley, however. Creativity and ingenuity is hampered by the lack of adequate funding.

Currently, many social service programs that serve the elderly, children, poor, and people with disabilities either operate independent transportation programs, coordinate with public transportation providers, or have no transportation at all. The result is:

- Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC) organizations providing transportation services that drain resources from their original mission; or
- People with unmet transportation needs.

Through more coordination, public and private transportation services can be provided more efficiently, thereby offering more rides to more people at a lower cost per trip.

Lead Entity

The Lead Entity was selected to be the Concho Valley Council of Governments. The CVCOG hosted the planning meetings and created an impartial planning process that tried to build consensus on the regional plan. The CVCOG hired a transportation planner to help gather data, plan meetings, plan public outreach, and to do peer research. Active participation was encouraged, however, the members of the committee level of participation was dependent on time and schedules.

Other Involved Entities

- The committee was made up of
 - Public transportation authorities and rural transit districts
 - Intercity transportation providers
 - Health and human service agencies that fund or purchase transportation for clients

- Regional transportation planning organizations
- Elected officials, local governments
- Nonprofit agencies that provide services for clients who need transportation
- Private sector providers
- Student transportation
- The local university
- Goodfellow Air Force Base

Many of the private transportation providers did not attend. These groups receive little to no state or federal funding. The focus for these providers is corporate in nature. In other words, they want to create a healthy bottom line and maintain customer base. Although these groups do work with HHSC and nonprofit agencies, they do or did not see themselves directly affected by HB 3588.

The participation was erratic. Most of the HHSC organization local branches attended consistently. The committee developed and conducted a survey, in addition to the TTI survey. The plan introduced in this document came out of months of review, discussion, and analysis.

Work Plan for the Committee

Table 6--Work Plan/Flow Schedule

Time Frame	Task/Responsible Party	Strategy
Month 1	Task 1 - Oversight/Goals Planning Committee Oversight	<i>Planning Committee will:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Goals & Performance Objectives • Confirm & Refine Planning Strategy • Communications Strategy • Identify Examples of Coordination • Take to Stakeholders for Review & Input
Months 1-3	Task 2 – Stakeholder ID Planning Committee Stakeholder ID	<i>Planning Committee will:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Stakeholders • Identify Key Personnel in Agencies for Data Collection effort • Set Up Communication/Education Strategy • Create Data Base • Draft Reports and Meeting Minutes • Take to Stakeholders for Review & Input

Months 4-7	Task 3 – Data Collection Planning Committee	<p><i>Planning Committee will:</i></p> <p>Inventory Current Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Services/HHS Services: • Services Provided/Area • Customers Served • Funding <p>Un/Under-Served Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics/Area • Services Needed • Identify overlaps and gaps • Take to Stakeholders for Review and Input
Months 6-8	Task 4 – Coordination Review Planning Committee	<p><i>Planning Committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current coordination efforts local and global • Identify New ways to share responsibilities and resources • Identify Benefits to Coordination • Identify Barriers to Coordination • Take to Stakeholders for Review and Input
Months 9-12	Task 5 – Action Plan Planning Committee	<p><i>Planning Committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how coordination is going to happen • Identify when coordination is going to happen • Identify How we will know when we are successful • Take to Stakeholders for Review and Input

Outreach/Public Involvement Description

In June and July 2006, the Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee held public meetings to discuss current transportation delivery systems and coordinating transportation in the Concho Valley. The schedule was as follows:

Table 7--Public Meetings Schedule for the Concho Valley

Location	Date	Time	Place
Eden	Monday, June 12, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Eden Multipurpose Center 319 West Blanchard
Ozona	Wednesday, June 14, 2006	10:30 am—1:00 pm	Crockett County Senior Center 1 State Highway 163 N

Junction	Monday, June 19, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Kimble County Senior Center 404 College Street
Brady	Wednesday, June 21, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Brady Senior Center 214 W. Lockhart
San Angelo	Monday, June 26, 2006	5:00 am—7:00 pm	Santa Fe Depot 703 South Chadbourne

The public involvement meetings were conducted with the Transportation Planner facilitating and members of the committee represented. The participants in the meetings had many suggestions on how to make the current transportation system better, but not on how to coordinate. The reason for this is that there is such a high level of coordination taking place already.

For the rural counties, the findings show that there is some confusion on who can use the rural public transit system. The Thunderbird was started many years ago as a senior citizen transportation system for the Area Agency for Aging and this perception continues to exist in spite of marketing and outreach efforts. Many of the attendees thought of the Thunderbird as only the “old people bus”. The Thunderbird Transit system is a public transit system. However, it is also used in some counties as a way to transport school children. Many of the public meeting attendees identified the lack of marketing and outreach as a reason for the persistent perceptions of the Thunderbird. Attendees identified the desire for increased routes and longer operating hours. There was also a desire for more availability for social and recreational trips. One attendee noted that seniors want to do more than just go to the doctor.

At the San Angelo meeting, the remarks focused on the urban transit system. Attendees identified the fixed route as inefficient. Workers from a business presented a petition requesting extended hours of service. Shift workers remarked that the fixed route is unavailable for workers on second (3:00-11:00 pm) or third (11:00 pm-7:00 pm) shifts. The STS system (city paratransit system) can take a month to approve an application for paratransit rides. There were concerns on the customer service skills of bus drivers and dispatchers. When the meeting was held, the City of San Angelo and the Council of Governments were engaged in talks to consolidate the urban and rural transit system. Efforts are being made to address the problems with the city transit system; however, it was noted at the public meeting that progress would be slow and dependent on funding.

In addition to the public meetings, the Committee used data from the United Way Needs Assessment and Analyzing Public Attitude toward the San Angelo Public Ground Transportation System for need analysis.

COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the Committee are to develop coordinated transportation services and program that achieves improved delivery of transportation services, generates

efficiencies in operation that can lead to increased levels of service, enhances customer service/satisfaction, and encourages cooperation and coordination

Regional Needs Assessment

In addition to the public meetings, the Concho Valley Regional Service Planning Committee used information from two needs assessment tools previously done in the past two years. The data used can be found here.

United Way of the Concho Valley Needs Assessment Data

Transportation is important to the communities. In the United Way Needs Assessment Summary of Findings, good transportation systems were identified as one of the assets and strengths in community focus groups in the 12 rural counties (not Tom Green County). In these same counties, transportation for the poor and elderly was identified as a challenge and concern. In Tom Green County, transportation challenges were:

1. Door-to-door, affordable demand responsive transportation for SRS/disabled
2. Life style transportation
3. Need more transportation for teen parents who are school age
4. Inadequate transportation for older adults
5. More gasoline funds for screened clients

In the Key Informants Survey, transportation was not a prevalent concern, although issues that are tangential to the ability of people getting from point A to point B were. Unemployment and underemployment were identified as serious issues. Inadequate transportation was identified as a major issue by 21.5%, a moderate issue by 35%, a minor issue by 27.1%, and not an issue by 13% of the key informants. In contrast, the Household Survey also unemployment and underemployment were identified as major issues. Inadequate transportation was identified by 17.7% as a major issue, 25.9% as a

Table 8--United Way of the Concho Valley 2004 Comprehensive Needs Assessment Executive Summary, July 2004

Transportation Issues	No Opinion	Not an Issue	Minor Issue	Moderate Issue	Major Issue
Not being able to get transportation for a person with a disability or an elder	6.7%	65.6%	11.3%	10.9%	5.5%

moderate issue, 30.6% as a minor issue, and 6.6% as not an issue with Household respondents. The focus of the survey was on elderly and disabled transportation in which 65% of the Household respondents identified as not an issue.

It is interesting to note that the majority of Household Survey respondents trust that leaders do coordinate and work together well.

Table 9--United Way of the Concho Valley 2004 Comprehensive Needs Assessment Executive Summary, July 2004

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
People in your community view local government as a strength.	16.5%	53.8%	18.6%	7.0%	4.1%
People in your community view the local school system as a strength.	37.1%	32.4%	18.2%	10.7%	1.6%
People in your community come together to work on common goals.	28.8%	50.0%	15.2%	4.9%	1.1%
People and groups in your community come together to help each other out when they have a problem.	50.7%	36.8%	8.2%	3.0%	1.3%
People in your community view the local church community as a strength.	53.2%	38.3%	5.1%	1.4%	2.1%
People who are different from one another participate together in community activities.	20.3%	51.8%	19.5%	6.5%	1.9%

Key Informants also see community leaders working together.

Table 10--United Way of the Concho Valley 2004 Comprehensive Needs Assessment Executive Summary, July 2004

Statements	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Your community is one where leaders from business, labor, government, education, religious, neighborhood, non-profit and all other sectors come together and work productively to address critical community issues.	28.7%	48.5%	17.0%	5.8%	0.0%
Your community is one that actively promotes positive relations among people from all races, genders, ages and cultures.	23.8%	55.2%	14.5%	5.2%	1.2%
Your community is one where people and organizations from all geographic regions get together to address mutual concerns.	15.9%	52.9%	21.2%	21.2%	1.2%
Your community is one where all religious groups come together to address pressing social concerns.	24.1%	44.1%	21.8%	7.1%	2.9%
Your community is one where associations in the community share strategies and work together.	18.8%	54.1%	22.4%	3.5%	1.2%
Your community is one that actively supports and strengthens connections between families, neighborhoods, and the whole community.	29.4%	47.1%	18.2%	4.7%	0.6%
Your community is one that actively promotes participation in the political process from all races, genders, ages and cultures.	20.6%	41.8%	20.6%	7.1%	1.8%
Your community is one in which there exists a great deal of mutual respect among leaders from all sectors of the community.	22.9%	42.9%	22.9%	7.1%	0.6%
Your community is one where leaders from all sectors of the community share common goals and uphold a common vision for the community.	11.8%	48.2%	34.1%	5.3%	0.6%

The breakdown by county on the issue of inadequate transportation in the Concho Valley is tabled below:

Table 11--United Way of the Concho Valley 2004 Comprehensive Needs Assessment Executive Summary, July 2004

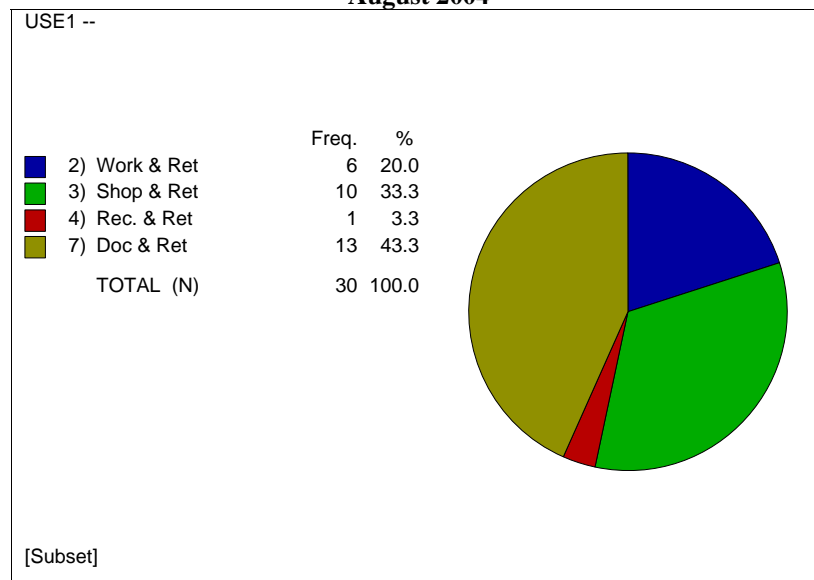
Community Priorities--Community Challenges and Issues				
Inadequate public transportation	No Opinion	Minor Issue	Moderate Issue	Major Issue
Coke County	7%	36%	21%	14%
Concho County	10%	25%	25%	30%
Crockett County	7%	30%	23%	16%
Irion County	5%	5%	38%	5%
Kimble County	9%	30%	21%	36%
Mason County	29%	38%	5%	5%
McCulloch County	0%	25%	44%	25%
Menard County	13%	31%	13%	25%
Reagan County	3%	42%	14%	3%
Runnels County	20%	26%	24%	8%
Schleicher County	0%	40%	30%	3%
Sterling County	25%	38%	25%	0%
Sutton County	33%	33%	0%	0%
Tom Green County	7%	19%	26%	18%

According to the United Way Needs Assessment, transportation needs are being met in an adequate way. People in the Concho Valley predominately rely on their own private vehicles. Public transportation seems to be adequate now. However, with the graying of the population, current increase in gas prices, and cuts in funding for transportation and health and human services, this perception may have changed since 2004.

Analyzing Public Attitude toward the San Angelo Public Ground Transportation System

In 2004, the San Angelo Planning Department worked with Dr. Laurence Jones of Angelo State University Department of Government on Analyzing Public Attitude toward the San Angelo Public Ground Transportation System. This survey garnered fewer respondents than the United Way Needs Assessment. The focus of this survey was on San Angelo residents. Because of sample size and the number of returned surveys, the researchers note that the results demonstrate an overrepresentation of non-public transit consumers and a higher median age and income level than is representational of the city residents. Groups such as females, single residents, and Hispanics are under represented in the survey. However, it is important to note that of the respondents that use public transit in San Angelo, the most common trip was to visit the doctor.

Figure 1--Analyzing Public Attitude toward the San Angelo Public Ground Transportation System, August 2004



Committee Final Assessment of Needs

After gathering the data from the providers and the public, the Committee found that the Concho Valley transportation needs were increased awareness of what public transportation is available, better fixed route system in San Angelo, more accessible and visible bus stops, and expanded service for shift workers. In order to address these needs, the Committee members realize that we must continue to work together to secure funding streams.

The public does not have a positive view of the fixed route system in San Angelo. The Committee also discovered that the rural populations were still unclear about the Thunderbird Transit system. Now that the consolidation of the rural and urban systems has taken place, the newly formed CVTD has a unique opportunity to increase awareness and change the perception of public transit in the Concho Valley.

The fixed route system is a hub and spoke model composed of five large loops. Each loop takes an hour to complete and do not intersect with the other loops. A typical one way commute on a bus can take an hour to two hours to complete. The system begins at 6:30 am to 6:30 pm. This time frame in conjunction with the lengthy travel time for commutes, make the fixed route system unwieldy and unattractive to the transit dependent and the agencies that assist them.

The bus stops for the fixed route systems are inadequate and poorly marked. Shelters are rare and accessibility for the disabled is difficult at best. While the stop may technically comply with ADA regulations, the actual usability of the stop by the disabled is minimal. This increases loading time for wheelchair passengers, which delays the bus from making their time points. Visibility, accessibility, and amenities need to be improved.

The Concho Valley has a number of businesses that operate on a shift rotation basis. These businesses range from telemarketing to prisons to hospitals. Many of the unemployed that are transit dependent cannot apply for these positions because they will

have no way to get to work. The Committee recognizes that to expand service hours will require partnerships with private businesses and government funding.

According to the 2000 Census, a fair number of people commute throughout the Concho Valley.

Table 12--Work Commute Census Data for the Concho Valley

Work County	Total workers	Workers residing in County	Commuters to County (percent of non-county residents in County workforce)	Commuters from CVCOG Counties	
Coke	1220	894	326 (27%)	145 (12%)	Concho, Sterling, Tom Green
Concho	1146	834	312 (27%)	215 (19%)	McCulloch, Menard, Tom Green
Crockett	1700	1543	157 (9%)	100 (6%)	Coke, Irion, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Tom Green
Irion	583	446	137 (23%)	106 (18%)	Reagan, Schleicher, Tom Green
Kimble	1881	1662	219 (12%)	61(3%)	Mason, Menard, Schleicher, Sutton
McCulloch	3108	2745	363 (12%)	201(6%)	Concho, Kimble, Mason, Menard, Tom Green
Mason	1467	1301	166 (11%)	46 (3%)	Irion, Kimble, McCulloch, Menard
Menard	885	728	157 (18%)	144 (16%)	Concho, Kimble, McCulloch, Mason, Schleicher, Tom Green
Reagan	1433	1216	217 (15%)	85 (6%)	Crockett, Irion, Tom Green
Schleicher	1083	944	139 (13%)	116 (11%)	Concho, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, Menard, Sutton, Tom Green
Sterling	630	473	157 (25%)	90 (14%)	Coke, Irion, Tom Green
Sutton	2017	1652	365 (18%)	255 (13%)	Coke, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, McCulloch, Menard, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, Tom Green
Tom Green	47471	44999	2472 (5%)	1090 (2%)	Coke, Concho, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, McCulloch, Mason, Menard, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton
Total	64624	59437	5,187 (8%)	2,654 (4%)	

The majority of these commuters do have private vehicles. Should (for some reason) these commuters become unable to drive, how would they manage to stay employed? How do the unemployed manage to secure a job if they have no transportation? Public transportation between the counties ranges from once a week trips to no routes at all. In the city of San Angelo, the fixed route system closes at 6:30 pm, which makes second and third shift transportation impossible.

Although these numbers may not seem significant now, with rising gas prices and the aging of our communities, the ability to get to work can and will factor into coordination.

Regional Transportation Resources: Overlaps and Gaps

Approximately 148,564 people live in the Concho Valley. Of that population, 14.7% are elderly, 22.5% are children, 15.9% are low-income, and 21.2% are disabled. Many of these individuals have unmet transportation needs.

Transportation gaps and needs identified in this document were gathered through a variety of sources: A survey distributed by several public and non-profit agencies; other

independent surveys; interviews with transportation providers; and public input at community forums and focus groups in June 2006.

The primary transportation gaps and needs identified include:

- **Time Gaps:** Transportation services are not always available when needed. In particular, weekends and the early morning and evening hours are underserved. These gaps can be a particular barrier for people trying to gain employment or be able to get to medical appointments or social trips. Outlying counties have some service to San Angelo at varying times during the month, but it is a very minimal level and does not begin to meet the need. According to the 2000 Census, 2,472 commute to Tom Green County to work, with 1,090 from the 12 other counties of the COG.
- **Geographical Gaps:** Transportation services are limited in certain areas of the Concho Valley. In particular, the rural areas outside of Tom Green County are underserved. Rural transportation is historically and currently under funded. Rural public transportation funding suffers from the lack of population density.
- **Trip Destinations Needs:** Some people may be eligible for medical trips or other program-specific trips, but are unable to find transportation to other essential services such as shopping or employment. Another critical unmet transportation destination need is accessing social activities such as visiting relatives, going to sporting events, attending worship services, or participating in community functions. Social participation is an integral component of any individual's health and quality of life.
- **Program Gaps:** Lack of financial resources prohibits state and local programs from adequately funding special transportation needs. Program gaps also occur when agencies do not coordinate their transportation services. Another gap results when land use policies and transportation policies do not support each other.
- **Specialized Service Gaps:** Paratransit-type services provide specialized services to many people. Since the consolidation, CVTD is re-examining the ADA policy for the fixed route system to streamline it. Before September 2006, it could take a month before a passenger could become qualified for ADA paratransit. The CVTD also recognizes that there is a need for other specialized services. Examples include improved alternative or non-English communication formats, personal assistance, door-through-door service, frequent stops, volunteer drivers, and the ability to make multiple stop trips without timely transfers.
- **Service Enhancement Needs:** In any system, room for improvement is needed. Individuals that frequently use public or private transportation services are particularly in tune with service enhancement needs such as reduced wait times or same-day reservation policies. A need for more fixed-bus routes and better-marked and sheltered bus stops was also identified as a way to address unmet transportation needs. The most costly need is the replacement of aging vehicles and preventative maintenance and repair costs.

Strategies to Address Gaps and Needs

The Committee has agreed to address the gaps and needs identified by our Regional Service Plan. The member agencies of the Committee plan to apply for JARC

(5316) and New Freedom (5317) funding to help address the issues of work commutes and improved accessibility to the fixed route and paratransit system. A comprehensive travel guide is being developed for the region that will include information about transportation for special needs. The rollout of this travel guide will begin marketing and an outreach campaign to educate the Concho Valley on transportation options. It is the hope of the Committee that the more knowledge the public has about transportation options, the more they will use the system. More ridership will spark more active interest.

The CVTD is planning to spearhead a rider training program that will be offered to the residents of Tom Green County. The CVTD plans to train caseworkers and client service staffs with the rider training program so that they can better explain the system to their existing and new clients. In tandem with the rider training, the CVTD will improve their internal training for dispatch and drivers. Dispatch and driver training will also include more information from the agencies on our Committee on how to deliver effective customer service for their clients.

Barriers and Constraints

We are rural, geographically isolated, and populated by retired people, low income, and the working poor. This creates an independent and proud way of life. This area does not have the wealth, political clout, and growth potential of the I35 corridor or the ethnic diversity of the Valley. But the local and state agencies and nonprofits here are tireless in their search of solutions that are homegrown and nurtured by our neighborly, small town outlook. At one time, San Angelo was estimated to have over 200 social and health groups. That number has diminished due to funding cuts. This area coordinates because it is a matter of survival that we do. Groups create coalitions here because the political realities that govern us demand it. Coalition and committee members are able to reach more of the people that need services by working together.

The lead agency distributed the barriers and constraint forms to the members of the committee. Very few of the committee members responded. There are numerous reasons for this. Some of the agencies may not be clear as to which law or regulation propose a barrier for them. Other HHSC priorities may take precedence at this time. State funding streams are being awarded during this period and, as it is with any state grant award, new reporting and procedure requirements are being implemented at this time. Lastly, most of the barriers and constraints that exist with in the region have become so familiar that they are almost invisible. Many of the agency staff at this local level cannot point to a law or regulation that creates barriers that was reported to exist. Some of it could be only policy, but there was uncertainty.

The barriers and restraints that the local group identified were—

- Barrier 1: Formalize the Accountability of TX DOT Funding
- Barrier 2: Rolling Stock Purchasing Assistance
- Barrier 3: Funding silos
- Barrier 4: Lack of adequate funding to serve need in rural and large geographic area.
- Barrier 5: Limited hours of the fixed route system
- Barrier 6: Problems accessing the Medicaid Transportation Programs
- Constraint 1: Developing a comprehensive ADA paratransit systems plan

- Constraint 2: There is no demand created by parent HHSC agencies to coordinate transportation.
- Fixed route insufficient.
- Constraint 3: Driver Training
- Constraint 4: Materials from public transportation is not appropriate for the visually impaired
- Constraint 5: Rural areas are still underserved
- Constraint 6: The need for door-to-door or door-through-door service.

The Committee decided to take a very local approach to addressing the barriers and constraints with which our area is faced. Realistically, there is very little the Committee can do about many of the barriers and constraints. The Regional Service Plan action items were chosen to address what could be done locally and effectively.

Ultimately, our goal is to coordinate transportation. Barriers and constraints make that difficult, but not impossible. Our region created an action plan taking into account what is possible.

Coordination Action Plan

Actions Items / Service Descriptions

Through meetings with the Regional Service Planning Committee, many areas of concern were discussed. After many meetings the Committee has settled on an action plan. The Committee has decided to focus on four areas. These areas are:

- Continuing to support and advise on consolidation tasks, specifically improving the fixed route system and streamlining the ADA paratransit
- Workforce Development Board will pursue JARC grant proposal for extended service and hours to targeted businesses in the Concho Valley
- A New Freedom grant proposal for improving accessibility for the disabled to existing and new bus stops
- Rider Training program to be put in place with the rollout of a comprehensive travel guide for the region
- Improved dispatch and driver training on customer service issues.

The consolidation of the urban and rural system is the pinnacle of coordination. The current transition of the CVRTD into the CVTD has been challenging. The HHSC organizations and nonprofits of the Concho Valley have been very supportive of the consolidation. No one expected everything to be better overnight. The CVTD has been supported by the community from its inception and there is a great deal of expectation. For this to be successful, it will take continued support from the community, businesses, and the local government entities. The Committee plans to be an active participant in the fixed route study. Input from the agencies clients and users of the public transit system will be integral in alleviating the problems with the current system. The CVTD's goal in the fixed route study is to create a system with the customer needs in mind. The CVTD would like to be able to get a rider from origination to destination in thirty minutes with on transfer or less.

One of the most difficult transportation challenges has been employment transportation. Employment and transportation is a huge issue in cities with a mature and

comprehensive transportation system. For a rural West Texas area, the issues are complicated by longer commutes, low ridership due to population density, and lack of funding. The Workforce Solutions group has been limited in helping the transit dependent unemployed worker to secure employment because of the limitations of public transportation in the Concho Valley. The Committee agreed that it was important to submit a grant application for Job Access and Reverse Commute funds to begin to address the difficulties. The Committee has identified the SITEL Corporation and the Eden Detention Center as candidates for the funding. The goal is to create a successful program with these two businesses that can be duplicated with other businesses in the Concho Valley. Employees of the SITEL Corporation have already delivered a petition to the CVTD with 192 signatures requesting extended hours for their shifts. The Eden Detention Center has many workers from San Angelo and surrounding counties that commute to their jobs there. The San Angelo State School has contacted the CVTD about helping them secure transportation for their employees to the Carlsbad site. The new JARC funding will be instrumental in attacking these barriers and will help open doors to making public/private partnerships more attractive to employers.

As stated earlier, the status of the bus stops in San Angelo is utilitarian at best. Wheelchair ramps are sparse and when they do exist, they are not easily accessible. Many of the stops do not have benches or shelters, which leave many riders exposed to the elements. Curb cuts are needed in many locations. The New Freedom grant proposal would enable the CVTD and the City of San Angelo Public Works Department to make the stops better accessible to the disabled riders. In the rural counties, the system provides door-to-door service. Many of the rural business do not have adequate ADA access.

The goal for travel training is to help educate public transit riders how to use the transit system effectively. Many of the people in the Concho Valley have never used public transportation before. Timetables and transfers can be confusing. Travel training will target the HHSC consumers as well as the general public. The first target group to get travel training will be HHSC caseworkers. By training the caseworker, it is the hope that each HHSC organization in the Concho Valley will have at least one staff person that can serve as an informal mobility coordinator for the organization. Implementation of mobility coordinators will help HHSC consumers plan and schedule trips in and out of Council of Governments area using public transportation available. Rider assistance cards will also be developed to help those with communication problems. The more confidence a rider has in their ability to understand the transit system and where to find answers to question about the system, the more likely that the rider will use the system regularly. Currently, the local high school special education department teaches this type of training to their cognitively impaired students. That curriculum will be evaluated as well as other curriculum and approaches. The goal is to have a consistent and effective travel-training program that can be customized to the consumer.

Currently, there is no one place a consumer can go to get transportation options and information offered in the Concho Valley. In the past, one would have to call many different places in order to get a ride. Although the transportation options are few, the search to find what was available was time consuming and frustrating. The Regional Service Planning Committee hopes to create a comprehensive travel guide that will document and explain what is available in this area. This guide will include traditional

transit providers as well as “new definition” transportation providers. It will also include scripts to be used by the consumer in order to get complete information from the transit provider, a self-assessment form to see if they qualify for ADA paratransit, and other pertinent information for the consumer. The guide will be updated yearly and distributed to area HHSC providers, assisted living centers, schools, and major points of interest (mall, shopping centers, government offices). The guide will not only be a tool for education, it will also serve to market the available transportation services to the general public.

The driver/dispatch training will be targeting communication issues and diversity training. The target audience will be the public transit staff, school bus drivers, and taxi drivers. By including training on the unique needs of HHSC consumers and the disabled, it is the hope that the frontline staff will be able to have tools that will help develop not only access to public transportation but welcomed access. Drivers and dispatchers come in contact a variety of riders daily and it is important for them to quickly assess any disabilities and challenges with which the rider may need assistance. Consistency in the delivery of information as well as making sure that the information was clear takes extra effort but saves time in the long term. HHSC organizations are willing to help advice on skill sets that are needed by public transit staff in order to best serve their clients.

Prioritization / Implementation and Schedule

The Committee has prioritized and scheduled the plan in the following manner:

	Action Step	Start Date/Implementation Date
Priority 1:	Continuing to support and advise on consolidation tasks	Ongoing
Priority 2:	Rider Training program to be put in place with the rollout of a comprehensive travel guide for the region.	Implemented—October 2007
Priority 3:	Improved dispatch and driver training on customer service issues.	Ongoing—CVTD has hired a consultant
Priority 4:	Improving the fixed route system and streamlining the ADA paratransit.	Start Date—December 2006; Implemented—August 2007
Priority 5:	Workforce Development Board will pursue JARC grant proposal for extended service and hours to targeted businesses in the Concho Valley.	Start Date—January 2006 Implemented—Upon award
Priority 6:	A New Freedom grant proposal for improving accessibility for the disabled to existing and new bus stops	Start Date—August 2007 Implemented—Upon award

Inter-regional Coordination

The CVTD has always been open and welcoming of working with other transit districts. We have had working relationships with West Texas Opportunities and Central Texas Rural Transit District. The administration has worked with Hill Country Transit District in coordinating transportation for Mason County. We have recently been

working with the staff at the Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission during our consolidation.

Inter-regional coordination is a goal for the Concho Valley Transit District. However, before we can pursue this goal, there is much work to be done on a local level. Inter-regional coordination will continued to be implemented on a case by case basis locally. For true inter-regional coordination to take place in a consistent and systemized way, Texas Department of Transportation will have to make it a priority for the transit districts.

Action Plan Evaluation

	Action Step	Start Date/Implementation Date	Evaluation
Priority 1:	Continuing to support and advise on consolidation tasks	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued participation of the Committee members in quarterly meetings. ▪ Agencies assist with public involvement activities.
Priority 2:	Improving the fixed route system and streamlining the ADA paratransit.	Start Date—December 2006; Implemented—August 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measurable increase in rider satisfaction 6 months after implementation. ▪ Decrease in wait times for bus ▪ Decrease in route times
Priority 3:	Improved dispatch and driver training on customer service issues.	Ongoing—CVTD has hired a consultant to help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All dispatchers and drivers trained in customer service techniques and strategies by January 2008. ▪ Training evaluations distributed and collected.
Priority 4:	Rider Training program to be put in place with the rollout of a comprehensive travel guide for the region.	Implemented—October 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-half of member agencies have had case worker staff complete the training by October 2008 ▪ 100 new riders or paratransit riders trained by December 2008; either by

			CVTD staff or member agency staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training evaluations collected and analyzed.
Priority 5:	Workforce Development Board will pursue JARC grant proposal for extended service and hours to targeted businesses in the Concho Valley.	Start Date—January 2006 Implemented—Upon award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Award of JARC funds Increased participation by businesses targeted in planning.
Priority 6:	A New Freedom grant proposal for improving accessibility for the disabled to existing and new bus stops	Start Date—August 2007 Implemented—Upon award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Award of New Freedom funds

Continuing / Sustaining the Coordination Plan

Continuation strategies

The sustaining of any plan is always a challenge. The Committee hopes to continue its planning of regional coordination. The format would change to quarterly meetings and would focus on the progress of the action steps initiated by the Committee. The Committee will be an important part of the fulfillment of the plan and helping with increasing the awareness of transportation issues. To continue with the work ahead, it will take continued funding by Texas Department of Transportation at a decreased level of funding that this initiative started up. The Committee would like to continue this process by exploring private/public partnerships on a local level. The continued support of TXDOT in partnership with HHSC would help to give muscle to the continued work of the Committee.

A part of what will make this Regional Service Plan a success is to get support from groups not originally a part of the planning or participating fully in the planning. This would include Chambers of Commerce, private business, and City Planning groups. A truly successful coordination plan must start integrating economic development and city design. Public transportation needs to be marketed to this audience as a strategy to make the whole community economically accessible and viable.

Plan Update Cycle / Process

Updates to the plan will happen in a number of ways. The Committee will meet on a quarterly basis to review progress on action steps. The CVTD will be meeting with the MPO board and will try to synchronize the MPO planning updates with the Regional Service Plan updates. By coordinating with the MPO, state funding, and federal funding cycle, we will be able to move forward tactically and strategically.

APPENDICES

Provider Inventory Summary

The committee conducted a preliminary survey of its stakeholders and participated in the survey that Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) conducted. The committee's survey was generalized to try to accommodate the health and social service members. The response to the TTI survey was confusion and frustration. For many health and human services providers, transportation data was bundled and connected to the priority of providing services. Some of the information requested is not required for the program reporting of these organizations or is counted and reported differently. The survey was extremely long. It is important to note that many HHSC stakeholders are serving on the committee because of organizational interests. There has been not communication from the state level HHSC organization either encouraging or mandating cooperation.

The gap of communication between system-based and client-based philosophies has been challenging to bridge. Health and social service organizations have not seen themselves as transportation providers, but as service providers that sometimes have to provide transportation. Jargon, perspectives, and systems have had to be explained and focused solely on the common purpose embraced by the committee—to help consumers with unique challenges to overcome barriers to transportation in order to receive the services they need to be functioning and contributing members of their families and communities.

From both surveys and through meetings and interviews, it is clear that most HHSC organizations would like to use their programming monies for programming and not transportation. Most organizations would gladly “get out of the transportation business” if they could be assured that the public transit system could serve their clients needs.

Barriers and constraints initially identified by the stakeholders in the local survey are listed below.

Lack of adequate funding	22
Inconsistent funding	11
Rural area	18
Regulations too restrictive	4
Red Tape	8
Inadequate fixed routes	11
Hidden populations	14
Not enough qualified drivers	6
Awareness	15
Passenger safety	4
Reliability	8
Other	12

Current providers of transportation services in the Concho Valley:

Table 13--Transportation Providers in the Concho Valley

Provider Name	Provider Type	Number of Counties Served	Fleet
<i>Public Organizations</i>			
Thunderbird Transit	Transit Lines	13	32 busses
SASRRC	Transit Lines	San Angelo city limits	18 busses, 2 vans
SAISD	School Transportation	SAISD boundaries	150 cars, 100 busses
<i>Private Organizations</i>			
Yellow Cab	Taxi Service	13	8 vans
Red Ball	Taxi Service	13	5 vans
Checker	Taxi Service	13	11 vans
Concho Coaches	Bus Lines	State wide	3 vans 3 busses
Kerrville Bus Lines	Bus Lines	State wide	150 busses

According to the “new definition”, many HHSC organizations have fleets to transport their consumers. Nursing homes must have a vehicle for transportation of their consumers.

Table 14--HB 3588 "New Definition" Transportation Providers

Provider Name	Cars	Vans	Busses
<i>Public Organizations</i>			
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council		5	
MHMR of the Concho Valley	15	9	
Hill Country MHMR		3	
<i>Private Organization</i>			
Adult Day Care		2	1
Christian Village		1	1
West Texas Boys Ranch		5	1
Baptist Memorial	1	2	
Nursing Homes		Most have 1 van	

Concho Valley Regional Transportation Survey

Agency / Organization:	
Person Responding to Survey:	
Address:	
Phone Number:	, Fax--
Email Address:	
What counties does your agency or office serve? (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tom Green <input type="checkbox"/> Concho <input type="checkbox"/> Menard <input type="checkbox"/> McCullough <input type="checkbox"/> Mason <input type="checkbox"/> Kimble <input type="checkbox"/> Sutton <input type="checkbox"/> Schleicher <input type="checkbox"/> Crockett <input type="checkbox"/> Irion <input type="checkbox"/> Reagan <input type="checkbox"/> Sterling <input type="checkbox"/> Coke
Our transportation services are provided by: (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Directly transporting our passengers ourselves <input type="checkbox"/> Giving a bus pass or bus voucher <input type="checkbox"/> Giving a taxi voucher or paying billed taxi services <input type="checkbox"/> Giving a check or cash (flat amount, per diem, or mileage) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ _____ _____
Types of passengers served: (check any that apply):	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior citizens (55 +) <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (0 - 18) <input type="checkbox"/> Young Adults / College Age (18 - 24) <input type="checkbox"/> Medical (dialysis, doctor appointment, Medicaid ride, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Person with a physical disability <input type="checkbox"/> Blind person <input type="checkbox"/> Person with a mental health disability <input type="checkbox"/> Person with an intellectual disability <input type="checkbox"/> Person in the criminal justice system <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed person <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ _____ _____
Describe how your passengers qualify for transportation services from you:	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Estimate the amount of transportation you provide:	Estimate the number of <u>unduplicated</u> passengers per month you serve _____ <i>and / or</i> estimate the <u>total</u> number of trips you provide per month _____
Do you own or lease vehicles in	

<p>which you transport your passengers yourself?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable</p> <p>If yes, we have: <input type="checkbox"/> cars (how many? _____) <input type="checkbox"/> vans (how many? _____) <input type="checkbox"/> busses (how many? _____)</p> <p>If yes, are you willing to share these resources with other agencies or organizations in a coordinated manner? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe</p>
<p>Do you contract transportation services from a separate agency, organization, or private company?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable</p>
<p>What barriers to providing transportation services do you think exist in the Concho Valley? (check all that apply)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of adequate funding to serve the need <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent or fluctuating funding amounts <input type="checkbox"/> Rural and large geographical area <input type="checkbox"/> State or other regulations are too restrictive regarding criteria for who is eligible for our transportation services <input type="checkbox"/> Too much governmental red tape to effectively run a transportation program <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate existing fixed routes <input type="checkbox"/> Hidden populations needing transportation are not being identified <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough qualified drivers to staff the need <input type="checkbox"/> People are not aware of the transportation services that are available to them <input type="checkbox"/> Concerns regarding passenger safety <input type="checkbox"/> Concerns regarding reliability of transportation provider <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ _____</p>
<p>Do you receive state, federal, local or grant funds to provide transportation service?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, how do you acquire these funds? (check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> formula grant <input type="checkbox"/> contract amount <input type="checkbox"/> unit rate <input type="checkbox"/> TX DOT direct funding stream <input type="checkbox"/> State agency funding stream <input type="checkbox"/> Federal direct funding stream <input type="checkbox"/> Local direct funding stream</p>
<p>Do your passengers have a cost-share in the transportation services you provide?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, what type of cost-share? (check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> fixed fare per trip <input type="checkbox"/> percentage of trip cost <input type="checkbox"/> monthly fixed amount for unlimited access <input type="checkbox"/> donation</p>
<p>Please <u>estimate</u> either your monthly or yearly budget for transportation services:</p>	<p>\$ _____ per month OR \$ _____ per year</p>

Counties Served:

Coke	17
Concho	18
Crockett	18
Irion	18
Kimble	19
McCulloch	16
Mason	17
Menard	17
Reagan	17
Schleicher	19
Sterling	17
Sutton	19
Tom Green	28

Our transportation services are provided by:

Directly transporting our passengers ourselves	18
Giving a bus pass or voucher	6
Giving a taxi voucher or paying billed taxi service	4
Giving a check or cash	3
Other	9

Passengers Served:

Seniors	19
Youth	17
Young Adults	20
Medical	16
Physical Disability	19
Blind	16
Mental Health	15
Cognitive Disability	16
Criminal Justice System	12
Unemployed	11
Other	10

Fleet Information: 15 groups own/lease their own fleet
 167 cars, 56 vans, 306 busses, 2 helicopters
 7 organizations contract from a separate agency. All of the counties contract with Thunderbird.
 Sharing of these resources has many barriers, but many are willing to look at this option.

Funding (as identified by 15 organizations):

- Formula grant—1
- Contract amount—1
- Unit rate—4
- TXDOT—7
- State agency—9
- Federal—4
- Local—5

10 Organizations have a cost-share program.

- Fixed Fare—1
- Percent of trip—0
- Monthly fixed amount—1
- Donation—1
- Other arrangement—Income based, etc

Barriers:

Lack of adequate funding	22
Inconsistent funding	11
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Other barriers--Outreach programs not funded, Barriers to using STS, Many people fall into criteria gaps, Need for door-to-door service, complicated routes, Bus stops far away from homes, Student discipline, Hours of operation do not work with shift work, Stigma associated, Taxis are expensive.

Results: The survey is incomplete. Many organizations have a difficult time answering these questions. Some organizations will not answer these questions for competitive reasons. Everyone seems to count differently. It is extremely difficult to get a true “apples to apples” comparison.

Public Outreach Activities Summary

Table 15--Public Meetings Schedule for the Concho Valley

Location	Date	Time	Place
Eden	Monday, June 12, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Eden Multipurpose Center 319 West Blanchard
Ozona	Wednesday, June 14, 2006	10:30 am—1:00 pm	Crockett County Senior Center 1 State Highway 163 N
Junction	Monday, June 19, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Kimble County Senior Center 404 College Street
Brady	Wednesday, June 21, 2006	5:00 pm—7:00 pm	Brady Senior Center 214 W. Lockhart
San Angelo	Monday, June 26, 2006	5:00 am—7:00 pm	Santa Fe Depot 703 South Chadbourne

The public outreach meetings were sparsely attended. The most surprising outcome was the lack of knowledge about the public transportation system which range from not even knowing one existed to a misconception that it was for “only old people” or “only for school children”. The common comments were

- Requesting for an extension of service.
 - Longer operating hours
 - More frequent trips to San Angelo
 - More social trips (shopping, entertainment)
 - Developing a work shuttle to businesses for employees
- More marketing and education about public transportation
- Shorter route times
- More transfer points
- More streamlined ADA approval process