

# Overview

On behalf of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our strategy for a Regional Service Plan. I am Jacques Wolske, the Transportation Manager for the Heart of Texas Council of Governments (also called HOTCOG). HOTCOG contracts with four subcontractors for rural public transportation in 6 counties including Hill, Bosque, Falls, McLennan, Freestone and Limestone.

- In August, HOTCOG sponsored a Regional Service planning workshop spanning three days. 32 representatives from Health/Human Svc agencies, HOT Workforce board, public transportation providers and general public from 6 counties were in attendance. A general overview of the task at hand was presented by a facilitator secured through the Texas Transportation Institute. A group of volunteers from the first meeting agreed to meet the following week to organize the work plan on two tracks—technical and outreach activities.
- The final meeting was held to present the work plan and elect a lead agency. The work plan demonstrated the need for on-going planning efforts to sustain and enhance progress made during the first year. Three committees were formed to ensure that all agencies and the general public will remain informed throughout the process. These committees are:
  - 1) Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (executive representatives from all agencies).
  - 2) Super Stakeholders (all consumers having a vested interest in public transportation)
  - 3) Stakeholders Working Group (representatives from the general public)
- HOTCOG was unanimously named as Lead Agency for the HOT region.
- Six task models were created to develop our Regional Service Plan. These tasks include:

## Task 1:

- Review local and national coordination projects to provide a base for which goals and objectives will be used to serve as the focus for the HOT Regional Service Plan.
- Develop methods for evaluation of potential coordination strategies based on customer needs, markets and users involved in the process.

## **Task 2:**

- **Identify all social service and human service agencies and transportation providers utilizing public transportation. Conduct a survey to develop a comprehensive list which includes unmet needs or inefficient services.**
- **Barriers to be addressed when the survey is conducted should include:**
  - 1) **Program restrictions for vehicles and drivers.**
  - 2) **Limited available funding.**
  - 3) **Local political concerns.**
  - 4) **Territorial boundaries of service providers.**
  - 5) **Multiple technology platforms**
  - 6) **Medicaid contractual limitations.**

## **Task 3:**

- **Identify new opportunities to enhance service delivery, increase customer satisfaction and improve efficiency and effectiveness thru regional service planning.**
- **Develop pilot projects.**

## **Task 4:**

- **Evaluate different strategies for regional coordination.**
- **Prepare a list of the highest-ranked projects identifying specific barriers or obstacles in order to streamline the implementation of pilot projects.**

## **Task 5:**

- **Develop a preliminary draft for the Regional Service Plan from information gathered during surveys. Include all agencies who will be enlisted in implementing the plan as well as implementing a performance-monitoring system.**
- **Identify budgets for initiation of the project as well as the funding sources to be utilized for ongoing operations once the plan is implemented.**
- **The HOTCOG budget incorporates Lead Agency administrative costs and supporting oversight activities totaling \$79,166, which is above and beyond the federal and state grants already in place. We are requesting assistance from TxDOT to meet these expenses. Projected in-kind/local match is valued at \$76,800, for a total budget of \$155,966.**

## Task 6:

- **Hard copies of the Regional Service plan will be distributed to all elected officials, policy boards and the RTCC; the plan will also be presented in public meetings in an effort to assure that the plan fairly reflects the thoughts and desires of all communities affected.**
- **Summaries from the review process along with a list of comments will be developed and categorized. Once amended, a final draft will be presented at a public meeting for final approval before submission to the Texas Transportation Commission.**

**In summary, the Heart of Texas Council of Governments is requesting \$79,166 to assist with the planning and implementation efforts for a Regional Service Plan in our region. We also request a common, electronic source for all providers to be able to communicate during the planning process.**

**A full version of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments strategic document is available along with a detailed budget on our website at:**

**<http://www.aaahot.org/transportation.htm>**