

The Regional Transportation Coordination Council was formed to provide support and non-binding opinions to HOTCOG during the development of a regional service plan in response to the mandates of HB3588. The first RTCC meeting was held on December 13, 2005. The RTCC includes volunteer representatives from the various public entities that comprise the HOTCOG six county area (Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone and McLennan).

Invitation to the general public is through word of mouth, fliers, and newspaper advertisement. During the first meeting, John Hendrickson, General Manager for Waco Transit, was voted chairperson and Mr. Chris Evilia, MPO Director for McLennan County was elected statistician. It was unanimously decided the RTCC would meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month. A representative list of attendees is attached; however, the attendance varies at each meeting.

At the January 2006 meetings, goals and objectives were discussed and recommendations were made to address the following topics:

- Regional scheduling and dispatch for the HOTCOG region
- Transportation for the disabled who need to get to work
- Social transportation for the disabled,
- Dependable and reliable transportation for the rural areas
- Make all vehicles ADA accessible
- Make future purchases standardized
- Educational system for outreach to the general public
- Advertising on vans and buses
- Utilizing each others resources

The committee also presented a list of challenges. Preliminary suggestions included:

- Lack of available funding
- Current condition of existing vehicles
- Demand in rural areas
- Accessing the transit system
- Territorial boundaries/county lines
- Curb to curb or door to door service
- Knowledge of available services

Unfortunately during the next meeting, goals and objectives were tabled until the barriers/constraints could be narrowed. The need for a statewide informational handbook including all the general information for the different providers across the state was

discussed. The importance of having this information available in vital public areas (i.e. clinics, hospitals, pharmacies) was stressed.

Successive meetings in February and March focused on rural trip destinations, barriers, and the area inventory of transportation providers. Mr. Evilia presented a map depicting current routes in the rural areas in order to determine the flow to major destinations where coordination could be possible.

Barriers/constraints were narrowed over this period of time and the final list was edited prior to submission to TTI. The final list includes the following:

1. Lack of state funding for public transportation.  
Over the past several years, public transportation funds provided by the state have seen significant decreases. The funds allocated to small urban and rural systems have not only seen a decrease in the total amount of state funding, but additional providers have been added to the distribution list of the allocation formula.
2. Public and administrative perspective of public transportation.  
Public transportation is not always viewed as part of the local infrastructure. Many times public transportation providers do not receive local funding because public transportation is not viewed as a vital service. Every community has limited amounts of local funding and public transportation has to compete for those funds. This barrier does not allow public transportation systems any guaranteed funding sources at the local levels to sustain, promote, or expand public transportation in either the rural or small urban areas. Both rural and small urban public transportation systems need a guaranteed method to generate local funding.
3. Client eligibility requirements in relation to various transit services.  
Rural and small urban public transportation systems provide transportation services through various programs including: section 5307, 5310, 5311, and Medicaid (Title XIX) funding. Each program has different requirements regarding eligibility.
4. Lack of statewide directory listing public transportation providers and subcontractors with detailed contact information and service description.
5. Lack of standardized scheduling, tracking, and reporting at the public transportation service provider level.  
Software used throughout the state differs significantly. Each provider has their own method of scheduling, tracking, and reporting trips. Many times the different software applications are incompatible.

6. Different regulatory requirements for the various stakeholders.

Public transportation services differ among the providers. Some provide curb to curb while others provide door to door service. Public transportation providers also have different requirements in scheduling. Some require advanced trip requests while others offer day of service scheduling. Variations exist in regulations on refusals, suspensions, license requirements, and client documentation. Training needs of transportation providers also differ in the areas of passenger assistance, restraint training, CPR, first aid, and ADA requirements.

Beginning in April 2006, the committee began discussing how best to assess area needs. A total of six public meetings were conducted in the respective six counties to engage the public on regional coordination. Unfortunately, there was little response from the public.

A survey was created and hard copies of programs/planning were distributed throughout the Heart of Texas region to familiarize the public about the regional coordination project. The deadline to collect surveys was May 23, 2006. Over 500 surveys were collected and presented to the statistician to develop need trends.

During the same meeting in May, John Overman, representative from TTI, gave a presentation to the RTCC on how to overcome challenges of integrating system and service-based transportation. He also presented methods define goals and objectives. The committee identified two preliminary goals which included funding future transportation and sustainability/expansion of services.

During the first meeting in June 2006, there was some discussion for an RFP to obtain the assistance of a consultant. This was met with some resistance due to lack of information from the Heart of Texas Council of Governments Transportation Manager. Since she was not in attendance, it was tabled until next meeting.

Chris Evilia presented the results from the surveys. Of the 530 surveys obtained, almost 65% believed the transportation services met the needs of the community. The biggest challenge faced is not the provision of more or different services, but outreaching and advertising the existing services. The meeting concluded with more discussion on the goals and objectives.

Future meetings will continue to be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays with the exception of July. There will be only one meeting due to prior commitments/vacations of several attendees. The RFP for a consultant was let in early June and is due July 11, 2006. Negotiations will begin immediately and final offer is due July 26, 2006. The consultant will work with HOTCOG and the RTCC to finalize goals and objectives, create a regional service plan for today, and develop a strategic plan for the future.

Al Pollard	McLennan Community College
Allen Hunter	City of Waco
Ann Vinson	Limestone County Senior Services
Becca Rollins	FAC
Carey Amthor	HOTRMHMR
Carol Kemp	MCYC
Carole Warlick	HCTD
Chris Evilia	Waco MPO
Chris Krause	Baylor University
Clifford Gholston	Waco MPO
Dixie Skeen	Texas Department of State Health Services
Frank Patterson	City Of Waco
Gary Rushing	TxDOT
Jackie McLaughlin	HHSC
James Stefka	ETMC-EMS
Jim Newkham	HOTRMHMR
Jimmy Lara	TxDOT
John Hendrickson	Waco Transit
John Overman	TTI
Joycie L. Burns	HOTWFB
Julie Talbert	HOT Workforce
Lisa Wilhelmi	MCC
Matt Penney	Waco Transit
Melody McDermitt	Central Texas Senior Ministry
Nancy Roane	Freestone County Transit
Nelda Popejoy	Limestone County
Paula Owen	Central Texas Senior Ministry
Robert Ator	Hill Country Transit District
Sharon Gephart	Bosque County Transit
Sonia Lopez	FAC
Stephen Harvey	HOCTILC
Teri Holtkamp	City of Waco
Trishia Taylor	Workforce
Wayne Warren	HOTCADA
Will Lowrance	City of Hillsboro

**HOTCOG**

**Employees**

Danielle Schmitz	HOTCOG
Donna Casstevens	HOTCOG
Donnis Cowan	HOTCOG
Hope Richardson	HOTCOG
Jacque Wolske	HOTCOG
Jennifer Smith	HOTCOG
Johnny Bates	HOTCOG
Mark McKown	HOTCOG
Pam McKown	HOTCOG
Rep Pledger	HOTCOG
Sara Schindler	HOTCOG
Scott Smith	HOTCOG