

North Texas

**Regional Transportation Coordination
State Planning Region #3
Work Plan**

October 19, 2005

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This work plan outlines the process whereby the North Texas region will develop a **Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan** that meets the requirements of Chapter 461 of the Texas Transportation Code. The focus of the planning process will be the coordination of transportation funding and resources among the Health and Human Service Commission programs, the Texas Workforce Commission programs, and the Texas Department of Transportation as required by House Bill 3588 (Texas 78th Legislature).

Background

Texas State Planning Region #3, as designated by the Governor, is located along the Texas/Oklahoma border, just east of the Panhandle, northwest of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and consists of Archer, Baylor, Clay, Cottle, Foard, Hardeman, Jack, Montague, Wichita, Wilbarger, and Young counties. See enclosed map. The geography of this region ranges from low rolling hills in the east to flat prairies in the west. Fruit orchards and vegetables dominate agriculture in the eastern section of the region. The central portion is an extension of the vast wheat field of the central U.S, and the western segment produces abundant crops of cotton. In addition to this agricultural base, ranching has always been important to the economy of the North Texas area. During the 1930's, and again in the 1980's, oil production brought great wealth to the area and allowed towns to grow and flourish. The subsequent decline in oil production produced a dramatic downturn in the region's economy.

The vast majority of the region is rural and access to health care, retail shopping, and other services often requires individuals to travel great distances. Over recent years, many of the regions' young people have seen growing opportunities in the urbanized areas of the state and have migrated out of the region to seek those opportunities. This out-migration has left the rural areas of this region with a population that is comprised of 24% elderly. This percentage is expected to increase as the youth continue to move to the greater opportunities. This increased elderly population places an even greater demand on transportation services within the region.

In 1999, Nortex Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) facilitated the collaboration of several agencies to study the transportation needs and resources in State Planning Region #3. Besides NRPC, the major players in this effort were Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), Rolling Plains Management Corporation (RPMC) SHARP Lines Transit (rural provider), Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS) (rural provider), and the City of Wichita Falls (urban provider). Many other agencies and organizations participated in the discussions on various levels. With funds provided by TXDOT, NRPC engaged the services of a transit consultant. Several months were devoted to assessing the transportation needs of the region, surveying the available resources, and drafting a plan to improve access and coordination of transportation throughout the region. A comprehensive document, *2000 North Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan* was prepared by the consultants, containing not only survey results of available transit resources, but also recommendations for better utilization of those resources.

In May of 2002, the College of Health Sciences & Human Services Health and Public Administration of Midwestern State University (MSU) published a *Report on Transportation Needs in Wichita Falls and Surrounding Areas*. Two local foundations funded the study and resulting report: The Priddy Foundation and the United Regional Health Care Foundation. Both foundations have strong ties to the local community and take special interest in human service needs within the community. The MSU report further validated the needs and recommendations of the *2000 North Texas Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan*.

Many of the stakeholders that participated in the previous planning and coordination have continued to meet on an on-going basis. The group has functioned in an advisory capacity to TXDOT on the use of FTA Section 5310 funds. The consensus remains that the most important needs regarding elderly and disabled transportation services are the continued improvement of coordinating services, better access to available transportation, and adequate funding to meet the financial costs of transportation providers. These principals are just as applicable to the general population that is in need of transportation services.

Regional Public Transportation Planning Process

On August 17, 2005, the Wichita Falls TXDOT District office facilitated a meeting of the region's major public transportation providers, TXDOT staff, state and local elected officials, and Nortex Regional Planning Commission. This core group has acted as the steering committee for this work plan and is now known

as the **North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force**. The Task Force is currently made up of representatives from:

- Nortex Regional Planning Commission
- TXDOT- Wichita Falls District office
- TXDOT - Childress District office
- City of Wichita Falls-Administration
- City of Wichita Falls-Transportation Department
- Rolling Plains Management Corporation - SHARP Lines Transportation
- Texoma Area Paratransit System
- Workforce Resource Board
- Elected Official Representatives

The group selected NRPC to function as the lead agency for the purpose of planning for the regional transportation coordination project for State Planning Region #3. The group will continue to play a strong role in the process and will bring specialized knowledge and experience to the table. All transit providers will continue to be included in the regional transportation planning process. Input will also be solicited from consumers and potential consumers of transportation services. As the actual planning process begins, the Board of Directors of Nortex Regional Planning Commission will formalize the creation of the North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force by appointing members to serve on this Task Force. The group will work in an advisory capacity to the full board of NRPC. Additional appointments will be added as appropriate.

The first step in the planning process will be to do a comprehensive update to the inventory of existing transportation resources and existing barriers. The inventory process is projected to be time consuming due to the vast array of agencies involved and the detail of the information that is needed. All funding streams must also be identified along with the administrative, procedural, and regulatory issues that present barriers to effective coordination.

Regional demographic and economic data will be collected to include all information relevant to transportation activities in the region. GIS mapping capabilities will help identify existing services and pinpoint areas of non-service. Such data will include, but not be limited to, population growth and distribution, elderly and disabled population, employment statistics, existing transportation routes, etc.

Based on the results and recommendations of the previous planning efforts in 1999, the ongoing advisory group has supported the allocation of Section 5310 funds for centralized dispatching for the region. Rolling Plains Management Corporation, the rural transit provider for eight of the eleven counties in the region, provides the centralized dispatching. Review of the

current dispatching coordination will be an important step in continued planning. Public knowledge of availability and usage will be key indicators of the success of the system and provide insight for improvements. The planning process will also provide an opportunity to encourage more participation by agencies not currently involved with the centralized dispatching.

Conclusion

The members of the North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force look forward to the challenge that lies ahead for coordinating and further strengthening the regional transportation system in State Planning Region #3. This region already has a baseline established which should help jumpstart this new initiative by TxDOT. To build a seamless approach toward a regional transportation system will require the dedication of local individuals and a commitment of state funds for this planning process. Attached is a timeline for activities to be accomplished over the next year along with the estimated funding required to conduct these activities. Respectfully, we request TxDOT approval of the \$131,260 as identified in the enclosed estimated budget in order to begin the planning process. Nortex Regional Planning Commission and our local partners are committed to making this a success.

Work Plan/Timeline

Task 1 – Leading Agency - August 2005

North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force identified Nortex Regional Planning Commission as the lead agency.

Task 2 – Application for Funding - October 2005

NRPC will apply for funding for Regional Transportation Planning activities.

Task 3 – Attend Statewide Workshop - October 2005

NRPC staff will attend the “Sharing Approaches” statewide workshop to present the approach from State Planning Region #3.

Task 4 – Staffing - November 2005

NRPC will determine staff members to perform duties relative to the North Texas Regional Public Transportation Plan.

Task 5 - Refine Mission, Goals, and Objectives - Fall 2005

NRPC will work closely with Task Force to refine mission, goals, and objectives.

Task 6 - Stakeholder Identification - November 2005

NRPC will identify all service-based and client-based agencies, private providers, and individuals within the State Planning Region #3 that deliver or are consumers of transit services.

Task 7 - Data Collection - November thru December 2005

Using the information previously collected as a basis, the NRPC staff will facilitate updating and further collection of data with the oversight of the Regional Transportation Task Force. Data collection will include, but not be limited to: service providers, service areas, funding streams, eligibility requirements, consumers, population distribution, and gaps in service.

Task 8 - Public/Stakeholder Participation - Ongoing

Throughout the planning process, the North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force will solicit involvement from all of the identified stakeholders, including the general public.

Task 9 – Identify Service Gaps and Additional Service Needs

The North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force will identify transportation services gaps and any additional service needs.

Task 10 - Regional Coordination Strategies – Spring 2006

NRPC will develop and prioritize regional coordination strategies that would enhance the service provision. Any barriers such as regulatory and legislative implications will be addressed with proposed resolutions.

Task 11 - Draft Plan and Public Meetings - Summer 2006

NRPC will develop a draft plan and hold public meetings to gain input and recommendations from clients and other interested citizens on the draft document.

Task 12 – Finalize/Submit Regional Coordination Plan – Fall 2006

North Texas Regional Transportation Task Force will review input and recommendations and finalize the North Texas Regional Transportation Coordination Plan. NRPC will submit the final plan to TxDOT for consideration and adoption.

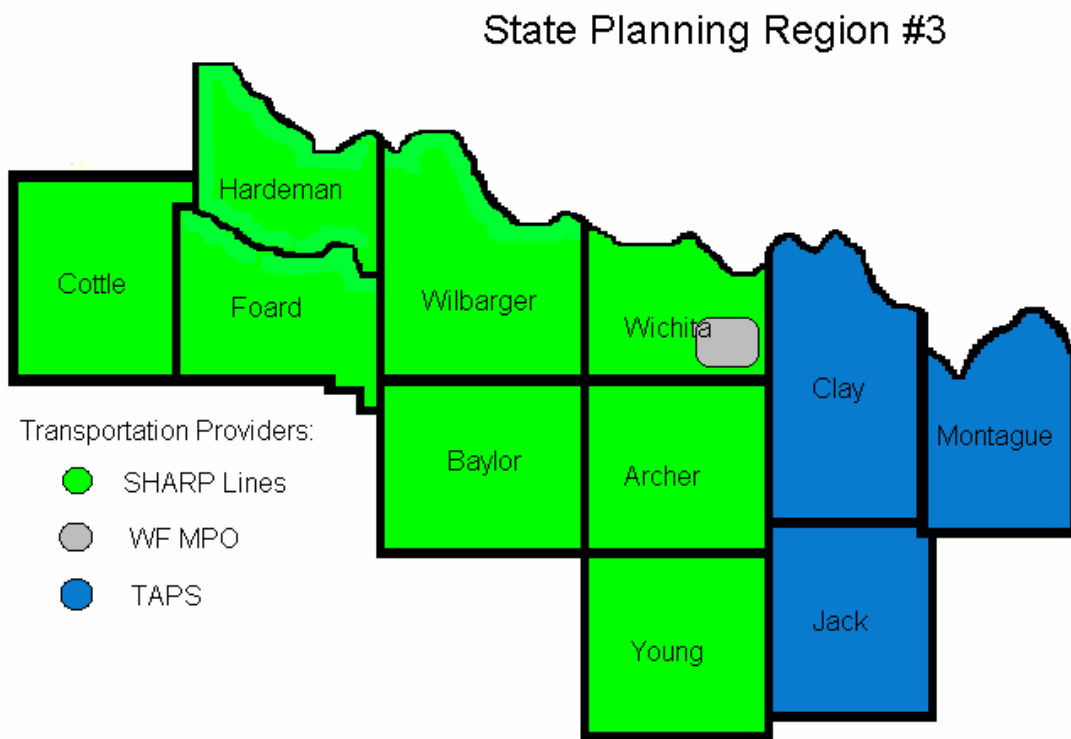
Task 13 - Implement Regional Plan – Fall 2006 thru Winter 2007

Contingent upon the adoption of the North Texas Regional Coordination Plan by TxDOT, implementation and monitoring of the final plan will be initiated.

Nortex Regional Planning Commission
Regional Transportation Planning
Requested Budget
For Fiscal Year 2005-2006

Cost Categories	Requested Budget FY05-06
Total Salaries	\$ 53,594
Fringe Benefits	<u>27,076</u>
Total Personnel Costs	\$ 80,669
Indirect Cost	12,391
Staff Travel	7,000
Consultants Services - GIS/Mapping	20,000
Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>17,500</u>
Total Expenditures	\$ 137,560
Total Sources of Funding:	
Local Resources	<u>- 6,300</u>
Remaining Balance to be Funded by TxDOT	<u><u>\$ 131,260</u></u>

North Texas – State Planning Region #3
Map of Rural/Urban Transportation Providers
As of October 19, 2005



SHARP Line is the transportation service provided by Rolling Plains Management Corporation. It is the rural transportation provider operating in eight of the eleven counties encompassing State Planning Region #3

TAPS is the transportation service provided by Texoma Area Paratransit System. It is the rural transportation provider operating in three of the eleven counties encompassing State Planning Region #3

WF MPO is the transportation service provided by the City of Wichita Falls. It is the urban transit provider operating in the City of Wichita Fall.