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16. Abstract

This report documents a study of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating public transit services in Texas. These include transit agencies and service operators, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local communities, federal agencies, and other groups. In addition, the study examined the relationships among these agencies and explored methods and techniques used to communicate among these diverse groups. The current communication approaches used in Texas are identified, along with methods utilized in other states. Examples of innovative practices and approaches are highlighted in short case studies. Possible ways to enhance the interaction among the groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services are outlined. The principal tasks conducted in the study included a review of relevant literature, a telephone survey of representatives from state departments of transportation in selected states, and a telephone survey of representatives from municipal and rural transit systems in Texas. Additional information was also obtained from representatives of the Federal Transit Administration, TxDOT, and MPOs for some of the case studies.

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IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

The transit industry in Texas and throughout the country continues to examine ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all types of public transportation services. Enhancing the ongoing communication and coordination among the different groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services has been identified as one approach to help accomplish these goals. In order for these benefits to be realized, however, approaches and techniques for improving coordination and communication must be identified and implemented.

This study examines the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating public transit services in Texas. It focuses specifically on the responsibilities of transit agencies and service operators, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and the Federal Transit Administration, as well as the communication methods and techniques utilized by these groups. The principal tasks conducted in the study included a literature review, a telephone survey of representatives from selected state departments of transportation throughout the country, and a telephone survey of representatives from municipal and rural transit systems in Texas. Additional information was also obtained from representatives of the Federal Transit Administration, TxDOT, and MPOs for the case studies highlighting innovative approaches.

The results of this research study indicate that the current communication methods and techniques used by TxDOT and other groups are similar to those used in other states. Further, the individuals within Texas contacted in the telephone surveys expressed a high level of satisfaction with current communication methods, as well as the timeliness and quality of the information provided. Recent enhancements resulting from the TxDOT continuous improvement (CI) process were noted, and examples of good working relationships were identified. Suggestions were also made on possible enhancements to existing communication methods.

This report should be of use to TxDOT, transit agencies and operators, MPOs, local communities, federal agencies, and other groups interested in enhancing communication among the groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services. Further, it should be of benefit in identifying and implementing appropriate communication strategies, including those utilizing advanced technologies and innovative techniques.

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the findings and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Federal Transit Administration or the Texas Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

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SUMMARY

Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all types of transit services in Texas continues to be a priority with transit agencies and operators, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), local governments, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), federal agencies, and other groups. Enhancing the ongoing communication and coordination among these groups can help realize these goals. As a result, identifying and implementing additional communication and coordination methods has become a priority in many areas.

This research study was undertaken to examine the roles and responsibilities of the agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services in Texas. The study also analyzed the current methods and techniques used to communicate among these groups and identified potential strategies for enhancing ongoing communication and interaction. The research study further examined the national and state experience with different coordination strategies. The results of this part of the study are documented in a separate report.

A number of activities were conducted to accomplish the objectives of the research study. First, a comprehensive literature review was completed on the techniques used to communicate among the various agencies. Second, a telephone survey was conducted of representatives from selected state departments of transportation (DOTs). The purpose of this survey was to obtain information on the methods and techniques used by other state DOTs to communicate with transit systems under their jurisdiction. Examples of comprehensive and innovative approaches were identified. Third, a telephone survey was conducted of representatives from municipal and rural transit systems in Texas to gain additional insights on preferred communication methods, suggested enhancements, and their involvement in the MPO planning process. Additional information was obtained from FTA, TxDOT, and MPO representatives on selected case studies.

The results of the research indicate that the current communication methods used by TxDOT and other groups in Texas are similar to those used in other states and, in some cases, are leading the country in innovative approaches. The survey of transit representatives in Texas indicated a high level of satisfaction with the techniques used within the state. Further, recent enhancements resulting from the TxDOT continuous improvement (CI) process and the additional responsibilities given to the TxDOT Districts were viewed positively by the respondents. Possible approaches for enhancing communication and interaction among the different groups were identified based on suggestions from the survey respondents and the case studies.

The major communication methods commonly used by the state DOTs included in the telephone survey were telephone conversations, on-site visits, newsletters, annual conferences, and semi-annual or quarterly meetings. TxDOT currently uses all of these communication techniques. In addition, telephone conference calls, video conferences, and other advanced technologies are currently in use or being considered in some states.

Representatives from the municipal and rural transit systems contacted during the telephone survey rated annual conferences, quarterly or semi-annual meetings, on-site visits, and telephone conversations as useful communication methods. The current use of these approaches and the

quality and timeliness of information was rated highly. Additional peer-to-peer meetings, and training opportunities, telephone conferences, and advanced technologies were all identified as potential ways to enhance ongoing communication.

The involvement of the municipal and rural transit systems and TxDOT transit representatives in the MPO planning process varies slightly throughout the state. Two respondents indicated that there was not an MPO in their area, and two responded that the transit system is within the MPO structure. Eleven of the transit agency representatives indicated that they have little involvement with the MPO other than the normal project review process. On the other hand, 21 respondents noted that regular information exchanges occur between the MPO and the transit system, while 16 indicated that they regularly participate in MPO meetings. Further, nine respondents indicated that representatives from their agency serve on the MPO advisory or technical committees and five serve on policy boards.

Thus, the study results indicate that the current communication methods and techniques used in Texas are well received. Further, the results show that the approaches used by TxDOT and the involvement of TxDOT transit representatives from both the Districts and the Division are well received by operators and other groups. A few elements emerged from the study for consideration as additional enhancements to current communication methods. The survey results and case studies were used to identify possible approaches for enhancing communication among the agencies responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services. The approaches suggested include additional peer-to-peer meetings, training courses, and the use of advanced technologies such as electronic mail (e-mail), electronic bulletin boards, and video conferences.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Transit agencies and operators, state departments of transportation (DOTs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), local governments, federal agencies, and other groups continue to examine ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of all types of transit services. Enhancing the ongoing communication and coordination among these different groups has been identified as one way to help accomplish these goals. Further, the requirements of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 place new emphasis on improving communication and coordination among all the diverse groups involved in transportation and transit planning, project selection, funding, implementation, and operation.

In order for these benefits to be realized, however, approaches and techniques for improving coordination and communication must be identified and implemented. Examining potential methods for enhancing transit coordination and communication in Texas was identified as a priority research need by the *Texas Transit Research Task Force* (1). To address these needs, this research study was undertaken by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), a part of The Texas A&M University System, for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Two reports have been prepared documenting the results of this research. The first, *Improving Transit Coordination in Texas* (2), provides a comprehensive assessment of the national and state experience with different coordination techniques and strategies. It outlines approaches that may be appropriate for further consideration in Texas and contains guidelines for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating coordination projects.

This report documents the second portion of the research study which focused on examining the roles and relationships among the various agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services in Texas. These agencies and groups include transit agencies and service providers, TxDOT, MPOs, local communities, federal agencies, and other groups. The study included an examination of existing communication methods and techniques, as well as an assessment of additional mechanisms for enhancing communication among these diverse groups.

Study Objectives

This element of the research study was designed to meet a number of objectives. The first was to explore the roles of different agencies and groups related to transit planning, funding, and operation. This included an examination of the new responsibilities placed on the different agencies by the ISTEA and the relationships among the various groups in carrying out these roles and responsibilities. In addition, the study explored the communication methods and techniques used by TxDOT and other selected state DOTs, as well as those used by transit providers, MPOs, and local agencies in Texas. Potential mechanisms for enhancing communication among the diverse groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services were identified.

The results of this assessment may be useful to TxDOT, transit agencies, MPOs, local communities, and other groups interested in improving communication among all types of transit services and agencies. Ultimately, enhancing communication among these diverse groups may improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of transit services in the state. In addition, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), transit agencies and state DOTs throughout the country, and national organizations may benefit from the results of this study.

Research Approach

A number of activities were conducted in order to accomplish the objectives of this study. First, a comprehensive literature review was completed on the subject of transit communication and coordination. The review included an examination of recent reports, journal articles, newsletters, and other information available on the use of different communication methods and strategies. Further, the roles of different groups and the requirements of the ISTEA were analyzed.

Second, a telephone survey of representatives from state DOTs was conducted to obtain additional information on the methods used to communicate with transit agencies and service providers. The literature review was used to help identify states to contact during the survey. The state DOTs were also selected to provide a mix of organizational approaches, as well as geographical distribution. Innovative approaches were highlighted in brief case studies and potential techniques that could be used in Texas were identified.

A telephone survey was conducted of representatives from the municipal and rural transit systems in Texas to obtain insight from operating agencies on their involvement in the local planning process, ideas on preferred communication methods, and suggestions on potential improvements. Additional information was obtained from FTA, TxDOT, MPO, and transit agency representatives on innovative approaches. The results from these surveys were used to identify possible techniques to enhance communication among the variety of groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services within the state.

Report Organization

The remainder of this report is divided into four chapters. A summary of the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies involved with planning, funding, and operating transit services in Texas is presented in Chapter Two. The results from the telephone survey of state DOT representatives and the communication techniques used in those states is summarized in Chapter Three. The survey responses from representatives of municipal and rural transit systems in Texas and the additional information on innovative case studies is presented in Chapter Four. The final chapter provides a summary of the key elements covered in the study and identifies methods and techniques that may be appropriate for enhancing current communication approaches in Texas.

CHAPTER TWO

AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A number of federal, state, and local agencies are involved with planning, funding, and operating public transit services in Texas. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the modal agency of the U. S. Department of Transportation with responsibility for administering federal funding for public transportation. At the state level, TxDOT is responsible for the administration of federal and state funding for transit, and for other program activities. The Metropolitan Transit Authorities (MTAs), municipal transit systems, rural transit systems, and specialized transportation providers operate the diverse mix of services found in Texas. In addition, MPOs throughout the state are responsible for planning, programming, and project selection activities that impact transit.

Each of these agencies has specific roles and responsibilities related to different elements associated with planning, funding, and operating transit services. The nature and scope of these responsibilities, as well as specific requirements, are defined by federal and state legislation, as well as rules promulgated by different agencies. In addition, representatives from these agencies interact on a regular basis to conduct the activities necessary to ensure that transit services are planned, funded, and operated in accordance with federal and state requirements.

This chapter provides an overview of the basic roles and responsibilities of these agencies. The nature and authority of the FTA is presented first, followed by TxDOT, the different types of transit agencies in the state, and MPOs. In addition, the roles and activities of national, regional, and state transit associations are highlighted. In each case, a brief background on the establishment and evolution of the agency is presented first. This is followed by a summary of the current roles and responsibilities related to planning, funding, and operating transit services in the state. The general day-to-day activities of staff from each agency is also included in this description.

Federal Transit Administration

Federal involvement in public transportation was initiated with the Housing Act of 1961. This Act contained three provisions affecting transit. These three elements addressed requirements for including mass transit in comprehensive urban planning activities, the development of a loan program for mass transportation agencies, and support for demonstration programs containing transit components. The first federal capital assistance for transit was authorized in the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. Federal funding for transit was initially administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1968, this responsibility was transferred to the newly created Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) in the U. S. Department of Transportation. The provision of federal transit operating assistance was first authorized in the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974 (3,4).

Federal legislation since 1974 has provided both new and changing responsibilities for UMTA. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 represents the most recent of the federal acts addressing transit. The ISTEA provides funding authorization for public transportation programs—along with the federal highway and highway safety programs—for the six-year period from 1992 through 1997. The ISTEA encompasses much more than just funding authorization, however. It also provides the vision, direction, and scope for the future surface transportation system in the country. The policies and programs contained in the Act represent a change from those governing the surface transportation system in the past. Many of these changes directly or indirectly affect transit.

First, the ISTEA changed the name of the federal agency responsible for transit from UMTA to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Act also provides greater flexibility among different funding programs including the ability to transfer funds between highway and transit programs. The ISTEA also places additional responsibilities on states and MPOs in the transportation planning and project selection process.

Title III, the *Federal Transit Act Amendments*, contains the transit formula and discretionary programs, and the transit planning and research program. The general structure and requirements of the different transit programs remain basically the same, but some changes were made to equalize the funding ratio between transit and roadway projects. Table 1 identifies the major transit programs contained in the ISTEA and the Fiscal Year 1995 appropriations for Texas. These are briefly summarized next.

- **Section 8**. The Section 8 program provides planning funds for MPOs. The ISTEA made states the primary recipient of Section 8 funds. The states then distribute the Section 8 funds to the MPOs. Funds may be used for a wide range of studies and activities related to transportation and land use, economic and demographic trends, modeling, ~~transit planning~~ and finance, and numerous other issues (5).

- **Section 9**. The Section 9 grant program provides funding to all urbanized areas of the country on the basis of a statutory formula. Section 9 funds can be used for capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more. The seven large urbanized areas in the state receive a direct allocation. Funding for urbanized areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000 is allocated to the states and apportioned by the governor. For urbanized areas under 200,000 in population, the statutory formula is based on population and population density. For areas with over 200,000 in population, the formula considers population, population density, and transportation data. Section 9 funds are administered by FTA, although TxDOT monitors the program in urbanized areas with populations of less than 200,000.

- **Section 18**. Section 18 is the statutory grant program for rural or non-urbanized areas with populations under 50,000. Section 18 funds can be used for both capital and operating assistance. TxDOT acts as the primary applicant to FTA and administers the Section 18 program. Section 18 also includes the 18(i) intercity bus set aside. This requires that states use 5 percent of the FY 1992 Section 18 funds, 10 percent of the FY

1993 funds, and 15 percent of the FY 1994 and subsequent year funds for intercity bus service projects, unless the state certifies that intercity bus needs have been met (5). The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) is also part of Section 18. RTAP funds are made available to states to support information dissemination, training, and other activities related to the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in non-urbanized areas.

Table 1. Major Transit Programs in the ISTEA

Program	Major Components	Fiscal Year 1995 Funding Appropriations for Texas
Section 8	Planning funds for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).	$2.8 million
Section 9	Formula grant program for capital and operating costs of urban transit systems.	$113.1 million
Section 18	Statutory formula funds for rural transit systems and support for intercity bus activities. Rural Transit Assistance Program.	$8.1 million $.2 million
Section 16	Capital funds for private-non-profit and public agencies providing services to the elderly and to individuals with special needs. Makes allocation to state statutory.	$3.1 million
Section 3	Discretionary and Formula Capital Program.	
Section 26	Transit Planning and Research New comprehensive planning and research program funded at 3% takedown of total funding. Breakdown for programs include: - State Planning. - Transit Cooperative Research Program. - National Planning and Research.	 $.2 million National Program National Program

Source: (5,6).

- **Section 16.** The Section 16 program provides capital funds for use by private non-profit groups, and public agencies under some circumstances, providing services to the elderly and to individuals with special needs. Funds can be used for capital costs or for the

capital costs of contracting for services. The funding share for the Section 16 program is 80 percent federal and 20 percent local. The ISTEA made the previous practice of allocating Section 16 funds through the states statutory. As a result, TxDOT is responsible for administering the Section 16 program.

- **Section 3.** Section 3 is the discretionary and formula capital grant program for new rail projects, rail and fixed guideway modernization, and bus and other capital projects. The ISTEA changed the allocation of Section 3 rail and fixed guideway modernization funds to a formula, rather than discretionary, basis. New start and bus rehabilitation funds are allocated on a discretionary basis. The funding share for Section 3 projects is 80 percent federal and 20 percent local, except for projects involving vehicle-related equipment to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Clean Air Act Amendments. In these cases, the federal share is 90 percent of the incremental capital costs to meet these requirements.

- **Section 26.** Section 26 is the Planning and Research Program. It includes the State Program, the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), and a National Planning and Research Program. The State Planning and Research Program provides formula-allocated funds to support state-initiated planning, research, technical assistance, and training efforts. The ISTEA established the TCRP as a new national transit research program administered by the Transportation Research Board (TRB). Finally, the National Planning and Research Program focuses on technology development and research to support FTA and federal initiatives.

In addition to Title III, other parts of the ISTEA also address transit. Title I, *Surface Transportation*, contains a number of specific programs relating to the highway and roadway systems. Title I also provides the requirements governing the surface transportation planning process at the state and metropolitan levels, as well as those addressing the new management system plans. Major programs of Title I include the National Highway System (NHS), the Interstate System, the Surface Transportation Program (STP), the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), and a number of special programs.

- **Surface Transportation Program.** The Surface Transportation Program (STP) represents a new approach that provides states and localities with block grant type funding for projects on any road, including the NHS, that are not functionally classified as local or rural minor collectors. Transit capital and bridge projects are also eligible for STP funding. The Act further places a number of specific requirements on the use of STP funds. For example, states must set aside 10 percent for safety construction activities and 10 percent for transportation enhancements (5).

- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.** The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) represents another new program established by the Act. Although all states are provided with some CMAQ funds, the program was designed to direct funding specifically to transportation projects addressing air quality issues in ozone and carbon monoxide non-attainment areas (5). In

Texas, Houston, Beaumont, El Paso, and Dallas all receive CMAQ funds based on their non-attainment status. Transit, transit-related, and travel demand management (TDM) projects may all be considered for CMAQ funding.

Additional guidance provided by FTA and FHWA stresses that CMAQ funds must be used for projects supporting air quality attainment efforts. Eligible projects include transportation control measures, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs, supporting elements of the required management system plans, traffic monitoring and management operations, emission inspection and maintenance programs, transit projects, and planning and air quality programs. Construction projects that add new capacity for single-occupant vehicles are not eligible, unless they are reserved for HOVs during peak periods (7).

- **Management Systems.** The ISTEA further requires that states, in consultation with MPOs and other groups, develop management systems addressing the six areas of pavements, bridges, highway safety, traffic congestion, public transportation facilities and equipment, and intermodal transportation facilities and systems. An additional traffic monitoring system for highways is also required by the ISTEA. States must begin implementing the management systems by October 1, 1995. The objective of the public transportation facilities and equipment management system—or Public Transportation Management System (PTMS)—is to develop, establish, and implement a statewide system for managing public transportation facilities, equipment, and rolling stock. The plan should provide a systematic ongoing process that collects and analyzes this information and provides decision makers with the information necessary to select cost-effective strategies for maintaining the federal investment in transit. Elements to be included in the plan are the identification of current public transportation assets, the development of condition measures, data collection and system monitoring, and strategy identification and evaluation (5,7). TxDOT is currently developing the public transportation facilities and equipment management system for Texas.

The FTA utilizes staff in both the headquarters office in Washington, D.C. and in regional offices throughout the country to administer the different programs. Texas is located in Region VI, which also includes New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The Region VI offices are located in Arlington, Texas. The administration of most grant programs is done at the regional level, in coordination with headquarters offices. However, staff from both offices may be involved in projects or may provide technical assistance and support.

The FTA Region VI staff perform a variety of functions and interact with representatives from TxDOT, transit agencies, and MPOs in a number of ways. The regional personnel represent the first point of contact within FTA. They also provide assistance to grantees throughout the process—from developing a proposal, to reviewing and awarding a grant, to monitoring progress and compliance, to project close out. As such, they interact on a regular basis with TxDOT and transit agency personnel. They also provide technical assistance on planning, legal, engineering, and other topics. Also, representatives from both the region and headquarters may participate in the MPO review and certification process. Regional FTA staff make regular site visits to the

different systems, participate in the development and review of the State Implementation Plan (SIP), participate in the annual conferences of various transit associations and groups, and provide other assistance as requested.

Representatives from the FTA offices in Washington, D.C. may also assist with transit planning and programming activities in the state. Although this involvement often focuses on the large MTAs in activities such as reviewing patronage forecasts and assisting with the planning of major fixed guideway systems, they may also provide assistance to TxDOT and systems in other parts of the state.

Texas Department of Transportation

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has a number of responsibilities related to the provision of public transportation within the state. These responsibilities have evolved over the years in response to both federal and state legislation. Further, staff from the TxDOT headquarters office in Austin and the 25 Districts located throughout the state are involved in different aspects relating to planning, funding, and operating public transportation services. This section summarizes the involvement of TxDOT in public transit and the current roles and responsibilities of the Department.

The Texas Mass Transportation Commission (TMTC) was the initial state agency responsible for administering funding for public transit services for the state. In 1975, legislation was passed merging the TMTC and the Texas Highway Department (THD) to create the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT). The bill further assigned the following responsibilities related to transit to SDHPT (8).

- Purchase, construct, lease, and contract for public transit systems.
- Encourage, foster, and assist in the development of intracity and intercity public transit.
- Encourage the development of rapid transit and other modes.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive master plan for public and mass transportation development.
- Assist local governments in procuring aid for public and mass transit.
- Conduct hearings and investigations necessary to determine the location, type, and cost of public transportation systems financed with state funds.
- Enter into contracts as necessary to perform duties.
- Apply for and receive federal funds and receive private gifts.

- Represent the state in public transit matters before federal and other state agencies.

- Recommend necessary legislation to advance the interests of the state and local transit services.

- Utilize authorities and private consultants for planning and design activities.

Public transportation was established as a sub-section of the Transportation Planning Division within SDHPT to assume these responsibilities. In 1988, Administrative Order Number 17-88 elevated transit to division status. The following responsibilities were given to the Public Transportation Division under this Order.

- Prepare and update a statewide comprehensive master plan for public transportation.

- Provide financial assistance through appropriate communication and application processes.

- Provide technical assistance through a core of technical expertise to district personnel and local communities.

- Represent the state in transit matters with federal agency officials, transit organizations, and local community representatives.

- Monitor and sponsor research and development activities to enhance public transit.

- Assist in the development of policies by the Commission, the Governor, and the Legislature.

In addition to Senate Bill 761, Senate Bill 762 was also passed in 1975. This bill established the State Public Transportation Fund (PTF) to provide state assistance for transit capital improvements. The intent of this bill was to improve public transit in the state, provide state assistance to fund capital needs, and coordinate highway and transit development within one agency (9). The PTF was later expanded to cover operating and planning expenses.

In 1991, the state legislature passed House Bill 9, which merged the Department of Aviation and the Texas Motor Vehicle Commission with the SDHPT to create the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). House Bill 9 contained a number of provisions related to public transit and the responsibilities of the new agency, including the following (10).

- Required TxDOT to develop and implement a statewide transportation plan covering all modes.

- Required TxDOT to establish separate divisions to accomplish its duties in the areas of aviation, highways and roads, public transportation, and motor vehicle titles and registration.

- Amended Article 6663c to change the definition of mass transit authority to exclude an authority created by a municipality with a population under 200,000.

- Amended Article 6663c to allocate 50 percent of the public transportation formula program funds to urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 not served by an authority and 50 percent to urban areas under 50,000 or to rural areas.

- Amended Article 6663c to prohibit mass transit authorities from participating in discretionary programs or receiving money from the formula or discretionary program.

- Amended Article 6663c to allow cities and urban areas not within a metropolitan transit authority to receive state funds.

Another bill passed in 1991 also influenced TxDOT's responsibilities related to public transit. Senate Bill 352 established a Public Transportation Advisory Committee to TxDOT. The Committee includes nine members, with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives each making three of the appointments. The members serve at the pleasure of the appointing officer. The Bill further defines the membership of the Committee to include one member representing rural public transit providers, one member representing municipal transit systems, one member representing metropolitan transit authorities (MTAs) in urban areas with populations of 200,000 or more, one member representing elderly and disabled providers, and five members representing the general public (11).

The Committee is charged with advising the TxDOT Commission on the needs and problems of the state's public transit providers, including methods for allocating state funds, commenting on proposed rules, and performing other duties as determined by the Commission. The Committee has been meeting on a regular basis since 1992.

As noted in the previous section, the ISTEA requires that states, in consultation with MPOs and other groups, develop and implement six management systems. The public transportation facilities and equipment management system is one of these. This management system must develop, establish, and implement a statewide system for managing public transportation facilities, equipment, and rolling stock. The Public Transportation Division is responsible for the development of this management system plan, which must be submitted by January 1995.

The Public Transportation Division is responsible for the administration of federal and state funds to the municipal and rural transit agencies in the state. As discussed in more detail in the next section, the metropolitan transit authorities apply directly with FTA for federal funds. TxDOT administers two state and four federal funding programs to support municipal and rural transit systems. The PTF and the Oil Overcharge Program represent the two state programs.

The five federal programs administered by the Department are Section 9, Section 16, Section 18, Section 8, and Section 26. The major elements of these programs as they relate to TxDOT are highlighted next.

- **Public Transportation Fund (PTF).** The PTF was established to provide financial assistance to local governments and non-profit groups for the local match required for federal funding programs. The PTF may be used for capital and planning activities at a 13 percent state, 7 percent local, and 80 percent federal ratio; ride-share vans at 80 percent state and 20 percent local ratio; and non-federally financed capital projects at a 50 percent local and 50 percent state ratio (12). The Texas Legislature is considering possible changes to the PTF, including removing the matching requirements and converting the fund to an unrestricted grant program.

- **Oil Overcharge Program.** Funding from the Oil Overcharge Program has been used to finance transit systems in Texas. Funding from this program will end after FY 1995, however. These one-time programs were administered by TxDOT on behalf of the state. Four programs have been used to fund different transit activities. The Local Match for Transit (LMT) Program provided funds to assist small urban and rural transit systems and private non-profit organizations that supply transportation for the elderly and for individuals with special needs. The Local Match for Rural Transit (LMRT) Program provided matching funds for the capital needs of rural transit systems. The Park-and-Ride Facilities Program provided funds to rural and urban areas outside the service areas of MTAs for the construction of park-and-ride lots. Finally, the Consumer Education project of the Rural Transit Riders Program helped fund the statewide and local marketing efforts of rural systems (12).

- **FTA - Section 9.** As described previously, urbanized areas with populations of less than 200,000 receive funding for transit services through the federal Section 9 Governor's Apportionment Program. Transit agencies in eligible cities work directly with the FTA Regional office on the application and grant administration aspects of this program. TxDOT monitors the program, however, and provides assistance to operators as needed (12). The state is also responsible for determining the annual allocation to each Section 9 provider. The FTA will not release a grant to a Section 9 system without TxDOT's approval of the funding amount.

- **FTA - Section 16.** The Section 16 program provides federal funding for wheelchair lift accessible vehicles and other equipment for private non-profit organizations and some public agencies operating transportation services for the elderly and individuals with special needs. Federal funding is available for 80 percent of the capital costs, with the remaining 20 percent coming from local sources. No federal funding is provided for operating expenses. Until recently, the Public Transportation Division was responsible for administering this program. Project selection responsibilities have been transferred to the Districts, however, as part of the TxDOT effort to decentralize the decision making process.

- **FTA - Section 18.** The Section 18 program provides federal funding for rural public transportation systems in areas with populations of less than 50,000. Federal funding levels are based on the rural population of the state. Texas, which has the largest rural population of any state in the country, has traditionally received the highest funding level of any state. TxDOT administers the Section 18 program and acts as the primary applicant. Transit systems submit their applications to TxDOT, and TxDOT transmits one application to FTA. As noted previously, the Section 18 program also includes the RTAP and the intercity bus set aside program. TxDOT is responsible for administering both these elements of the Section 18 program (12).

- **FTA - Section 8.** The Section 8 program provides planning funds for MPOs. As a result of the ISTEA, TxDOT is the primary applicant for Section 8 funds and distributes them to the MPOs. The allocation is based on an administrative formula that considers both population and minimum allocation (5,12).

- **FTA - Section 26.** TxDOT uses funding through the State Program for a wide range of activities. These include development efforts such as the annual conference, public transportation planning, technical assistance, scholarships for Section 9 operators, and administration of the Section 8 and 26 programs.

TxDOT carries out these responsibilities at both the Division and the District level in a number of ways. Major activities focus on grants management, conducting statewide planning and needs assessments, providing planning and technical assistance to providers and other groups, and coordinating transit activities within TxDOT and with FTA, the state legislature, other agencies, the different transit associations, and other groups. In addition, the Division is responsible for the development and implementation of the State Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) required by ISTEA, as well as the transit-related sections of the State Transportation Plan.

Both the Division and the Districts are involved in accomplishing these requirements and activities. The Division is split into two general functional areas—program management and planning. The general functions of the Division and the Districts are summarized next, along with a few examples of specific activities and communication with other groups. Appendix A provides a listing and a map of the TxDOT Districts.

The program management section is responsible for all the grants management and oversight activities. These responsibilities include assisting operators with the application process, coordinating the proposals and submitting them to FTA, and the ongoing management and oversight of grants, project close out, and technical assistance. There is a program manager for the different types of operators—Section 9, Section 16, and Section 18. Semi-annual meetings are held with these groups, and the program managers make regular site visits to different systems.

The planning staff within the Division is assigned to general geographical regions within the state. These individuals provide planning support and technical assistance to the transit systems

and other groups within these areas. The planning section is also responsible for the statewide planning activities, as well as coordinating with other TxDOT Divisions, FTA, and other agencies and groups.

There is a Public Transportation Coordinator (PTC) within each of the 25 TxDOT Districts. The PTCs provide a closer link to the transit operators and MPOs within each District. The PTCs interact on an almost daily basis with staff from the Districts, the providers, MPOs, and cities and agencies. The location of the PTCs within the Districts allows for closer coordination on projects and faster response to questions and issues. Although the PTCs have been in existence for a number of years, TxDOT is moving toward more decentralization of some functions, enhancing the roles and responsibilities of the PTCs. For example, the selection of Section 16 projects has been given to the Districts.

The Division and the Districts assist with activities such as the Annual Texas Public Transportation Conference, the development of training and technical assistance programs, and other ongoing projects. A few of these activities are summarized next. These examples provide a good indication of the ongoing communication and interaction among the Division and the Districts and providers, FTA, MPOs, and other groups.

Statewide Planning Activities. The Division is responsible for a number of statewide transit plans and for coordinating the transit elements of the overall state transportation plans. The Division has historically developed a planning document outlining the current status of transit operations in the state and the anticipated capital and operating needs of providers (12,13). *Public Transportation in Texas: Profiles and Projections 1996-1999* is the most recent of these reports. In response to recent federal requirements, TxDOT sponsored a study of the intercity bus industry in the state (14) and is currently working on the development and implementation of the Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) and the transit elements of the state *Master Plan*. The PTMS, which is one of the management systems required by the ISTEA, includes the identification of current public transit assets, the development and use of condition measures, data collection and monitoring activities, and the development of strategies to maintain the federal investment in transit facilities and equipment.

Grants Management. As noted previously, TxDOT has different responsibilities for the administration of Section 8, 9, 16, 18, and 26 program funds. TxDOT staff interact on a regular basis with transit providers, FTA staff, and other groups to assist with the application process, to develop submissions to FTA, to monitor progress and compliance, and to conduct reviews and on-site visits.

Semi-Annual Meetings. Regular semi-annual meetings are held with providers and other groups to discuss the status of activities, upcoming deadlines, recent federal and state initiatives, and issues or concerns. These meetings provide an ongoing mechanism for communication and coordination among the various groups responsible for transit in the state.

Annual Conferences. The Division has historically taken the lead role in planning and hosting the annual state public transportation conference. The annual conference is held in Austin in odd numbered years, to allow interaction with the Legislature. In even numbered years, the conference is held in a different community throughout the state. The conferences are coordinated with the local transit agency, the Texas Transit Association, and other groups. These conferences provide the opportunity for all groups involved in transit within the state to meet on an annual basis. The conferences usually include keynote speakers, general sessions, breakout sessions, the bus and van operator rodeo, training and technical assistance programs, and meeting times for different groups and organizations.

Training. The Public Transportation Division has sponsored different training sessions for operators over the years. The financial management seminars funded through RTAP provide a recent example of the training efforts offered or coordinated by TxDOT. Another example of ongoing training efforts is the *Texas Rural Public Transportation System Peer-to-Peer Resource Manual* (15) published by TxDOT in 1993. This manual was developed through the coordinated efforts of the Division, the Transit Operators Advisory Committee, and Section 18 systems. The manual includes a listing of the expertise available at different systems in areas such as marketing, public relations, local coordination planning, automation and computerization, maintenance, and training. The manual provides transit operators with a resource to obtain help with specific problems. Contacts can be made with others who have encountered and overcome similar issues through telephone conversations, the exchange of written material, or on-site visits and meetings. The manual is in the process of being updated. In addition, TxDOT is sponsoring annual training conferences with training sessions focusing on the needs of operators and PTCs over the three day event.

In addition to these activities, staff from both the Division and the Districts provide a wide range of technical assistance and support to operators and other groups. A few examples of these activities and the ongoing interaction among TxDOT transit personnel and other groups are highlighted next.

Austin. The TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator in the Austin District interacts in numerous ways with other TxDOT staff and representatives from the MPO, the city, the county, local transit agencies, private businesses, and other groups. The PTC provides technical assistance, helps coordinate activities, and carries out other responsibilities. Two examples highlight the roles TxDOT plays to enhance communication and interaction among the different agencies involved in transit and transportation in the Austin area.

The Austin Transportation Study (ATS), which is the MPO for the area, holds joint staff meetings every two weeks. Both the PTC and the TxDOT District Planner attend these meetings on a regular basis. Representatives from ATS, the City of Austin, and Travis County also participate on a regular basis. Staff from TxDOT's Transportation Planning and Programming Division, as well as other state agencies, also attend as appropriate.

These meetings are used to discuss the status of projects and programming activities, review schedules and upcoming deadlines, monitor progress on projects, and discuss any issues or problems. The regular meetings provide an excellent mechanism to ensure that all agencies are adequately informed on projects and help foster ongoing communication and coordination among all groups.

The TxDOT Austin District PTC is also actively involved in the Voluntary Trip Reduction Program (V-TRIP). V-TRIP, which was initiated by ATS in 1994, focuses on reducing vehicle emissions and traffic congestion in Austin by encouraging employers to promote alternative transportation modes for their employees. An initial group of four public agencies and two private businesses have been meeting on a regular basis to develop and implement a variety of trip reduction strategies. TxDOT is one of the public agencies participating in V-TRIP, along with the City of Austin, the Texas Natural Resources and Conservation Commission (TNRCC), Capital Metro, and Travis County. The PTC represents both TxDOT's Austin District and TxDOT Headquarters in the group. TxDOT has completed a survey of all employees and is working toward implementing a range of alternative commute and work options. Efforts are underway to expand V-TRIP, and TxDOT's PTC will continue to play an active role in the group.

Midland-Odessa. Staff from the Division provided assistance to the Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission in the Midland-Odessa area in the examination of the potential for starting a new transit system. The Division staff provided examples of requests for proposals (RFPs) used in other areas to obtain consultant services to conduct transit needs assessments. A listing of possible consultants was also provided.

Yoakum. A number of approaches help involve all the appropriate groups in transit-related activities in the Yoakum District. First, within TxDOT, the PTC and the District planners work closely to coordinate updating the TIP and other plans. These activities are also coordinated with appropriate staff within the Public Transportation and the Transportation Planning and Programming Divisions. The District staff attend the regular meetings of the MPO technical committees and policy board. Further, MPO staff serve on the District's Section 16 project selection review committee and attend TxDOT's semi-annual providers meetings. Thus, there is regular and ongoing communication among the staff from TxDOT, the MPO, and providers.

Transit Agencies in Texas

Public transportation has been provided in Texas since the mid-1800s. Privately owned and operated mule-drawn street railway service was first initiated in Houston in 1868, followed by service in Dallas in 1871. By the 1890s, mule-drawn streetcar systems were operating in 13 cities in Texas. Some larger cities—such as Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston—had multiple private streetcar companies (16).

Following the national trend, mule-drawn systems in Texas were converted to electricity in the late 1800s. Laredo was the first city in the state, and the first community west of the Mississippi River, to develop an electric street car system. Opened in 1889, the Laredo system was soon followed by service in Austin and Houston in 1891. By the early 1900s, a total of 19 cities in Texas had operating streetcar systems (16).

Motorbuses, which ultimately replaced streetcars in all but a few selected cities in the U.S., were first introduced in New York City in 1905. In 1922, San Antonio was the first city in Texas to begin operating buses. Between the 1920s and the 1950s, buses replaced streetcars in most cities in the state. Bus systems were in operation in 25 cities in Texas by the 1950s.

The operation of mass transit systems remained in private hands in most communities in the United States until the 1960s. A variety of factors contributed to the wide-spread change from private to public ownership and operation. The rapid increase in automobile ownership, the construction of the interstate freeway system, and the suburbanization of America cities, all contributed to the continual decline in transit ridership and revenues. Although the specific issues and problems varied among communities, the end result of these trends was that by the 1950s and 1960s many private transit systems were on the verge of financial collapse or had gone out of business.

In order to maintain at least a basic level of transit service, many cities responded by subsidizing private operators and, ultimately in most cases, purchasing the assets of the private companies and creating public transit systems. In Texas, the transit system in San Angelo was the first to change from private to public ownership in 1932. Similar trends occurred in other communities in the 1960s. Today, public transit services are provided by seven MTAs, 23 municipal transit systems, and 41 rural transit operators. In addition, over 260 private non-profit agencies and other groups operate transportation services for specialized groups. The characteristics of each of these operators is described next.

Metropolitan Transit Authorities—The seven large metropolitan areas in Texas—Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio—are served by MTAs. State legislation allows for the creation of MTAs by approval of citizens in the service area and the authorization of a dedicated sales tax to support the development and operation of transit services and facilities.

Legislation passed in 1973 provided for the creation of regional metropolitan transit authorities. This legislation was amended in 1977 to allow voters to approve up to a one percent sales tax to fund the MTAs. These two statutes provide broad powers to the authorities to plan, design, construct, and operate a wide range of transit services and support facilities. Voters in San Antonio and Houston were the first to approve the creation of MTAs in 1978.

The MTAs currently operate a range of transit services including regular route bus systems, specialized transportation services for disabled individuals, and rideshare programs. Additional services and facilities have been implemented by some MTAs.

For example, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has developed an extensive system of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, park-and-ride lots, and transit centers. The HOV lanes represent the joint efforts of METRO and TxDOT. METRO operates extensive park-and-ride and express bus services on the HOV lanes. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and TxDOT implemented a contraflow HOV lane on the East R. L. Thornton Freeway using the moveable barrier technology. DART is also constructing a light rail transit (LRT) system, which will begin operation in 1996.

In addition to their transit operations, all MTAs allocate a portion of their sales tax for street and roadway improvement programs. For example, part of the Phase II Mobility Plan approved by Houston area voters in 1988 included a General Mobility Program. This program utilizes 25 percent of the METRO sales tax to fund mobility improvements unrelated to public transit. This program includes projects focusing on upgrading and widening streets, new roadway grade separations, signal improvements, and other street improvements. In some cases, General Mobility Projects are jointly funded with other jurisdictions, while in other cases, METRO provides all the funding. The DART Local Assistance program has a similar focus, providing funding for roadway projects, bus facilities, and conducting traffic and transit studies in the 11 DART member cities not receiving LRT service.

A mix of local, state, and federal funds are used to support the capital and operating expenses of the MTAs. Local sources include the dedicated sales tax, fare box revenues, advertising revenues, and interest income. The sales tax rates approved by the voters range from a low of .25 percent in Fort Worth to the full one percent in Houston, Dallas, and Austin. State funding from TxDOT may be used to support the costs of fixed facilities, however. For example, funding from TxDOT has been used to match Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for some of the HOV lanes in the Houston area.

The MTAs obtain their federal funding directly from FTA and do not apply through the state. The MTAs receive both Section 9 operating assistance and capital funds from FTA. Further, some MTAs have obtained special grants from FTA. As discussed in greater detail later, any MTA project involving federal funds must be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) approved by the MPO. In addition, representatives from the different MTAs are usually involved in MPO planning and programming activities.

Municipal Transit Systems—Currently there are 23 municipal transit systems in Texas. These systems are located in communities with populations of 50,000 or more. Of these, eight provide only specialized services for elderly and disabled individuals, while 15 provide services to all residents. The cities with municipal transit systems are listed below:

- Abilene, City Link
- Amarillo

- Arlington, Handitran*
- Beaumont
- Brownsville, BUS
- Bryan-College Station
- Denton
- Fort Worth, NETS*
- Galveston, Island Transit
- Grand Prairie*
- Laredo, El Metro
- Lewisville*
- Lubbock, Citibus
- Mesquite*
- Plano*
- Port Arthur
- San Angelo, ANTRAN
- Sherman*
- Sherman-Denison-Howe
- Temple*
- Tyler
- Waco
- Wichita Falls

* *Elderly and Disabled or Special Events Services Only*

Municipal transit systems are funded through a mix of federal, state, and local funds. Urban areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000 are able to apply directly to FTA for Section 9 funds. TxDOT will act as the applicant if the system wishes, however. Urban areas with populations of 200,000 and above apply directly to FTA. As noted previously, TxDOT is responsible for determining the annual Section 9 allocation to the municipal systems. Grants will not be released by FTA without state approval of the funding amount.

State funding for the municipal systems is provided through the PTF, which is administered by TxDOT. The allocation of PTF funds is based on a formula which considers the population and population density of each area. The seven MTAs listed previously are not eligible recipients of PTF funds. While it is possible to have a state/local project, all current recipients use the PTF funds to match Section 9 grants (12).

Rural Transit Systems—Texas has the largest rural service area of any state in the country. Currently, 41 rural transit systems provide services to rural areas and cities with populations under 50,000. The systems and service areas are illustrated in Figure 1 and identified in Table 2. Funding for these systems is provided by the FTA Section 18 Program, the PTF, and local sources. TxDOT acts as the administrator for the Section 18 funds and the PTF. In addition, some rural systems utilize the FTA Section 16 Program described next for vehicle purchases.

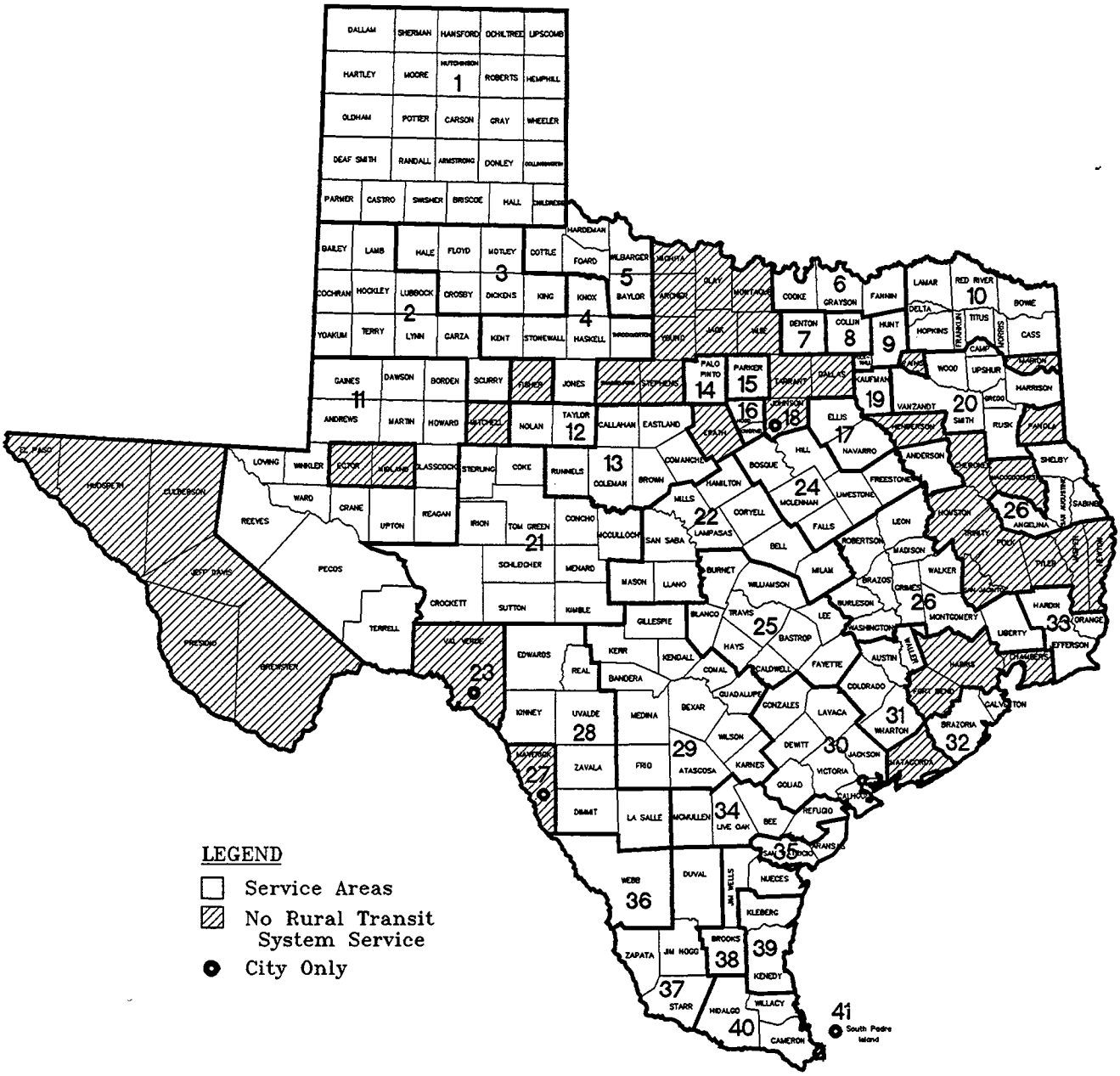

Figure 1. Rural Transit Systems and Service Areas

Table 2. Rural Transit Systems and Service Areas

Map Number	System and Area
1	Panhandle Community Services, Inc.
2	South Plains Community Action Association, Inc.
3	Caprock Community Action Association, Inc.
4	Aspermont Small Business Development Center, Inc.
5	Rolling Plains Management Corporation
6	Texoma Area Paratransit System, Inc.
7	Services Program for Aging Needs in Denton County
8	Collin County Committee on Aging
9	Hunt County Committee on Aging
10	Ark-Tex Council of Governments
11	West Texas Opportunities, Inc.
12	People for Progress
13	Central Texas Opportunities, Inc.
14	Palo Pinto County Transportation Council
15	Parker County Transportation, Inc.
16	The Transit System, Inc.
17	Community Services, Inc.
18	City of Cleburne
19	Kaufman County Senior Citizens Services, Inc.
20	East Texas Council of Governments
21	Concho Valley Council of Governments
22	Hill Country Community Action Association, Inc.
23	City of Del Rio
24	Heart of Texas Council of Governments
25	Capital Area Rural Transportation System

Table 2. Rural Transit Systems and Service Areas, continued

Map Number	System and Area
26	Brazos Valley Community Action Agency
27	City of Eagle Pass
28	Community Council of Southwest Texas, Inc.
29	Alamo Area Council of Governments
30	Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
31	Colorado Valley Transit, Inc.
32	Gulf Coast Center
33	Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission
34	Bee Community Action Agency
35	San Patricio County Community Action Agency
36	Laredo-Webb County Action Agency
37	Community Action Council of South Texas
38	Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc.
39	Kleberg County Human Services
40	Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
41	Town of South Padre Island

Specialized Elderly and Disabled Transportation—The FTA Section 16 Program provides federal funds for 80 percent of the capital costs of vehicles, radios, and computer equipment used by private non-profit organizations providing transportation services to elderly and disabled individuals. No funding is provided for operating expenses, however. TxDOT is responsible for administering this program. No additional state funds are provided, and the 20 percent local match, as well as the operating expenses, must come from local sources. As of 1993, some 268 agencies had utilized Section 16 funding to purchase transit vehicles (12).

Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), or councils of government (COGs) as they are called in some areas, were first authorized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, which also established the urban transportation planning process. The key elements of this process, which were required in all areas receiving federal funds, were that it should focus on the whole urban area—not just the major city—and that it be an ongoing effort carried out cooperatively by the state and local communities. This became known as the 3 "C" process referring to a "continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative" effort. Transit systems and transit issues have historically been included in the MPO planning process.

The requirements for metropolitan planning and MPOs have changed over the years in response to federal legislation. The ISTEA provided the most recent of these changes. MPOs are required in all metropolitan areas with populations of 50,000 or greater. Historically, MPOs have been responsible for the development and adoption of a number of plans and programs, including a long-range plan, a short-range plan, a TIP, and a unified planning work program (UPWP). Each of these documents includes transit projects and transit planning activities. Currently, there are 25 MPOs in Texas. These are listed in Table 3, along with the urbanized area they cover.

The ISTEA confirmed the MPO as the responsible agency for preparation of the long-range transportation plan and the TIP. The ISTEA further placed additional requirements on the development and content of these plans. The TIP, which has historically contained all projects for which federal funding is being sought, must now be financially constrained. Further, the ISTEA requires that 15 factors be addressed in the long-range planning process. Although many of these factors are similar to those included in previous requirements, the ISTEA represents the first time they have been incorporated into law.

A number of the 15 factors address public transportation services either directly or indirectly. For example, consideration must be given to methods to expand and enhance transit services and to increase the use of such services. Further, capital investments that would result in increased security in transit systems must be considered. In addition, the needs of the management systems—including the public transportation facilities and equipment management system—and the impact of all transportation projects to be undertaken regardless of funding sources must be included in the planning process (5).

The ISTEA and subsequent rules also outline new requirements for public participation, project selection, and coordination with state plans and the management systems plans. Both the ISTEA and the subsequent rules clearly indicate the need for adequate public involvement and input from public officials during the development of the different plans. This must include involvement in the early stages of plan development and throughout the planning and project selection process. Further, the procedures MPOs will use to ensure participation by these groups must be documented and published.

Table 3. Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Texas

Urbanized Area	Designated MPO
Abilene	City of Abilene
Amarillo	City of Amarillo
Austin	Austin Urban Transportation Study Policy Advisory Committee
Beaumont/Port Arthur	South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Brownsville	City of Brownsville
Bryan-College Station	Bryan-College Station Urban Transportation Study Steering Committee
Corpus Christi	City of Corpus Christi
Dallas-Fort Worth	North Central Texas Council of Governments
El Paso	City of El Paso
Harlingen-San Benito	City of Harlingen
Houston/Galveston/Texas City & La Marque	Houston-Galveston Area Council
Killeen and Temple	Central Texas Council of Governments
Laredo	Laredo Urban Transportation Study Steering Committee
Longview	City of Longview
Lubbock	Lubbock Urban Transportation Study Steering Committee
McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg	McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg Urban Transportation Study Steering Committee
Midland-Odessa	Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission
San Angelo	City of San Angelo
San Antonio	San Antonio Urban Transportation Study Steering Committee
Sherman-Denison	Texoma Council of Governments
Texarkana, Texas	Ark-Tex Council of Governments
Tyler	City of Tyler
Victoria	City of Victoria
Waco	City of Waco
Wichita Falls	City of Wichita Falls

The ISTEA also established a new category of MPOs, called Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), for metropolitan areas with over 200,000 population. More stringent requirements are placed on TMAs. For example, TMAs must update long-range plans every three years, while other MPOs must complete updates no less than every five years (5,6).

Transit Associations

Transit associations at the state, regional, and national levels provide a range of support services for all types and sizes of transit agencies. Four national organizations focus on public transportation. The American Public Transit Association (APTA) is the national trade organization for the transit industry. APTA provides a number of programs for its members, including a regular newsletter and information bulletins, conferences and an annual meeting, special training sessions, and other supporting programs and services. Although APTA includes all sizes of transit systems among its members, it tends to be oriented more toward the larger and mid-sized providers. A number of individuals from Texas transit agencies hold leadership positions in APTA.

The Association for Coordinated Transit (ACT) focuses on transit systems operating in rural and small communities receiving Section 18 funds. Like APTA, ACT provides a number of services to its members including newsletters and information bulletins, conferences, and other networking opportunities. Mr. David Marsh, the Executive Director of the Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) is the current president of ACT.

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is a national organization focusing on improving mobility for all individuals. CTAA publishes a regular magazine, holds an annual conference and exposition, and provides training courses and other outreach activities. Mr. David Marsh, CARTS, is on the CTAA Board of Directors, and other representatives from transit systems in Texas participate in various CTAA activities.

The Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) is a national organization focusing on providing alternatives to driving alone. ACT is an association of organizations and individuals who share a common commitment to developing a balanced, effective transportation system. ACT tends to focus more on ridesharing—carpooling and vanpooling—and other travel demand management (TDM) strategies. ACT's national headquarters are in Washington, D.C., but there are also chapters throughout the country, including the Lone Star Chapter in Texas. The 1995 National ACT Conference will be held in Houston on September 17-21, 1995.

At the regional level, the Southwest Transit Association (SWTA) provides similar services to transit agencies in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Arizona, Kansas, and Louisiana. SWTA holds an annual conference and specialty workshops throughout the year. It also maintains a monthly schedule of training classes that rotate throughout the member states.

The Texas Transit Association (TTA) conducts a range of activities to support transit within the state. TTA helps coordinate the Annual Public Transportation Conference, holds its own

meetings, publishes a newsletter, and provides transit agencies with a voice at the legislature and with TxDOT.

All six of these associations play important roles in providing timely information to member agencies, promoting the sharing of ideas and experiences through conferences and annual meetings, expanding the training opportunities to transit personnel, and providing other specific support services. Thus, the associations help to enhance communication and coordination among all groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES USED BY STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION

In order to obtain information on the techniques used by other state departments of transportation (DOTs) to communicate and interact with transit providers under their jurisdiction, TTI conducted a literature review and a telephone survey of representatives from selected state DOTs. The results from these two activities are summarized in this chapter. This information indicates that TxDOT is utilizing the same communication approaches as many other DOTs. Further, in some cases, TxDOT has implemented techniques in advance of other states. There are also examples of approaches that are being used in other states that may be appropriate for consideration within Texas.

The literature review focused on reports and information available from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), including the report *Survey of State Involvement in Public Transportation* (17), as well as other articles and publications. Representatives from 23 state DOTs were contacted during the telephone survey. The states included in the survey were selected to provide a mix of sizes and geographical locations. The survey was designed to obtain information on the types of communication techniques utilized and the general issues associated with communication encountered in the different states. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix B, and a listing of the state DOT representatives contacted is included in Appendix C.

This chapter provides a summary of the results of the literature review and the responses to the telephone surveys. An overview of the communication methods identified by the state DOT representatives is presented first. This is followed by a summary of the individual techniques and case studies of the approaches used in some states. These are then compared with the communication methods currently used by TxDOT.

Overview of Communication Methods

Table 4 provides a summary of the mechanisms currently used by the state DOTs included in the telephone survey to communicate with transit agencies under their jurisdictions and other groups involved in public transit. On-site visits and telephone conversations were the most frequently noted communication methods. Other commonly cited techniques were newsletters, annual conferences, and semi-annual or quarterly meetings. A few representatives indicated that telephone conferences and advanced technologies, such as faxes and electronic mail (e-mail), were also used to communicate with agencies and service providers.

Table 4. Communication Methods Used by Selected State Departments of Transportation

State Agency	Newsletters	Annual Conferences or Meetings	Semi-annual or Quarterly Meetings	On-site visits	Telephone Conversations	Telephone Conferences	Other Advanced Technology	Other
Alabama	x				x			x
Colorado	x	x		x	x			
Florida	x[1]	x	x	x	x			x
Idaho	x		x	x	x			x
Illinois	x	x		x	x			x
Indiana	x		x	x	x			x
Kansas	x			x	x			x
Louisiana		x		x	x		x	x
Maine	x			x	x			x
Minnesota	x[1]	x	x	x	x			x
Mississippi		x	x	x	x			x
Montana	x	x		x	x			
Nevada	x	x		x	x			
New Mexico			x	x	x		x	x
New York	x	x	x	x	x			
No. Carolina	x	x		x	x	x		
No. Dakota				x	x			x
Ohio	x	x		x	x			x
Oregon	x	x	x	x	x			x
Rhode Island					x			
So. Carolina		x		x	x			x
So. Dakota	x	x		x	x			x
Texas	x[1]	x	x	x	x			x
Washington	x		x	x	x			x

[1] Articles in state Transit Association newsletter.

A wide range of other communication methods and techniques were also reported by the survey respondents. Examples of other techniques included training sessions sponsored with funding from the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), workshops, compliance reviews, regular correspondence, and regular updates on legislative or funding issues. In addition, a number of representatives identified new communication methods in the planning or implementation stages. Electronic bulletin boards, e-mail, video conferencing, and additional training sessions represent a few examples of these techniques.

Specific Communication Techniques

Telephone Calls—Telephone calls were the most common means of communication reported by the survey respondents. All of the state DOT representatives contacted indicated that telephone conversations were held on a regular or semi-regular basis with grantees. The respondents further indicated that these included calls initiated by state representatives, and by transit system personnel, as well as other groups.

Thus, it appears that telephone calls are used for a variety of purposes. From the state DOT perspective, telephone conversations are used to provide information to grant recipients on funding schedules, the status of grants, changes in requirements, legislative updates, and other activities. Telephone calls are also used by state representatives to obtain information from transit systems and operators. On the other hand, many of the individuals contacted indicated that they respond to requests for help or technical assistance from transit agencies over the telephone.

The current use of telephone conference calls appears to be more limited. Only the representative from the North Carolina DOT indicated that conference calls were used on a regular basis. In addition, two respondents did indicate that video conferencing was being considered as an alternative to on-site meetings.

On-Site Visits—On-site visits represent the other communication technique utilized in almost all of the states included in the telephone survey. Only two of the 23 state DOTs indicated they do not conduct on-site reviews on a regular basis. The nature and frequency of these visits varies among the states, however. In ten states, on-site meetings are held on an annual basis. More frequent on-site reviews are held in seven states, while one state conducts on-site meetings once every three years.

The focus of the on-site meetings also appears to vary among the different states. Management and financial reviews were the most commonly noted topics, along with overall program audits. In two states, vehicle inspections are also conducted as part of the annual reviews.

Newsletters—Newsletters are used by a number of state DOTs to communicate with the transit systems under their jurisdiction and to share information among agencies. Seventeen of the 23 state DOTs included in the survey use newsletters as part of their ongoing

communication methods. Two states, Minnesota and Florida, coordinate the newsletter with the state public transit association. Most newsletters are published on a quarterly basis, although a few are issued twice a year. In Indiana, both quarterly newsletters and quarterly transit bulletins are published.

According to the survey respondents, the focus of most newsletters is on current issues, changes in regulations or requirements, upcoming meetings, and application deadlines. The newsletters also provide an opportunity for transit systems to share information on projects and activities, as well as provide updates on federal and state legislation.

Annual Conferences—Annual transit conferences or meetings are also held in many states. Fourteen of the 23 representatives contacted reported annual transit conferences in their states. A number of the state DOT representatives indicated that these conferences are organized in cooperation and conjunction with the state transit association. In some cases, the state takes the lead in organizing the conferences, while in others it plays more of a supporting role. It also appears that the location of the conference changes on a regular basis in most states, with a different local transit agency acting as host each year.

Like newsletters, annual conferences cover a variety of subjects. Most respondents indicated that a mix of general sessions and smaller group sessions are used to cover topics ranging from federal and state legislative and regulatory updates, to current issues and project experiences. Some representatives also reported that training opportunities on specific topics are provided as part of the conferences. The involvement of key state officials, representatives from FTA regional and Washington, D.C. offices, and APTA staff was reported. In addition, many conferences include transit rodeos for bus operators and social functions.

Semi-Annual or Quarterly Meetings—Semi-annual or quarterly meetings are held in nine of the 23 states contacted during the telephone survey. These meetings are used for DOT personnel to communicate information on funding, application requirements and deadlines, and other program activities. They also provide the opportunity for the sharing of information among transit systems. Further, in some states, training sessions or workshops are held in conjunction with these regular meetings.

Technical Assistance and Other Activities—A number of the state DOT representatives provided information on other program activities and communication methods. For example, many indicated that the state DOT provides ongoing technical assistance to transit grant recipients. This help may range from simply answering questions over the telephone to spending time on-site to help with specific problems. Some representatives also noted that the state helps coordinate peer-to-peer training and supports other activities. RTAP was frequently noted as the source for funding many of these activities.

A few DOT representatives indicated that the use of advanced technologies is being explored to further enhance existing communication methods. In addition to the use of

fax machines and the consideration of video conferencing, electronic mail, electronic bulletin boards, and greater use of videos were noted by many respondents.

Case Studies

A few examples are provided in this section summarizing the approaches used in some states. The case studies were selected to provide an indication of the comprehensive approaches and innovative techniques used in these states.

Florida. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) interacts with transit systems within the state in a number of ways. The responsibilities for transit grants administration, planning, and technical assistance are split between the Public Transportation Division and the Districts. In addition to the normal grant assistance, review, monitoring, and close out functions, FDOT offers a wide range of other support and technical assistance to transit systems in the state. These include technical assistance on planning, safety, fleet leasing, and other activities. A number of major investment studies (MIS) are underway in the state. Both Division and District personnel are assisting with the transit elements of these studies. FDOT also coordinates activities such as annual and mid-year conferences and newsletters with the Florida Transit Association (FTA) and the Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation (FACT).

Indiana. The Indiana Department of Transportation (IDOT) uses a number of methods to communicate and coordinate with transit systems, MPOs, and other groups within the state. On-site visits are conducted on a regular basis. IDOT helps plan and organize the annual Indiana Transit Association meeting, and IDOT staff actively participate. In addition, IDOT staff attend MPO meetings on a regular basis and participate in the project development and selection process. IDOT conducts regular training and technical assistance programs. Two recent workshops have focused on the changing roles of MPOs and emergency training procedures. IDOT has also set up a fax network, which allows critical information to be sent quickly to transit agencies and MPOs. Additional enhancements under consideration include the use of electronic bulletin boards and e-mail/modems. These projects are being examined as a joint effort with Indiana University.

Minnesota. The Office of Transit at the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) utilizes a number of different techniques to communicate and interact with transit systems, MPOs, and other groups. The Office of Transit is responsible for administering the state funding programs and other activities in Greater Minnesota, which encompasses all of the state other than the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan area. Mn/DOT project managers are assigned by geographical areas within the state. These individuals are responsible for all activities related to the transit systems in their areas. The project managers make frequent visits to their systems and have established strong working relationships with the transit systems, MPOs, and other groups. This approach

allows Mn/DOT to tailor their approach to the needs and characteristics of each local area.

Second, as a result of the ISTEA, Mn/DOT has established Area Transportation Partnerships (TAPs) within each District. The TAPs are comprised of representatives from the MPO, transit systems, Regional Development Commissions, Mn/DOT, and other groups. The TAPs help in the project development and selection process. Although not formal members of the TAPs, Office of Transit staff attend the meetings and may assist the transit systems with the development of transit project proposals.

Mn/DOT also provides a range of training and technical assistance to transit agencies in Greater Minnesota. One recent example of this was the development of marketing material and marketing training programs. Mn/DOT also coordinates with the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) on the publication of a newsletter and co-sponsorship of an annual conference. Mn/DOT is active in MPTA in an ex-officio capacity. This arrangement has benefitted both groups and has helped maximize available resources. Mn/DOT is considering faster ways to communicate with different groups within the state, including the use of electronic bulletin boards, but has no specific plans to implement a system at this time.

Within the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, Mn/DOT representatives from the Metropolitan District and the central office are actively involved in a wide range of transit-related activities, including participation in the Metropolitan Council's planning and project selection process. One recent innovative project has been *Team Transit*. *Team Transit* represents the coordinated efforts of Mn/DOT, the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), the Metropolitan Council, and local communities, to identify problems to the effective operation of transit services and to develop and implement solutions to these problems. Through the joint efforts of these agencies, a number of improvements have been operationalized. These include bus by-pass lanes on congested freeway and roadway sections, bus by-pass lanes at additional ramp meters, bus pull-ins, traffic signal timing improvements, and other enhancements. Additional improvements are being considered and planned through the *Team Transit* process.

Communication Methods used by TxDOT

As described in the previous chapter, representatives from the TxDOT Public Transportation Division and other TxDOT Divisions were contacted to obtain information on the methods and techniques used to communicate with municipal and rural transit agencies, MTAs, MPOs, and other groups. The methods used by the Public Transportation Division and the Districts to communicate with the municipal and rural transit systems under their authority are highlighted in Table 4.

As illustrated in Table 4, TxDOT uses many of the same communication techniques noted by other state DOT representatives. These include telephone conversations, on-site visits, regular

meetings, annual conferences, and other techniques. Although TxDOT used to publish a separate transit newsletter, it now coordinates with the TTA and submits articles for the TTA newsletter.

As part of the CI process within TxDOT, responsibilities and functions are becoming more decentralized. For example, District staff have been taking on more responsibilities for both on-site visits and for ongoing technical assistance, as they are closer to the grantees. In addition, as noted previously, the Districts are now responsible for the Section 16 project selection process.

Annual transit conferences have been held for over 20 years in the state. These are sponsored and coordinated by TxDOT in conjunction with TTA and other groups. The conferences are held in different communities each year, with the local transit agency acting as the host. In addition, TxDOT has sponsored a number of training sessions in association with the semi-annual meetings and conferences. The financial management seminars funded through RTAP provide a recent example of a training session sponsored by TxDOT. The *Peer-to-Peer Resource Manual* represents another example of the Department's technical assistance and support activities.

The survey results indicate that TxDOT is utilizing the same general approaches and techniques to communicate and interact with transit agencies and MPOs as other states. Further, the decentralization of many functions and responsibilities to the Districts represents an innovative approach. The examples of the interaction of TxDOT personnel from both the Division and District summarized in the previous chapter provide an indication of the good working relationships that have been established in many areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY OF SMALL URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT SYSTEMS IN TEXAS

The second telephone survey conducted as part of this research study focused on small urban and rural transit systems in Texas. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information from representatives of these systems on current communication methods used at the state level, communication and interaction at the local level, current involvement in the MPO planning process, and any suggestions for enhancing communication and interaction among the various groups responsible for transit. A copy of the survey form is provided in Appendix D, and a list of the representatives contacted during the survey is contained in Appendix E. Representatives from 44 systems participated in the survey.

The results from the telephone survey are summarized in this chapter. Information on communication and interaction between the transit agencies and state and federal representatives are described first. This is followed by a review of current communication methods used at the local level and the involvement of the transit systems in the MPO planning process. Short case studies are presented on the approaches being utilized in some areas. In addition, information on the involvement of representatives from MTAs in the MPO planning process is also presented. Since many of the MTAs have had longer involvement in the MPO process, their experiences may be of benefit to other transit systems in the state.

Current State Communication Methods

Transit agency representatives were asked to review the four main communication methods currently used in Texas. These techniques were annual conferences, quarterly or semi-annual meetings, on-site visits, and telephone conversations. The responses, which are presented in Table 5, indicate a high level of satisfaction with current communication techniques.

Quarterly or semi-annual meetings received the highest overall ratings, with 84 percent of the respondents indicating that these meetings are very useful. Annual conferences and telephone conversations were also ranked highly by respondents. Eighty percent of the transit agency representatives rated annual conferences as very useful, and 75 percent gave similar ratings to telephone calls. Although rated somewhat lower than these three methods, 57 percent of the respondents indicated that on-site visits were useful.

Table 5. General Rating of Current Transit Communication Methods

Current Communication Practices	Response			
	Very Useful		Somewhat Useful	
Quarterly or Semi-annual Meetings	38	86%	16	14%
Annual Conferences	35	80%	9	20%
Telephone Conversations	33	75%	11	25%
On-site Visits	25	57%	11	25%

A number of respondents provided comments on these four communication techniques. The networking opportunities, peer-to-peer interaction, and information presented at annual conferences were noted as very positive elements of these meetings. Providing current information on legislative and regulatory changes, as well as the status of grant applications and funding, was identified as a major benefit of quarterly and semi-annual meetings. A total of 34 percent of the respondents indicated a preference for quarterly, rather than semi-annual, meetings. Telephone calls were identified as an excellent communication method to obtain specific information or help with a particular problem.

Further, many respondents noted that TxDOT Division and District personnel were very helpful in responding to requests and that the general interaction with the Department was very good. Although most respondents indicated that the historical relationship between the Department and operators was good, a number noted that the interaction has become even better recently. The Continuous Improvement (CI) focus of TxDOT, giving additional responsibilities to the PTCs and Districts, and a more open attitude were all noted as very positive.

Additional Communication Methods and Techniques

The transit agency representatives were also asked if there were any enhancements to existing approaches or other communication methods they would like to see used in the state. Table 6 identifies the suggestions made by the survey respondents. Opportunities for additional peer-to-peer meetings were mentioned most frequently, followed by additional training courses and newsletters, advanced technologies, telephone conferences, and other techniques.

Table 6. Additional Communication Methods and Technologies

Other Methods	Response	
Additional peer-to-peer meetings	15	34%
Additional training courses	11	25%
Newsletter	11	25%
Other advanced technology	11	25%
Telephone conferences	4	9%
Other	7	16%
No other methods needed	5	11%

Suggestions for additional peer-to-peer meetings included more interaction among similar-sized systems, as well as learning from larger systems with expertise in particular subject areas. Focusing these meetings on special topics or functional areas, such as ways to enhance transit services in communities with large numbers of tourists and visitors, was suggested. Along with more peer-to-peer meetings, additional training courses were also identified as a way to enhance communication among all groups. Recent training courses targeted toward the needs of rural systems, like the financial management seminars, were noted as very good.

One-fourth of the respondents indicated that restarting a regular newsletter should be considered. Topics suggested for inclusion were information about the activities and projects of different transit systems, information on TxDOT projects, a calendar of events, and updates on the status of key legislation and funding opportunities. The potential use of advanced technologies was also suggested by some respondents. E-mail, electronic bulletin boards, faxes, computer links, video conferencing, and telephone conference calls were noted most frequently for possible use.

MPO Involvement and Communication at the Local Level

Transit agency representatives were asked about their involvement in the MPO planning process and the communication methods and techniques used at the local level. The current level of involvement in the MPO process in different areas is summarized in Table 7. Only two respondents indicated that there was not an MPO in their area. On the other hand, two operators noted they were located within a Council of Government or MPO. In other cases, the level and nature of the interaction between the transit systems and the MPOs varies.

Table 7. Current Involvement in Local MPO Planning Process

Type of Involvement	Response	
Exchange information	21	48%
Attend meetings	16	36%
Little involvement	11	25%
MPO reviews projects	10	23%
Serve on advisory or technical committees	9	20%
Serve on policy board	5	11%
Are part of MPO/COG	2	5%
No MPO in area	2	5%

At one end of the spectrum, some representatives indicated that their agency had very little involvement with the MPO in their area. Ten respondents indicated little interaction outside the formal review of programs and proposals by the MPO. On the other hand, 21 respondents noted that information is exchanged regularly between their agency and the MPO, while 16 indicated they regularly attend MPO meetings. Finally, nine respondents indicated that representatives from their agency serve on MPO advisory or technical committees, and five serve on policy boards.

A number of respondents provided examples of communication and interaction among the transit systems, MPO, TxDOT, and other groups at the local level. Two examples provided by the respondents are summarized next, along with one example of the MTA's involvement in the MPO process in Houston.

- **Beeville.** A representative of the Bee Community Action Agency in Beeville regularly attends meetings of the Corpus Christi and Victoria COGs. This allows staff to keep informed on projects and issues. The agency programs are also reviewed by the COGs, and agency staff present updates on the status of plans and activities.

- **Galveston.** Representatives from the Gulf Coast Center in Galveston currently serve on task forces in Galveston and Brazoria Counties examining the potential for expanding and enhancing transit services in the area. With funding from the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC), the task forces developed a request for proposal (RFP), reviewed the proposals, and selected a contractor.

- **Houston.** The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) interacts and works with HGAC in a number of ways. This includes the submission and review of required plans, projects, and applications. In addition, staff from both agencies often work on joint projects and studies. Further, METRO staff actively participate in the technical committees and policy boards, including serving in leadership positions.

The individuals contacted in the telephone survey expressed mixed reactions toward greater involvement in the MPO process. Many expressed an interest in more involvement in the MPO process and additional interaction with the MPO and other groups. A few expressed concern that the MPO in their area was more interested in urban issues and paid little attention to the needs of rural residents, however. Others viewed the MPO requirements as just another level of bureaucracy and indicated a preference for limited involvement.

The most common communication methods and techniques reported by survey respondents at the local level include telephone conversations, written correspondence, local meetings, and newsletters. Approximately half of the respondents indicated they felt current communication at the local level was good. Greater use of telephone communications, local training sessions and workshops, local and regional newsletters, computer networking, e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and greater participation in the MPO planning process were suggested as possible ways to enhance communication among all groups involved in transit and transportation at the local level.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This report has provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating public transportation services in Texas. It has included a discussion of the responsibilities of FTA, TxDOT, transit agencies and operators, MPOs, and transit associations. In addition, the report examined the current methods and techniques used to communicate among these groups and explored potential approaches to enhance ongoing communication. Information on communication strategies was obtained from a review of current literature as well as telephone surveys of representatives from selected state departments of transportation and municipal and rural transit systems in Texas.

The results of this study indicate that a wide range of communication techniques are used by the agencies responsible for planning, funding, and operating transit services in Texas. Communication methods most commonly used in the state include telephone calls, faxes, on-site visits, quarterly or semi-annual meetings, annual conferences, and training sessions. These approaches are similar to those used in other states. Further, most transit agencies reported some level of involvement in the MPO planning process in their area.

The results of the study indicate that most transit agency representatives find the current communication methods to be useful and beneficial. The responses further indicated a high level of satisfaction with the techniques used in the state. The recent enhancements resulting from the TxDOT CI process and the decentralization of additional responsibilities to the Districts were also noted positively.

Communication techniques receiving the highest ratings from the survey respondents were semi-annual or quarterly meetings, annual conferences, and telephone conversations. Areas for enhancing the ongoing communication among all groups were noted, however. Approaches suggested most frequently included additional peer-to-peer meetings, newsletters, additional training courses, and advanced technologies.

The results from the telephone surveys of both transit agency representatives in Texas and representatives from selected state DOTs provide a few suggestions for possible ways to enhance communication among all groups in the state. Communication methods and interaction techniques that may be appropriate for further consideration in Texas are summarized next.

Potential Methods to Enhance Transit Communication and Interaction in Texas

The results of the literature review and the two telephone surveys provide a few ideas for methods and techniques that could be used to enhance the ongoing communication and interaction among the agencies and groups responsible for planning, funding, and operating public transit services in Texas. The following approaches to enhancing communication and

interaction are presented for further consideration. Each strategy is briefly summarized, along with suggestions on the agencies and groups that may be appropriate to initiate each.

Additional Peer-to-Peer Meetings—As discussed in this report, peer-to-peer meetings and training sessions have been used successfully in the past on a number of subjects. Building on this strong base, additional sessions could be held on current topics and issues. These could include meetings with representatives from similar sized systems, as well as those utilizing the expertise of staff from larger systems. Further, one-on-one visits could be sponsored to provide direct help on issues or problems. The *Peer-to-Peer Resource Manual* (15) developed by TxDOT could be used as the basis of an enhanced peer-to-peer training and communication network. This manual, which is currently being updated, provides an existing source of information on available areas of expertise. A survey could also be conducted to identify the specific topics of interest to different agencies and providers, available staff and agency expertise, the willingness of different groups to participate, the best times to conduct sessions, and available resources. The TxDOT Public Transportation Division could take the lead in this effort with assistance from TTA, SWTA, transit agencies and providers, and other groups.

Newsletters—Continuing to include TxDOT developed articles in the TTA newsletters could help enhance ongoing communication. The Public Transportation Division may also wish to consider restarting their previous newsletter or publishing periodic bulletins on important topics and issues. Based on the suggestions made by transit agency representatives, these could provide information on projects and activities of the different systems, TxDOT activities, key legislative and regulatory changes, a calendar of events, and a schedule of upcoming deadlines. These newsletters or bulletins could be done through the joints efforts of the Public Transportation Division, the Districts, TAA, and SWTA. Consideration could also be given to developing news articles on transit projects and issues for publication in other newsletters, papers, and magazines.

Additional Training Sessions—In addition to the peer-to-peer activities described previously, training sessions could also be used to enhance communication among different groups in the state. These sessions could be held in conjunction with regularly scheduled conferences or as special courses. A first step in developing a set of ongoing training courses would be to obtain additional information on the specific issues, needs, and topics to be addressed. Further, these activities could be coordinated with TTA, SWTA, APTA, ACT, and other groups. These groups and TxDOT could coordinate on the developing and hosting of additional training sessions.

Advanced Technologies—More extensive use of advanced technologies could help enhance communication. Technologies and approaches that could be considered include e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, computer links, video conferencing, and other strategies. The availability and use of these technologies is becoming more widespread throughout the state. These techniques can be used to provide instant communication links and can reduce the need for travel, thus saving staff time and resources. The Public

Transportation Division and other groups may wish to explore the development of an electronic bulletin board or other enhanced computer links among transit systems.

For example, TxDOT, transit agencies, MPOs, and other groups could subscribe to one or more of the transportation-related mailing lists available on the Internet. This would allow the exchange of information among all these groups, as well as with other groups around the world. Specific mailing lists exist on transit, bicycles, alternative commute modes, and other subjects. Houston METRO has used the transit mailing list to obtain information from other transit agencies around the country. Another approach would be to use Home Page and a computer server to provide information to the WorldWide Web.

Regular Meetings—The regular joint staff meetings held in Austin—which include the MPO, the District, and other agencies—represents an approach that other areas may wish to duplicate. This approach can be a good way to help ensure that all groups are kept involved and informed on the status of different projects. Regular meetings also provide a good way to identify and address potential problems early before they become major issues.

Special Initiatives—The V-TRIP effort in Austin and the *Team Transit* Program in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area represent two special initiatives that other areas in Texas may wish to consider. Although differing slightly in focus and organizational approach, both programs are intended to enhance transit and TDM strategies through the coordinated efforts of the state DOT, the local transit system, the MPO, local municipalities, and other groups. This same general approach could be used for many projects and purposes within Texas.

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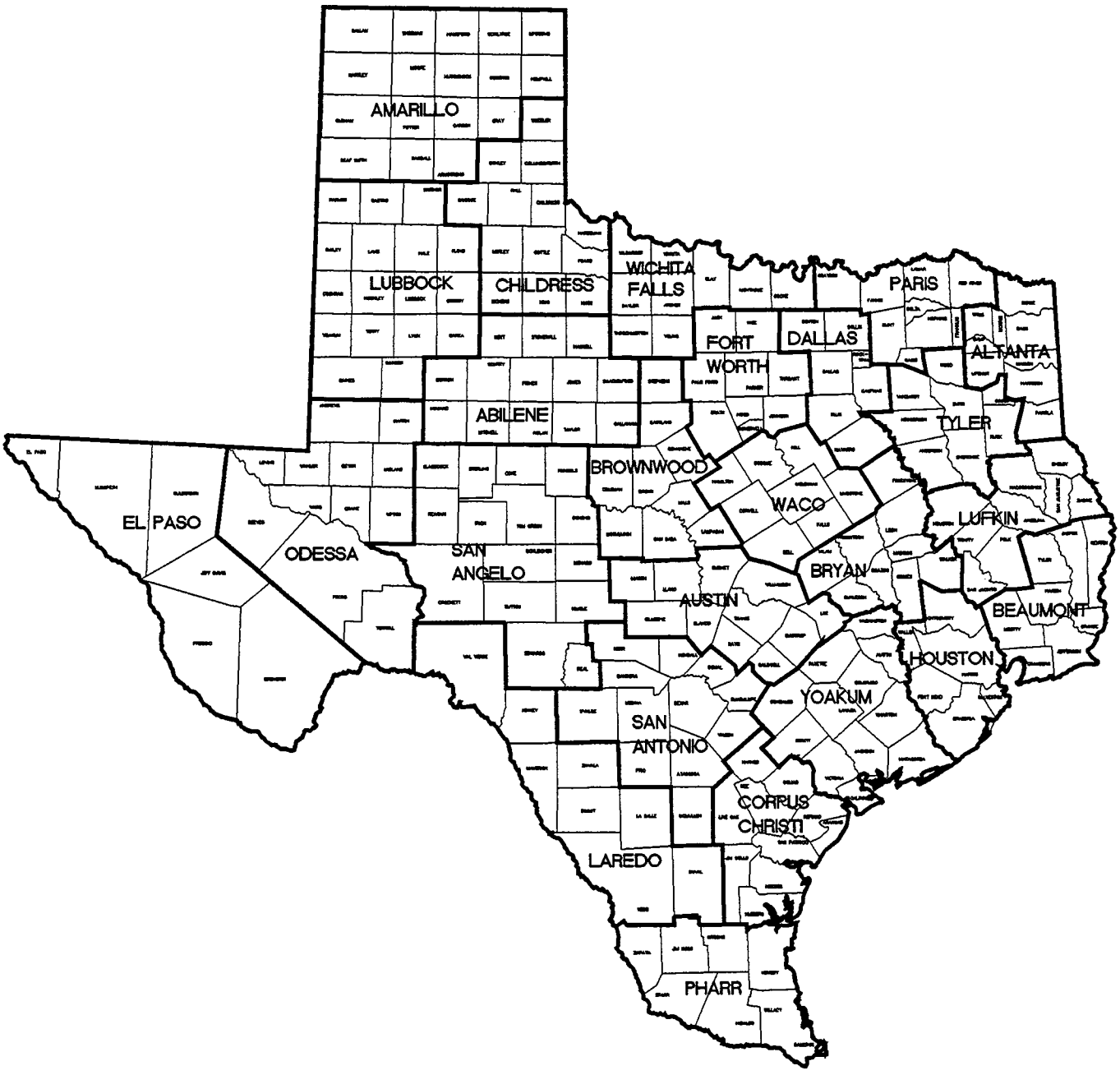
APPENDIX A

LIST AND MAP OF TxDOT DISTRICTS

TxDOT Districts

District	Phone
Abilene	915/676-6801
Amarillo	806/356-3201
Atlanta	903/799-1220
Austin	512/832-7000
Beaumont	409/898-5756
Brownwood	915/464-2591
Bryan	409/778-9714
Childress	817/973-7135
Corpus Christi	512/808-2220
Dallas	214/320-6110
El Paso	915/774-4200
Fort Worth	817/370-6500
Houston	713/802-5001
Laredo	210/712-7405
Lubbock	806/748-4420
Lufkin	409/633-4322
Odessa	915/332-0501
Paris	903/737-9300
Pharr	210/702-6100
San Angelo	915/947-9200
San Antonio	210/615-5801
Tyler	903/510-9220
Waco	817/867-2700
Wichita Falls	817/720-7790
Yoakum	512/293-5284



TxDOT Districts

APPENDIX B

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION ON TRANSIT COMMUNICATION METHODS

Transit System:
Address:
Contact Person:
Telephone:
FAX:

Introduction:
The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), a part of The Texas A&M University System, is conducting a study on communication and coordination between State DOTs and transit agencies. As a part of this project we are conducting a survey of selected state departments of transportation. Your assistance is requested in answering a few questions related to strategies employed by your agency in communicating with the transit agencies under your jurisdiction. Also, any reports or written material you might have available to send would be appreciated.

General Information:
How many Section 18 or small Section 9 transit systems do you deal with?

Communication Techniques and Practices:
What types of communication techniques do you use in dealing with those transit agencies:

Newsletters	Telephone conversations (frequency)
Annual Conferences or meetings	Telephone conferences (frequency)
Bi-annual or quarterly meetings	Other advanced technology
On-site visits (frequency)	Other methods (please identify)

Have communication issues been a problem with your work?

What kind of communication techniques are used with the larger transit systems in the state?

APPENDIX C

STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION INCLUDED IN THE TELEPHONE SURVEY

State Department of Transportation	Contact Person	Telephone Number
Alabama DOT	Jerry Peters	(205) 242-6078
Colorado DOT	Tom Mauser	(303) 757-9768
Florida DOT	Harry Reed	(904) 488-7774
Idaho Public Transportation, DOT	Connie Swearington	(208) 334-8282
Illinois DOT, Division of Public Transp.	David Spacek	(312) 793-2111
Indiana DOT	Larry Merritt	(317) 232-1480
Kansas DOT	James Van Sickle/ Diana Ashwell	(913) 296-0343
Louisiana DOT, Public Transportation & Development	Carol Cranslaw/ Denise Vutera	(504) 379-1436
Maine DOT, Bureau of Transp. Services	Nathan Moulton	(207) 287-2841
Minnesota DOT, Transit Division	Donna Allen	(612) 296-7052
Mississippi DOT, Public Transit Division	C. Jean Bennett	(601) 359-7800
Montana DOT	Janis Winston	(406) 444-4210
Nevada DOT	Sandy McGrew	(702) 687-3466
New Mexico DOT	Brian Ainsworth	(505) 827-0410
New York State DOT	Michael Baher/ Jerry Fiddler	(518) 457-2100 (518) 457-8335
North Carolina DOT	Charles Glover	(919) 733-4713
North Dakota DOT, Public Transit	Bill Weimer	(701) 224-2194
Ohio DOT, Bureau of Transit Assistance	Rosemary Amiet	(614) 466-8955
Oregon DOT, Public Transit Section	Joni Reid	(503) 986-3300
Rhode Island DOT	David Martone	(401) 277-2694
South Carolina Department of Highways & Public Transportation	Karen Ross Grant/ John Rittner	(803) 737-1280
South Dakota DOT	Willis McLaughlin	(605) 773-3137
Texas DOT	Bill Strawn	(512) 416-2823
Washington DOT, Transportation Office	Gordon Kirkemo	(206) 705-7914

APPENDIX D

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF TEXAS TRANSIT PROVIDERS ON COMMUNICATION METHODS

Transit System:

Address:

Contact Person:

Telephone:

FAX:

Introduction:

The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), a part of The Texas A&M University System, is conducting a study examining the communication and coordination between state DOT's, transit agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, local communities, federal agencies, and other groups. As part of this project, we would like your input concerning general communication among agencies in Texas. Please help us by answering the following questions.

Current Practices:

In your opinion, how useful would you rate the following methods of communicating with transit agencies used by TxDOT and others?

Annual conferences:

____ Very useful ____ Somewhat useful

Quarterly or semi-annual meetings:

____ Very useful ____ Somewhat useful

On-site visits:

____ Very useful ____ Somewhat useful

Telephone conversations:

____ Very useful ____ Somewhat useful

Other Methods:

Are there other communication techniques and methods you would like to see used more in Texas?

____ Newsletter

____ Telephone Conferences

____ Training Courses

____ Peer-to-Peer Meetings

____ Other Advanced Technology:_____

____ Other:_____

Local Community/Inter-agency Communication:

Is there a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or Council of Governments (COG) in your area?

____ Yes ____ No

Are you or other transit agencies and operators involved in the activities of the MPO?

____ Yes ____ No

____ Serve on Policy Board

____ Serve on technical or advisory committees

____ Attend meetings

____ Provided with information

____ Other

What methods do you use to communicate with the local MPO, the community, and other transit providers in your area?

____ Local Meetings

____ Newsletters

____ Telephone Conferences

____ Other _____

Are there other communication methods that you would like to see used more in your area?

APPENDIX E

TEXAS TRANSIT AGENCIES INCLUDED IN THE TELEPHONE SURVEY

Transit Agency	Contact Person	Address	Telephone
City of Abilene - City Link	Martha Castillo General Manager	1189 South 2nd St. Abilene, TX 79602	(915) 676-6403
Alamo Area Council of Governments	Barbara Hughes Coordinator	118 Broadway, Suite 400 San Antonio, TX 78205	(210) 225-5201
Ark-Tex Council of Governments	Beverly Pearson Director of Regional Services	P.O. Box 5307 Texarkana, TX 75505-5307	(903) 832-8636
Aspermont Small Business Development Center, Inc.	Danna Myers Transportation Director	P.O. Box 188 Aspermont, TX 79502	(817) 989-3538
City of Beaumont	Albert Eby Assistant Manager	500 Milam Beaumont, TX 77701	(409) 835-7895
City of Brownsville	Terry LeBar General Manager	700 South Iowa Brownsville, TX 78520	(210) 541-4881
Bee Community Action Agency	Paul Sullivan Executive Director	P.O. Box 1540 Beeville, TX 78104-1540	(512) 358-5530
Brazos Transit System	Gayle Todd Assoc. Admin. for Planning & Budget	504 E. 27th Street Bryan, TX 77803	(409) 779-7443
Capital Area Rural Transportation System	Dave Marsh Executive Director	5111 E. 1st Street Austin, TX 78702	(512) 478-7433
Caprock Community Action Association, Inc.	Tammy Flores Admin. Asst. for Transportation	224 S. Berkshire Crosbyton, TX 79322	(806) 675-7307
CARR	Will Evrard Transportation Department	P.O. Box 820 Coleman, TX 76834	(800) 710-2277
City of Cleburne	Ron Parnell Community Services Director	302 West Henderson Cleburne, TX 76033	(817) 641-3321
Collin County Committee on Aging	Joseph Jones Transportation Director	P.O. Box 396 McKinney, TX 75069	(214) 542-0106
Colorado Valley Transit, Inc.	Claudia Wickes Assistant Director	109 Shult Dr., Suite #203 Columbus, TX 78934	(409) 732-6281
Community Action Council of South Texas	Eli Ramirez Transportation Director	P.O. Box 98 Rio Grande City, TX 78582	(210) 487-2585
Community Council of Southeast Texas, Inc.	Sarah Cooke Transportation Director	713 E. Main Street Uvalde, TX 78802	(210) 278-6268

Transit Agency	Contact Person	Address	Telephone
Community Services, Inc.	Rodney Coppock Transportation Director	P.O. Box 612 Corsicana, TX 75151	(903) 872-2405
Concho Valley Council of Governments	Gordon Nelson Transportation Director	5002 Knickerbocker Rd. San Angelo, TX 76904	(915) 944-9666
City of Eagle Pass	Nancy Sanchez Administrative Secretary, Transportation	P.O. Box 4019 Eagle Pass, TX 78853	(210) 773-1111
East Texas Council of Governments	Roxanne Pitts Transportation Director	3800 Stone Road Kilgore, TX 75662	(903) 984-8641
Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission	Patrick Kennedy Executive Director	P.O. Box 2028 Victoria, TX 77902	(512) 578-1587
Gulf Coast Center	Paulette Shelton Transportation Director	P.O. Box 2490 Galveston, TX 77553	(409) 763-2373
Heart of Texas Council of Governments	Tim Hardy Transportation Coordinator	300 Franklin Avenue Waco, TX 76701	(817) 756-7822
Hill Country Community Action Association, Inc.	Carole Warlick Transportation Director	P.O. Box 846 San Saba, TX 76877	(915) 372-5167
Hunt County Committee on Aging, Inc.	Sally Chavarria Transportation	3720 O'Neal Greenville, TX 75401	(903) 454-1444
Kaufman County	Doris Jenkins Transportation Director	P.O. Box 836 Terrell, TX 75160	(214) 563-5875
Kleburg County Human Services	Eli Esparza Transportation	720 E.Lee Kingsville, TX 78363	(512) 595-8576
Laredo-Webb County Community Action Agency	Jose M. Gamez Transportation Coordinator	600 S. Sandman Laredo, TX 78044	(210) 722-6100
Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council	Richard Hinojosa Dir. of Regional Planning and Services Development	4900 N. 23rd St. McAllen, TX 78504	(210) 682-3481
Palo Pinto County Transportation Council, Inc.	Rita Imboden Director	P.O. Drawer 1348 Mineral Wells, TX 76067	(817) 328-1391
Panhandle Community Services	Robert Wharton Transportation Director	P.O. Box 32150 Amarillo, TX 79120-2140	(806) 372-2531
Parker County Transportation Service, Inc.	Karl Cary Coordinator	P.O. Box 1236 Weatherford, TX 76086	(817) 599-8671

Transit Agency	Contact Person	Address	Telephone
People for Progress, Inc.	Leroy Davis Director of Transportation	301 West Arkansas St. Sweetwater, TX 79556	(915) 235-1748
Rolling Plains Management Corporation	Jerry McMillan or Charlie McDaniel	P.O. Box 490 Crowell, TX 79227	(817) 684-1571
Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc.	Gloria Ramos Executive Director	1300 Wyoming Street Alice, TX 78332	(512) 668-3158
San Patricio Aransas Rural Transit System	Irene Quilimaco Program Coordinator	512 E. Sinton St. Sinton, TX 78387	(800) 242-0116
Services Program for Aging Needs in Denton County	Al Murdock Executive Director	1800 Malone Denton, TX 76201	(817) 382-1900
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission	Bob Dickenson Director of Air Quality and Transportation	3501 Turtle Creek Drive Port Arthur, TX 77642	(409) 724-1911
South Plains Community Action Association, Inc.	Peter Canga Transportation Manager	P. O. Box 610 Levelland, TX 79336	(806) 894-6104
Texoma Area Paratransit System, Inc.	Ven Hammonds Executive Director	P.O. Box 1378 Sherman, TX 75091-1378	(903) 893-4601
The Transit System, Inc.	Barbara Perry General Manager	P.O. Box 332 Glen Rose, TX 76043	(817) 897-2964
Town of South Padre Island	Lamberto (Bobby) Balli Transportation Director	P.O. Box 3410 South Padre Island, TX 78597	(210) 761-1025
City of Waco	Kirk A. Scott General Manager	421 Columbus Avenue Waco, TX 76701	(817) 753-0113
West Texas Opportunities, Inc.	Janet Everheart Executive Director	P.O. Box 1308 Lamesa, TX 79331	(806) 872-8354