

# EasTexConnects

COORDINATED CUSTOMER SERVICE AND REGIONAL TRANSFER PLAN

JULY 2012



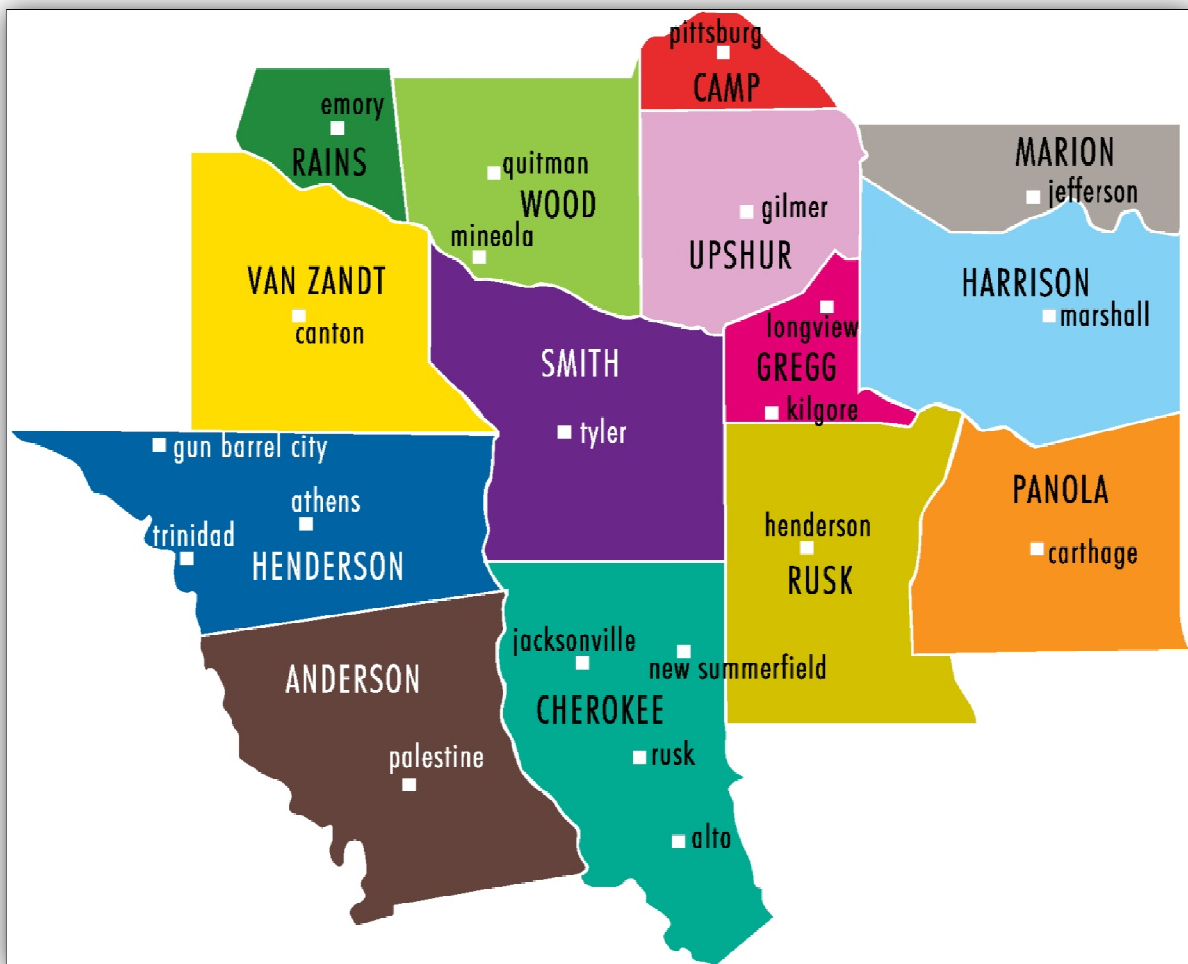
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## 1. SERVICE AREA AND SYSTEM DESCRIPTIONS

Ten thousand square miles of rolling hills, piney woodlands and large freshwater lakes comprise the landscape of rural East Texas. This sparsely populated region is divided into 14 counties: Anderson, Camp, Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Marion, Panola, Rains, Rusk, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood.

Exhibit 1.1 East Texas Region



Though each community has its own unique characteristics and needs, they all share a common desire for efficient, accessible transit region-wide. The current systems meet the needs of the public; however, further coordination and integration of transfer locations, fare media, and public education outreach is needed to move the systems forward.

### Transportation in East Texas

East Texas is served by a variety of public, private, and nonprofit transportation providers. Two of the largest urbanized areas, Longview and Tyler, have fixed-route systems, while GoBus provides demand-response and deviated fixed-route service to the rural areas in the region. Other transportation services include Greyhound, Amtrak, regional airports, private taxis and shuttles, as well as a number of other medical/social service transportation providers.



Longview Transit provides traditional fixed-route service within the City of Longview via six routes operating between 6:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. on weekdays and 7:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. on Saturday. Fixed-route service is supplemented by an eligibility-based Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service that operates between 6:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. on weekdays and 7:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. on Saturday. The paratransit service area is defined as an area within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of the fixed-route service, or up to another  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to the nearest landmark. Operation of Longview Transit is currently contracted to McDonald Transit Associates.



City-operated Tyler Transit provides traditional fixed-route service within the city of Tyler via four routes operating between 6:00 a.m. and 8:15 p.m. on weekdays and 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturday.



Fixed-route service is supplemented by the eligibility-based ADA complementary paratransit service that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The paratransit service area is defined as within the city limits of Tyler. Operation of the Tyler paratransit service is currently contracted to NDMJ, Ltd.



The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG), serving as the East Texas Rural Transit District, operates GoBus demand-response service within each county of the fourteen-county region. Service within each county generally operates Monday through Friday between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., though some counties only have local service on certain weekdays. There is no weekend



service. Scheduled trips from outlying counties to the cities of Longview, Marshall, and Tyler operate on designated days, usually arriving in the destination city by 10:00 a.m. and departing around 2:00 p.m. 24-hour advance notice is required for trip reservations, which can be made up to 2 weeks in advance.

GoBus also provides deviated fixed-route service in the City of Marshall. The Marshall service has three routes, each of which can “flex” up to ¾ of a mile off its designated route upon request.



#### NDMJ, Ltd.

In addition to operating the City of Tyler’s paratransit service, NDMJ, Ltd. provides special purpose supplemental transportation which serves Smith County (outside of Tyler city limits). It supplements regular GoBus and Tyler paratransit services and operates on evenings, holidays, and weekends, utilizing a three-year grant through JARC/New Freedom.



Amtrak stops within East Texas include Texarkana, Arkansas/Texas, Marshall, Longview, and Mineola.

All of East Texas is served by Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" route, which connects Chicago and Los Angeles via St. Louis, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, El Paso, Tucson, and Phoenix. Amtrak provides daily service between Chicago and San Antonio with tri-weekly connections between San Antonio and Los Angeles. The Longview rail passenger station is a junction for Amtrak's dedicated Thruway Motorcoach services which connect all “Texas Eagle” trains to Shreveport or Nacogdoches, Houston, and Galveston (Lone Star Coaches). Amtrak's Shreveport Thruway is a truly intermodal connection as it operates to/from the rail station in Longview and Shreveport's Regional Airport in Louisiana.



#### KERRVILLE BUS COMPANY *“friendly service since 1929”*

Greyhound and Kerrville Bus Company serve the Cities of Carthage, Henderson, Jacksonville, Kilgore, Longview, Marshall, and Tyler. Service is also provided to Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston, as well as smaller cities along key transportation corridors.

#### Other Providers

Taxis serve as an efficient transportation solution. Taxis in East Texas also frequently provide door-to-door service in those instances where public transit might not adequately fulfill specific mobility needs, such as medical trips. Currently, taxi service is well-dispersed throughout the

region with London Cab in Longview, Tyler Taxi in Tyler, Camp County Taxi in Pittsburg, and Marshall Cab in Marshall, to name a few.

### Exhibit 1.2 Summary of Public Transit Service

County	Services and Days of Operation
<b>Anderson</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Elkhart to Palestine (Monday and Wednesday), Neches to Palestine (Tuesday), Tennessee Colony to Palestine (Thursday), within Palestine (Monday-Friday); <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Tuesday (from county); Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (from Frankston)
<b>Camp</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday
<b>Cherokee</b>	<b>Greyhound:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Tuesday
<b>Gregg</b>	<b>Longview Transit:</b> Fixed-route and paratransit services within Longview Monday through Saturday <b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday through Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Connector Service between Kilgore and Longview (Ranger Ride):</i> Monday through Friday <b>Greyhound:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>Amtrak:</b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio; service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles
<b>Harrison</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Flex route, fixed-route service within Marshall Monday through Friday; <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday through Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday <b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>Amtrak:</b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio; service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles
<b>Henderson</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> within Athens (Monday through Friday), within Gun Barrel and Mabank (Thursday); <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Tuesday
<b>Marion</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Tuesday; <i>Service to Marshall:</i> Monday through Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday
<b>Panola</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Marshall:</i> Tuesday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday <b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to various locations throughout the country
<b>Rains</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Mineola:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday
<b>Rusk</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> within Henderson (Monday, Wednesday and Friday); <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday <b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to various locations
<b>Smith</b>	<b>Tyler Transit:</b> Fixed-route and paratransit services Monday through Saturday <b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday through Friday <b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to various locations
<b>Upshur</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday; <i>Service to Longview:</i> Tuesday
<b>Van Zandt</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday
<b>Wood</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> <i>Service within the county:</i> Monday, Wednesday, Friday; <i>Service to Tyler:</i> Thursday <b>Amtrak:</b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio; service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles

## 2. FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE COORDINATION

### Introduction

Currently the level of regularly scheduled transit services in East Texas varies greatly from county to county. Additionally, portions of certain counties receive significantly more service than others due to the presence of dedicated transit systems in the Cities of Marshall, Longview and Tyler. What has evolved is a series of transit services that overlap greatly within the more urbanized areas of a county while still only offering peripheral service to the more rural areas. While this service provides great options to some, it also creates inefficiencies within those same service corridors and causes operators to detract revenue from each other resulting in a low fare recovery per passenger and increased expenses for the GoBus system. By coordinating these services through the use of formal transfer points and shared fare media, there is great potential for service improvement, redirection of coverage and increased fare recovery by the individual systems.

### Develop Regional Transfer Locations for Adoption by Local and Regional Agencies to Pursue Funding for Stop Improvement(s)

In 2008, the Texas Transit Institute conducted a study to review the transit needs in the East Texas region. As a part of that study, a list of transfer locations (Appendix A) to connect the systems was developed. Many of these transfer locations remain undeveloped and without the standard transit amenities (shelters, benches, and trash receptacles). While these amenities are preferred by transit patrons, they are not required to begin the process of developing a coordinated transfer network.

An analysis was conducted of the previously identified transfer locations examining the condition of the proposed location, access to current transit service, volume of transit service at the current location, and level of improvement required. Priority was given to proposed locations that served multiple transit systems or routes within a service area, as well as, the condition of the proposed location and the number of basic improvements (access, ADA, etc.) needed enhance the location. From this analysis, three tiers were created (Exhibit 2.1).

Exhibit 2.1 Transfer Locations by Tier

County	Location	Ranking
Gregg	Longview Amtrak	1
Gregg	Longview Magrill Transfer Center	1
Harrison	Marshall- Amtrak	1
Harrison	Marshall- Greyhound	1
Smith	Tyler- Greyhound	1
Cherokee	Greyhound Station	2
Gregg	Kilgore	2
Panola	Carthage Greyhound	2
Rusk	Kerrville Station	2
Wood	Mineola Amtrak	2
Anderson	Palestine	3
Camp	Pittsburg	3
Gregg	Gladewater	3
Harrison	Hallsville	3
Henderson	Intersection of US 175 and SH 19	3
Marion	Intersection of US 59 and SH 49	3
Rains	Intersection of US 69 and SH 19	3
Upshur	Intersection of US 271 and SH 155	3
Van Zandt	Intersection of SH 19 and SH 64	3

**Tier 1** transfer locations should be considered the highest priority for funding. These stops all serve multiple services, including local, regional, and long-distance travel. Many of them are in close proximity to regional services such as dialysis and adult day care allowing for additional transfer possibilities for the paratransit services within the area. While some of the locations listed in Tier 1 do not include abundant parking, the emphasis was on multi-system travel and transferability. While some may be discouraged from travel due to the lack of parking, the transit agencies should view this as a great opportunity to encourage use of the local transit service to access the long-distance providers.

**Tier 2** transfer locations largely focus on connections between regional and long-distance providers. The number of daily trips is significantly reduced from Tier 1 locations and the conditions of the overall transfer locations require more improvement. Tier 2 locations are recommended for funding after the completion of the Tier 1 improvements to assign limited transit enhancement funds to the greatest number of passengers. However, due to the competitive nature of the funding, it is recommended that a comprehensive list of

improvements be prepared for these locations so that should funding become available that better suits a Tier 2 improvement, the funding can be pursued.

**Tier 3** locations are currently served by only one provider. The locations identified offer centralized access to the jurisdictions allowing fairly easy access within the region. These locations generally require more improvements and several of them have ADA access constraints that may require significant capital contributions to remedy. As the communities further develop, the service provider may decide to move the transfer location to better developed parcels to reduce the capital contribution required for improvement.

Identifying transfer locations and ranking them is only half of the process required to begin a capital improvement program to implement the location improvements. Federal funding programs require capital improvements be included in local and regional transportation planning documents to be eligible for funding. By designating the locations into applicable planning documents, grant funding can be pursued from a variety of transit and non-transit community based planning grants to improve the transfer locations. Funds such as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA) specifically fund these types of improvements.

The FTA defines a transit enhancement as, “projects or project elements that are designed to enhance mass transportation service or use and are physically or functionally related to transit facilities.” The following activities are the transit projects and project elements that qualify as transit enhancements. All must be related to or serve mass transit.



- Historic preservation, rehabilitation, and operation of historic mass transportation buildings, structures, and facilities (including historic bus and railroad facilities);
- Bus shelters;
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification, including tables, benches, trash receptacles, and street lights;
- Public art;
- Pedestrian access and walkways;
- Bicycle access, including bicycle storage facilities and installing equipment for transporting bicycles on mass transportation vehicles;
- Transit connections to parks within the recipient's transit service area;
- Signage; and
- Enhanced access for persons with disabilities to mass transportation.

*Recommendations:*

1. Adoption by the counties and/or individual transit operators acknowledging the list of Transfer Locations included as Appendix A and incorporation into the applicable General Plans and Regional Transit/Transportation Plans in the priority order.
2. Convene a task force of local transit officials, health and human services agencies, and community planners to develop an inventory of potential amenities specific to each location. Not only will this aid in the pursuit of funding, but this collaborative development can help foster grassroots support for the transit services themselves, which is an integral part of the environmental justice process.
3. Re-route local services in the Cities of Marshall, Longview, and Tyler to ensure that the local fixed-route network utilizes the transfer locations included in this report as Appendix A. Including the health and human services agencies into this discussion can also assist in the coordination and transfer of their client trips to public trips both within the local service areas and for regional and long-distance travel.

**Coordinate Local and Regional Services and Implement a Transfer Policy to Redirect Services**

The current network of transit services in the East Texas region is fragmented and while passengers are able to access many of the destinations they desire, the process can be confusing and the services themselves are redundant in some areas. The result is a regional network wherein three cities have an overconcentration of service while the remaining rural community relies of a spoke system to access these larger areas. By re-evaluating the existing services and looking towards a hub and spoke style regional network, service efficiencies will result and existing resources can be reinvested into the feeder services.

The San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD) in Stockton, California provides an excellent example of how the existing services can be re-worked and the changes implemented to the benefit of both the regional operator and the local transit agency.

SJRTD is the regional provider in San Joaquin County, just east of San Francisco in Northern California. The County has a diverse population offering cities with higher density populations married with a largely agricultural rural community surrounding the urban cores. Originally the service provided to the rural areas was predominantly dial-a-ride services with limited interregional fixed-route service. Often these services would acquire passengers from within the small transit systems and provide the service. While the passenger received their ride, the smaller agencies struggled to meet performance and financial targets on their routes. A re-working of the County service was undertaken and the “Hopper” system was born. The “Hopper” services provide demand-response, reservations-based services to County residents wishing to access the cities within the County. In the small cities the Hopper functions as an origin-to-destination service, providing direct access to a variety of locations. In the larger jurisdictions, the Hopper serves as a “feeder” service connecting the County passengers to the closest available transfer point for the local service. In those cities, the Hopper does not take the passenger to the final destination but rather coordinates its service to meet regularly scheduled fixed-route service and transfers to either fixed-route or the local paratransit service. This model has allowed the passengers to access their destinations but ensures that the local system retains the ridership it has built on key corridors. The result has been increased ridership on all systems and better fare retention by local entities.



#### *Recommendations:*

1. Re-evaluate the service provided by GoBus to areas served by Marshall, Longview, and Tyler Transit and consider eliminating service by GoBus to specific destinations within those service areas and instead transfer passengers onto the local systems at the adopted transfer points. This would allow GoBus system to focus more of their resources within the County, offering linkage to the cities while allowing the existing systems to increase ridership and service efficiency. Through a coordinated system, existing GoBus passengers will retain access to their final destinations and additional capacity will be added to the system to allow expanded use of the services by those who need it.
2. Re-route local services in the Cities of Marshall, Longview, and Tyler to ensure that the local fixed-route network utilizes the transfer points included in this report as Appendix A. Examine the potential to build in layover and recovery time at those locations to allow for any delays when connecting with the regional GoBus service as well as to allow time for the boarding of transfers.
3. Implement a last bus holds policy for the GoBus regional system when making the final departure for the day. Create a call sheet for the local operators to



contact GoBus with the on-time schedule for the last connection to ensure that the regional bus does not depart prior to any delayed fixed-route service.

4. Develop an outreach plan to educate passengers on the potential changes to the local and regional transit network. Through clear, specific outreach targeted to direct users, there is great opportunity to promote the benefits passengers are likely to see. In an era of dwindling resources, the redirection of core services could result in service expansion while holding the bottom-line flat. This is truly a win-win for both the agencies and the transit dependent population.

To facilitate transferring between the systems, develop a regional transfer policy that allows for fare reconciliation among operators and also clearly identifies how to transfer between systems. A coordinated transfer policy does not have to be complicated but should clearly identify how a passenger utilizes multiple systems and what data is recorded. When instituting a transfer network that requires transfers between regional and local systems, the key is to ensure the passenger does not feel burdened by the transfer.

While the transfer policy is primarily aimed at connecting the local operators to the regional GoBus service, transfers from Amtrak to the local service in Longview and Marshall should also be pursued. For example, the Amtrak Capital Corridor service currently offers one-directional transfers to local transit agencies in Northern California. Prior to disembarking, passengers are able to request a free transfer to one of the local transit systems. The conductor then issues a transfer pass to the patron who is free to use the transfer on the local system once the train arrives at the destination. The transfer is dropped into the farebox and the local agency submits an invoice to Amtrak monthly for the full cost the fare.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Develop a transfer fare and policy for transferring between services. Longview Transit and Tyler Transit already offer free transfers on the local fixed-route systems.

GoBus to Local: When transferring from GoBus from a local transit system, passengers should request a free transfer from GoBus. The regional fare is significantly higher than the local system and it is recommended that the passenger not pay full fare for both rides. The local operators shall note all boardings utilizing GoBus transfers and shall bill GoBus monthly for all rides. It is recommended that each transfer be valued at ½ of the local fixed-route fare. While discounted to the local agency, the agency benefits from increased ridership along existing routes. Go Bus will benefit from reduced trip lengths and times, and will still retain a healthy percentage of the regional fare.



- Local service to GoBus: To facilitate transfers between the local operators back onto GoBus, passengers on the local system shall request a free transfer to the regional GoBus system. Upon boarding GoBus, the transfer shall be presented and the GoBus fare reduced by \$1.00.
2. Publish the transfer information between each agency on all fare media, in transit system brochures, and on all system websites. The information would include how to request transfers, questions about how the transfers work, and links to regional partner agency websites.
  3. The public transit operators shall develop transfer agreements setting forth specific requirements on how often to report ridership and transfers (recommended interval is monthly), how invoicing shall occur, coordinated planning efforts, and system outreach. Staff will clearly document the value of all transfers among each operator.
  4. Outreach to Amtrak about developing a transfer policy between the Amtrak services in the corridor and the local transit providers.

### Develop a Regional Fare System Setting Standardized Fares for Local and Regional Services

One of the largest challenges for a passenger accessing multiple transit providers is knowing what the applicable fare will be. Passengers often worry about becoming stranded without enough money to get home and, for passengers on a fixed income, their resources are often limited. Creating a standardized fare structure and offering combined media accepted by all public operators can take the worry out of the travel.

Coordinating fare media can be as simple or complex as you want it to be. There are nearly as many variations of media possible as there are ideas on how to deliver the services, but the key to successfully implementing any fare program modifications is a unified marketing and outreach plan across all agencies utilizing the fare media. With the right outreach plan, the door to creativity opens. Presented below are just a few of the multiple options available.

#### *Option 1: A Local Monthly Pass with a 10-Ride Add On*

This option entails the use of a local monthly pass as the base fare and simply adds the regional fare to the pass through the use of “punches”. The transit patron pays for their normal monthly pass (full fare or discount) and then pre-pays for 10 regional trips. The pass shown could be utilized as a Longview Transit monthly pass (with their applicable graphics and a new regional “brand” on the face). Through labeling (local, regional) and color coding the



passes notify the driver of the value. The pass is activated by the local agency by placing a sticker on the card to show that payment has been received. Generally, the number of punches included is low and they expire at the end of the month making the card unable to be reloaded.

### *Option 2: A Reloadable Local Monthly Pass with a Multi-Ride Punch Card*



Option 2 is similar to Option 1 in that there is still a combined local pass with a regional punch card system. Both are validated by the placement of a monthly sticker. The difference with Option 2, is that due to the number of pre-paid rides, they are often discounted and do not expire in the month in which they are sold. The card continues to be valid until the punches are completed. The passenger has the ability to 1) just pay for the punches and never activate a local pass; 2) activate a local pass and continue to reload the

monthly pass until all punches are used and the monthly sticker expires or; 3) buy the monthly local pass and use it until it expires, at that time the pass becomes only valid on the regional system until the punches are all used. Passes can be developed for full and discounted fares by changing the branding and/or colors used. The same passes can be used among multiple agencies with the differentiation occurring by the sticker placed.

### *Option 3: Implement Electronic Fareboxes on all Transit Vehicles to Issue Standardized Fare Media, Smart Cards, and Transfers*

The use of technology in transit has made the ability to coordinate fares easier than ever before. Electronic fareboxes have revolutionized the way transit agencies approach their fare



media and allow for phased implementation and rollout of fare changes. Fareboxes, such as the GFI Odessey allow passengers to pay with cash, daily passes, and monthly passes; they also can accept and issue daily passes and transfers directly to passengers. Each farebox counts the fares received and notifies both the passenger and the driver if the correct fare has been paid. The fareboxes also come with a “smart card” feature, allowing for a refillable electronic pass to be issued to the passenger for use on multiple systems. The card is loaded with the different system fares selected and tracks the usage of the card by route and fare type. All data is downloaded daily when the farebox vault is removed and transmitted back to a central server. Through the robust data collection, the transit agencies are then able to determine how riders are interfacing with the system and what the most common transfers and transfer points are.

The actual fare media when utilizing this type of farebox is standardized but the logos and graphics can be customized to each transit agency or to the local coordinated fare structure and branding. The technology can identify if a card was used on a different system and can automatically reduce the fare required or allow for a free boarding.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Option 3 is recommended for implementation. By utilizing smart card technology, the transition to coordinated transfers, combined fares, and seamless travel is simplified, not only for the agencies but also most importantly for the passengers. Fare retention is increased and passengers are not required to obtain multiple fare instruments when making transfer trips. The agencies also benefit from a wealth of data collected and the system can generate most of the reporting data to coordinate with the fare reconciliation recommended in the transfer policy.
2. Work to implement a coordinated fare schedule throughout the region. Currently, local fares vary from operator to operator within the individual service areas. The difference between the fares is currently minimal, thus it is recommended that the fares be set at parity to allow for continuity when passengers are traveling throughout the region. In addition, as part of the transfer policy and funding agreement, the transfer coordination policy will be simplified through the development of one schedule of local and regional fares.

#### **Implement a Multi-Faceted Outreach Program**

The scope of this educational outreach program is to highlight the coordination of transportation services region-wide, and to resolve any “fears” riders may have about a new fare media and transfer requirements. Since the transfer agreement is designed to complement the agencies, the outreach needs to be coordinated as well. One single, unified message to the public will clearly illustrate that the agencies are working collaboratively and that that same coordination will occur at the trip level. An appropriate approach would be a cross-promotional effort between rural GoBus services and urban transit providers. GoBus and Longview Transit/Tyler Transit could arrange advertising buy-ins to promote “town to city” services.

*Recommendations:*

1. All systems should be encouraged to tap into rural markets through community weekly newspapers. In many rural communities, the weekly paper is the sole source of news outside of local gathering spots (i.e., barbershops and restaurants). The newspaper is the connection to the changes and provides a voice to the new program.
2. Health and human services agencies provide a great resource to local and regional transit providers. Coordination with agencies allows for additional hands-on training for passengers who are most likely to be concerned with the extra transitions required when using a coordinated system. These agencies know their clients and are willing partners to educate the public about the services available. Moreover, these agencies often benefit from coordinated transfer systems as they are able to add capacity to their existing travel programs for those who seek access to medical appointments, educational resources, and employment. Coordinated smart cards allow for limited-ride cards to be offered to the passengers, offering a benefit to the operators.
3. This message could also effectively be told through radio. Place simple, effective advertisements on country music stations to reach this rural demographic. Advertisements should communicate connectivity between GoBus and urban transit services.
4. Direct mailers are an opportunity to place information into the hands of thousands of potential riders. Mailing lists targeting low-income households, multi-family dwellings, and specific geographic locations can maximize the value of direct mail. Consider development of limited punch passes to distribute during the outreach and education period to entice passengers to try the new system.
5. Provide detailed handouts responding to Frequently Asked Questions, providing contact names and phone numbers and the addresses of outlets where the fare media may be purchased.
6. Where fare vendors are utilized, consider hosting a public workshop so that patrons can ask questions and get familiar with the fare media and new transfer processes. Informed riders can act as additional customer service ambassadors assisting in easing the transition for the passenger and reducing the impact to the transit agency customer service representatives.

**Adopt a Formal Universal Age for Seniors**

To assist in the implementation of fare media available for use on all three public transit systems, it is important that they adopt criteria to access the different discounted fares. In accordance with FTA requirements for half fare, discounted fares must be made available to the elderly, disabled, and Medicare cardholders. While the Medicare card and disabled categories are pre-defined for the transit agencies, the age at which an agency defines a senior is flexible.

*Recommendations:*

1. Both Longview Transit and GoBus have adopted senior ages of 60. The recommendation is that Tyler Transit adopt the same threshold, which will reduce the need for passengers to age verify with all systems for reduced fare.
2. Develop a regional senior identification card to be issued by all three agencies. This will lower administrative time in processing the eligibility of the same passenger on multiple systems and provide assurance to the passenger that they qualify on all potential systems they may be choosing to access.

### 3. PARATRANSIT COORDINATION

#### **Coordinate Local and Regional Services and Implement a Transfer Policy to Redirect Services**

Paratransit services by their very nature are subject to delays. Add in multiple operators and extensive coverage area, ensuring that passengers make their connections can become complicated. Fortunately, a transfer policy for paratransit services can be simple and straightforward to implement, allowing for reduced costs and positive customer feedback.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Re-evaluate the service provided by GoBus to areas served by Marshall, Longview, and Tyler Transit and consider eliminating service by GoBus to specific destinations within those service areas and instead transfer passengers onto the local paratransit systems at the adopted transfer points. This would allow GoBus system to focus more of their resources within the County, offering linkage to the cities while allowing the existing systems to increase ridership and service efficiency.
2. Implement a regional paratransit policy requiring all public transit operators to provide reciprocal agencies a copy of their daily manifest for paratransit trips to ensure coordination of transfers between systems. As noted on the Daily Schedule of Transit included in Section 1, not all systems interface every day. By creating local schedules for dispatch and scheduling staff, it would be simple to add a checklist to coordinate other agency trips on those days the regional services are expected to meet up with local service.
3. Implement a regional paratransit policy requiring all transfers of paratransit passengers to be “hand-to-hand” transfers. A common fear and unfortunate occurrence for paratransit riders is that should they be required to transfer, they will be left stranded at the transfer location. Implementing a “hand-to-hand” transfer policy reassures passengers that they will not be left stranded. The process is simple to implement and only requires that when waiting to transfer, the bus which originated the trip will remain until the passenger has been “handed” to the next system and boarded. While some time delay occurs, greater efficiencies still remain by making the transfer. Another benefit of the “hand-to-hand” transfer is that should the second vehicle have an incident requiring it to drop the pickup, the first vehicle can be contacted to complete the trip, working out the details with the other agency off-line after the fact, not affecting the passenger.
4. Consider allowing the other local operators access to each other’s reservations system to schedule through trips. There are two ways to complete this concept.

The first would be to allow each of the local transit operators web access to the reservations system so that when a passenger calls for a ride requiring a transfer, the reservationist can directly book both halves of the trip. Should the agencies not want to share access to the systems, this concept can be completed manually with the reservationist making the first reservation and then calling the other agency and scheduling the second trip for the passenger. In this method the passenger is assured that both of the trips are set to connect and that they will be able to complete their trip.

Exhibit 3.1 Sample Reservation Software

### Implement a Regional ADA Certification Process and Develop a Regional ADA Database

ADA certification processes can be difficult to navigate, even for those who are fairly transit savvy. For passengers with certain disabilities, these processes can be overwhelming and lead them to go without service simply to avoid the process. Creating a region-wide ADA Certification process can be beneficial both to the passenger and to the individual agencies themselves. The passenger saves time and confusion by completing one set of documents and gains the confidence that they will be able to access ADA services anywhere in the region. Agencies save the time certifying the same passenger multiple times, and customer service representatives can redirect their time to answering service-related questions rather than working out reciprocity and visitor status with neighboring agencies.

Creation of a Regional Eligibility Database is a simple and effective tool to integrate the ADA and demand-response services into an easily accessible resource for local and regional operators. Implementing a Regional Eligibility Database (as is in place in numerous portions of



the country, including the San Francisco Bay Area which has an exemplary program) connects the operators to key data required to deliver passenger services securely and on-demand 24 hours a day.

Depending on the data the operators chose to enter into the database the system can:

- Track ADA applications from initial submittal easily tracking the 21-day certification window and highlighting applications which are incomplete and require additional information from the passenger to complete;
- Be an effective tool to monitor communications with passengers during the certification, logging all actions and providing documentation if a challenge arises to the agencies certification process or timeline;
- Update passenger information in real-time, providing needed address changes or medical considerations (temporary changes in certification, requirements to transport oxygen, service animals, etc.);
- Serve as a resource to access ADA certified individuals during an emergency. The data contained in the database can assist emergency responders in identifying the movement of passengers where assistance by the transit agency may be necessary;
- Act as a central repository for regional ADA certifications: passengers can apply to one agency and then, once entered into the system, become available to all regional services for transportation; and
- Auto-generate targeted transit information to ADA passengers as well as notification of system re-certifications when required.

In addition to providing essential ADA coordination, the database also serves as a data collection system offering detailed planning data to operators regarding the use of the system, resources to manage the program, projected ridership, and certification trends; it can also generate data beneficial to reporting for the National Transit Database.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Provide each of the three operators with copies of each other's applications and certification criteria. Convene a working group to evaluate the different applications and identify any significant differences within the forms and processes. Discuss expectations and the level of scrutiny each agency requires for their process.
2. Once the forms have been evaluated, create a single application packet including all agency logos. Be sure to include language on the form allowing the initial agency receiving the form to share the information with other regional operators. A sample application has been included as Appendix B.



3. Develop a single ADA certification card (with all agency logos) to issue to passengers once they have been certified. This card provides assurance to the passenger that they will be able to access all ADA services within the region, and allows bus operators to limit the volume of fare media they must be familiar with. The ADA card will also be able to serve as eligibility for reduced fixed-route fares.
4. Develop the ADA database and select an agency to “host” the database. The concept is for all agencies to access the database through a secure “web portal” with one of the agencies (we would recommend ETCOG) acting as host to ensure that the system is backed up and that all regional data is collected consistently.

## 4. UTILIZING THE REGIONAL ONE-STOP CALL CENTER

### Introduction

The 2011 Regional Transportation Coordination Plan recommends establishing a “one-stop-shop” information source. This “Call Center” would take all transportation-related inquiries and match riders with services relevant to their needs. The implementation of the transfer agreement process, regional fare media, and a new regionally adopted listing of transfer points offers a great jumping off point to begin the on-stop shop program. Specifically, incorporating the one-stop shop into the transfer and coordinated fare media process meets the need identified to assist passengers who while familiar with one transit system have limited knowledge of the rest of the region’s resources and require assistance navigating the schedules and trip planning.

### Branding

Branding is vital to a program’s success. An effective brand can elicit recognition and a call to action. ETCOG should consider following the lead of Tulare County, California, regarding its proposed One-Stop Regional Transportation Call Center. The Tulare County customer service call center, The Green Line (877-40GO-GREEN), has an easy-to-remember name and number (slogan: “Your Bus Info Help Line”). The service provides information about transit services in Tulare and Kings counties, including both local (city) services and regional (county-wide) services.



The brand selected should carry forward to the regional transfer program and the fare media created for use by each of the operators. By creating a distinct look and feel to the program, the fare media and one-stop shop can be cross-promoted to create a more successful and wide-spread outreach program. As noted in the Regional One-Stop Call Center Implementation Plan, the distinct look and feel of the coordinated program will assist in directing passengers to the new central repository and offer consistency throughout the region. As passengers gain recognition of the brand, then the additional transit services merely become extensions of the current system since the schedules, fare media, and customer service contacts are already known and easily accessible.

### Coordinating the Message to the Public

Once the Call Center is established, all marketing materials and partner websites should be updated with the new “brand” information. The Call Center phone number should be incorporated into every point of contact public transit agencies have with the public.

*Recommendations:*

1. Undertake extensive outreach to local social service organizations, senior programs, veterans' programs, schools, governments, and employment assistance organizations to promote the new Call Center. Utilize direct mail (such as an oversized postcard) to communicate the change.
2. Issue one or more media releases in the weeks leading up to the launch of the Call Center.
3. Consider including car cards on buses and coordinating with all regional transit agencies to ensure their brochures, maps, and route schedules include the helpline number.

**Customer Service**

Even before the transfer and fare media program is launched, it is important to offer a standard level of customer service from all public transportation providers. In order to promote true connectivity, it is important that one service does not stand out as significantly worse than the others based on customer experience. A few simple tactics can help alleviate any such perceptions. The regional Call Center would be of great assistance in ensuring that passengers receive a consistent message. As a central repository of regional information, the Call Center is best equipped to expand to meet the needs of travel training and online trip planning. Through one call, passengers would be able to access the regional system and, following the implementation of the fixed-route, fare, and paratransit recommendations above, be able to schedule a through-trip utilizing multiple providers, answer questions on any of the region's services, and dispatch vehicles to ensure coordination and alleviate the fear of leaving anyone behind.

*Recommendations:*

1. Log all calls that come into the Call Center (regional or individual operator call centers). This will help the transit providers track what questions are being asked and if further educational outreach is needed about the services and fares.
2. Logging requests for information can help determine if there is a location or medium that should be included in future brochure distributions or outreach efforts. For example, if a large number of calls are coming from a particular community, the more locations in that community may need to be added to the brochure distribution list.
3. Partner with local health and human services agencies to provide outreach to local dialysis clinics, adult day care clinics, and their clients about the new Call Center and the resources available. Partner with their staff to host mock customer calls with the Call

Center in order to develop a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions available to Customer Service Representatives and identify strategies for dealing with passengers with limited functional capabilities. Engage the agencies to provide the Customer Service Representatives with sensitivity training on the different ways to interact and communicate with persons with limited social and cognitive abilities.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF IDENTIFIED TRANSFER LOCATIONS

County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
<b>Anderson</b>	<b>Palestine:</b> Near the intersection of US 84, US 287 and SH 19 in the Family Dollar parking lot	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Elkhart to Palestine (Monday and Wednesday), Neches to Palestine (Tuesday), Tennessee Colony to Palestine (Thursday), within Palestine (Monday-Friday) Service to Tyler: Tuesday (from county); Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (from Frankston)
<b>Camp</b>	<b>Pittsburg:</b> Near the intersection of US 271 and SH 11 in the McDonald's parking lot	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday
<b>Cherokee</b>	<b>Jacksonville:</b> Greyhound Station at US 175	<b>Greyhound GoBus</b>	<b>Greyhound:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday Service to Tyler: Tuesday
<b>Gregg</b>	<b>Gladewater:</b> Near the intersection of US 80 and US 271 in the Brookshire's parking lot	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday

County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
<b>Gregg</b>	<b>Kilgore:</b> Near the intersection of Business US 259 and SH 42 in the Fred's parking lot (downtown Kilgore)	<b>GoBus</b> <b>Greyhound</b>	<b>Greyhound:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Monday through Friday (Ranger Ride)
<b>Gregg</b>	<b>Longview:</b> Longview Amtrak Station at 905 Pacific	<b>Longview Transit</b> <b>GoBus</b> <b>Amtrak</b>	<b>Longview Transit:</b> Fixed-route and paratransit services within Longview Monday through Saturday <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday <b>Amtrak:</b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio, service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles
<b>Gregg</b>	<b>Longview:</b> Magrill Transit Plaza at 500 N. Green	<b>Longview Transit</b> <b>Greyhound</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b>Greyhound:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>Longview Transit:</b> Fixed-route and paratransit services within Longview Monday through Saturday <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday

County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
Harrison	<b>Hallsville:</b> Near the intersection of US 80 and FM 450 in the Dairy Queen parking lot	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday
Harrison	<b>Marshall:</b> Marshall Amtrak Station at 900 N Washington	<b>GoBus</b> <b>Amtrak</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Flex route, fixed-route service within Marshall Monday through Friday Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday <b>Amtrak:</b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio, service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles
Harrison	<b>Marshall:</b> Marshall Greyhound/Kerrville Station at 201 S Bolivar	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to locations throughout the country <b>GoBus:</b> Flex route, fixed-route service within Marshall Monday through Friday Service within the county: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday
Henderson	<b>Athens:</b> Near the intersection of Business US 175 and Business SH 19	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: within Athens (Monday through Friday), within Gun Barrel and Mabank (Thursday) Service to Tyler: Tuesday

County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
<b>Marion</b>	<b>Jefferson:</b> Jefferson Transportation and Visitor Center at 305 E Austin St	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Tuesday Service to Marshall: Monday through Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday
<b>Panola</b>	<b>Carthage:</b> Carthage Greyhound Station at 400 N Adams	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to various locations throughout the country <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Longview: Tuesday Service to Marshall: Tuesday Service to Tyler: Thursday
<b>Rains</b>	<b>Emory:</b> Near the intersection of US 69 and SH 19	<b>GoBus</b>	<b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Mineola: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday
<b>Rusk</b>	<b>Henderson:</b> Kerrville Station at 1113 N US 79	<b>Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</b> Daily service to various locations <b>GoBus:</b> Service within the county: within Henderson (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) Service to Longview: Tuesday Service to Tyler: Thursday



County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
<b>Panola</b>	<b>Carthage:</b> Carthage Greyhound Station at 400 N Adams	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</u></b> Daily service to various locations throughout the country <b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Longview: Tuesday Service to Marshall: Tuesday Service to Tyler: Thursday
<b>Rains</b>	<b>Emory:</b> Near the intersection of US 69 and SH 19	<b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Mineola: Monday, Wednesday, or Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday
<b>Rusk</b>	<b>Henderson:</b> Kerrville Station at 1113 N US 79	<b>Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</u></b> Daily service to various locations <b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: within Henderson (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) Service to Longview: Tuesday Service to Tyler: Thursday

County	Proposed Transfer Location	Scheduled Service (Provider and Type)	Days of Operation
<b>Smith</b>	<b>Tyler:</b> Tyler Transit Depot at 210 E Oakwood St	<b>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company</b> <b>GoBus</b> <b>Tyler Transit</b>	<b><u>Greyhound/Kerrville Bus Company:</u></b> Daily service to various locations <b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county (including locations in Tyler): Monday through Friday <b><u>Tyler Transit:</u></b> Fixed-route and paratransit services Monday through Saturday
<b>Upshur</b>	<b>Gilmer:</b> Near the intersection of US 271 and N SH 155	<b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday Service to Longview: Tuesday
<b>Van Zandt</b>	<b>Canton:</b> Near the intersection of SH 19 and SH 64	<b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday
<b>Wood</b>	<b>Mineola:</b> Mineola Amtrak Station at 111 E Front St	<b>Amtrak</b> <b>GoBus</b>	<b><u>GoBus:</u></b> Service within the county: Monday, Wednesday, Friday Service to Tyler: Thursday <b><u>Amtrak:</u></b> Daily service between Chicago and San Antonio, service three days a week between Chicago and Los Angeles

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ADA CERTIFICATION FORM



**Paratransit Services**  
(Rider to Complete)

3800 Stone  
Kilgore, TX 75662  
(903) 984-8641

**ADA PARATRANSIT RIDER CERTIFICATION APPLICATION**

The information obtained in this certification process will be used only by the transit agencies in eastern Texas for the provision of transportation services and will not be provided to any other person or agency without prior written approval of the applicant.

☐ **New Application**   or   ☐ **Recertification**

**Please check the transit agency you are applying for (you may select more than one):**

☐ GoBus   ☐ Tyler Transit   ☐ Longview Transit

**APPLICANT INFORMATION (Please print or type)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle Initial

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt # \_\_\_\_\_ Cross St. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address, if different than above

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Male • Female •

Last four digits of your Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide the name and phone number of a LOCAL friend or relative to contact in the event of an emergency:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you use any of the following aids for mobility? (Check all that apply)

- Manual Wheelchair
- Power Scooter
- Crutches
- Oxygen Tank
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Electric Wheelchair
- Cane
- Walker
- Service Animal
- None

**Please Note:** A wheelchair or other mobility device must meet the definition of a "common wheelchair" as specified in the ADA regulations, i.e., "not more than 30" wide and 48" long when measured 2" above the floor, and must weigh less than 600 pounds when occupied".

2. Is your mobility device oversized? • Yes • No

- a. If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Does your mobility device weigh less than 600 pounds when occupied?  
• Yes • No

3. Is your condition temporary? • Yes • No

If yes, expected duration: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

4. Does your condition change from time to time due to medications, medical treatments, other? • Yes • No

If yes, please explain

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Type of disability:**

5. I have a ☐ Visual ☐ Physical ☐ Mental Impairment

6. **What** is your disability and **how** does it make it **impossible** for you to use the fixed route service?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How far can you continuously walk **OR** advance your manual wheelchair without the help of another person? (i.e., number of blocks) \_\_\_\_\_

Could you travel further if you stopped to rest?

- Yes • No • Sometimes

(If No or Sometimes, please explain why)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you ever used any of these transit services? Check all that apply:

- GoBus • Paratransit • Fixed Route • Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many blocks from your residence is the nearest accessible bus stop?

- Less than 1 Block • 2 to 4 Blocks • 4 or more • Don't know

10. Can you independently get on and off a lift-equipped bus?

- Yes • No • Sometimes • Don't know

(If No or Sometimes, please explain why)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Would your ability to use public transit affected by weather or environmental/architectural barriers that block your path of travel? (e.g. temperature extremes, no sidewalks, lack of signal lights at a busy intersection, etc.)

- Yes • No (If Yes, please explain why)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Can you ask for, understand, and follow directions?

- Yes • No • Sometimes

(If No or Sometimes, please explain why)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Can you cross a busy intersection?

- Yes • No • Sometimes

(If No or Sometimes, please explain why)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
14. If you are approved for Paratransit Services will you require a personal care attendant?

- Yes      • No

**Certification of Applicant**

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have given in this application is correct and the application will be returned if it is not complete.

I understand that the results of the review will be based on my ability to use the fixed route system. Verification of my disability by my physician or health care professional, identified below, does not guarantee my eligibility for ADA certification of paratransit service.

**Signature of Applicant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

*If someone other than the applicant completed this application, the following information must be provided.*

Name of person completing the application \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to the applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Road**