

Chapter 9: Continuation Strategies

A key constraint inhibiting the development of coordination projects and systems is continued funding, resources, and leadership. Undoubtedly, in its early stages, the success of a single coordination project may be the result of an individual's vision to realize personal goals and objectives. From there, future projects may grow. Ultimately, this process may produce a coordinated transportation network that binds the region. However, early dependence upon the driving force of one person risks the sustainability of coordination as that person may leave the region, retire, or take another job. In order for a coordination network to develop in Panhandle region, it is a perspective that must be expanded from a personal to an institutional context.

Plan Update / Cycle

It is anticipated that TxDOT will require a full update of the plan every two years. One action plan included in this study is the establishment of a Transportation Coordinator / Mobility Management position. This position would provide support and planning for future coordination efforts; a responsibility that would logically fall under this position would be the update for the Panhandle Transportation Coordination Study.

Barring funding for this position, the RTAG may choose to adopt the "Six Ps" as a framework for addressing coordination planning in the future. This framework was articulated by Michael Norris of the North Central Texas Council of Governments during the Best Practices Roundtable in June 2006. It includes six topics that address the how coordinated transportation is incorporated into each agency's policies and procedures. These topics include:

- Policies: What policies need to be modified to reflect the need for mobility coordination?
- Planning: What planning documents need to reflect a coordinated approach, e.g. the Transportation Improvement Plan, the Long Range Plan, the Texas Workforce Annual Plan, the TPMHMR Local Plan, etc.

Chapter 9: Continuation Strategies

- Partnerships: What partnerships need to be developed to ensure that coordination continues to grow and develop in the Panhandle region?
- Programs: What existing programs need to be modified to reflect a coordinated approach to mobility planning?
- Projects: What coordination projects will enhance mobility in the Panhandle region?
- Performance: How will performance be measured to reflect coordination?

In order to begin this process, an online survey was sent to 32 agencies on October 11, 2006. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding each agency’s: 1) policy toward coordination; 2) planning cycle; 3) existing programs that should be considered as part of a coordinated system; 4) projects that the agency was pursuing that may benefit from a coordinated approach; 5) partnerships that agencies would like to develop; and 6) how project performance is measured by each agency.

The response from the survey was very poor. Of the 32 agencies contacted, seven replied. Of these, only 3 agencies provided any substantive information. These responses are noted below:

Q: What policies does your agency have regarding coordinating with other agencies to provide or obtain transportation services?

Area Agency on Aging	Rules governed by Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Part 1, Chapter 84, Rule 84.3
Amarillo City Transit	<p>There are no other public transportation providers with in the City limits of Amarillo. Most agencies rely on the Transit Department to transport their clients to receive social services. 12,000 prepaid curb-to-curb service tickets (or 40% of the available curb to curb rides) and 30,206 prepaid fixed route tickets were purchased by agencies last year. A few social service agencies will provide taxi vouchers so that a person can obtain immediate medical treatment.</p> <p>The City of Amarillo would gladly coordinate service with other public transportation providers, although there are none at this time. Any policy changes must be approved by the Community Services Division Director, the City Manager and Amarillo City Commission.</p>
Amarillo College	No, we just contact other agencies and services for students who request this assistance. We do not provide this service as a college, but do have many students who need some type of transportation assistance.

Chapter 9: Continuation Strategies

Q: What planning documents does your agency prepare on a regular basis that reflects either your agency’s delivery or purchase of service?

Area Agency on Aging	The next update for our Area Plan is due in May 2007 and is rewritten every three years. The vendor contract is updated every year during the late summer months and takes effect at the beginning of the new fiscal year which is October 1st annually.
Amarillo City Transit	The MPO Annual Report is updated on an annual basis and the next update is January.
Amarillo College	

Q: What partnerships would you like to see developed so that coordination of service improves in the Panhandle?

Area Agency on Aging	I am not real familiar with all the other transportation programs since we only deal with the elderly. I just would like to see coordination where we might be able to utilize some of the other programs that are less expensive and do not have to be medically related so we can stretch our small allocation as far as possible for our clients benefit. I am not sure if this is something that we could work with the taxi services in town or not. This would allow curb to curb service for the elderly to be able to go the grocery store or other shopping and may not be limited to just 8-5. I realize they are not able to handle mobility-impaired clients yet but that may be something to discuss with them for the future. This would also ease the requirement that the client schedules the trip 2 weeks in advance.
Amarillo City Transit	The Panhandle region needs more operating assistance. The region does not have enough resources and has lost significant State Transportation funds. Because of the loss of State funds, the City is considering consolidating the fixed route and curb-to-curb services into a flex/fixed route system. There are no other public transportation providers to partner with.
Amarillo College	We have students attending school who need to use public transportation. Many need the bus or Special Transit Services. We also have students who come to Amarillo College from the surrounding area and they need transit services as well. Currently, we do not have any transportation service to the East Campus. This type of transportation could also be very useful to students needing to attend classes on that campus. We do not have transportation assistance for students in the evening and this is also a need for many students.

Q: Does your agency measure the effectiveness/efficiency of your transportation program? If so, what performance measurements do you use?

Area Agency on Aging	We require our transportation provider to submit monthly reports on each eligible client and how many trips they had for that month and we only reimburse for clients that we have authorized ahead of time. It is tricky to do this, so we estimate the number of trips that the maximum amount of money the provider could receive and divide it by the unit rate then take
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Chapter 9: Continuation Strategies

	<p>that number and divide it by 12 months and that is the average number of trips we would reimburse for in a month. It is flexible due to the fact that we never know when the client will need rides or not, so one month they may fall short of the average number while other months they may exceed the average number of trips. This methodology allows us to ensure that the funding is being spent on actual trips. The provider also has a no-show policy; if they miss 2 or 3 trips in a month then they are put on hold until the next month. The client is also sent letters explaining what could happen if they fail to cancel the trip so they will be warned that they are in jeopardy of losing access to the service for the rest of the month. Another thing we do is have the provider report to us the amount of client contributions received for that month and we purchase units with that money first then use Title III funds to pay the rest. This ensures that the program is as financially efficient as possible. We have to submit performance projections to the State Unit on Aging for transportation so this also help us ensure the effectiveness/efficiency of the program. If we do not meet our projections we are penalized. So we strive to meet these goals.</p>
<p>Amarillo City Transit</p>	<p>The City of Amarillo is a very conservative operation. The City scrutinizes every program during the budgeting process. The City of Amarillo uses Powerplan Budgeting Software.</p>
<p>Amarillo College Disability Services</p>	<p>No response.</p>

At this time, the resources have not been identified and committed to update the Panhandle Transportation Coordination Study. As mentioned, should funding be obtained for a transportation coordination / mobility management position, the update may be the responsibility of that position. Alternatively, some members of the RTAG have indicated a continued interest in maintaining the group. Should the RTAG remain a viable planning committee, future updates may be completed through the collective action of RTAG members.