

Montgomery

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Waller

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Colorado

Wharton

Fort Bend

Matagorda

Brazoria

Galveston

Harris

Walker

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Austin

Colorado

Wharton

Fort Bend

Matagorda

Brazoria

Galveston



Houston-Galveston Area Council

Sub-Regional Transit Service Planning & Coordination

Colorado Valley Transit District

Executive Summary

May 2011



Liberty

Waller

Austin





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Existing Conditions

CVTD currently operates demand response service in all four counties and operates nine deviated fixed routes in Austin, Colorado, and Wharton counties. In addition, CVTD provides scheduled trips to medical facilities and the Katy area.

Funding for CVTD’s service is provided primarily through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and other programs administered by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Local revenues from Title 3 and Title 19 funds are received from aging programs, United Way, local Economic Development Corporation partnerships, private grants, and each of the four county governments. CVTD applies for and receives funds each year from FTA through TxDOT. These funds are for non-urbanized area programs (5311), Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program (5310), and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program (5316). They are also eligible for other federal funding grants including but not limited to, New Freedom (5317). These grants depend on the qualifying projects being implemented.

Although CVTD receives funding from various sources, sustainability of service is of major concern to the transit district. Historically, pilot services have been initiated by CVTD with funds having limited timeframes, such as grants administered through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ). Potential alternative funding strategies are recommended in Chapter 6 of this report.

Proposed System

Recommendations for future service implementation was developed after a thorough study of the existing transit conditions in the four-county service area, review of current ridership trends and development of a forecast methodology as well as personal interviews with CVTD staff, local elected officials, and other groups, as described in Chapter 2 of this report. When these projects are implemented as funding becomes available, the proposed recommendations will refine the existing network of services and provide new services to better fit current and projected travel needs of the residents served by CVTD.

Short-Term Recommendations

Short-term recommendations are based on previous costs, system performance (2008) and include adjustments to existing service as well as proposed new transit investments for implementation if financially feasible. Proposed short-term service improvements are as follows:

- Frequency improvements to existing service;
- Implementation of several routes in Waller County, specifically those serving Prairie View A&M ;

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- Provide weekend service; and
- Expand vanpool services.

Long-Term Recommendations

Long-term recommendations include proposed new transit investments for implementation over the six to ten years and beyond if funding resources are available and recommendations are applicable to current needs. Long Term recommendations are as follows:

- Implement additional LOOP and LINK
- Implement commuter service with connections to the Katy area, and other area service providers; and
- Develop transfer facilities for commuter services.

Costs and Benefits of Proposed CVTD System Improvements

Costs associated with short- and long-term recommendations must be supported through local match and community investment. Although the annual costs will increase, there are many benefits to supporting the development of transit in the CVTD service area. Costs and benefits associated with service improvements are listed in **Table ES.1** below.

Table ES.1: Transit Costs and Benefits Matrix

| Service Improvement | Cost | Benefit |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Keep existing deviated fixed route service and increase existing frequency on each route | \$1,735,306 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing service ▪ Expected increase in ridership for this proposed improvement in 2035: 41,200 riders annually or 46 percent of existing ridership. |
| Proposed new service | \$1,000,000 - \$2,500,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase ridership ▪ Provide service to areas that do not currently have service ▪ Enhance mobility ▪ Economic development opportunities ▪ Expected increase in ridership for this proposed improvement in 2035: 60,950 riders annually or 80 percent of existing ridership. |

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Funding

Transportation agencies generally use federal monies for capital projects and local tax monies for operation and maintenance, however there are funding opportunities available that go beyond the traditional sources, such as federal grants and state sales tax. The determination of funding is recognized as an issue that needs to be addressed at the local level.

CVTD has plans to continue the current demand response service and deviated fixed route in Austin, Colorado, and Wharton counties, reinstate the cancelled deviated fixed route service in Waller County, and further invest in improved service in the three remaining counties if the funds are available.

The new services will require additional capital investment in vehicles, shelters and Park & Ride or transfer facilities. Capital costs may average approximately \$4.8 million, inclusive of 12 vehicles and two facilities which include, three bus bays, minimal (10-20 spaces) parking, a canopy and facilities for the bus drivers.

CVTD currently utilizes most federal and state funds as well as in-kind contributions, but there is federal funding available that either CVTD has never applied for (New Freedom) or does not have the local investment available to continue (CMAQ). It is recommended that CVTD explore the alternative funding strategies as a means to assist with local match from the community and continue to seek federal funds for which their projects qualify.

Final Recommendations

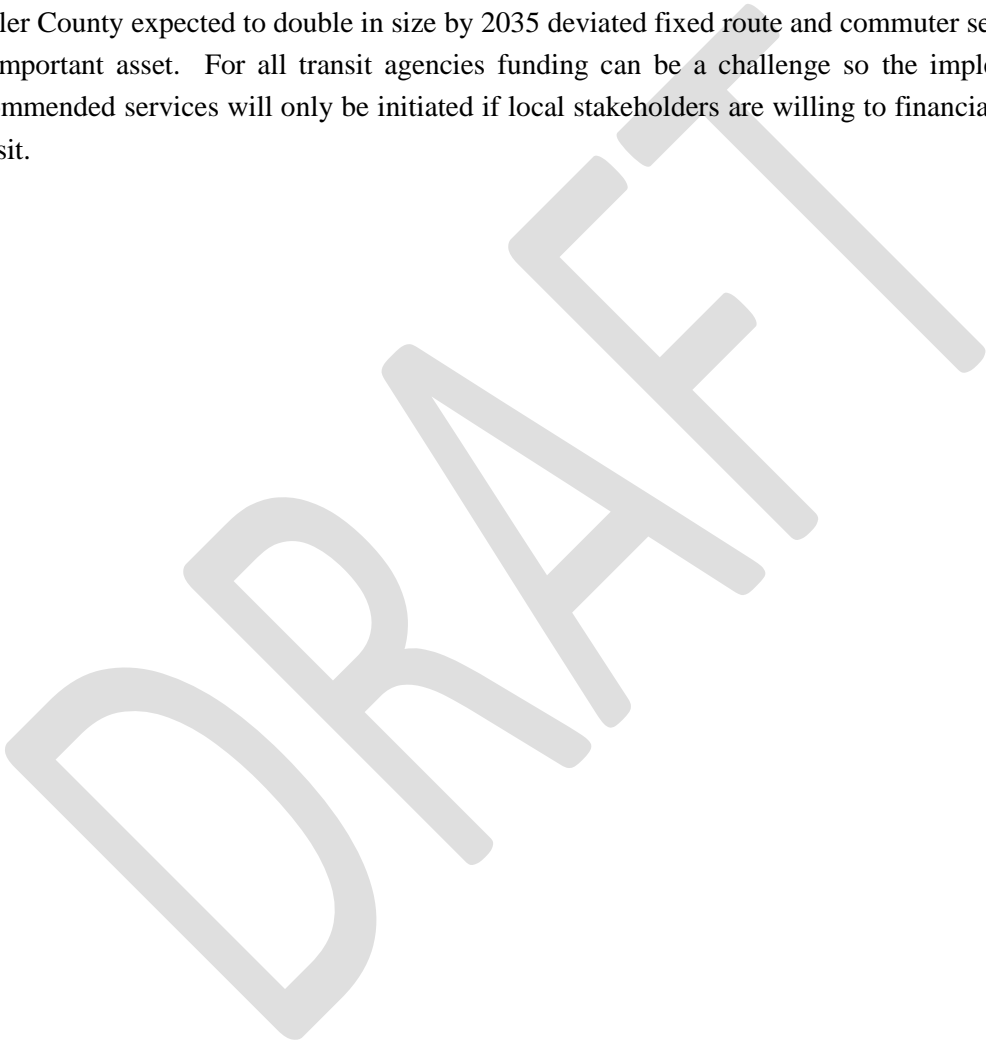
- 1) CVTD's service area consists of two colleges, one major University, and several major employers. As was mentioned earlier in this report, five new services that are proposed to serve the students of Prairie View A&M University could potentially be paid for with the imposition of a \$46/semester transit fee. This new service would be open to everyone, but if implemented, Prairie View A&M students would ride for free and other passengers would pay the established fare. This fee is small by comparison to other colleges and universities in Texas and is a good example of what could be accomplished in the area of funding if the colleges and major employers that require service would be asked to contribute toward funding the transit they need.
- 2) All new services are proposed with the understanding that they will be implemented as funds become available.



- 3) Increasing the frequency of existing services and providing service to Prairie View A&M appears to hold the most promise for the short-term. Much of this service is in Waller County which is the County that has the highest need.

Conclusion

Recommendations were based on transit needs identified throughout the planning process. With Waller County expected to double in size by 2035 deviated fixed route and commuter services will be an important asset. For all transit agencies funding can be a challenge so the implementation of recommended services will only be initiated if local stakeholders are willing to financially commit to transit.



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