
Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

**“Human Service-Public Transit
Coordination Plan”**

Final Plan

November, 2011

KFH Group, Incorporated

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Appendix 6: Technical Memorandum No. 6: Organizational and Staff Structure and Process to Sustain Planning and Services

Appendix 7: Technical Memorandum No. 7: Leveraging Resources/Sustainability

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Lower Rio Grande Valley Human Service – Public Transit Coordination Plan

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) requested a service oriented update to the 2006 Lower Rio Grande Valley Coordinated Transit Plan. LRGVDC and the Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) recognize that an update was needed that focuses on strategies that help eliminate gaps in services. In other words, planning efforts should be directed toward effectively and efficiently increasing service. These potential services can include traditional fixed-route and paratransit services, but also include approaches such as mobility management as well as a variety of coordination strategies designed to improve service for customers.

This Coordination Plan is the latest phase of the coordination process. Unlike previous years, this effort emphasizes the strategies and operational options and focuses less on the process. The goal of this effort is to encourage the implementation of activities that foster improved public and human service transportation.

This plan has been developed over the course of the past five months, with input from many interested stakeholders through an open planning process with eight public meetings over the study period. These meetings, the review of existing services, demographic and land use analysis, and other details of the planning process are summarized in the beginning of this document. For those interested in the detailed planning analyses conducted and updated for this plan, they are referred to the appendices that are included in a separate document:

- Appendix 1: Technical Memorandum No. 1: Outreach Plan
- Appendix 2: Technical Memorandum No. 2: Transportation Resources in the Region
- Appendix 3: Technical Memorandum No. 3: Assessment of Transportation Needs

- Appendix 4: Technical Memorandum No. 4: Parallel Transit Planning Processes
- Appendix 5: Technical Memorandum No. 5: Planning for Comprehensive Services – Strategies for the Future
- Appendix 6: Technical Memorandum No. 6: Organizational and Staff Structure and Process to Sustain Planning And Services
- Appendix 7: Technical Memorandum No. 7: Leveraging Resources/Sustainability
- Appendix 8: Technical Memorandum No. 8: Performance Measures

The Plan first discusses the state and federal planning requirements, followed by the review of existing services and a summary of the comprehensive needs assessment. Section 2 discusses the vision, mission, and goals of the planning effort, followed by Section 3 a discussion of strategies and projects. Section 4 reviews the implementation effort. Following the Plan are the supporting technical memoranda presented as appendices.

Purpose of the Coordinated Plan

The purpose of this planning process was twofold. The first was to continue moving forward with implementation of existing coordinated efforts. The RTAP's approach to mobility and transportation choices calls for local planning and local decision-making based on sound planning activities. The second purpose was to meet the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) rules regarding development of a coordinated transportation plan for any locale to receive a variety of funds from the FTA, a very important resource for funding.

In August 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), legislation that provides funding for highway and transit programs. SAFETEA-LU includes new planning requirements for the FTA Section 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute – JARC), and Section 5317 (New Freedom) Programs, requiring that projects funded through these programs “must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.” This provision is aimed at improving transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes, and ensuring that communities are coordinating transportation resources provided through multiple federal programs.

State Coordination Requirements

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) administers the Section 5310, 5311, 5311(f), JARC, New Freedom, and Rideshare Programs for the State. TxDOT's Public Transportation Division (PTN), manages these funding programs that are affected by the coordinated planning process.

In 2005, the TxDOT Strategic Plan called for the development of regional public transportation coordination plans based on the SAFETEA-LU legislation. Texas Transportation Commissioner Hope Andrade then led the efforts to implement a strategy to develop regional public transportation coordinated plans. The 2006 Coordinated Plan was in response to that planning strategy. Broadly, the project examined ways to more effectively "manage mobility" for the region. A major area of emphasis for this study was the coordination of services at the local level. The project included an evaluation of coordinated transit and human service transportation on a regional scale throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley. As a result, TxDOT has provided funding support to the regions in the development of their plans and updates since 2006.

Federal Coordinated Transportation Plan Elements/Requirements

FTA guidance defines a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan as one that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those needs; and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

- *Section 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities)* - Financial assistance supporting capital and purchase of service to transport the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- *Section 5316 (JARC)* - The JARC Program provides funding for developing new or expanded transportation services that connect low income persons to jobs and other employment related services, and to transport residents of urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.
- *Section 5317 (New Freedom)* - The New Freedom Program provides funding to assist individuals with disabilities to access and use transportation services, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services. Projects funded through the New Freedom Program must be both new and go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

These specialized funding programs are intended to be coordinated with services supported through a variety of other federal and state funding sources, including:

- FTA Section 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Funding) – financial assistance for communities over 50,000 population. These funds are available as operating or capital funding for communities between 50,000 and 200,000 population. Communities over 200,000 can only use these funds for capital needs (with some minor exceptions).
- FTA Section 5311 (Non-Urbanized or Rural Area) - financial assistance to enhance the access of people in non-urbanized (rural) areas for any needs and provide for the participation of private intercity transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation (Section 5311(f)) to the maximum extent feasible.
- The Medical Transportation Program (MTP) of Medicaid is part of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). This program provides free transportation for Medicaid clients to access Medicaid approved services. This program is far and away the largest human service transportation program in the region – far more than all of the other programs combined.
- Other Human Service Transportation – There are a variety of small scale human service transportation efforts. Unfortunately, these programs often do not have dedicated funding for transportation and any funds used for transportation take away from other program needs.

Summary of the Comprehensive Assessment of the Public’s Unmet Transportation Needs Review and Inventory of Existing Resources

These summaries describe the unmet needs and the existing resources. For those seeking greater detail, the Appendices that follow will describe the entire analysis and all of the results.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

The first part of this section reviews the public’s unmet transportation needs in the three county area. This includes quantitative analysis of demographic data as well as identification of unmet needs (qualitative) through discussions with service providers, human service agencies and other community stakeholders, community surveys, public meetings, and a round-up of needs identified in previous RTAP planning efforts.

The three-county area of the Lower Rio Grande region consists of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties, six cities over 50,000 populations, and 16 cities from 5,000 to 50,000 population. Table 1 shows a brief profile of communities over 5,000 in population. The service area is quite diverse with suburbs/exurbs, and very rural areas in the remaining study area. The largest Cities, Brownsville and McAllen, are each at the far end of the service area. The region's population has reached over one million according to the 2010 Census. The region is the southernmost region in the State of Texas and borders Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico.

Table 1: Cities and Unincorporated Communities Over 5,000 in Population

City	County	Population
Brownsville	Cameron	175,023
McAllen	Hidalgo	129,877
Edinburg	Hidalgo	77,100
Mission	Hidalgo	77,058
Pharr	Hidalgo	70,400
Harlingen	Cameron	64,849
Weslaco	Hidalgo	35,670
San Juan	Hidalgo	33,856
San Benito	Cameron	24,250
Alamo	Hidalgo	18,353
Donna	Hidalgo	15,798
Mercedes	Hidalgo	15,570
Alton	Hidalgo	12,341
La Homa	Hidalgo	11,985
Raymondville	Willacy	11,284
Hidalgo	Hidalgo	11,198
La Feria	Cameron	7,302
Cameron Park	Cameron	6,963
Mila Doce	Hidalgo	6,222
Elsa	Hidalgo	5,660
Palmview South	Hidalgo	5,575
Los Fresnos	Cameron	5,542

Physically, the area has a long urbanized corridor of travel along US Highway 83 which links the two largest Cities (McAllen and Brownsville) with the urbanized portion of Hidalgo County. The vast majority of the population resides in this corridor. Outside the corridor, the major population centers include Port Isabel, South Padre Island (which are major destinations) and Raymondville.

Figure 1 displays the study area in more detail. The study area encompasses 3,643 square miles and has a population of 1,203,123 (2010 Census). From 2000 to 2010, the population of the service area had grown at a rate of 30%, making it one of the fastest growing regions in Texas.

Brief profiles are provided on each county in the region. Summary population data is provided in Table 2 (total county population and change in the past decade).

Table 2: County Population Growth, 2000 - 2010

County	2000 Population (Census)	2010 Population (Census)	Percent Change (2000-2010)	Land Area (Square Miles per Census 2000)	2010 Population Density (Persons Per Square Mile)
Cameron	335,227	406,220	21%	1,276	318
Hidalgo	569,463	774,769	36%	1,583	489
Willacy	20,082	22,134	10%	784	28
Total	924,772	1,203,123	30%	3,643	330

Cameron County

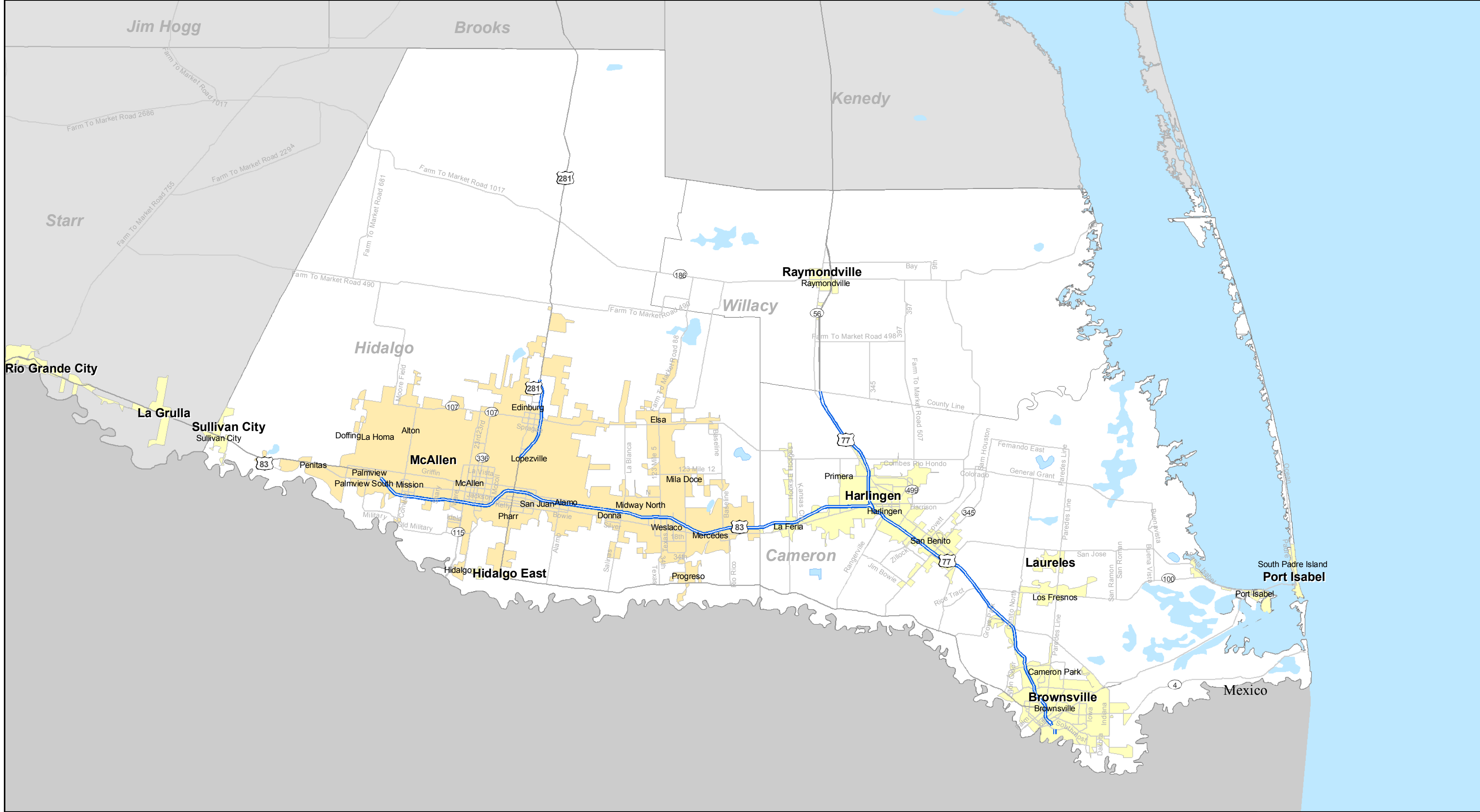
Cameron County is the southernmost county in the State of Texas. Its largest city and county seat is Brownsville with a population of 175,023 according to the 2010 Census and is home to the University of Texas, Brownsville. South Padre Island is a barrier island at the far eastern edge of the county, and is a popular tourist destination. The Mexican city of Matamoros is directly adjacent to Brownsville across the U.S-Mexico border.

Hidalgo County

Adjacent to the west of Cameron County is Hidalgo County, the region's most populated county. The largest city is McAllen. Edinburg is the county seat and is home to the University of Texas Pan American. Hidalgo County is one of the fastest growing counties in Texas with a 36% increase in population over the last ten years. The series of cities from Mission to Mercedes constitutes a concentrated urban core.

It should be noted that the contiguous area of Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, and some of the surrounding smaller cities has a population of over 600,000, a substantial urban area of its own. Transit systems in urban areas this size typically operate over 60 fixed-route vehicles and 15 - 20 paratransit vehicles. This area has fewer than 20 vehicles in fixed route service all day long.

**FIGURE 1:
STUDY AREA**



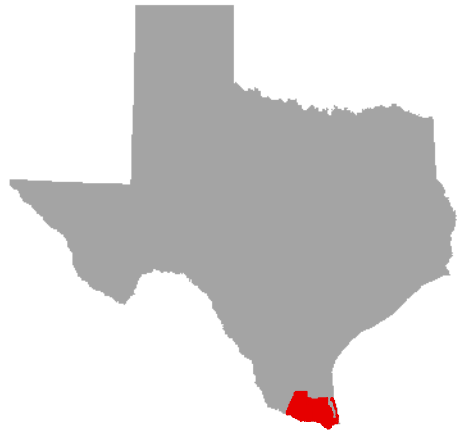
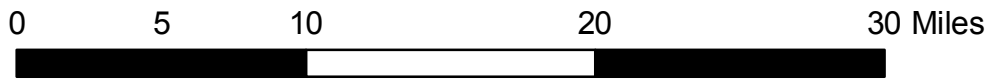
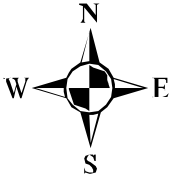
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- LRGVDC Study Area
- Urban Areas 240k - 1million
- City Areas 1,000 - 240k
- Limited Access Highway
- Highway
- Major Road
- Adjacent Counties

Prepared by:



Prepared for:



Willacy County

Willacy County is rural in nature and much different from the urbanized areas of Cameron and Hidalgo Counties. Its largest city and county seat is Raymondville, with a population of 9,733 located in the north central part of the county.

Regional Demographic Profile

A key component of the needs assessment involves identifying where people live who are most likely to need public and specialized transportation services. A first step is identifying where people are concentrated across the region, specifically population density (Figure 2) which often dictates the type of service to be operated. This demographic profile then focuses on groups that are most likely to have limited mobility options due to age (youths and elderly), disability, limited financial resources, and/or lack of access to an automobile (Figure 3).

Clearly, based on demographic characteristics, the greatest level of need is in the US Highway 83/77 corridor, where the largest population densities and highest population can be found. In rural areas, the greatest densities and need are found in the larger towns in the study area, with remote rural areas having a lower level of total population needs.

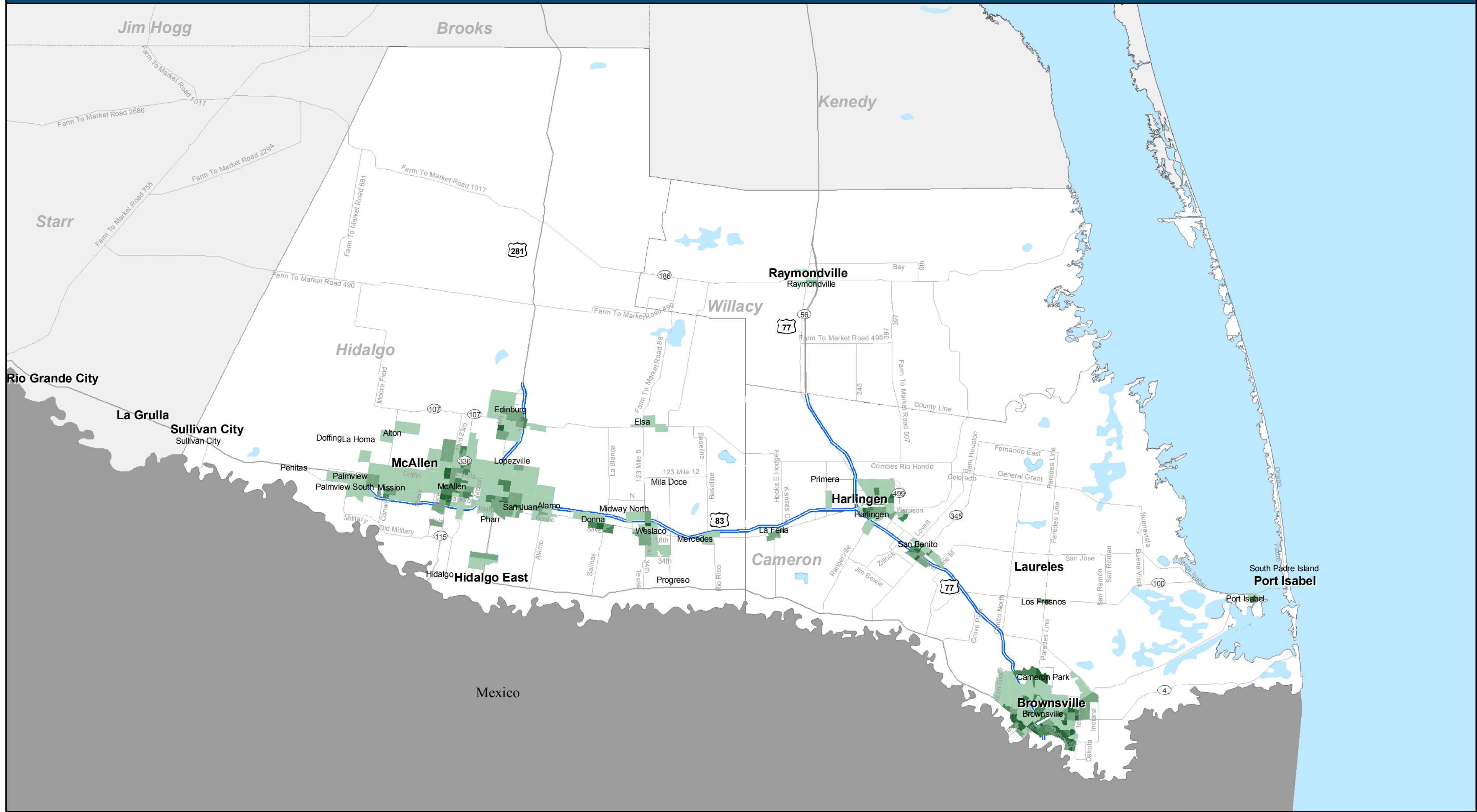
Major Destinations

The vast majority of jobs are located along the US 77/83 corridor from Mission to Brownsville, and South Padre Island and the US 281 Corridor from Hidalgo to Edinburg. This is illustrated in Figures 4 through 7.

The estimate of need is not a matter of a simple calculation. It is an assessment based on a wide variety of input. These key areas of input included:

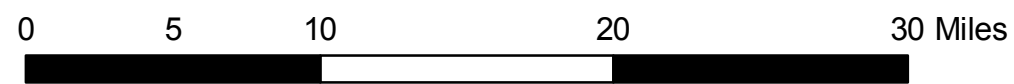
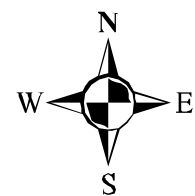
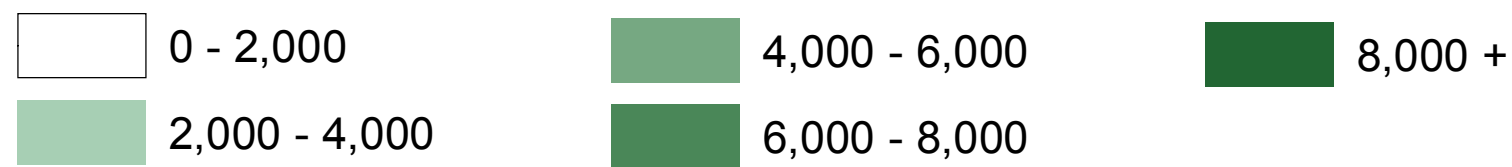
1. **Meetings and Interviews:** The meetings with human service agencies, transit providers, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), the general public, and other interested participants provided a significant backdrop to the discussion of needs.
2. **Review of Demographics and Travel Patterns:** The detailed findings delineated above indicate that the need for service will continue to increase as the general population increases.
3. **Survey of Transportation Providers:** Some of the respondents to the surveys responded to the questions on needs.

**FIGURE 2:
POPULATION DENSITY (PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE)**



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Persons Per Square Mile



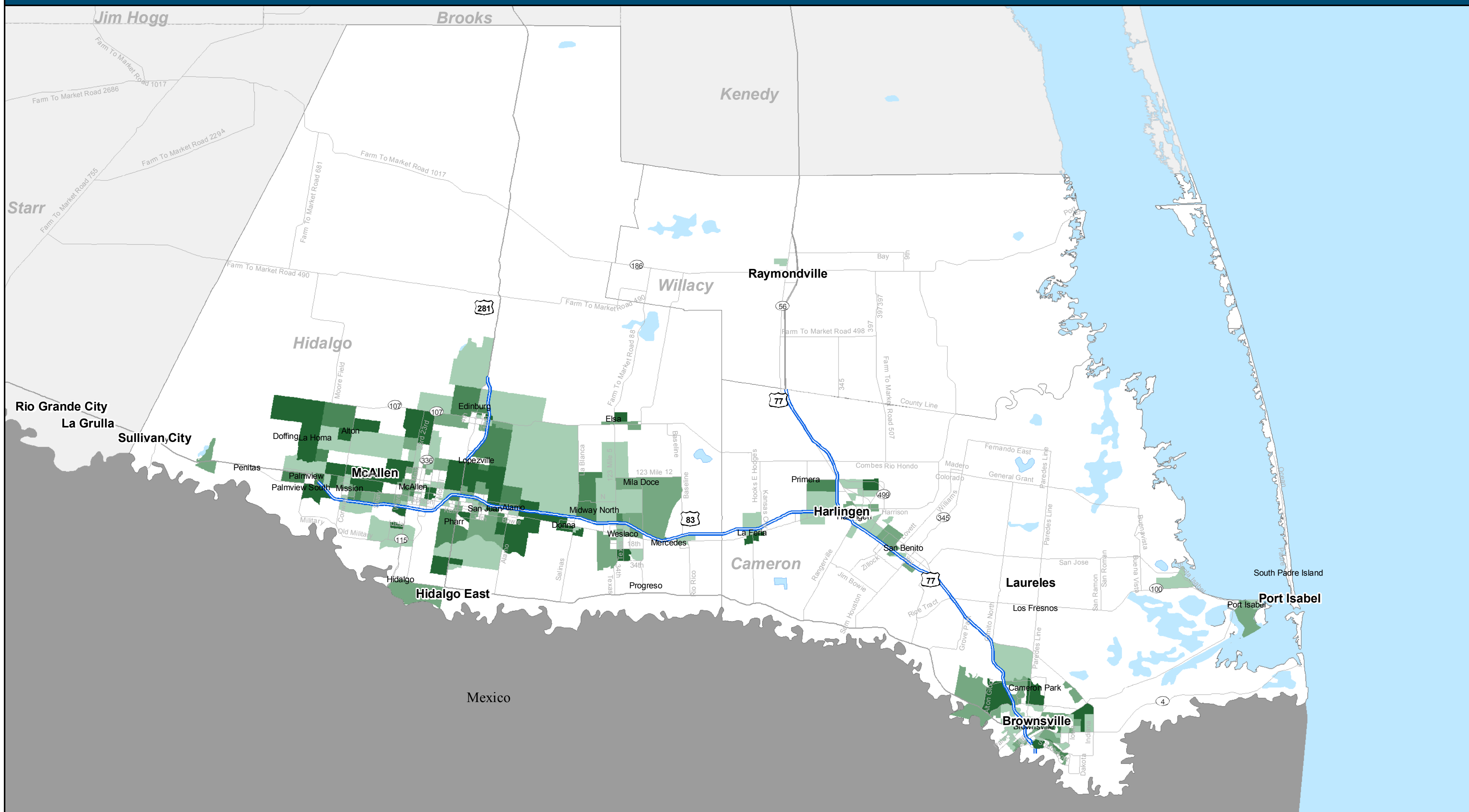
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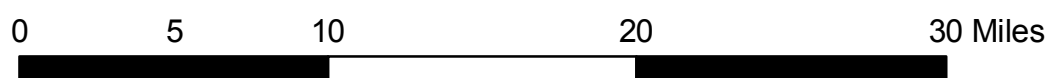
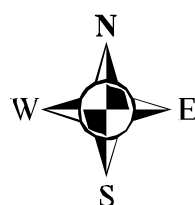
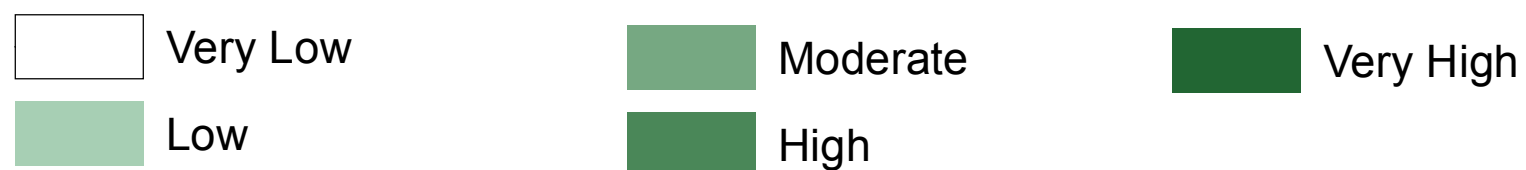


**FIGURE 3:
TRANSIT DEPENDENT INDEX**



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Concentration of Transit Dependent Population



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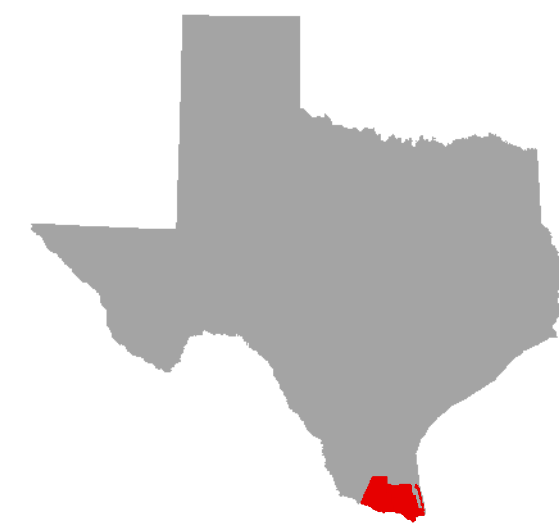
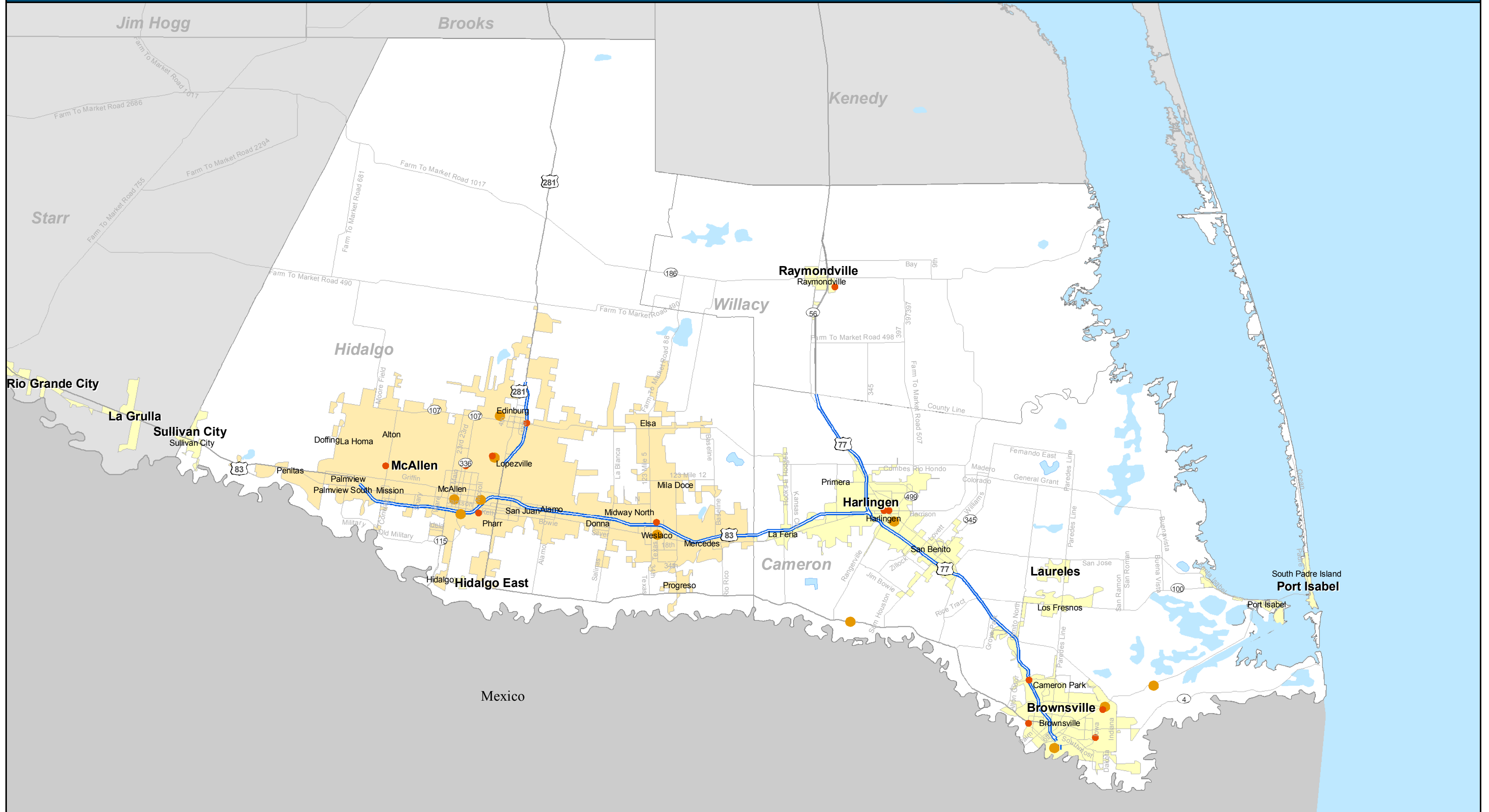
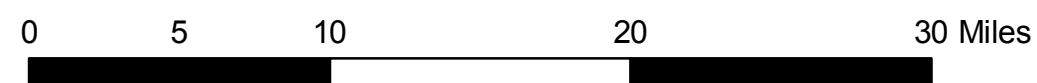
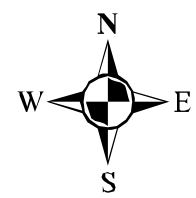


FIGURE 4: MAJOR EMPLOYERS



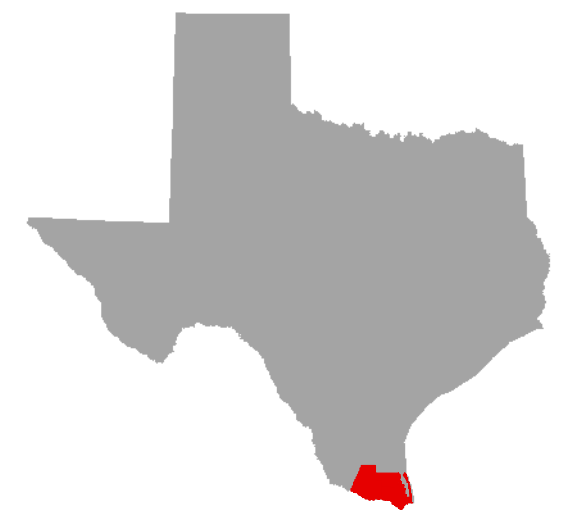
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- Urban Areas 240k - 1million
- Urban Areas 1,000 - 240k
- Employers with 1000+ Employees
- Employers with 500+ Employees
- Adjacent Counties



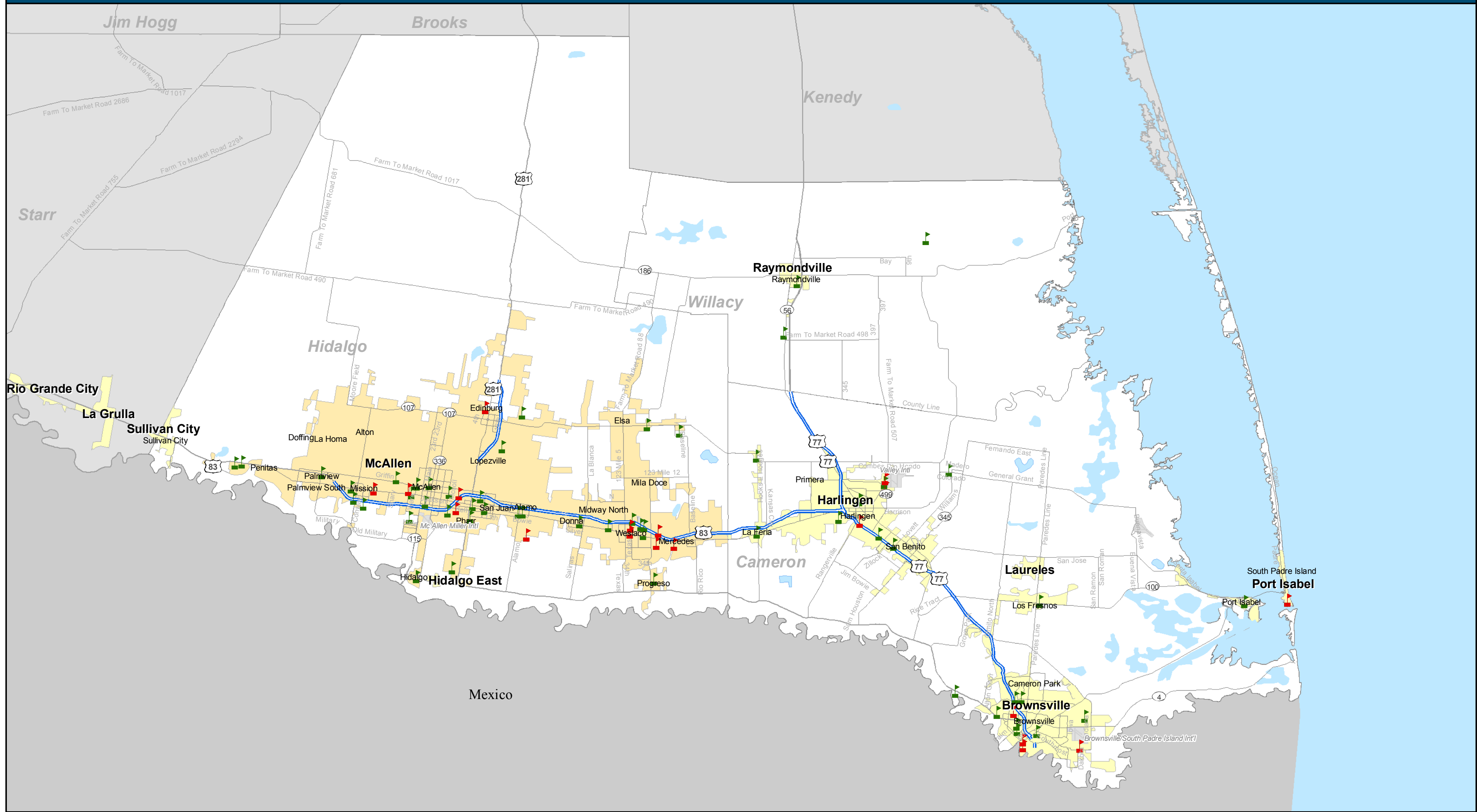
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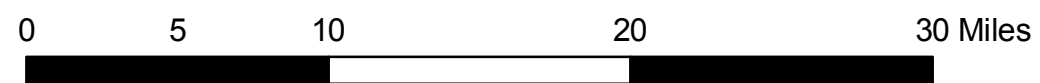
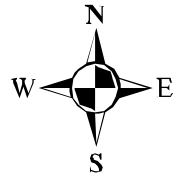


**FIGURE 5:
EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**



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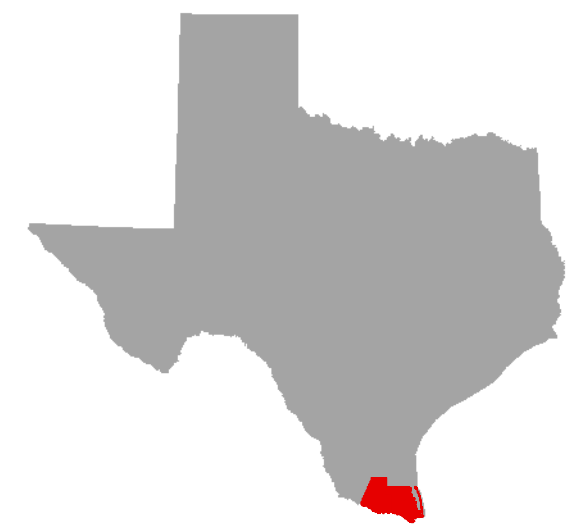
- LRGVDC Study Area
- Urban Areas 240k - 1million
- Adjacent Counties
- City Areas 1,000 - 240k
- High Schools
- Colleges and Universities



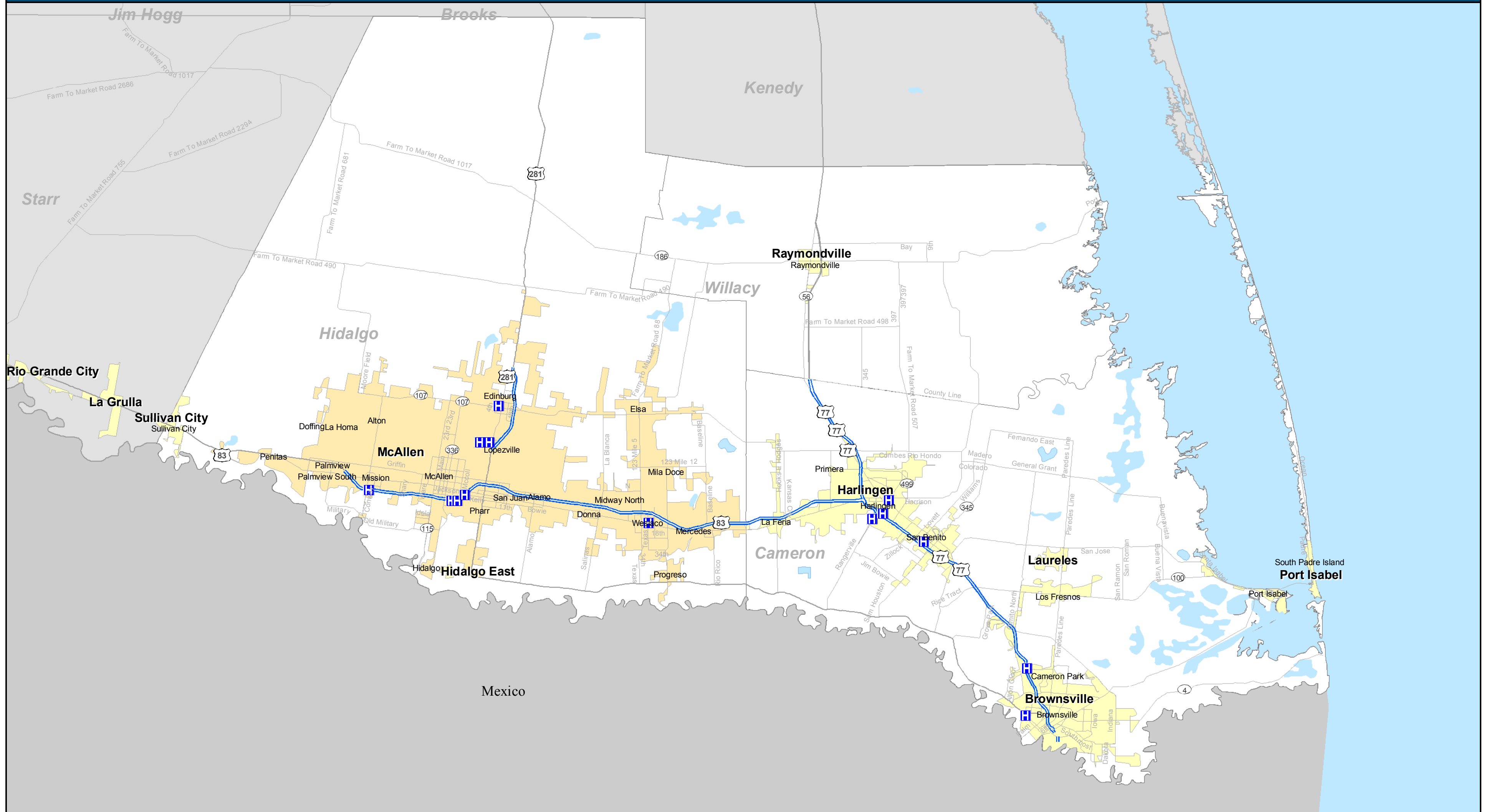
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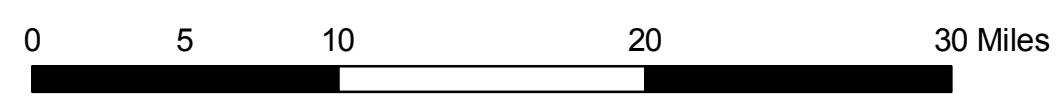
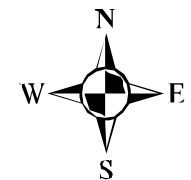
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**FIGURE 6:
MEDICAL FACILITIES**



- LRGVDC Study Area
- Adjacent Counties
- Urban Areas 240k - 1million
- Urban Areas 1,000 - 240k
- Medical Facilities



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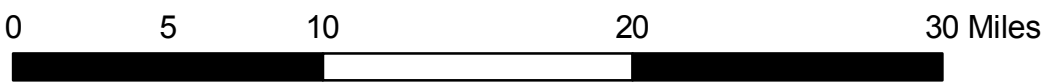
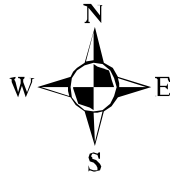
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FIGURE 7: REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTERS



- LRGVDC Study Area
- Adjacent Counties
- Urban Areas 240k - 1million
- Urban Areas 1,000 - 240k
- Regional Shopping Centers

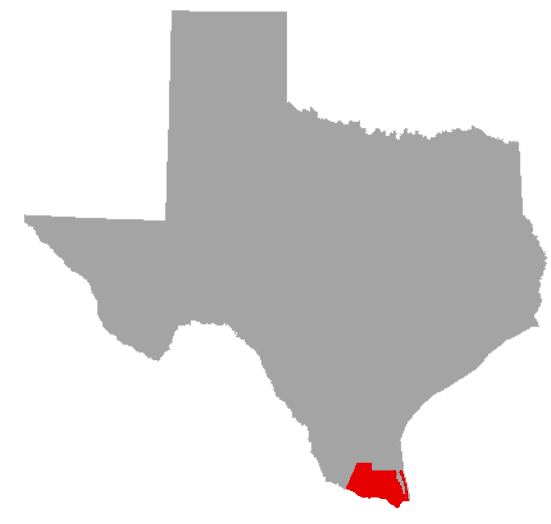


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Source: Texas Workforce Solutions, Employer Contact Information

The general population is growing at a rapid rate and compounding this with the low incomes in the area should result in considerable need for service. The use of transit can equal approximately 2% of all trips if regular service were available. The fact that a private carrier has been able to recover their costs from the farebox is significant proof of need between cities.

As part of the public involvement process a public survey (Attachment 1) was administered in Hidalgo and Cameron County to obtain information on the public's perception on unmet transportation needs. Overall, the responses confirmed the findings of the needs review - lack of regional service. Also, interviews (in person and by telephone) were conducted with 10 key agencies.

These interviews confirmed the needs summary below. For details regarding the specific locational needs identified through this process, review Appendix 3.

The most significant needs are summarized as follows:

- **Connectivity** - Connectivity is acknowledged to be one of the highest needs. Increases in connectivity throughout the region will grow in importance as people spread farther out seeking employment. Simply put, while most of the service area has coverage, the ability to get from one city to another, or to travel across the region is problematic. There is no regular daily service that connects the largest cities, and persons wanting to use transit for commuting purposes cannot do so.
- **Colonias** - Some of the highest needs continue to be in the colonias spread all over Hidalgo County, with many in Willacy and Cameron Counties as well. These areas need regularly scheduled service throughout the day to meet a variety of needs including commuter, medical, and shopping.
- **Mexican Nationals** - There is no doubt that the continued growth in Mexico will contribute to high levels of ridership in the urban systems for Brownsville and McAllen, without any federal or state compensation for this extra burden.
- **Fixed Route Need** - Harlingen - San Benito and Edinburg - Mission each has the potential demand and need for more fixed-route service within their cities. Cities of 60,000 population (for example) can sustain a 5 - 6 bus fixed-route system.
- **Shorter Headways** - There is a need for more frequent service throughout the day on consistent schedules in the urbanized areas.

- **Rural Service** - Willacy County has additional needs that are not being met, for both local service and service to Harlingen. Rural parts of the other two counties also have some unmet needs.

Passenger Transportation Resources and Planning Processes

Planning Organizations - This includes agencies responsible for transportation planning in the region, including state, regional, and local organizations. There are a wide variety of participating agencies including three MPO. The following agencies have responsibilities for planning transportation in the Valley region:

- Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
- Brownsville Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Harlingen-San Benito Metropolitan Planning Organization (HSBMPO)
- Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO)
- Hidalgo County Commuter Rail District
- Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority
- Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority
- Texas Department of Transportation

Public Transportation Providers - There are four (five, including Rainbow Lines from Starr county that routinely provides service into Hidalgo County) public transportation providers in the region as well as a number of human service transportation providers.

- Brownsville Metro - City of Brownsville
- Valley Metro - LRGVDC
- Metro McAllen - City of McAllen
- The Wave - Town of South Padre Island
- Rainbow Lines - Community Action Council of South Texas (CACST)
- Valley Transit Company - Greyhound
- Other intercity bus companies
- Taxi companies and jitney services (Hidalgo - McAllen)

Client-Focused Services - services provided to clients of human service agencies and programs, typically limited to particular demographic groups and trip purposes. This category includes private, non-profit community-based organizations, health and human service agencies, workforce agencies, schools, municipal programs targeted to particular groups, and others.

MTP is far and away the largest human service transportation program (about 90% of the available funding). It is operated as a separate service by a for profit company.

The next largest funding source is the LRGVDC Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) providing funding to senior centers in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties. LRGVDC receives Section 5310 funding from TxDOT as well as funding for public transportation services. Currently, the AAA uses six vendors to provide transportation services for medical visits and shopping.

Public Involvement Activities

The public involvement activities were extensive and used a wide variety of input. Activities were focused on compiling needs of agencies and the public and on strategies for addressing the needs. Their comments described in Appendices 3 and 5 reflect the same needs as found through other sources and serving to confirm this understanding. These activities included the following:

- Interviews with human service agencies (Needs/Strategies).
- Interviews with other community organizations (Needs/Strategies).
- Transportation Needs Survey - Human Service Agency transportation providers (Needs/Strategies).
- Transportation Needs Survey - Conducted during the Operation Lone Star events to obtain input from individuals that live in under-served communities in the Valley.
- Focus Group Meetings (Two Rounds) - Human service organization clients and the public. Round 1: Needs and Strategies. Round 2: Draft Coordinated Plan.

SECTION 2: RTAP VISION, MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Mission Statement

Regional Transportation Advisory Panel provides a platform for collaborative approaches to transit planning for seamless and efficient movement of people in the region.

Vision Statement

People will be able to move throughout the region safely, reliably and efficiently by using a seamless transit network.

Project Goals

The RTAP has identified the following goals and performance measures that will be monitored to assess the extent to which the coordinated public transportation systems are achieving the goals of the RTAP Plan.

About the Performance Measures: *The Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Transportation Advisory Panel does not directly implement transportation services, but instead provides coordination support to numerous agencies that do implement these services in the region. The RTAP intends to track the performance of the Coordinated Regional Public Transportation System through the following System Performance Indicators. The RTAP may also develop additional performance measures to track coordination activities themselves.*

Goal 1: Improve the quality of people's transit experience

- I. Improve service delivery
 - RTAP will recommend for public transit agencies to acquire technology to track on time performance
 - *Performance Measure:* RTAP will recommend adoption of a 95% on-time performance standard: regional schedule variation (+/- 15 min) in FY 2013
 - Increase service frequency throughout the region, as transit agencies will seek to adopt the following standards before FY 2013:
 - *Performance Measure:* Urban areas should have headways of one hour as a maximum
 - *Performance Measure:* Rural areas should have headways of two hours as a maximum
 - Develop pilot plans for improved service via the FY 2011 Regional Transportation Coordination Plan
 - *Performance Measure:* One-way trips per vehicle trip, one-way trips per hour, cost per one-way trip
 - *Performance Measure:* Implementation of morning and evening commuter service at hours conducive to work schedules. Once service is implemented measures will be operational: One-way trips per vehicle trip, one-way trips per hour, cost per one-way trip.

- *Performance Measure:* Implementation of new service. Once service is implemented measures will be operational: one-way trips per vehicle trip, one-way trips per hour, cost per one-way trip.
- II. Improve customer service
 - RTAP will seek to provide a workshop for customer service skills to the public transit agency staff in FY 2012
 - *Performance Measure:* Customer service skills workshop held for all transit systems in the region. Track customer service improvements through a public survey.
 - RTAP will recommend a uniform fare structure before FY 2013
 - A. Urban fixed routes
 - B. Commuter routes
 - C. Rural routes
 - D. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit
 - *Performance Measure:* Implementation of a regional fare structure

Goal 2: Provide increased transit alternatives to people in the region

- I. Public transit agencies will continuously integrate with multiple modes of non-traditional transportation
 - *Performance Measures :* Successful completion of each activity
- II. MPO's will develop a regional map identifying sidewalks, hike & bike trails, bike lanes, bus routes, bus stops, bus shelters, etc. before FY 2013
 - *Performance Measures :* Successful completion of each activity
- III. Expand vanpool through state JARC
 - *Performance Measure:* Number of fully functioning vanpools
- IV. Add projects from the strategies and partnerships of the 2011 Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan
 - *Performance Measures:* Number of service hours in place, one-way trips is also an important indicator.

Goal 3: Coordinate transit agency functions

- I. RTAP will complete a resource inventory in 2012 to identify agency capabilities
- II. RTAP will recommend a regional training calendar to the public transit agencies before the end of FY 2012
- III. RTAP will recommend uniform standards to the public transit agencies for the following:
 - Fleet standards
 - Urban

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- Rural
 - Commuter
 - ADA Paratransit
 - Bus stops/shelters
 - Amenities and signage
 - Brochures and time schedules
 - System maps
- IV. RTAP recommends to public transit agencies for anytime there are changes to time schedules, route alignments, or addition/subtraction of routes that they inform each other of such changes
- *Performance Measures:* Successful completion of each activity

Goal 4: Improve the image of transit across the region

- I. RTAP will continuously identify opportunities for transit promotion campaigns such as holiday promotions; Dump the Pump Day, Green Living Festival, etc.
 - Create an annual promotion event calendar starting in FY 2012
- II. RTAP will develop a coordinated outreach strategy to identify and educate stakeholders based on the findings of the FY 2011 Regional Coordination Plan in FY 2013
- III. RTAP will organize an annual newsletter to inform and educate local, state, federal officials and the general public on public transportation
 - *Performance Measures:* Successful completion of each activity

Goal 5: Develop a sustainable fiscal system for transit in the region

- I. Transit providers will present an annual availability of funds report to the RTAP and other partner agencies beginning in FY 2012 including lapsing funds
- II. Non-transit agencies will request their annual state/regional transportation budget report to present to the RTAP beginning in January 2012
- III. RTAP will strategize the use of all previously identified funding, subject to their respective requirements
- IV. Non-transit agency in-kind match identified as needed
- V. RTAP will recommend performance measures identified in the FY 2011 Regional Coordination Plan, to the public transit agencies
 - *Performance Measures:* Successful completion of each activity

Performance Measures

The setting of goals and objectives was the first step in guiding the process. The second step is to identify the different types of quantitative and qualitative performance measures followed by setting of specific measures for each of the strategies to be developed.

Performance measurement is an important component of transportation programs and particularly a demonstration program, providing an assessment of the program's operation and its effectiveness in meeting its stated goals. Performance measurement also supplies important information that can be used to inform and educate community partners and stakeholders on the progress of the program. Evaluation of a demonstration program additionally serves to assess the potential for transitioning the program from pilot to permanent, ongoing status.

Performance measures should be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Therefore, operating data such as trips provided, as well as input from users and operators, should be components of the evaluation process.

Performance monitoring of the implemented strategies is an important component of the planning process, allowing the RTAP, transit management, stakeholders, and participating jurisdictions to assess the services provided, the resources required to fund the program, and the users' response to the program. Performance monitoring for a demonstration program is particularly critical as it allows for adjustments and revisions to ensure the program is operating as intended.

SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Key Premise

One of the best ways to support the needs of human service agency clients is to ensure that the region's general public fixed-route transportation system operates as effectively as it can. When the public transportation systems are able to meet the majority of those needs through the existing fixed-route public transit network, then human service agency resources can be freed up to focus on the specialized needs of their most difficult to serve clients, rather than being expended on basic public transportation. Efforts to support or improve general public transportation should be fully supported by RTAP, human service agencies, and public transit systems as the foundation of coordinated transportation. Any coordination effort should start with maximizing the use of fixed-route services and fixed schedule services (in rural areas).

Key Themes

1. **The Overarching Goal** - *Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective high quality and safe transportation for our community.*
2. **Mobility and Opportunity** - Mobility and access to opportunity are fundamental needs in our society. Well-designed and well-managed public and human service transportation can maximize ridership and benefit all.
3. **Coordination - A Tool** - Coordination itself is not the goal; rather it is one of the significant tools we can use to meet the overarching goal. It is an important tool to improve efficiencies, but most definitely not the only tool.
4. **The Keys to Coordination** - Coordination almost always requires three things to ensure success:
 - *Leadership* - an entity and/or individual that champions the effort;
 - *Trust* - as in any relationship professional or otherwise, trust is essential to success;
 - *A Good Deal* - all sides must benefit from the relationship
5. **Realistic Service Design** - One of the unique challenges in these isolated areas is the low productivity (a very important term - typically defined as one-way trips per vehicle hour) inherent in paratransit/demand-response transportation. Low productivity results into a high cost per trip and fewer trips.

Coordinated Planning

The intent of the coordinated plan is to bring the transportation elements of the various public transit and human service transportation programs into one coordinated network. The strategies revolve around some basic facts:

- As discussed in *Technical Memorandum No. 2: Transportation Resources*, Medicaid is far and away the largest funder of human service transportation. It is estimated that MTP spends up to 90 - 95% of all human service agency funds available for coordinated transportation. Unfortunately, Medicaid transportation has become an exclusive program, and due to a state decision, this program is in essence not currently open to coordination.
- Other funders of note include the AAA (purchase services from a number of providers) and the workforce boards (typically give gas cards to clients).

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- There are many other small agencies that provide transportation for their clients. These agencies have no funding available for transportation. Their out of pocket expenses are very low.

Strategies, Programs, and Partnerships for Meeting the Goals of the RTAP

A series of strategies and pilot projects were developed for consideration by the RTAP. The following strategies and projects are based on the choices made by the RTAP. It should also be noted that the implementation plan reflects the activities of the RTAP, which has primarily a development and monitoring role. Each strategy includes:

- A narrative discussion of the strategy
- Examples of potential projects (where appropriate)
- Potential costs to implement

Potential Funding Sources

As discussed in detail in Appendix 7, there are limited sources of funds available; however the good news is that many of the transit systems in the region are not accessing all of the opportunities available, so there is room for growth.

All of the strategies that require funding will access the following five basic sources:

1. FTA Funding – There are a variety of FTA funding sources. As a rule these funds must be matched with other funding sources and the availability of matching funds is often an inhibiting factor. Operating assistance is funded at a 50% match, while capital expenditures are matched by the federal government at 80%. There are two types of funding sources: Those funds allocated to transit systems and those that require a competitive process.
2. Local, State and Human Service – This can include: human service contracts/funding, local and state government contributions. The Medicaid Transportation Program is far and away the largest single source of the human service funds.
3. Dedicated Sales Tax – There are mechanisms in the Texas state law that allows a variety of entities to seek up to a 1 cent sales tax.
4. Private Sector Sponsorships and Advertising – Many transit systems across the country have embraced the private sector as a source of sponsorship and/or advertising (traditional to transit).

5. Other Sources - These include foundation grants and other fund raising techniques.

Coordination/Planning Strategies

Coordinating Strategy No. 1: Development of Regional Mobility Management

Mobility management is about activities/functions rather than it being about an individual or an entity. There is no necessity for having an individual conduct all mobility management functions. Any of the major stakeholders can take on one function or another - as long as they are coordinated among RTAP members.

Determine Mobility Management Functions. The Mobility Management functions can all be considered as either separate projects taken on by the RTAP and individual members or through a mobility manager. What functions should be addressed and what entity will perform them? The list of mobility management activities includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. **One Stop Information** - One stop information center and website where people can get information on various services.
2. **Customer Marketing and Education** - Develop a comprehensive Customer Education and Marketing Program.
3. **Leadership** - Provide centralized leadership and assist RTAP with partnerships.
4. **Coordination and Technical Support** - Assist non-profit agencies with coordinated New Freedom and JARC Program applications.
5. **Mentoring Program** - Coordinate mentoring and education.
6. **Facility Location** - Coordinate land use issues.
7. **Coordinated Training** - Coordinate training efforts between all operators of service.
8. **Regional Planning Activities** - Coordinate planning efforts and focus on regional connectivity.
9. **Customer Service** - Create Regional Standards for Customer Care.

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10. **Coordinating Fare Structure** – Rationalizing fares across the region.
 11. **Group Procurement** - Developing economies of scale through group purchases.
 12. **Monitoring and Coordinating Regional Planning Efforts** - Organizing and staffing various committees in urban and rural areas.
 13. **Ridesharing** - Functioning as the rideshare coordinator.
 14. **Vehicles** - Distribute retired vehicles

It should be kept in mind that these functions can be accomplished with or without a Mobility Manager, but it would require leadership and a commitment by the transit operators and key stakeholders. These Mobility Management efforts can be funded through JARC and New Freedom Funding as well as Section 5311 and Section 5310 funds.

Develop Process to Select Mobility Manager(s). Assuming that the RTAP desires a mobility management function, the RTAP should select the type of entities where the Mobility Manager or function would be housed and their affiliation with an organization. These entities often include:

- Transit systems,
- MPO (urban areas),
- Councils of Governments,
- Human service agency,
- Nonprofit entity
- In at least one state, the department of transportation funds the Transit Association, which hires the Mobility Managers, or
- A Mobility Manager can be an independent entity with its own board.

Potential Costs. Many of the mobility management functions can save money rather than cost money. Economies of scale can make a difference and many of these activities fall in that category. Instead of each of the four transit systems conducting their own efforts, they can pool their resources and share the costs. The functions that can save money include:

1. One Stop Information Center
2. Marketing and Education
4. Coordinate Technical Support
5. Mentoring Human Service Agencies

-
6. Coordinated Training
 7. Group Procurement

The remaining mobility management functions are basically revenue neutral, simply costing staff time rather than an outlay of funding. These include:

8. Leadership
9. Facility Location
10. Regional Planning Activities
11. Customer Service
12. Coordinated Fare Structure
13. Monitoring and Coordinating Regional Planning Efforts
14. Ridesharing
15. Distribute Retired Vehicles

Both New Freedom and JARC Program funds can be used to support a mobility management function. If the RTAP desires to fund/seek a New Freedom or JARC grant (for up to 80% federal funding for up to three years), this strategy becomes an excellent option if local match can be obtained. Local match can come from a variety of sources such as local governments, sponsors, advertising, and human service contracts.

Coordination Strategy No. 2: Human Service Coordination Opportunities - A Mentoring Program

While a large number of Section 5310, volunteer, adult day centers, and other agencies with small scale operations will not get involved in a large scale coordination effort; there are areas where these agencies can benefit from coordination. A mentoring program can include support from the larger systems in: driver training, maintenance, insurance, and vehicle replacement programs, for example. These efforts can pay immediate dividends to those small one or two vehicle services. A vehicle replacement program will allow the larger systems to lease vehicles ready to be retired (but well maintained) to these small providers and requiring the agency to participate in training and maintenance programs. Minimal funding is required to initiate these activities through the Mobility Management function. The Workforce Boards and AAA shall participate in these efforts.

Potential Costs. There are no out of pocket costs associated with this strategy.

Coordination Strategy No. 3 - Coordinate Procurements

This strategy has been initiated by some of the systems in a group vehicle procurement. This is an excellent start and should be expanded as appropriate. It is

also discussed in the context of mobility management. It is highlighted here because of the benefits and ease of implementation. This is a non-threatening activity that benefits all and builds trust among the operators – an essential element of success. The advantages of group procurements include:

- Lower cost - A better price for each unit
- More variety - More vendors responding to an RFP
- More attention - After the procurement is complete.

Some other procurements that could lend itself to a group procurement include:

- Bus stop amenities – shelters, benches, signs, etc.
- Technology – Distinct operational advantages when all systems are operating with the same technology platform
- Maintenance equipment, supplies, or services

Potential Costs. There are no out of pocket costs associated with this strategy.

Coordination Strategy No. 4: Coordinate Driver and Dispatcher Training

This strategy is motivated in a similar manner to the above strategy – it is non-threatening and very useful for all operators. The first step would be to develop similar policies and procedures for each of the transit systems, followed by an agreed upon driver and staff training program and course. One or more entities would be selected to conduct the training at a site agreed upon.

Potential Costs. This strategy has the potential to save significant sums by eliminating duplicative programs.

Coordination Strategy No. 5: Transit Traveler Information

This is also a non-threatening strategy. This “One Stop Shop” will be able to provide basic information about traveling throughout the region for all transit systems. Customers will call or access the web to gain scheduling and other information for all of the systems and agency transportation as appropriate. It is important that the program not try to do too much too quickly, therefore it is recommended that the second phase begin after the first phase has been implemented. The second phase of this project is the interactive component where customers will be able to plan out their route and get concise directions, fares, and eventually can book a trip and pay for it on-line, hence the smart aspects of this phase.

Potential Costs. This strategy has the potential to save significant sums by eliminating duplicative programs.

Coordination Strategy No. 6: Fare Structures

In order to make service easier for the customer, fares and ticketing should be coordinated so that customers do not have to pay a variety of fares for a regional trip. Passengers should be able to purchase tickets to ride the regional system, local bus service and intercity service at each of the major transfer points. Customers should be able to purchase one ticket at their origin depot and ride throughout the region – or out of the region on Valley Transit. Fares can be a valuable tool in guiding customer choice. Local fixed-route service should be encouraged through the lowest fares. Paratransit service should have the highest fare reflecting its higher per trip cost. The fares should be compatible across the system, for example:

- Commuter service – Should cost no more than \$3 - \$5 each way
- Local Service – Local fixed-route or flex route service or fixed schedule service should have a fare of \$.50 to \$1.00
- Paratransit fares should be double fixed-route

Potential Costs. There are no out of pocket costs associated with this strategy.

Coordination/Planning Strategy No. 7: Develop a Regional Plan for Services

Currently all planning is done incrementally with routes being developed one or two at a time. This strategy calls for the development of a regional plan to connect the entire region and all of the transit systems (including adjacent Starr County). This planning effort will give all of the operators an opportunity to work together. A series of peer reviews will be conducted. This effort should include all of the transit systems and MPOs. The plan should have a five year horizon.

This is a complex planning process, although some elements such as the analysis of needs and review of existing resources are already in place. It may be best to contract with an expert consultant with experience in conducting these large scale transit planning efforts.

Potential Costs. If contracted to conduct the plan, costs would range from \$75 – \$100,000 considering that much of the analysis is in place. This could be paid for using FTA planning funds, or possibly JARC and New Freedom Funding.

Service Strategies

Without question, the best way to coordinate services is to provide quality public transit as most persons with disabilities can use public transit if properly planned. The majority of the input received, as part of this planning process, indicated that regional connectivity is the key need. People in Edinburg needing to go to McAllen or Harlingen; people in Pharr needing to go to San Benito; and people from all over needing to get to South Padre Island. Many persons pointed out that they need daily service for work, school, and many other needs.

The service area includes a corridor where the vast majority of consumers live and work. This type of corridor lends itself well to public transit as corridors are relatively simple to serve. Valley Metro should take advantage of this opportunity. It is the best option for the residents of the region and is the number one need according to the feedback received. The service area includes a corridor where the vast majority of consumers live and work. Taking advantage of this opportunity is the best option for the residents of the region.

These strategies call for continuing to build the regional network through:

- A route structure that operates at least six days per week
- Expanded service hours
- Reduced headways
- Multiple trips throughout the day for each route
- A schedule conducive to work trips

Without these elements, there is no connectivity as anything less than this level of service is not dependable in urban areas. The extensive network of public transit needed in the Valley would serve all members of the public and target job access services for human service agency clients as well as residents of colonias and other low income residents.

Service Strategy No. 1: Connectivity – Seamless Connections

In order to develop a regional network, it will be essential to provide for seamless connections between systems. Without these seamless connections built around a regional transit plan, there will be no regional network.

Key elements to a seamless network include the following elements:

- Operates regularly throughout the day.

- Transfer facilities are at locations with passenger amenities, where appropriate.
- Proper use of interlining of routes or timed meets between buses that guarantee that the buses will connect. Without this element, failure will be inevitable.

Potential projects can include:

1. One regional service from Mission to Brownsville and South Padre Island. This service would connect the entire region and most other services can feed off of that “Main -Line”. The service area includes a corridor where the vast majority of consumers live and work. Taking advantage of this opportunity is the best option for the residents of the region.
2. Transit terminals and stations are warranted as hubs in strategic locations throughout the Valley, both as anchors for current operations and as catalysts for future growth. These stations can connect to future commuter rail and current intercity bus transportation. These facilities should include administrative space, parking, and park & ride options, biking facilities, passenger amenities, information nodes, ticketing options, and other amenities as required by full-featured terminals. The opportunity for joint development and public/private partnerships should be explored. Maintenance garages and storage depots should be developed at or near these facilities as needed. Terminals along existing rail right of way are warranted as identified in the Hidalgo County Commuter Rail Feasibility Study. Smaller park & ride locations and transfer stations are needed in locations throughout the Rio Grande Valley along the Business 83 or US Highway 83 corridor to set the infrastructure anchors for future vanpool, rideshare, or commuter transit service.
3. Transit providers will seek to coordinate the interagency use of bus stops.

Potential Costs. Costs revolve around the type of projects implemented. For the RTAP, costs involve staff time and commitment.

Service Strategy No. 2: Local Services

The study process revealed that new or expanded fixed-route or flex route service has potential in the following communities:

- 1. Harlingen - San Benito** - These communities can be served as one transit system as they are contiguous. The area is currently served by four flexible bus routes

and a fifth connecting the area to Brownsville. The demographics include: low income of the population, low availability of autos, and the reasonable densities in these cities. It is expected that this system if operated appropriately, can generate eight one-way trips per vehicle hour within the first year of implementation.

2. Edinburg - Mission – Edinburg can sustain a 3 – 4 bus system as its population/density, University, and proximity to McAllen all can serve to enhance ridership. It would be most advantageous if Edinburg and the other cities in the McAllen area coordinate closely with McAllen transit system to provide a seamless service covering both cities (which are contiguous). This service could also generate eight one-way trips per vehicle hour.

3. Expansion of Existing Urban Service – Brownsville and McAllen are growing rapidly. Brownsville will become a large urban area and in essence will lose its operating match from the Federal Government. Corresponding growth is occurring in the Colonias ringing these cities. These two cities will be seeking JARC and New Freedom funding to ensure that these communities and other growing areas receive service.

4. Ferry Service Port Isabel - South Padre Island – Ferry service should be considered as a supplement to the causeway during peak capacity times and as an emergency backup. In the event the causeway is damaged.

Service Strategy No. 3: Coordinated Main Line Service

The Main Line includes the express and local service to be provided on the U.S. 83 corridor from Brownsville to Mission and ultimately Rio Grande City. Previously this service was provided by Valley Transit as express service – operating on the highway, with limited stops; and local service from Harlingen to McAllen operating on Business 83 with stops throughout the corridor. Valley Transit no longer provides this service. Valley Metro is currently planning and implementing a variety of new services, including limited regional service.

Service Strategy No. 4: Develop and Implement Feeder Network

This very important activity will bring scheduled dependable service to the rural communities outside the U.S 83 urban corridor. This service is designed to provide the highest level of service possible and to ensure regional connectivity by opening the regional “main line” to persons not living along that corridor. This would be accomplished by operating feeder buses to outlying communities such as Progreso, Edcouch, Raymondville and many colonias. These buses would provide a timed meet service with the local and express (where possible) main line service to ensure a timely

trip throughout the region - or connecting to Valley Transit/Greyhound's network across the country. The feeders will bring employees to their jobs. This will be particularly useful for workers going to low income jobs on South Padre Island. The feeders could operate at varying headways, depending on demand, but all should be operated at least 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. five days per week for basic work and school needs. Service should be provided to the supermarkets and other big box stores which are on US 83, typically .5 to 1 mile from Business 83. Service will be designed to enhance options for commuters and students (where appropriate).

This service will bring new access to low income residents with disabilities. The vehicles will be lift-equipped and will be able to flex off of the route as needed. It will be funded with JARC funds as well as local funds and/or Section 5311(F).

Potential projects include:

1. Service connecting colonias, rural areas, and other outlying areas.
2. Supporting or augmenting existing private provider service connecting Harlingen with South Padre Island should be considered.
3. Several communities in Hidalgo County warrant more flexible or fixed route service with complementary ADA paratransit.
4. Increase frequency of bus routes.
5. Add more service in Willacy County.
6. Sunday service should be added.

Service Strategy No. 5: Fixed Schedule Service

The need for dependable scheduled service became evident in the outreach phase. Fixed scheduled service is to replace one-on-one paratransit throughout the service area. The paratransit service is very expensive and cannot possibly reach as many persons as a scheduled service that can group trips. Fixed schedule service operates in designated rural areas according to a posted schedule. The bus will be in a specific area at a specific time. Passengers can be picked up at their door or at designated stops in the area. The vehicle then proceeds to the designated destination area (typically the largest town in the county). Service is limited to specific days and times. The level of service would be dependent on the need. Fixed schedule service allows the transit system to group more trips and eliminate the one-on-one trips typical of rural demand-response service. This type of service would operate in the rural portions of each county in the service area. Some areas may receive five days a week

service, while others may receive one day per week service. Section 5311 and New Freedom funding should be sought.

Service Strategy No. 6: Paratransit Service

Paratransit service should be reserved for the ADA service in the cities and remote exceptions in the rural areas. Paratransit should be considered a last resort due to its expense.

Potential projects can include:

1. Demand response or fixed schedule service in Hidalgo and Cameron County should be added to meet the needs of those areas that are designated as urban, but that have rural characteristics such as low population density. These areas can be converted into flexible or fixed routes as ridership builds.
2. Transit agencies should explore potential contractual relationships with local taxi companies to provide service for places where transit does not reach.

Potential Costs - Strategies 2 - 6. Based on the data reported by each of the transit systems (see Appendix 2), the cost to implement new service will cost between \$50 and \$70 per vehicle hour, depending on the type of service, size of the vehicle, and other factors.

Service Strategy No. 7: Pedestrian and Cycling Access

Expand and improve pedestrian and cycling access throughout the region. Access includes examining accessibility features and safety of all bus stops and pathways leading up to bus stops. A focus should be on existing and new potential routes and stops such as the Business 83 corridor.

Transit vehicles should be equipped with bicycle racks. The encouraging of bicyclists greatly expands the reach of transit and has proven to be a successful investment. All bus stops should have a bus stop sign at a minimum. Stops should adhere to minimum ADA standards. Standards should be developed to determine at what point a bench, shelter, or other amenity is required.

Potential Costs. These cost estimates should be used as approximations for planning purposes.

Signage:

- Bus Stop Sign - \$75 - \$150

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- U-Channel Pole - \$75 - \$150
 - Installation - \$80 - \$100

Bench

- Bench - \$200 - \$350 (includes installation)
- Concrete Slab - \$600 - \$800

Shelter

- Shelter - \$7,500 - \$10,000 (includes installation)
- Concrete Slab (14'x12') - \$1,500 - \$1,700

Sidewalk

- 4' wide sidewalk - \$17.50 - \$20.00 per linear feet
- Does not include curb and gutter

Service Strategy No. 8: Develop Sponsorship Program

Transit has a long history of providing advertising on and in buses for additional revenue for the system. Some rural systems have engaged in advertising over the years, but a sponsorship program is more than simply advertising. Instead of the usual selling of just one form of advertising, the system should sell sponsorship packages. Since sponsorship and advertising funds are an important source of local funding, this program should be implemented first, in order to determine the level of funding that can be attained. The local operators will work together to develop a sponsorship program designed to interest private businesses in sponsoring service and purchasing advertising on buses, websites, and written materials. The sponsorship program will allow for varying levels of service.

Potential Revenue (No Costs) - This program is designed to generate revenue and can be conducted in house or using an advertising firm, where payment would be a percentage of ad sales. This is detailed in Appendix 7.

Service Strategy No. 9: Establish a Regional Rideshare Program

Currently in the Lower Rio Grande Valley area there is no mechanism to aid in the formation of vanpools or carpools. Valley Metro states that they are preparing to implement a pilot program. Analysis of the commute patterns revealed a great opportunity for ridesharing between the three counties. Ridesharing is typically composed of a central database for matching individuals with similar commute trips

into carpools or vanpools. These successful vanpools can grow into fixed routes over time.

Carpools include in-formal or formal arrangements by and between individuals to share a ride to work or on other regular trips. Vanpools are typically a formal arrangement by a group of 7 to 15 individuals that share a similar commute trip. Often these arrangements are facilitated by a governmental authority. Many vanpools pay for themselves as well, while others receive some subsidy.

Some issues that need to be further studied to implement a Lower Rio Grande Valley region-wide rideshare program include:

- Who will implement the regional rideshare program? Please note that to take advantage of economies of scale and to ensure success, there should be one designated vanpool operator in the region. Multiple exclusive databases ensure duplication of effort and loss of opportunities.
- The issues and cost savings surrounding the use of lease operated passenger vans versus public owned passenger vans. Again however if the vans are full, they can pay for themselves.
- What combination of minivan and full sized van?
- The best subsidy and cost structure to optimize reporting and increase customer utility.
- The level of safety associated with 15-passenger vans and the impact of driver training courses for mitigating accident rates.

Potential projects can include:

1. Seek vanpool projects in an effort to improve air quality, reduce congestion, and provide transportation alternatives to the general population and workforce of the Rio Grande Valley.
2. Seek ridesharing opportunities at colonias, working with local advocates and entities to organize vanpools. Also work closely with major employers to identify potential vanpools.

Potential Costs. Rideshare programs are low cost (staff time) and vanpools are by definition required to pay for themselves. Subsidies are often available from local government and businesses that benefit from vanpool programs. This program can also be contracted to a private firm experienced in managing these programs.

Strategy No. 10: Non-Traditional - Market Development/Shopper Shuttles

Lower Rio Grande Valley's unique geography and development pattern makes traditional transit and commuter service difficult or impossible to operate in many areas of the county. There are a number of nontraditional services that are low cost in nature and flexible enough to meet a variety of needs.

The nature of the non-traditional family of services is that service is not implemented (and costs are not incurred) until demand has met minimum thresholds. Market development service requires a minimum number of riders for a group to request service. Ridesharing, vanpooling, and carpooling are other approaches that can help meet the needs of commuters in a very cost-effective manner.

It makes sense from a planning, management, and operations standpoint to coordinate all of these non-traditional services together as part of the overall public transit program provided by the transit systems.

Shopper Shuttles

With peak hour vehicles available for other services during mid day, it may be possible to offer shopper shuttle services to sponsors willing to support the transit system. The shopper shuttle targets neighborhoods with high numbers of transit dependent populations and frequent destinations (e.g. Wal-Mart, HEB, and medical centers), and can be very effective during off peak hours. Often these arrangements pay for themselves through funding from the retailers, who in return, receive the business, advertising/promotion, and they get involved in a positive way with their communities.

There are numerous examples (in Texas and across the country) of this type of service being successful with supermarkets and discount "big boxes." Typically shuttles target transit dependent persons (elderly, disabled, and low-income persons) in their neighborhoods. Service is usually for shopping and medical.

Potential Costs. Based on the data reported by each of the transit systems (see Appendix 2), the cost to implement new service will cost between \$50 and \$70 per vehicle hour, depending on the type of service, size of the vehicle and other factors. With shoppers shuttles it may be feasible to contract with local businesses to offset all or part of the costs.

SECTION 4 - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The strategies will be implemented over the five year horizon of this plan. The objective in this implementation plan is to introduce the changes in a manner that maximizes ridership and funding. That is, the services with the most ability to increase ridership, coupled with the areas with the greatest need will be implemented first. Funding will drive implementation however as municipalities that provide local funding will gain priority status. It should be noted that TxDOT's funding formula stresses ridership increases which necessitates serving the high ridership areas over isolated areas. As with all plans, these timelines are subject to change.

Year 1

In the first year, the Mobility Management activities will take priority because so many future activities will depend on these functions being coordinated. Other activities will center on planning in support of the future services to be implemented. All stakeholder and operator committees will be formed as well.

- Mobility Management – The stakeholders will organize work groups, seek funding, and determine who will perform which functions
- Conduct Regional Planning and Funding Activities - Fixed-Route, Feeder Service, commuter, and other service
- Mainline Regional Service – Initiate planning and funding activities
- Rideshare/Vanpool Service – Implement rideshare program
- Implement various low/no cost coordination activities:
 - Mentoring/Technical Support
 - Group training
 - Group procurement
- Sponsorship Program – the program should be designed and marketed in Year 1

Year 2

In the second year, the Mobility Management functions will be implemented slowly. Planning and funding activities will continue and vehicle procurement will be initiated. This year will require careful planning and working with the local community leaders.

- Mobility Management - functions to include:
 - One Stop Information Center
 - Customer marketing and education – coordinated
 - Develop a uniform fare structure
- Human Service Coordination – Initiate activities of training, maintenance, and vehicle utilization
- Main Line – Implement service. This is the essential element of regional connectivity
- Fixed-Route/Feeder Service – Continue planning and funding efforts and secure arrangements for operators and commitments from leaders
- Procure vehicles
- Fixed Schedule Service – Implement in selected areas in place of paratransit vehicle
- Shopper shuttle – Seek partners for service (e.g. HEB or Walmart)
- Sponsorship Program – This program should be implemented in Year 2

Year 3

In the third year the Mobility Management activities will continue to grow. Feeder service will be started as local funding is available. Vehicles and technology will be procured for future years. Where appropriate, planning activities will continue – much of the energy should be focused on implementation.

- Mobility Management:
 - Implement uniform fare structure
 - Conduct other functions as appropriate
 - Monitor all service
- Fixed-Route – Procure vehicles, initiate new JARC and New Freedom service in Brownsville and McAllen
- Main Line – Implement Raymondville service
- Feeder Service – Initiate half of the feeder service

- Fixed Schedule Service – Implement all other areas outside of fixed-route and feeder areas

Year 4

In this year the operators will prepare for fixed-route service in the two sets of cities. The rest of the feeders will be implemented. The Mobility Management activities will implement the through ticketing services.

- Mobility Management – Ongoing activities
- Fixed-Route – Implement the fixed-route services
- Shopper Shuttle – Seek additional opportunities for service
- Monitor service

Year 5

This year should focus on measuring changes and planning for new services over the next five years.

- Mobility Management – Implement new planning initiative for the next five years
- Fixed-Route – Identify new JARC and New Freedom opportunities

Year 6

In Year 6, planning activities will be completed for the next five year plan. Activities will be prioritized and will include expanded urban service, new feeder/commuter routes, and upgraded technology for fixed-route as well as paratransit. The system will also be fine-tuned at least twice a year. The possibility of consolidating all of the public operators should be explored in this time frame.

Attachment 1

Public Opinion Survey

Lower Rio Grande Development Council (LRGVDC)

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ABOUT TRANSIT SERVICES IN THE VALLEY

To improve service and public awareness, LRGVDC is surveying people at the Lone Star event in July, 2011. This survey is administered by community volunteers. If you have already filled out a survey **this week**, you do not need to fill this out again. Thank you.

1. Do you use public transportation services in the Valley?

Yes

No

If "No", why not:

Drive own car

Cannot Afford Bus

Does not go where I live or need to go

Inconvenient

2. If "Yes", what was the purpose of your trip(s)? (Check all that apply.)

Work

Social/ Recreation

School

Shopping

Medical

Government Agency

Other:

3. If "Yes", how often do you use these services?

5 – 7 days a week

3 – 4 days a week

1 – 2 days a week

Once a month

2 times a month

Less than once a month:

4. If "No", how do you get to places? (Check all that apply.)

Drive own car

Ride from family member

Ride from friend

Other:

5. Usually, where do your trips start? Please provide a place (home community/ neighborhood/ nearest major intersection.)

6. Where in the Valley would you like to go that you can't get to by public transportation? Please provide place(s). (Name and location of store, medical center, etc.)

7. How did you get to the event today? (Drove my own car, ride from family member, etc.)
