

# El Paso County Community Transportation Study Task Order No. 10: Community Demand Response Service Planning

## *Final Report and Service Plan for General Public Demand Response Transit*

Prepared for:



EL PASO  
TRANSPORTATION  
AUTHORITY

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

February 23, 2026

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Definition of GPDRT.....	1
1.2 El Paso Outer County Region.....	2
1.3 Report Organization.....	3
2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	4
2.1 Existing Transportation Services.....	4
2.2 Transit Needs Index.....	5
2.3 Transportation Provider Profiles.....	11
2.4 Trip Demand Estimates.....	14
2.5 Major Demand Generators.....	19
3.0 GPDRT SERVICE PLANNING GUIDELINES.....	22
4.0 PRELIMINARY GPDRT SCENARIOS.....	23
4.1 Considerations.....	23
4.2 Potential Service Components.....	24
4.3 Preliminary Scenario #1: Consolidated DAR and ADA Paratransit.....	28
4.4 Preliminary Scenario #2: Separate DAR and ADA Paratransit.....	29
4.5 Preliminary Scenario #3: Microtransit.....	30
4.6 Preliminary Scenario #4: User-Side Subsidy Program.....	30
4.7 Evaluation of Preliminary Scenarios.....	31
4.8 Chapter References.....	37
5.0 PREFERRED GPDRT SCENARIO.....	38
6.0 GPDRT USE CASE EXAMPLES.....	39
7.0 GPDRT SERVICE PLAN.....	46
7.1 Introduction.....	46
7.2 Component: Dial-a-Ride Commingled with Existing ADA Paratransit.....	46
7.4 Component: User-Side Subsidy Program.....	62
7.5 Component: Volunteer Driver Program.....	64
7.6 Component Integration.....	67
7.7 Implementation.....	70
7.8 Performance Measures.....	71
7.9 Chapter References.....	74
APPENDIX A: ROUND 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.....	75
APPENDIX B: ROUND 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.....	85

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. El Paso Outer County Service Area .....	3
Figure 2. El Paso Outer County Senior Population .....	6
Figure 3. El Paso Outer County Households with an Individual with a Disability .....	7
Figure 4. El Paso Outer County Population below Poverty Level.....	8
Figure 5. El Paso Outer County Households with No Vehicle Available .....	9
Figure 6. TNI for Outer County Census Block Groups .....	10
Figure 7. Fort Bliss Vanpool Origins and Destinations in the Outer County .....	12
Figure 8. El Paso Outer County Key Demand Generators .....	21
Figure 9. Location of Illustrative Resident of Hueco Tanks .....	39
Figure 10. Location of Illustrative Resident of South San Elizario .....	40
Figure 11. Location of Illustrative Resident of Canutillo .....	41
Figure 12. Accommodation of Trip Requests in Commingled ETA access Service .....	47
Figure 13. Original ETA Access Zones .....	49
Figure 14. Commingled ETA access Zones .....	50
Figure 15. Existing ETA ándale San Elizario-Clint Zone (Pilot).....	56
Figure 16. Potential ETA ándale Socorro Zone.....	57
Figure 17. Potential ETA ándale Horizon City-Sparks Zone.....	57
Figure 18. Potential ETA ándale Canutillo Zone .....	58
Figure 19. All Existing and Potential ETA ándale Zones .....	59

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Existing ETA Transportation Services .....	5
Table 2. TNI Data and Results .....	10
Table 3. Summary of Transportation Providers Serving the Outer County .....	11
Table 4. ETA's GPDRT Peers .....	15
Table 5. Outer County GPDRT Trip Demand based on Peer Data .....	15
Table 6. TCRP Report 161 Forecast Methodology Inputs.....	17
Table 7. TCRP Report 161 Forecast Methodology Outputs.....	18
Table 8. ETA GPDRT Annual One-Way Trip Demand Estimates .....	19
Table 9. El Paso Outer County Key Demand Generators .....	20
Table 10. Microtransit Costs and Performance .....	26
Table 11. VDP Feasibility Assessment.....	28
Table 12. DAR Ridership Forecasts .....	32
Table 13. Population Density of Outer County Communities .....	33
Table 14. Illustrative Microtransit Fares in Texas .....	34
Table 15. Summary of Preliminary Scenarios .....	36
Table 16. ETA GPRDT Options for Illustrative Riders in the Outer County (Exploratory) .....	43
Table 17. Existing and Potential ETA ándale Zones .....	55
Table 18. Potential ETA ándale Ridership at Service Maturity .....	61
Table 19. GPDRT Service Selection Matrix .....	69
Table 20. GPDRT Performance Measures and Standards .....	72

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA) commissioned the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to undertake a Community Transportation Study. The objective of the Study is to plan general public demand response transportation (GPDRT) service to accommodate unmet demand in the rural areas of the county (i.e., the Outer County).

This report describes the work conducted during the GPRDT Study and contains the GPDRT Service Plan as Chapter 7. The GPDRT Service Plan includes the following elements:

- Descriptions of GPDRT service components
- Discussion of how the service components are integrated
- A high-level implementation schedule
- Performance measures
- Public participation guidance

Project work tasks consisted of the following:

- Existing conditions evaluation
- Development of preliminary GPDRT service scenarios, which were used to explore a range of service options
- Development and refinement of a preferred GPDRT service scenario
- Preparation of a GPDRT Service Plan
- Coordination with ETA staff
- Two rounds of public engagement, including in-person events and surveys
- El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) board presentations

The GPDRT Service Plan also reflects the outcomes of previous studies, including the following:

- *El Paso County Regional Transit Institutional Options Feasibility* (the "Phase 1 Study"). Adopted in 2018 and updated in 2019.
- *Best Practices and Guidelines for El Paso County Rural Public Transportation to Identify Potential Stop Location and Route Configurations: Final Report* (the "Phase 2 Study"). Adopted in 2021.
- *Implementation Plan for El Paso County Rural Transit System: Final Report* (the "Implementation Plan"). Adopted in 2023.
- *El Paso County ADA Paratransit Plan* (the "ADA Plan"). Adopted in 2024.

### 1.1 Definition of GPDRT

Demand response transit (DRT) is public transit service that operates in response to individual trip requests and does not follow fixed routes or fixed schedules. DRT vehicles may be shared by multiple riders traveling between different origins and destinations; the more sharing that occurs, the more productive DRT is.

Categories of DRT include general public DRT (i.e., GPDRT), ADA paratransit, and special population demand response service. GPDRT serves all individuals in the community, whereas ADA paratransit and special population demand response service serve specific population segments.

GPDRT can take several forms, including the following:

- Dial-a-ride (DAR)
- Microtransit
- Feeder service to fixed-route transit
- User-side subsidy program
- Volunteer driver program (VDP)
- Point or route deviation service

In low-density areas, it can be more cost-effective to provide GPDRT service than fixed-route service. GPDRT can also be used in such areas to grow transit demand to the point where fixed-route service becomes cost-effective.

## **1.2 El Paso Outer County Region**

The study area for the Community Transportation Study is referred to as the “Outer County.” Figure 1 provides a map of El Paso County and the Outer County area. The Outer County is the non-urbanized rural area that excludes:

- The area within 3/4 mile of fixed-route service (which is considered to be within walking distance of fixed-route service)
- Fort Bliss Military Reservation area (which is served by Sun Metro through an agreement with Fort Bliss to operate fixed routes around and through Fort Bliss)
- The city of Socorro, as this municipality opted out of ETA service and plans to provide its own transit service for seniors

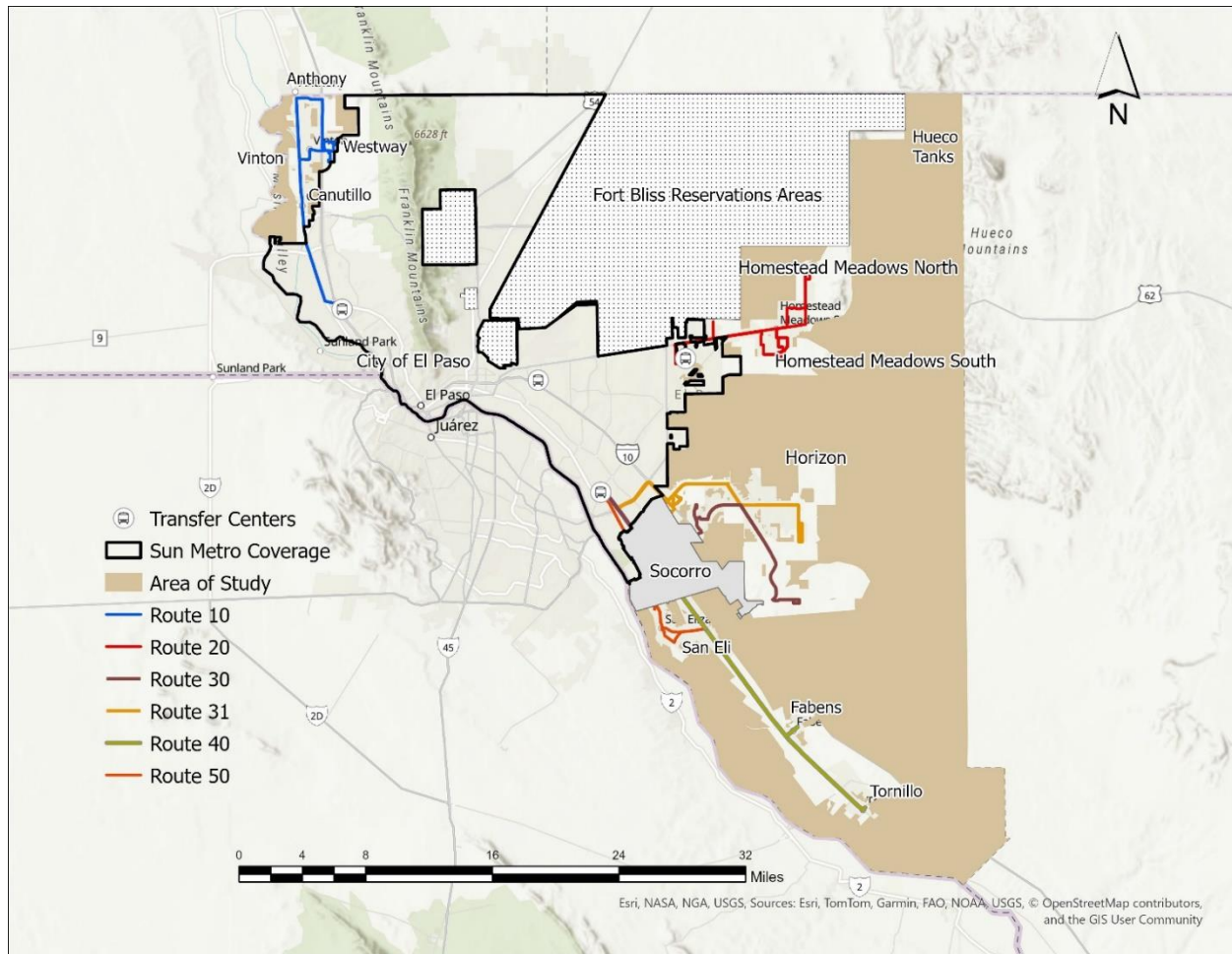


Figure 1. El Paso Outer County Service Area

### 1.3 Report Organization

This report is divided into the following sections:

- Existing conditions
- GPDRT service planning guidelines
- Preliminary GPDRT scenarios
- Preferred GPDRT scenario
- GPDRT use case examples
- GPDRT Service Plan
- Appendix A: Round 1 Public Engagement
- Appendix B: Round 2 Public Engagement

## 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter describes existing transit service and potential need for transit service in the Outer County. The chapter includes the following sections:

- *Existing ETA Transit Services.* An inventory of existing ETA transit services throughout the county.
- *Transit Needs Index.* An analysis of potential need for GPDRT service.
- *Transportation Provider Profiles.* An inventory of other transportation operators in the county.
- *Trip Demand Estimates.* Preliminary forecasts of total (not service-specific) GPDRT ridership in the Outer County.
- *Major Demand Generators.* A list of locations in the Outer County that are likely to generate the most transit trips.

### 2.1 Existing Transportation Services

Table 1 summarizes existing transportation services that are provided and/or funded by ETA. Additional services in the ETA service area are in different stages of planning and implementation and include the following:

- *ETA paseo expansion.* Routes 11, 21, 32, 32X, 40X, and 48 are planned. Routes 11, 21, 40X, and 48 (formerly 84) were identified in the Phase 2 Study.
- *GPDRT implementation.* The GPDRT Study described in this report identifies additional ETA services for the general public. These services consist of advanced reservation DAR (commingled with ETA access), a user-side subsidy program, and a volunteer driver program (VDP). These services are described in more detail in Chapters 4 and 7 of this report.
- *Socorro microtransit.* This service was identified in the Socorro ¡Avanzando! 2025-2028 Transit Development Plan. The service was launched in July 2025, with funding provided by the City of Socorro.

**Table 1. Existing ETA Transportation Services**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Operator</b>
ETA paseo	Fixed route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates in major corridors outside of the El Paso city limits and serves Sun Metro transfer centers</li> <li>Routes: 10, 20, 30, 31, 40, and 50</li> </ul>	Transdev
ETA access	ADA paratransit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates within 3/4 mile of fixed routes plus areas surrounded by ETA fixed routes</li> <li>Divided into East, West, and South zones</li> <li>Meets ETA's ADA paratransit obligations</li> <li>Trips between zones and trips with destinations inside the Sun Metro ADA paratransit service area are available for a higher fare (premium service)*</li> </ul>	Transdev
ETA ándale	Microtransit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates as a pilot service in San Elizario and Clint and provides connections to/from Socorro, MVTC, and EPCC</li> </ul>	Transdev
Vamonos	Vanpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates countywide</li> </ul>	Enterprise Mobility
Gold Route	Commuter bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves the corridor running from El Paso (two transfer centers) to/from Anthony to/from Las Cruces</li> <li>Managed by NMDOT</li> </ul>	All Aboard America
SunCycle	Bikesharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves the downtown area of El Paso</li> <li>Managed by the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority (CRRMA)</li> </ul>	Mesilla Pedicab Company

\*ETA adopted a fare-free policy in 2025, after development and evaluation of the preliminary scenarios.

## 2.2 Transit Needs Index

The first step in creating the Outer County demand estimation for GPDRT involved collecting and mapping Census block group–level demographic data from the 2022 Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates and the Business Analyst 2023 database. This involved separately mapping four demographic measures and then combining them into one “score” (i.e., the transit needs index, or TNI) that demonstrates level of transit need in each Census block group. The four demographic measures are:

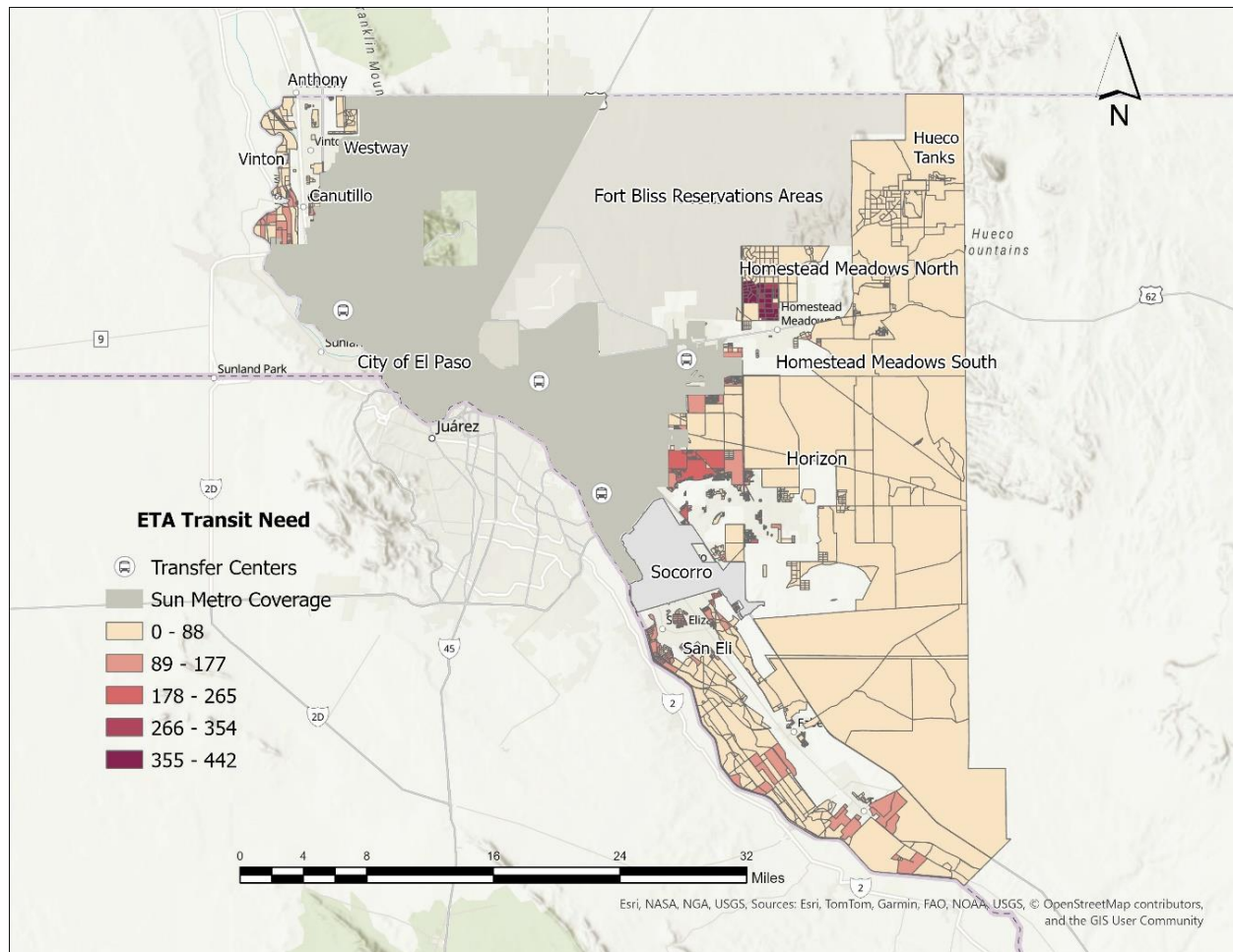
1. Senior Population (65 Years of Age and Over)
2. Households with an Individual with a Disability
3. Population Below the Poverty Level
4. Households with No Vehicle

The TNI calculation involved the categorization of the Outer County Census block groups into ten equal intervals. A TNI of 1 for a given Census block group indicates the lowest relative transit need within the Outer County. A TNI of 10 for a given Census block group indicates the greatest relative transit need within the Outer County.

### **Senior Population (Age 65 and Older)**

Figure 2 shows the population aged 65 and older in the Outer County Census block groups. The elderly population is distributed across different areas of El Paso County, with notable concentrations in areas near the northern Sparks community (north of Route 31), near Homestead Meadows, near Clint (south of Socorro),

and in some areas in the Village of Vinton and Canutillo (the west side of Route 10). In a smaller but also important amount, border communities in San Elizario, south Fabens, and Tornillo also have concentrations of seniors aged 65 and older.



**Figure 2. El Paso Outer County Senior Population**

**Households with an Individual with a Disability**

Figure 3 shows the percentage of housing units in each Census block group in which at least one household member is a person with a disability. The most notable concentrations of households with at least one person with a disability in the Outer County are in the recently developed areas north of Eastlake Blvd (north of Route 31), Clint, and some areas of Socorro. A significant concentration of persons with a disability can also be found in Tornillo, west of San Elizario, and in Canutillo.

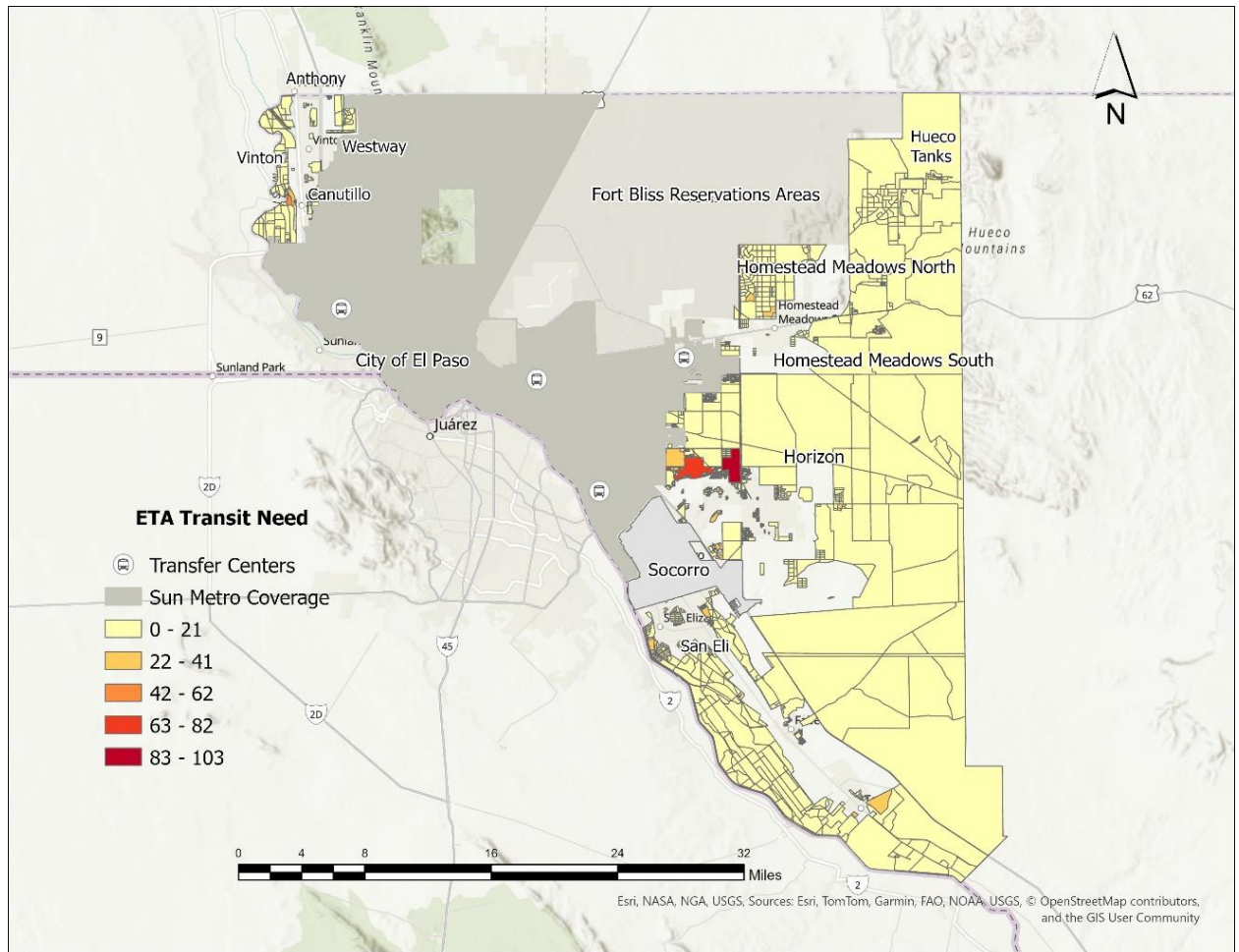
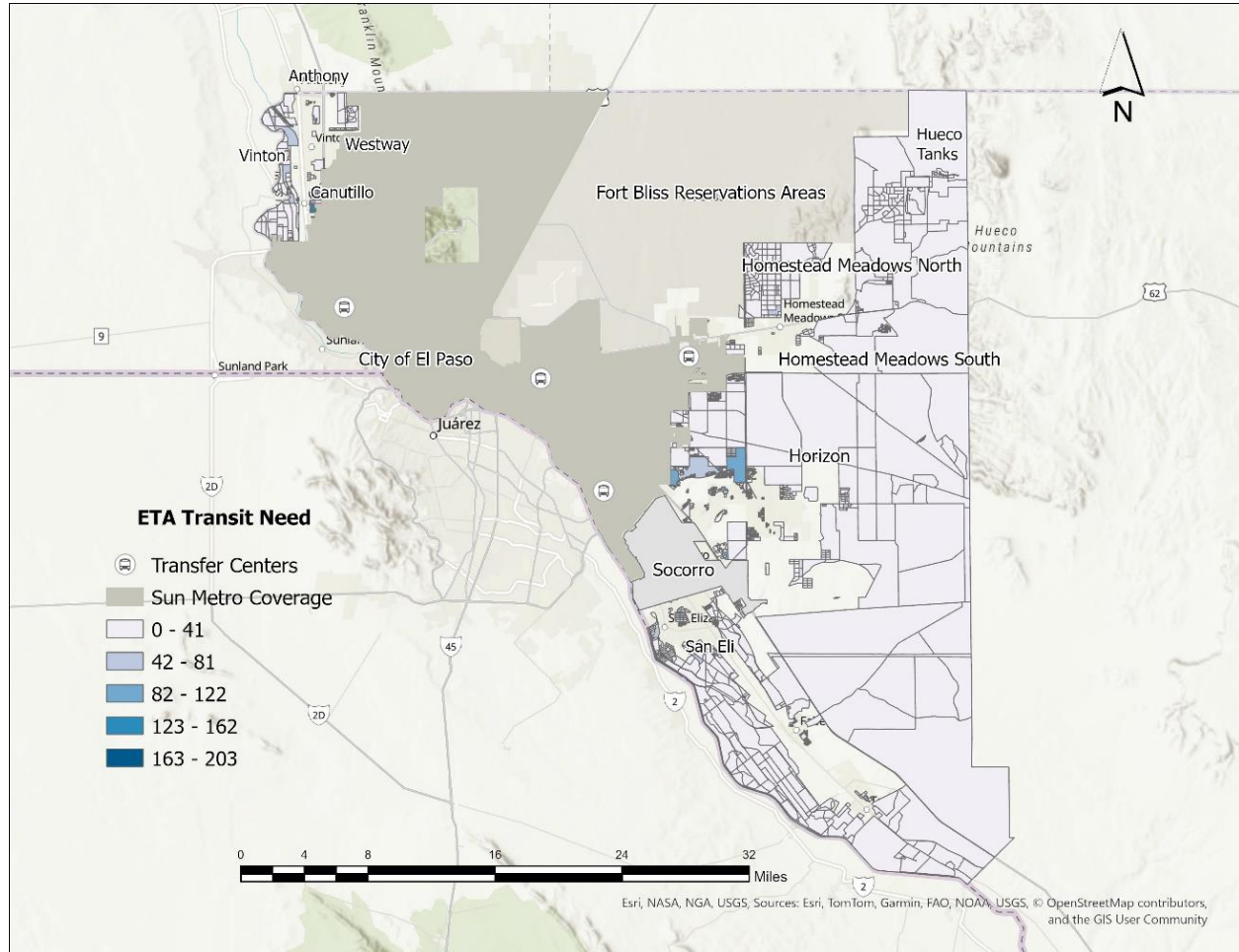


Figure 3. El Paso Outer County Households with an Individual with a Disability

**Population below Poverty Level**

Figure 4 shows the percentage of the population in each Census block group with an income below the poverty level. In 2023, the median household income in El Paso County, Texas, was \$55,417—significantly below the national median of \$80,610 and the Texas state median of \$77,719.<sup>1</sup> Outside the city limits of El Paso, concentrations of persons living below the poverty level are in southeast El Paso County, including areas in Homestead Meadows North and South, Horizon City, Socorro, Clint, Fabens, and Tornillo.

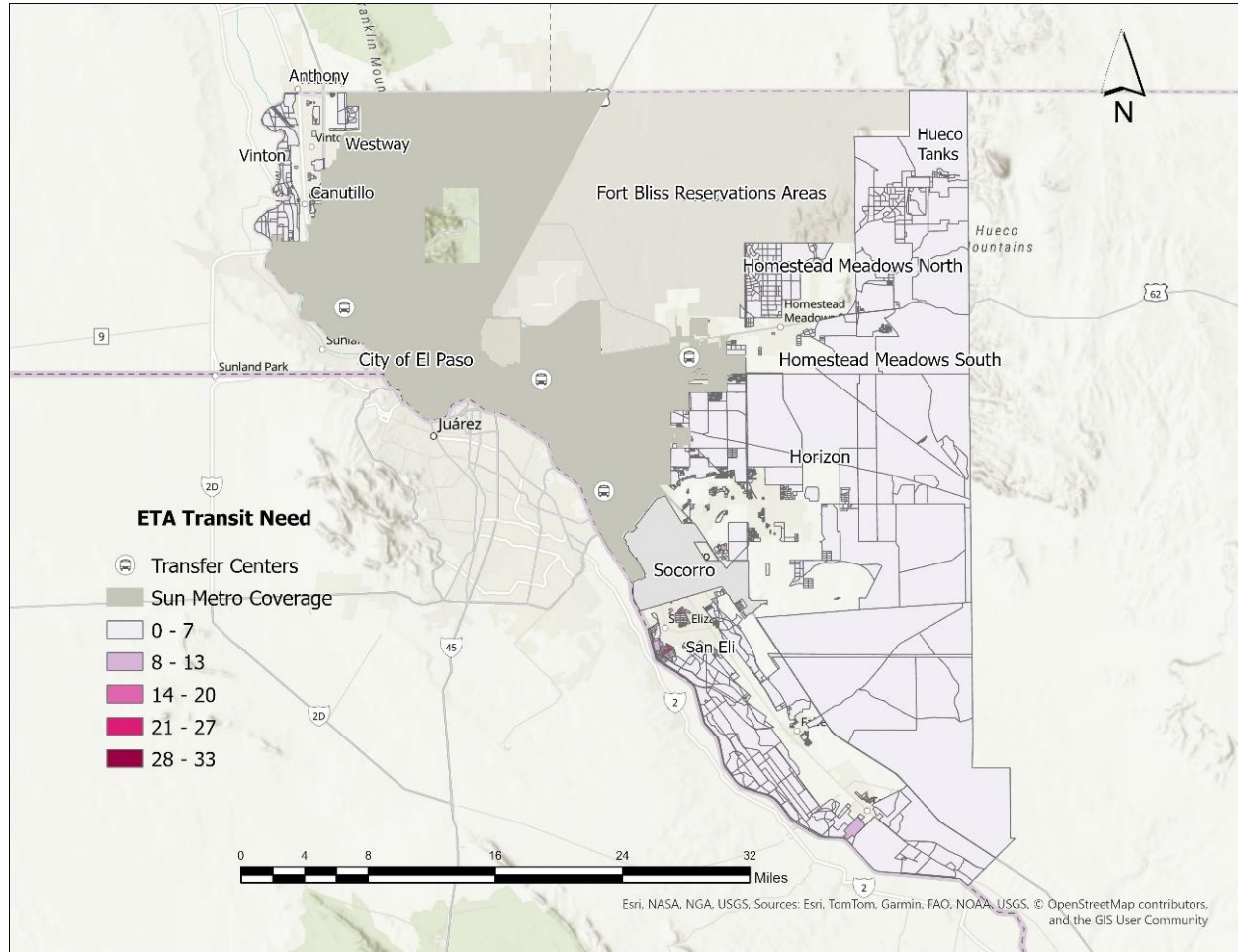


**Figure 4. El Paso Outer County Population below Poverty Level**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/elpasocountytxas/IPE120223>

**Households with No Vehicle Available**

Figure 5 shows the percentage of households in each Census block group with zero vehicles available in the household. Concentrations of households with zero vehicles are more commonly observed in San Elizario and Tornillo.



**Figure 5. El Paso Outer County Households with No Vehicle Available**

**Transit Needs Index Results**

Figure 6 shows the TNI for the Census block groups in the Outer County. Table 2 presents the TNI data and results for the West, East, and Total Outer County areas.

Higher-TNI areas, represented in orange and red, are concentrated in locations including Homestead Meadows North (north of Montana Avenue), the Southview area located north of Eastlake Boulevard (north of Route 31), and eastern Clint. These are locations with the greatest relative need for transit services. In contrast, lower TNI Census block groups (represented in shades of green) are more prominent in less densely populated or suburban areas like Horizon City, Westway, South Tornillo, and Hueco Tanks.

In the northern westside portion of El Paso County, high TNI areas are concentrated near Canutillo and Vinton, indicating a greater need for transit services in these regions. Route 10 runs through areas with predominantly low-to-moderate transit need, providing a critical connection between communities such as Anthony, Vinton, and Canutillo. Its alignment suggests it primarily serves areas with relatively lower transit

demand, emphasizing the need to evaluate its coverage against areas with higher TNI scores. This orientation on Route 10 highlights opportunities for optimizing transit resources in this region. Details on realignment of Route 10 were covered in a previous study<sup>2</sup>, suggesting more coverage for the Canutillo community.

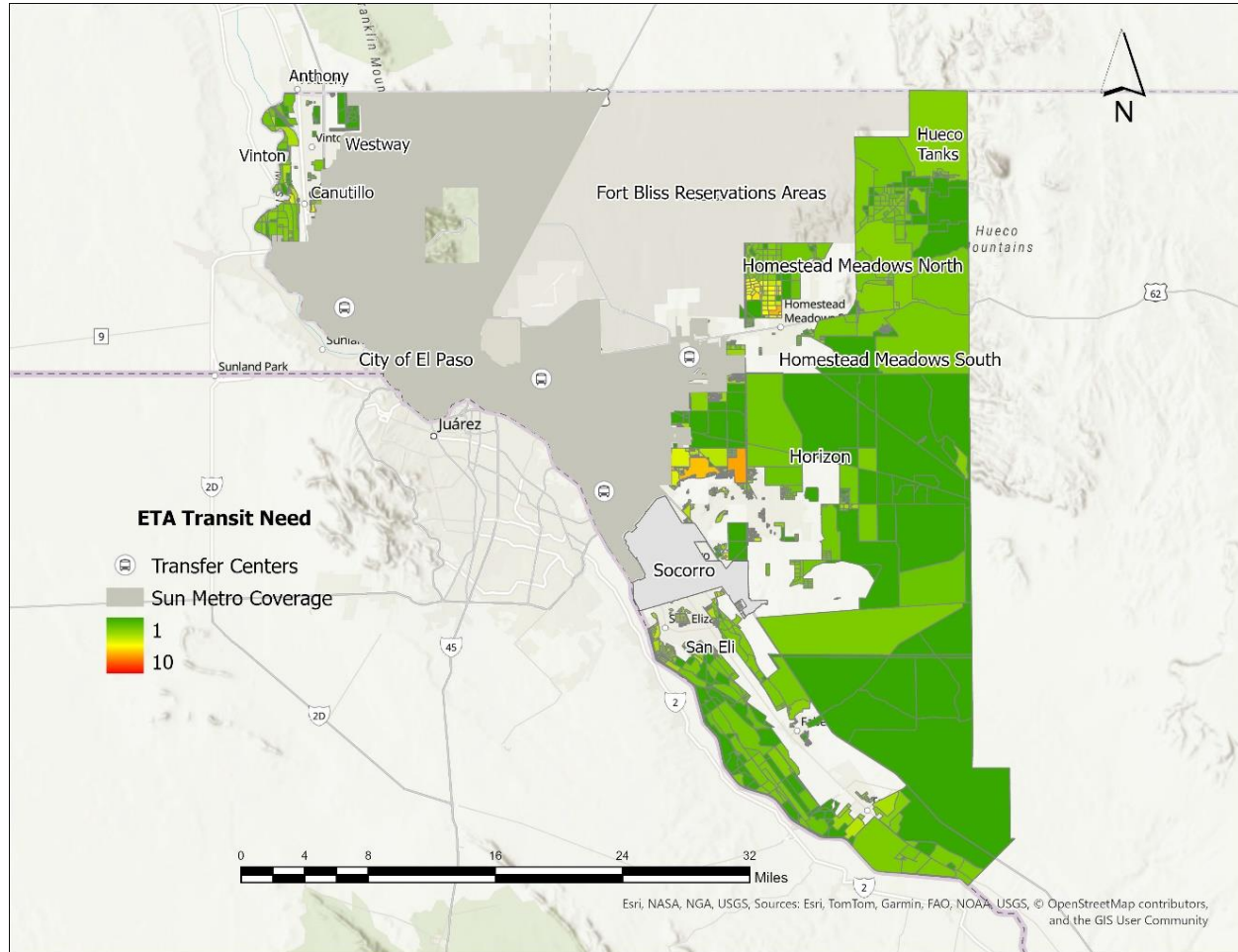


Figure 6. TNI for Outer County Census Block Groups

Table 2. TNI Data and Results

Outer County Area	Number of Census Block Groups	Population Below Poverty Level	Individuals with a Disability	Senior Population (65+)	Households with Zero Vehicles	Total Outer County Population	Total TNI Score	Average Census Block Group TNI Score
West	218	287	703	1,175	1,557	7,893	507	2.33
East	1,714	2,377	7,550	8,350	14,946	90,349	4,686	2.73
Total	1,932	2,664	8,253	9,525	16,503	98,242	5,193	2.69

<sup>2</sup> Best Practices and Guidelines for El Paso County Rural Public Transportation to Identify Potential Stop Locations and Route Configurations. TTI, July 2021.

### 2.3 Transportation Provider Profiles

This section provides profiles of human service agencies that operate, purchase, or facilitate arrangements for Outer County transportation services for their clients as well as other private non-profit transportation providers and for-profit carriers that serve the Outer County. Ultimately, the purpose of providing the profiles of these transportation providers is to get an estimate of the annual number of trips these providers are serving and then to subtract those trips, where appropriate, from the estimated demand for GPDRT as calculated in Section 2.4, the remainder constituting the demand to be met by ETA GPDRT. Table 3 provides a summary of the transportation providers and their annual passenger trips.

In consideration of this goal, profiles of ETA’s and Sun Metro’s fixed-route and paratransit services are not included in this report because their respective service areas do not overlap with the Outer County. For the same reason, transportation services for the City of Socorro are not included.

**Table 3. Summary of Transportation Providers Serving the Outer County**

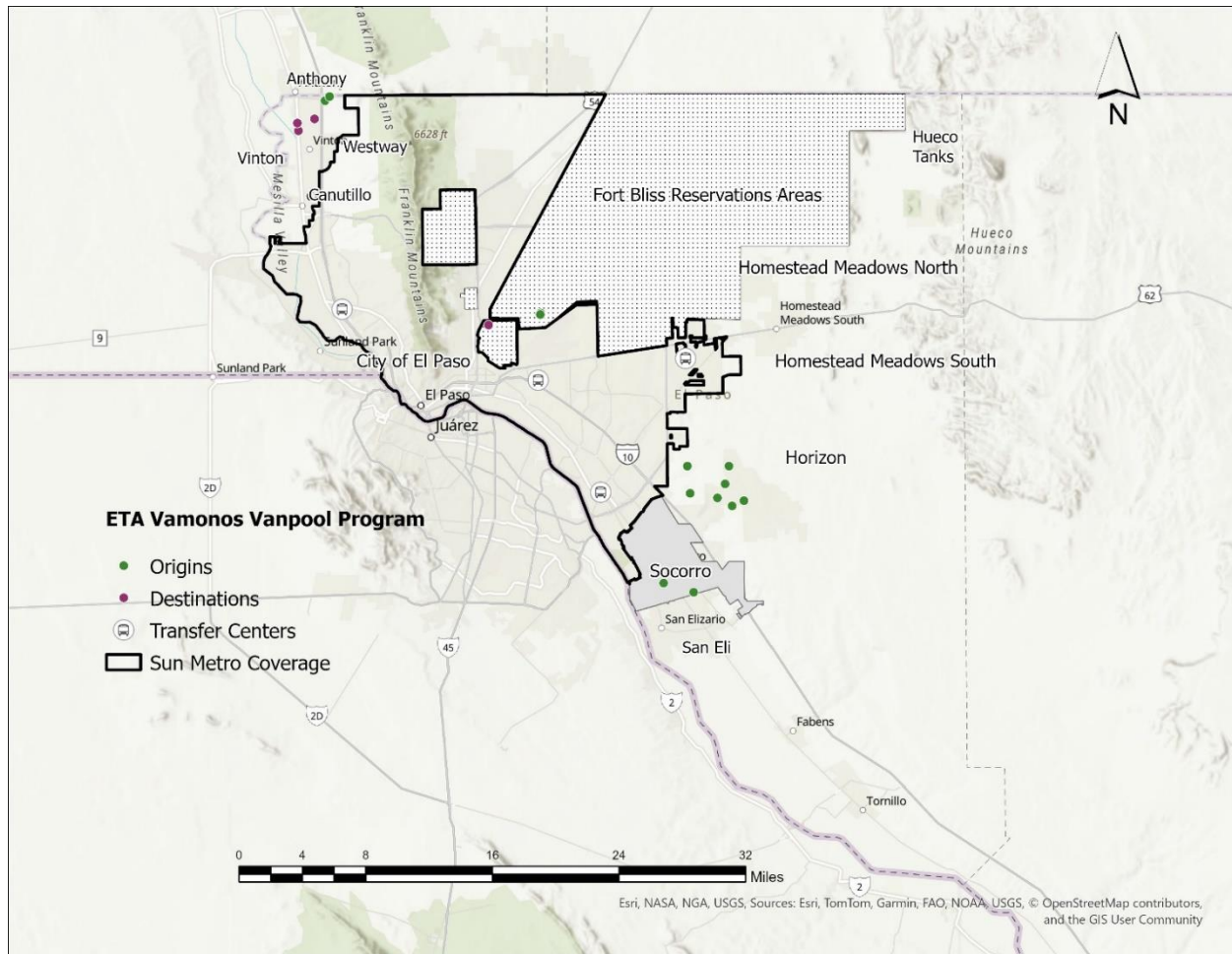
Provider	Client/Rider Eligibility	Service Area Within Outer County	Trip Purpose Eligibility	Annual Trips with Origins in Outer County
Vamonos Vanpool	General Public	Rural Regions to Fort Bliss	Work	3,600
Project Amistad	5310-Rural	Rural Regions of EPC	Any	3,470
Area Agency on Aging	Seniors		Medical & Dialysis	1,300
Viba Transportation	NEMT clients	Outer County	NEMT	1,920
<b>Total</b>				<b>6,990</b>

Note: NEMT = non-emergency medical transportation

#### **Vamonos Vanpool**

El Paso County’s Vámonos Vanpool program is a commuter service managed by Enterprise, under contract to El Paso County Transit Operations Department. This program offers flexible vanpooling solutions to reduce individual commuting costs and alleviate traffic congestion. The service is available throughout El Paso County and is partially funded by the Category 5 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) through TxDOT and the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Currently, the vanpool program totals 145 vans involving an average of five riders per vanpool (including the driver) and operating an average of six days a week. There is an even distribution between those operating five, six, and seven days a week. According to a recent analysis, 92% of these vanpools originate in urban parts of the county, and the remaining vanpools originate in rural areas of the county. In addition, all but 15 of the vanpools have destinations outside of the county—mostly in New Mexico. The 15 other vanpools go to Fort Bliss. A map of the 15 vanpools’ origins and destinations is provided as Figure 7.

Based on these statistics, the Vámonos Vanpool program is responsible for 429,000 one-way trips annually, with 34,320 vanpool trips being made by County residents living in rural areas. We will use this number as an estimate for these vanpools originating from the Outer County. However, since only 15 (10.3%) of the 145 vanpools have work destinations in El Paso County, we estimate the intra-county travel need from the Outer County being met by the Vámonos Vanpool program as 10.5% of 34,320 trips or about 3,600 trips per year.



**Figure 7. Fort Bliss Vanpool Origins and Destinations in the Outer County**

**Project Amistad**

Project Amistad is a 501(c)(3) social service organization that provides a variety of human services to the El Paso community. Social services are provided to seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans, as well as to individuals in need of a guardian, individuals needing a representative payee, individuals/families of homelessness, and individuals facing struggles associated with divorce or domestic violence. Transportation is integral to Project Amistad’s mission and to many of these services. This includes services provided through Project Amistad’s Aging, Disability, & Transportation Resource Center.

The most relevant transportation service currently provided by Project Amistad is the “5310-rural” transportation service, available with advance reservations on a first-come/first-served basis for seniors and persons with disabilities. The 5310-rural service is funded by TxDOT through a Section 5310 grant, which serves rural areas up to 25 miles outside the City of El Paso’s border; this includes all of the Outer County. Project Amistad has a vehicle fleet totaling 35 vehicles, of which 10 to 15 vehicles are used for the 5310-rural service on a given weekday. There is no limitation with respect to trip purpose. The fare is \$3.00.

From September 2024 through January 2025 (five months), 1,446 rural one-way passenger trips were provided on the 5310-rural service, equating to an estimate of 3,470 one-way passenger trips annually. In addition, Project Amistad also serves between 6 and 10 veteran trips per month from the Outer County, as sponsored by Veterans Service of El Paso.

Project Amistad also serves as a subcontractor for MV Transportation, Sun Metro's ADA paratransit program (Lift) contractor. For this contract, Project Amistad operates 10 Lift runs. Project Amistad also provides non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) trips for MV Transportation, which also doubles as a Medicaid NEMT vendor. However, these services, as well as the bulk of the veterans trips, are all within the City of Paso. Note that Project Amistad formerly was a direct NEMT transportation provider, but no longer provides such trips, except as subcontract to MV.

Additionally, Project Amistad operates and manages Sun Metro's Mitigation Transit Service, providing neighborhood and express transit options in Northeast and West El Paso. These areas are outside of the Outer County.

In terms of operational efficiency and service demand, the agency faces the challenge of dispatching enough vehicles each day to minimize wait times and meet service standards, while remaining efficient and cost-effective. This includes providing dialysis-related transportation, where timely and reliable service is critical. Securing diverse funding has become a recent challenge for Project Amistad. Areas that represent a challenge for the program are the El Paso far east (beyond Homestead Meadows) and Las Colonias (South of Horizon) mainly because of the road conditions and travel distances.

### **Rio Grande Area Agency on Aging**

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) provides transport for seniors aged 60 and above within El Paso County. This service is limited to three round trip medical/dialysis trips per week. Seniors must call at least four days before the appointment, and there is no fare. Service is provided on a first-come/first-served basis based on the available capacity of the transportation vendors under contract to the AAA. In the Outer County, the go-to vendors are Med Blue, which transports an average of 80 one-way passenger trips per month, and Helping Hands Transportation, which transports about 20 one-way passenger trips per month. Viba Transportation (see below) serves as a back-up, transporting an average of 8 one-way trips per month. Together, these three vendors are transporting about 1,300 one-way passenger trips annually. At an average cost of \$40 per one-way passenger trip, this equals an annual budget of \$53,000 for senior trips originating in the Outer County.

Note that the AAA is not providing funding to local senior centers in its area for the transportation of seniors to/from nutrition programs/congregate meals. According to AAA staff, they are aware that the senior center in Socorro does operate a senior van to transport seniors to/from the senior center; however, Socorro is outside the Outer County study area.

### **Viba Transportation**

Viba Transportation is a NEMT vendor, providing services to clients of multiple agencies. In 2023, Viba served 24,000 one-way passenger trips, primarily to persons with limited or no proficiency in English. It is estimated that 8% of these trips—or 1,920 one-way passenger trips—emanate from the Outer County. It should be noted that Viba does not provide service to and from Tornillo and communities beyond Homestead Meadows due to the extensive travel times, distances, and cost associated with operation.

### **University Medical Center**

University Medical Center (UMC) provides limited, non-emergency transportation for patients and affiliated individuals. With a fleet of two minibuses, both wheelchair-accessible, the service supports out-patient appointments and hospital discharges on a request basis. Coverage is constrained to specific areas around the hospital, leaving those farther away underserved. To meet demand effectively, UMC prioritizes specific

patient groups or transport needs, such as discharges and critical outpatient appointments. Individuals with Medicaid coverage in Texas are eligible for NEMT services at no cost. This includes transportation to and from medical appointments, such as those at UMC in El Paso. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHS) provides these services to ensure Medicaid beneficiaries can access necessary healthcare.

### **El Paso Veterans Administration Health Care System – Veterans Transportation Services and Disabled American Veterans Service**

The research team requested but did not receive data from El Paso Veterans Administration (VA) Health Care System.

## **2.4 Trip Demand Estimates**

TTI prepared estimates of Outer County GPDRT trip demand using two methodologies: a peer-based methodology and the Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 161 methodology. The former translates the amount of GPDRT service currently delivered by similar public transit operators to the Outer County context. The latter estimates GPDRT demand at the planning level based on research on rural transit need and demand in regions studied by the TCRP Report 161 researchers. Both methodologies produce demand estimates that represent what could be expected after the GPDRT system matures (i.e., after one to two years). It should be noted that TCRP Report 161 indicates that using a peer-based methodology is the preferred method.

### **Peer-Based Methodology**

Table 4 contains FY24 data for GPDRT trips provided by rural Texas public transit districts that could be considered ETA's peers. The transit districts in the table operate in West Texas and/or provided less than 100,000 trips (all modes) in FY24. All GPDRT services represented in the table require reservations at least one day in advance. Note that ETA provides vanpool service, but none of the peer districts do.

Applying the average trip rates from Table 4 to the Outer County resulted in the estimates of annual and average daily GPDRT demand shown in Table 5. These estimates reflect the range of GPDRT trips that would likely be provided by a public transit district (e.g., ETA).

**Table 4. ETA's GPDRT Peers**

Operator	Service Area Population	Service Area Size (sq mi)	FY24 GPDRT Trips	GPDRT Trips per Capita	GPDRT Trips/Sq Mi	Notes
Aspermont Small Business Development Center	35,584	6,313	12,000	0.34	1.90	
City of Del Rio	47,693	3,145	29,677	0.62	9.44	Also operates local fixed-route bus
Kleberg County Human Services	30,976	2,340	24,167	0.78	10.33	Also operates commuter bus and local flex-route bus
McLennan County Rural Transit District	66,656	947	20,299	0.30	21.44	Also operates commuter bus
Panhandle Community Services	229,466	25,095	201,891	0.88	8.05	
Rolling Plains Management Corporation	89,509	7,016	84,382	0.94	12.03	
South Plains Community Action Association	185,058	15,306	97,374	0.53	6.36	Also operates commuter bus
The Transit System, Inc.	71,796	607	19,443	0.27	32.03	
Webb County Community Action Agency	15,762	3,297	3,309	0.21	1.00	Also operates local flex-route bus
West Texas Opportunities	209,466	42,908	67,742	0.32	1.58	
<b>Average</b>				<b>0.52</b>	<b>10.41</b>	

Data source: Texas Transit Performance Dashboard and TxDOT PTN-128 transit data reporting system, accessed January 27, 2024

**Table 5. Outer County GPDRT Trip Demand based on Peer Data**

Item	Based on Population	Based on Land Area
Outer County Size (Estimated)	35,700	710
Annual One-Way GPDRT Trips	18,600	7,400
Daily One-Way GPDRT Trips*	62.0	24.7

\*Assumes GPDRT service is operated 300 days per year

**TCRP Report 161 Methodology**

Relevant definitions for the TCRP Report 161 methodology (which has been implemented as a spreadsheet tool) are:<sup>3</sup>

- *Need*. The number of people in a given geographic area likely to require public transportation service.
- *Demand*. The number of trips likely to be made over a given period within a given geographic area at a given price and level of service.
- *Need – Number of Persons*. The number of individuals likely to require public transportation.
- *Need – Number of Trips*. The number of trips those individuals requiring transportation would make if there were minimal limitations on their ability to travel.
- *Demand – Non-Program*. The demand for non-program trips. Program trips are “...those trips that would not be made without the existence of a specific social-service program or activity.” For program trips, “the distinguishing factor is that the trip time and destination are set not by the traveler but by the agency sponsoring the trip.”
- *Mobility Gap*. The total number of trips not taken because members of zero-vehicle households do not have the ease of mobility available to members of households with ready access to a car.

Table 6 summarizes the inputs to the TCRP Report 161 methodology. The last column in the table represents the Outer County. Table 7 summarizes the outputs of the methodology. The last row in Table 7 is an estimate of GPDRT non-program demand in the Outer County. This represents Outer County demand that could be met by ETA fixed-route service, by another transit provider, or by travelers’ friends and family. The 14,200 annual trip demand represents an average of 47.3 one-way trips per day.

---

<sup>3</sup> paraphrased or cited from TCRP Report 161

**Table 6. TCRP Report 161 Forecast Methodology Inputs**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Census/ACS Source</b>	<b>Total El Paso County</b>	<b>Urban El Paso County (El Paso City)</b>	<b>Socorro City</b>	<b>Fort Bliss CDP</b>	<b>% in Fixed-Route Area<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>El Paso Outer County<sup>2</sup></b>
Number of persons residing in households with income below the poverty level	B17001 – Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Age, 2023	158,190	120,990	7,267	1,317	75%	7,154
Number of households owning no vehicles – 1-person households	Table B08201 – Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023	11,963	11,342	274	0	75%	87
Number of households owning no vehicles – 2-person households	Table B08201 – Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023	3,969	3,650	46	7	75%	67
Number of households owning no vehicles – 3-person households	Table B08201 – Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023	1,775	1,295	19	35	75%	107
Number of households owning no vehicles – 4-or-more-person households	Table B08201 – Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023	1,851	1,062	15	77	75%	174
Population aged 60+	Table B01001 – Sex by Age, 2023	168,929	143,609	6,283	39	75%	4,750
Population aged 18-64 with a mobility limitation	Table S1810 – Disability Characteristics, 2023	16,512	14,504	548	29	75%	358
Persons living in households with no vehicle available (from above)	Table B08201 – Household Size by Vehicles Available, 2023	32,630	26,775	483	427	75%	1,236

<sup>1</sup> Approximated

<sup>2</sup> Total El Paso County less El Paso City less Socorro City less Fort Bliss Census Designated Place (CDP) and not within 3/4 mile of ETA fixed routes

**Table 7. TCRP Report 161 Forecast Methodology Outputs**

Item	Units	Explanation	Outer County
<b>Estimation of Transit Need</b>			
Total need for passenger transportation service	Persons	Persons in households with income below poverty level + persons in households owning no vehicle; individuals likely to require public transportation	8,400
Total households without access to a vehicle	Households	Households owning no vehicle	435
State-specific mobility gap	Daily 1-way passenger trips per household	2.0 for Texas	2.0
Total need based on mobility gap	Daily 1-way passenger trips	Trips made if there are minimal limitations on ability to travel; reflects unmet need; likely overestimates due to friends and family meeting some of the need	870
Total need based on mobility gap	Annual 1-way passenger trips	Trips made if there are minimal limitations on ability to travel; likely overestimates due to friends and family meeting some of the need	261,000
		20% of above value to be met by public transportation; per Page 17 in TCRP Report 161	52,200
<b>General Public Rural Non-Program Demand</b>			
Rural transit trips	Annual 1-way passenger trips	Non-program trip demand based on population aged 60+, limited mobility population aged 18-64, and residents of zero-vehicle households	14,200

**Demand to be Met by ETA GPDRT**

Table 8 is based on the above-described demand estimates and the information in Section 2, and it presents an estimate of the GPDRT demand to be met by ETA GPDRT (i.e., GPDRT demand that is not likely to be met by any of the providers profiled in Section 2.3). The ETA GPDRT demand in the table is presented as a range of estimates, which is reasonable because (1) it is not known the extent to which peer transit agencies are providing Section 5310 and NEMT trips and (2) trip data from El Paso VA Health Care System were not received. The lower-end estimate from the peer-based method (which is based on land area) seems unrealistically low in comparison to the trips carried by the peer transit agencies. Accordingly, the research team concluded that 7,200 to 11,600 annual one-way GPDRT trips could be estimated to be carried by ETA GPDRT.

**Table 8. ETA GPDRT Annual One-Way Trip Demand Estimates**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Peer-Based Method: Lower Estimate</b>	<b>Peer-Based Method: Higher Estimate</b>	<b>TCRP Report 161 Method</b>
Met + Unmet Demand Estimates (Annual One-Way Trips)	7,400	18,600	14,200
<i>Source</i>	<i>Table 5</i>	<i>Table 5</i>	<i>Table</i>
Demand Met by Other Providers	6,990	6,990	6,990
<i>Source</i>	<i>Table 3 less vanpool</i>	<i>Table 3 less vanpool</i>	<i>Table 3 less vanpool</i>
Demand to be Met by ETA GPDRT	410	11,610	7,210
<i>Source</i>	<i>Calculated</i>	<i>Calculated</i>	<i>Calculated</i>

## 2.5 Major Demand Generators

This section identifies and maps key GPDRT demand generators. Origins considered to be key GPDRT demand generators are of the following types:

- Transit center
- Healthcare
- Grocery
- General store
- Convenience store
- HHS
- Specialty grocery
- Restaurant
- Education
- Library
- State Park

Table 9 lists the key demand generators in the Outer County, and Figure 8 maps them. These generators were identified by TTI researchers using ArcGIS Business Analyst.

**Table 9. El Paso Outer County Key Demand Generators**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Employees</b>
<i>West Side of Outer County</i>	
Gonzalo & Sofia Garcia Elementary	93
Westside Baptist Temple	2
Canutillo Middle School	100
Ltd Driving School	2
Anthony Adult Living	3
Anthony High School	25
Valley By Products	20
<i>East Side of Outer County</i>	
Dr Sue Shook Elementary	58
Iglesia Betesda	2
Fabens High School	86
Fabens Independent School District	15
Fabens Middle School	60
SPC Rafael Hernando Middle School	100
San Elizario High School	120
San Elizario High School NJ ROTC	7
Hueco Tanks State Park	23
Mamacitas Restaurant & Bar	9

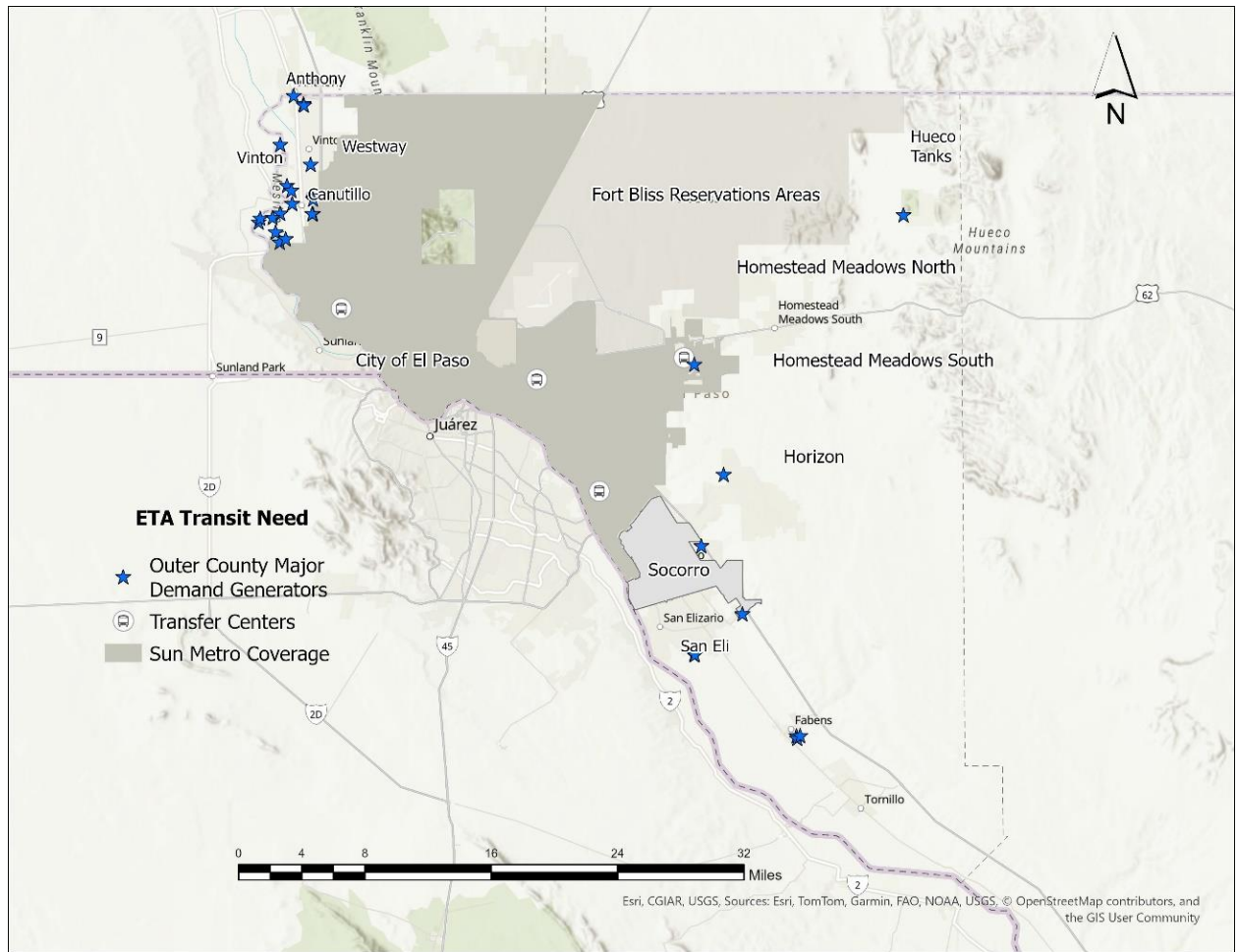


Figure 8. El Paso Outer County Key Demand Generators

### 3.0 GPDRT SERVICE PLANNING GUIDELINES

The transit service planning guidelines described in this section are from the Phase 2 Study entitled *Best Practices and Guidelines for El Paso County Rural Public Transportation to Identify Potential Stop Location and Route Configurations*. The guidelines were developed using the Phase 1 Study findings and recommendations, a review of best practices, input from the public and stakeholders, and peer agency comparison. The guidelines are intended to inform decision-making about how to plan and implement transit services in El Paso County. They were applied in Chapter 4 and 5 to develop and evaluate scenarios, and they were applied in Chapter 7 to inform service standards for each GPDRT service component.

For GPDRT, the applicable transit service planning guidelines from the Phase 2 Study are the following:

1. Transit service should be available to all residents of rural El Paso County.
2. Transit service can take the form of flexible bus routes or DAR.
3. New or modified transit services should serve existing riders to the extent possible.
4. Transit service should run at least 14 hours per day on weekdays and at least 12 hours per day on weekends.
5. County transit service should not compete for riders with Sun Metro bus service.
6. DRT service should connect residents of rural El Paso County to (a) key destinations in the county, and (b) Sun Metro transfer centers.

As GPDRT service options and needs have continued to evolve since the completion of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Studies, updated transit planning guidelines are the following:

1. GPDRT should be available to all residents of rural El Paso County.
2. GPDRT can take the form of DAR, microtransit, feeder service to fixed-route transit, user-side subsidy programs, VDPs, and/or flexible bus routes (point or route deviation service).
3. New or modified transit services should serve existing riders to the extent possible.
4. Transit service should run at least 14 hours per day on weekdays and at least 12 hours per day on weekends.
5. County transit service should not compete for riders with Sun Metro bus service.
6. DRT service should connect residents of rural El Paso County to (a) key destinations in the county, and (b) Sun Metro transfer centers.
7. GPDRT should be easy to understand and use, and individuals with limited access to the internet and electronic payment methods should be able to access it.
8. GPDRT should be cost-effective (i.e., well-used while making efficient use of funding and other resources).

## 4.0 PRELIMINARY GPDRT SCENARIOS

The four preliminary scenarios described in this chapter were intended to support exploration of a range of service options. This chapter includes the following sections:

- Considerations used to develop the scenarios
- Service components considered in the scenarios
- Preliminary Scenarios #1 through #4
- Evaluation of the preliminary scenarios
- List of references cited

### 4.1 Considerations

TTI considered the following findings of the Round 1 public engagement effort in developing preliminary scenarios:

- Survey results revealed a high proportion of respondents lacking private vehicles and having limited mobility. This makes reservations-based GPDRT highly appropriate, especially for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Many survey respondents emphasized the need for consistent, reliable service, supporting the option of advance reserves.
- A volunteer driver program (VDP) could be key in reaching geographically dispersed residents. The survey showed that some residents live more than two miles from existing transit.
- The survey showed a willingness to pay between \$2 and \$5 per trip.
- GPDRT could use ETA access (ADA paratransit) fleet vehicles for those residents who require wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs).
- Survey findings indicated a moderate demand for flexibility by accommodating same-day requests if capacity allows.

Appendix A describes the Round 1 public engagement effort.

TTI considered the following industry's best practices and innovations in developing preliminary scenarios:

- Phased implementation of GPDRT can ensure that GPDRT keeps up with growth and development in El Paso County while maximizing cost-effectiveness.
- Simpler GPDRT services can be more cost-effective than more complicated GPDRT services.
- GPDRT services that support both advance reservations and on-demand trip requests can be maximally convenient for users.
- The type of vehicle used to provide GPDRT service can impact operating costs, efficiency, and service quality.
- GPDRT and ADA paratransit services can be consolidated (i.e., the same vehicles and drivers are used for GPDRT and ADA). This maximizes the use of common fleet of vehicles and paves the way for commingling ride-sharable GPDRT and ADA trips on the same vehicle.
- Partnerships can assist with planning, funding, building community support, marketing, and provision of resources.
- Effective marketing of GPDRT and making information about GPDRT readily available are important to the success of GPDRT.
- Adding structure (e.g., a feeder service model) to GPDRT service can be more cost-effective while

still meeting needs. GPDRT services can operate under different structures at different times of day and in different parts of the Outer County. GPDRT services can be more or less integrated with fixed-route services depending on time of day, trip patterns, and service quality standards.

- GPDRT could be complemented by volunteer driver programs (VDPs), carpooling, and vanpooling. Such programs might reduce costs, increase service levels, and jumpstart implementation of GPDRT. The opportunity for a vanpool participant to use GPDRT for midday trips might increase vanpool usage, promote GPDRT service, and support improved access to employment opportunities.
- GPDRT could take the form of a user-side subsidy program that takes advantage of local private transportation providers. The cost of providing trips through a user-side subsidy program might be less than the cost of providing trips through traditional advance reservation GPDRT.
- A published transactional data specification for demand response transit can support integrated trip planning and trip booking within ETA and/or across multiple demand response operators in the region.
- GPDRT could be supported by investments in bike-sharing and walkability, particularly if GPDRT is not a door-to-door service.
- GPDRT fares (if applicable) could be used to balance service quality and service costs. For example, riders could be charged a lower fare for GPDRT trips that are efficient for the operator but not attractive to riders, or they could be charged a higher fare for the trips that are the most attractive (e.g., trips where the vehicle is not shared with other riders).
- Coordinating with health providers and health agencies can create an opportunity for more partners, access to different funding sources, and opportunities to measure GPDRT performance in new ways (e.g., measurable health improvements in riders who have better access to medical facilities).
- GPDRT services might provide resources such as grocery carts to further assist riders in reaching destinations and meeting needs.

Existing ETA access (ADA paratransit) vehicles have seven passenger seats plus two wheelchair spaces.

## 4.2 Potential Service Components

### Dial-a-Ride

The distinguishing characteristics of DAR service, as provided by a public transit agency, are the following:

1. DAR services are provided to the general public (although some DAR services can be provided to sub-populations such as seniors and people with disabilities).
2. DAR services are demand-responsive, meaning customers have to request service by making a trip reservation.
3. DAR services are accessed on an advanced reservation basis. (Some DAR services also allow standing orders, which might be referred to as subscription service.)
4. DAR services provide curb-to-curb service (although some DAR services provide door-to-door service).

DAR vehicles do not follow an established route but provide rides within a community or zone. In a multi-zone model, customers who want to travel between zones may have to transfer at existing transfer centers, possibly with another fare for the second leg. Other multi-zone models allow direct inter-zone trips but with a higher fare.

Most DAR services operate as a "many-to-many" service (i.e., connecting many possible origins to many

possible destinations) or a "many-to-few" service (i.e., connecting many possible origins to limited set of possible destinations). A DAR service can also serve as a feeder to fixed-route service, which is a many-to-few service (to multiple bus stops) or a many-to-one service (to a transit center), depending on the overlap between the fixed routes and the DAR service area. Where transferring between the DAR service and the fixed-route service, customers may have to pay two fares or a transfer fee. Conversely, in many such models, the transfer is free.

DAR services can be provided using dedicated vehicles operated in-house or by a contractor, using non-dedicated vehicles operated by a contractor, or using a combination of the two. The most common arrangement is using a dedicated fleet. In less dense areas, smaller vehicles tend to be used, as the lower demand rarely warrants the need for buses with larger capacities.

### **Microtransit**

Microtransit is a technology-enabled shared-ride, general-public, curb-to-curb (vs. door-to-door) service in which passengers book a pickup via an app or phone call and are transported by a microtransit vehicle (which may be a bus, van, SUV, or sedan). The primary characteristic of microtransit service that distinguishes it from DAR service is that it can be accessed on a same-day basis, while DAR trips are booked on an advance reservation basis. In many cases, microtransit can be requested on an "immediate-fulfillment" basis, as with a taxi or TNC. The microtransit technology plays a pivotal role in microtransit's responsiveness, as it is constantly optimizing the assignment of drivers, whether microtransit is provided with dedicated or non-dedicated vehicles and drivers.

Some microtransit services only allow requests on the day of service, while others also allow advance reservations and even subscription service. For most microtransit services, trips are booked via an app; the system must also have a call-in option, per Title VI. Largely because of the ADA's service equivalence requirements, microtransit service bookings often require one to two hours of advance notice. This is to ensure that trips needing wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) and trips that do not have equivalent response times, on average.

While many microtransit services are designed to pick up and drop off customers at their requested addresses, some microtransit technologies are enabled to use "virtual" stops to which passengers will be directed to walk (typically within a couple of blocks). Virtual stops tend to group ride-sharable trips more productively.

Microtransit service zones tend to be smaller than DAR zones, with most of the former ranging between 3 and 7 square miles, where the requisite demand density exists. To be cost effective, especially with dedicated service, productivity needs to be above 3.0 passengers per vehicle hour,

Microtransit services can be operated in-house with dedicated vehicles, by the transit agency, or by its paratransit contractor. The transit agency or contractor would need to acquire microtransit technology. There are also microtransit technology vendors who can provide turnkey services. Most transit agencies with microtransit services have implemented these services where and/or when fixed-route service is not cost-efficient or logistically inappropriate. In many locales, microtransit services provide feeder service, similar to some DAR services.

Table 10 presents illustrative microtransit cost and performance data from TCRP Synthesis 141 (1). The table shows microtransit productivity ranging from 2.4 to 4.7 passengers per vehicle service hour.

Table 10. Microtransit Costs and Performance

Transit Agency	Contracted or In-House	Cost per Vehicle Service Hour	Passengers per Vehicle Service Hour	Cost per Passenger Trip
AC Transit (Oakland, CA)	In house	\$214.00 (fully allocated)	3	\$71.00
Cherriots (Salem, OR)	In house	\$65.00	3.5	\$18.57
DART (Dallas, TX)	Contracted. DART provides vehicles and facilities but not fuel.	\$46.00	2.5 for original DRT service and 3.5 for new GoLink service	\$18.40 \$13.14
Greater Dayton RTA (Ohio)	In house and contracted	RTA pays Lyft and taxis and uses in-house paratransit.	Not applicable	\$13.00
Denver RTD (Denver, CO)	Contracted	\$83.00	3.8	\$21.84
HART (Tampa, FL)	Contracted	HART pays contractor by trip and not by hour.	3.5	\$10.00
Houston METRO (Houston, TX)	In house	\$75.00	2.4	\$31.25
Kitsap Transit (Kitsap County, WA)	In house	\$130.72	3.66	\$35.68
LYNX (Orlando, FL)	Contracted	\$41.17	3.3	\$12.60
MST (Monterey County, CA)	Contracted	\$54.18	4.03	\$13.44
NVTA (Napa Valley, CA)	Contracted	\$44.48	2.6	\$17.00
NCTD (San Diego County, CA)	Contracted	\$97.00	2.7	\$36.00
Utah Transit Authority (Salt Lake City, UT)	Contracted and in-house	\$34.69	4.7	\$7.34

Source: Reproduced from (1)

### **User-Side Subsidy Program**

A user-side subsidy program involves a transit agency and/or other sponsoring entities providing a discount on riders' use of other transportation providers' services. A user-side subsidy program might work as follows:

- *Paper scrip model.* This model traces back decades to taxi subsidy programs, where the sponsoring transit agency sells books of paper scrip (with designated values, such as \$1.00, \$5.00 and \$10.00 tickets) at a substantial discount to general public (or eligible) customers. Customers will call a participating transportation provider of their choosing to arrange for service and pay the fare to the driver in scrip tickets. The driver turns in their collected tickets for reimbursement, and the transportation company turns in the collected tickets (from all drivers) to the sponsoring transit agency for reimbursement. This system still works and is still used by many sponsoring entities across the US. One of the shortcomings is fraud, but this can somewhat be thwarted by numbering each book/ticket and tracking who the book was sold to. Another cost-controlling strategy is limiting the number of books/tickets sold per month to an individual.
- *Travel voucher model.– paper.* Travel vouchers, also paper, work similarly to scrip. The main

difference is that travel vouchers are good for one trip. Most vouchers work by having the rider fill out the voucher with their name, date of travel, origin, and destination and then sign their name. As with scrips, fraudulent activity can happen, notably via collusion between drivers and riders on trips never taken; sponsors with a voucher program can utilize some of the same cost control strategies as mentioned for scrip. Another strategy is printing an expiration date on the travel vouchers. One of the potential advantages of travel vouchers is that they can be incorporated into a VDP.

- *Travel voucher model – electronic.* These have the same purpose as paper travel vouchers but are delivered electronically to the customer's e-wallet, typically on a monthly basis. Fares are paid and subsidies are applied via the customer's payment-enabled mobile device.
- *Farecard or bank card model.* Many sponsoring entities have graduated from scrip and voucher models to farecard or bank card model in order to bypass the fraud that typically accompanies scrip and voucher models. General public or eligible customers must register with the sponsoring transit agency. The transit agency sets up a farecard account or helps with the paperwork for a bank card. In both cases, an account is set up for the customer, and the sponsoring transit agency matches (in some ratio) the funds that the customer loads into the fare account. Often, the amount a transit agency loads on an account is capped (per month) as a cost control strategy. The amount of matching funds could also vary depending on rider income, age, or other factors. The customer then arranges for service with any transportation providers that will accept the card, and they will use the card to pay for the trip. Farecards are usually swiped at the trip origin and destination and provide that information (along with pick-up and drop-off times, fare paid, etc.) to the sponsoring transit agency. The shortcoming of farecards is that they do not capture the request time, which is needed for the transit agency to provide evidence of service equivalence. Bank cards (which are typically Master Card or Visa debit cards with a limited MCC code, limiting use to taxis, TNCs, and airport shuttles) are more universally accepted than farecards, opening up the potential pool of carriers from whom service can be requested. The downside of bank cards is that the trip information provided by the bank is very limited.

User-side subsidy programs can be a very cost-efficient way to transport customers. For example, in 2003, Harris County Transit implemented the RIDES user-side subsidy program for its senior and disabled residents, migrating from vouchers to MJM Innovations' farecard system in 2011. In 2024, ridership totaled 35,635 trips, with an average subsidy per trip of \$19.12. Most of these trips were taken on taxis. Others were served by non-profit (agency) transportation providers. HCT also uses the farecard system for its medical program transportation and for its ADA paratransit service.

A downside of user-side subsidy programs, in addition to the lack of (some) data needed for reporting, is that they essentially provide exclusive-ride service. Hence, user-side subsidy program trips cannot be included in National Transit Database (NTD) reporting.

### **VDP**

A VDP involves transit service being provided by volunteer drivers using their own vehicles or agency-owned vehicles. Volunteer drivers may or may not be compensated through mileage reimbursement. VDP trips might be available on days and at times when DAR is not available, depending on availability of volunteer drivers. Scheduling software that includes schedules of volunteer drivers could support VDPs being used to provide trips in the Outer County, where the demand density is insufficient to operate DAR in a cost-effective manner. VDPs are generally well received by riders. While some VDPs charge fares—note the possible use of travel vouchers as discussed above—most do not.

Research conducted by Sherman (2) in 2019 proposed a methodology for assessing the need for a VDP within a rural county as well as the capacity (i.e., volunteer driver pool) available to support the VDP. The methodology's need criteria consisted of county population, the percentage of county population between ages 65 and 85 (i.e., the population likely to need a VDP), and the percentage of county population over age 85 (i.e., the population with the greatest need for a VDP). The methodology's capacity criteria consisted of the percentage of county population between ages 55 and 75 (i.e., the most common age range for drivers in a VDP), the percentage of county population with an annual household income of \$96,000 or greater (i.e., the most common household income range for drivers in a VDP), and the percentage of county population with at least one vehicle available. Sherman established thresholds for each criterion to determine the extent of VDP need and capacity.

Table 11 summarizes application of the methodology using Sherman's thresholds. The table indicates that the need for a VDP in the Outer County is not acute or high but there is a potentially adequate supply of volunteer drivers in the Outer County.

**Table 11. VDP Feasibility Assessment**

<b>Need Criteria</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Notes</b>
County rural population*	74,851	Acute need for VDP? No	"Acute" need if <50,000
County rural population ages 65-85	6,113 (8.2% of total)	Acute need for VDP? No High need for VDP? No	"Acute" need if >30% "High" need if >20%
County rural population over age 85	453 (0.6% of total)	Acute need for VDP? No High need for VDP? No	"Acute" need if >5% "High" need if >4%
<b>Capacity Criteria</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Notes</b>
County rural population ages 55-75	11,071 (14.8% of total)	Very high capacity for VDP? No High capacity for VDP? No	"Very High" capacity if >35% "High" capacity if >25%
County rural population in household with \$96,000 or greater annual income**	37,758 (50.4% of total)	Very high capacity for VDP? Yes High capacity for VDP? Yes	"Very High" capacity if >30% "High" capacity if >25%
County rural population with at least 1 vehicle	54,338 (72.6% of total)	Very high capacity for VDP? No High capacity for VDP? No	"Very High" capacity if >95% "High" capacity if >90%

\*2025 estimate from the American Community Survey

\*\*The household income brackets in the American Community Survey do not line up with a threshold of \$96,000. TTI counted population in households with annual incomes of at least \$75,000 instead, which might overestimate the number of potential volunteer drivers in the Outer County.

### 4.3 Preliminary Scenario #1: Consolidated DAR and ADA Paratransit

Implement a traditional DAR service in areas of the Outer County that have the highest demand density (which are close to the ADA paratransit service area). Design the system to provide trips within these areas but also to feed the EPATS and Sun Metro fixed routes at existing transfer centers. Use the existing ETA access fleet to provide trips. Same-day rides can be accommodated when capacity allows. A VDP complements service in parts of the Outer County where demand density is low.

Advantages of this scenario include:

- The services could be used by riders who cannot use cashless fare payment media and/or do not

- have reliable mobile and internet access.
- The reservations, scheduling, and call center systems that support ETA access can be used to support DAR and possibly the VDP.
- Using ETA access vehicles for DAR allows for more efficient use of the vehicles.
- The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service reduces service duplication and increases the availability of vehicles in the Outer County.
- The VDP may be able to serve trip demand outside of DAR operating days and hours.
- VDP per-trip costs are less than DAR per-trip costs. Shifting DAR trips to the VDP could reduce overall operating costs.
- VDP vehicles are typically provided and maintained by volunteer drivers.

Disadvantages of this scenario include:

- DAR tends to be more expensive per trip than fixed-route service.
- The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service makes the need to transfer more likely.
- DAR trips by ADA-eligible riders might be prioritized over trips by the general public, due to ADA regulations that prohibit capacity constraints and require service equivalence.
- The VDP is available only when and where volunteer drivers are willing and available to drive.

#### **4.4 Preliminary Scenario #2: Separate DAR and ADA Paratransit**

Implement a traditional DAR service, as described above, but operate the DAR and ADA paratransit services separately, using a new, dedicated fleet to provide DAR trips. As with Scenario #1, a VDP complements service in parts of the Outer County where demand density is low.

Advantages of this scenario include:

- The services could be used by riders who cannot use cashless fare payment media and/or do not have reliable mobile and internet access.
- The reservations, scheduling, and call center systems that support ETA access can be used to support DAR and possibly the VDP.
- The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service reduces service duplication and increases the availability of vehicles in the Outer County.
- The VDP may be able to serve trip demand outside of DAR operating days and hours.
- VDP per-trip costs are less than DAR per-trip costs. Shifting DAR trips to the VDP could reduce overall operating costs.
- VDP vehicles are typically provided and maintained by volunteer drivers.

Disadvantages of this scenario include:

- DAR tends to be more expensive per trip than fixed-route service.
- The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service makes the need to transfer more likely.
- Capital expenditures would be required to acquire (and possibly to maintain) the DAR fleet.
- Compared to Scenario #1, higher DAR fares may be needed to offset the higher capital expenditures.
- For the DAR service, using dedicated DAR vehicles is not as efficient as sharing ETA access vehicles.
- The VDP is available only when and where volunteer drivers are willing and available to drive.

#### **4.5 Preliminary Scenario #3: Microtransit**

Deploy a dedicated fleet for on-demand, same-day service (i.e., microtransit) in areas of the Outer County where a productivity of over 3.0 trips per revenue hour can be sustained, recognizing that it may take some time to build ridership. (TTI notes that it might be more cost-effective to use a non-dedicated fleet until microtransit ridership matures and/or reaches 3.0 trips per revenue hour.) The advance notification would be 1 hour to ensure service equivalence; over time, data may show this advance notice could be shortened. Provide DAR service using ETA access vehicles in other areas of the Outer County where enough demand exists. A VDP would complement service in the most remote parts of the Outer County, where demand density is low.

Advantages of this scenario include:

- Microtransit supports same-day trips and can support curb-to-curb service.
- Microtransit can be operated in-house, partially contracted out, or fully contracted out, providing EPATS with operating flexibility that can be adjusted over time.
- Adequate capacity would be available at microtransit service launch.
- Riders would not have to register in advance to use the microtransit service, though they might have to download an app.
- The microtransit service would be highly visible in the community.
- DAR and VDP advantages are as listed for Preliminary Scenario #1.

Disadvantages of this scenario include:

- The Outer County does not appear to have the demand density to make microtransit scenario cost-effective in the near term.
- Microtransit service would be difficult to use for riders who are not able to pay using cashless media or do not have reliable mobile service or internet access.
- Microtransit services that use dedicated fleets are likely to cost more than alternatives that use non-dedicated fleets.
- Microtransit riders might not receive curb-to-curb service, as some microtransit services are designed to use virtual stops that may be a couple of blocks away from the rider's origin and/or destination.
- For microtransit, significant technology and staffing investments might be required of EPATS, depending on the role of contractors.
- DAR and VDP disadvantages are as listed for Preliminary Scenario #1.

#### **4.6 Preliminary Scenario #4: User-Side Subsidy Program**

Instead of providing DAR or microtransit service, partner with other transportation providers (e.g., taxi, Uber, Lyft, Project Amistad, Med Blue, Helping Hands Transportation, Viba Transportation, and University Medical Center) to deliver GPDRT service on an on-demand, same-day basis. Offer subsidies to reduce user fares. A VDP could complement service in the most remote parts of the Outer County.

Advantages of this scenario include:

- The user-side subsidy program supports same-day trips and curb-to-curb service.
- EPATS bears no costs for labor and vehicles for the user-side subsidy program.

- No vehicle purchases or large technology and staffing investments are required of EPATS for the user-side subsidy program.
- EPATS can set a subsidy that makes cost per trip less than in other scenarios, especially if non-profit organizations and social service agencies contribute to the subsidy for eligible riders.
- EPATS can set a subsidy that makes the fare affordable for riders.
- EPATS can set a subsidy and a cap on monthly trips per person to manage user-side subsidy program demand.
- The VDP may be able to serve trip demand outside of the user-side subsidy program providers' operating days and hours.
- VDP per-trip costs might be less than user-side subsidy program per-trip costs. Shifting user-side subsidy program trips to the VDP could reduce overall operating costs.
- VDP vehicles are typically provided and maintained by volunteer drivers.

Disadvantages of this scenario include:

- There might not be a sufficient volume of providers operating in some parts of the Outer County to make the user-side subsidy program a reliable service option in those areas. Adequate capacity might not be available at program launch.
- Operating days and hours are those of the providers participating in the user-side subsidy program,
- Wheelchair-accessible vehicles must be provided through the user-side subsidy program, and riders who require wheelchairs must receive service equivalent to that received by riders who do not require wheelchairs.
- Riders have to register in advance to participate in the user-side subsidy program.
- Service provided through the user-side subsidy program is not highly visible in the community.
- User-side subsidy program trips cannot be reported to the NTD, as they are exclusive-ride trips.
- The VDP is available only when and where volunteer drivers are willing and available to drive.

## 4.7 Evaluation of Preliminary Scenarios

For the purposes of TTI's evaluation of preliminary scenarios, the Outer County is defined as the portion of rural El Paso County that is not within walking distance of EPATS fixed-route service and which excludes Fort Bliss and the City of Socorro. The Outer County had a 2024 population of 67,943 and encompasses 571.5 square miles. The population density of the Outer County is 118.9 persons per square mile.

### Ridership

For DAR, TTI estimated trips at service maturity using three methods. First, TTI modified the DAR forecasts in the Phase 2 Study to remove ADA paratransit trips (which were forecasted in the ADA Plan). Second, TTI used the GPDRT estimates from Chapter 2. Third, TTI used data from an updated list of peer services in Texas to derive average trip rates per capita and per square mile and applied the rates to the Outer County. The resulting ridership estimates are presented in Table 12. In the peer comparison row of the table, the range of estimates reflects use of the per-square-mile (low end) and per-capita (high end) trip rates.

**Table 12. DAR Ridership Forecasts**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Annual One-Way Trips</b>	<b>Average Monthly One-Way Trips</b>	<b>Average Daily One-Way Trips*</b>
Phase 2 Study	30,000	2,500	96
Chapter 2	7,200 to 11,600	600 to 967	23 to 37
Updated peer comparison	9,200 to 31,300	764 to 2,600	29 to 100

\*Assumes service operates six days a week

Of note, the Phase 2 Study estimates in Table 12 align with the updated peer comparison per-capita estimates; however, the estimates from the Phase 2 Study included Socorro. The high-end estimates from Chapter 2 are consistent with the range of the updated peer comparison estimates. For the purposes of evaluation in this report, TTI assumed forecast DAR ridership of 11,600 annual one-way trips.

For microtransit, TxDOT's 2023 *Rural Microtransit Implementation Guidebook (4)* suggests that microtransit is suitable in areas that have a population density of 700-1,500 persons per square mile and which have ample local trip destinations (e.g., shopping centers) to attract riders. The Guidebook also suggests that there should be at least 5,000 residents in the service area. While there are more than 5,000 residents in the Outer County, the population density of the Outer County is 118.9 persons per square mile, which is well below the population density the Guidebook suggests to be adequate to support microtransit service. As the Outer County does not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit across the Outer County, TTI did not estimate ridership for the scenario in which microtransit is provided everywhere in the Outer County.

The population and population density of communities within the Outer County are shown in Table 13. Shaded cells denote cases in which the community meets the above-described population and population density thresholds for microtransit service feasibility. The table indicates that, on that basis, only one community within the Outer County—San Elizario—may be a feasible location for cost-effective microtransit services. However, Section 2.5 lists only one key demand generator in San Elizario, so the potential for microtransit trips to be generated and contained within San Elizario is relatively low. For the purposes of evaluating preliminary scenarios, TTI therefore did not estimate ridership for the scenario in which microtransit is provided only within specific communities within the Outer County. (TTI notes that Outer County communities with higher populations and higher population densities are likely to be more suitable locations for fixed-route transit service.)

**Table 13. Population Density of Outer County Communities**

Community	Population	Land Area (square miles)	Population Density (persons/square mile)
Agua Dulce	3,218	7.797	412.7
Anthony	3,671	6.392	574.3
Canutillo	6,212	2.746	2,262.2
Fabens	7,498	4.325	1,733.6
Clint	923	1.964	470.0
Homestead Meadows North	5,210	15.588	334.2
Homestead Meadows South	7,142	3.665	1,948.7
Horizon City	22,489	8.714	2,580.8
San Elizario	10,116	6.900	1,466.1
Socorro	34,306	22.045	1,556.2
Sparks	4,760	1.4	3,400.0
Tornillo	1,432	3.465	413.3
Vinton	2,684	2.741	979.2
Westway	3,811	1.149	3,316.8

Source: American Community Survey Tables P1 and GEOINFO.

For the user-side subsidy program, ridership depends on subsidy policies, the availability of participating transportation providers in the Outer County, and the fares charged by the participating providers. Lower subsidies and/or higher fares will tend to dissuade ridership, while higher subsidies and/or lower fares will tend to attract ridership.

For the VDP, TTI estimated trips at service maturity by modifying a VDP trip generation rate proposed by Goudreau (3) in 2019 and applying it to the population of the Outer County. Goudreau proposed that, as a rule of thumb, a VDP could generate 40 annual "drives" per 1,000 rural population, where a "drive" is defined as a series of trips for one VDP rider on one day during which the driver is not available to transport other riders. TTI assumed that one "drive" is equivalent to two one-way trips. Applying the modified rate of 80 annual one-way trips per 1,000 rural population to the population of the rural county, TTI estimated that a VDP could serve up to 6,000 one-way trips annually. On average, this is 500 one-way trips per month and 16 one-way trips per day. These estimates assume that there are sufficient volunteer drivers available to meet demand.

**Fare Revenue**

*Note: ETA adopted a fare-free policy in 2025, after development and evaluation of the preliminary scenarios.*

The average DAR fare was assumed to be \$2.50 per one-way trip, which is the same base fare as ETA access and is consistent with the findings of the Round 1 public engagement effort regarding an acceptable GPDR fare. Multiplying the average fare by 11,600 annual trips (from Table 12) results in annual fare revenue of \$29,000 at service maturity.

As the Outer County and its communities do not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit, TTI did not estimate fare revenue for microtransit for the purposes of evaluating preliminary alternatives. For

informational purposes, however, illustrative microtransit fares in Texas are provided in Table 14.

**Table 14. Illustrative Microtransit Fares in Texas**

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Base One-Way Fare</b>	<b>Notes</b>
City of Tyler <sup>4</sup>	\$1.00	
Hill Country Transit District <sup>5</sup>	\$2.00	Discounts available
Capital Area Rural Transportation System <sup>6</sup>	\$2.00	Discounts available
Arlington Transportation <sup>7</sup>	\$2.00-\$5.00	Varies with trip length
Waco Transit System <sup>8</sup>	\$1.50	
Capital Metro <sup>9</sup>	\$1.25	Discounts available

For the user-side subsidy program, ETA would not receive any fare revenue. Fare revenue would be collected and retained by the participating transportation providers.

The average VDP fare was assumed to be \$2.50, matching the assumed DAR fare. Multiplying the average fare by 6,000 annual trips (from Table 12) results in annual fare revenue of \$15,000 at service maturity. TTI notes that some VDPs do not charge a fare.

**Revenue Hours and Revenue Miles**

TTI calculated that operating DAR with a dedicated fleet would require 5,249 annual revenue hours at service maturity. This calculation was based on forecasted ridership and the average trips/revenue hour from the updated peer comparison (i.e., 2.21 trips/revenue hour).

As the Outer County and its communities do not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit, TTI did not estimate revenue hours or revenue miles for microtransit, for the purposes of evaluating preliminary alternatives.

For the user-side subsidy program, revenue hours and revenue miles would not be provided by ETA.

For the VDP, TTI estimated annual VDP revenue miles of 48,000 by multiplying average one-way VDP trip length (assumed to be 8.0 miles, based on distances between major trip attractors listed in Section 2.5) by estimated annual VDP trips.

**Operating Costs**

Under Preliminary Scenario #1, annual DAR operating costs of \$283,439 (\$24.43 per trip) were calculated by multiplying DAR annual revenue hours by a unit operating cost of \$54 per revenue hour. This unit operating cost is the current unit operating cost for ETA access's cutaways.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cityoftyler.org/government/departments/tyler-transit/map-and-schedules/microtransit>

<sup>5</sup> <https://takethehop.com/microtransit-1>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ridecarts.com/route/carts-now/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://city.ridewithvia.com/arlington>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.waco-texas.com/Departments/Transit-System/Transportation/Micro-Dash>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.capmetro.org/pickup>

Under Preliminary Scenario #2, annual DAR operating costs of \$283,439 (\$24.43 per trip) were calculated by multiplying DAR annual revenue hours by a unit operating cost of \$54 per revenue hour. The unit operating cost assumes that a dedicated DAR fleet will have the same operating cost per revenue hour as ETA access's cutaways.

As the Outer County does not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit, TTI did not estimate revenue hours or revenue miles for microtransit, for the purposes of evaluating preliminary alternatives. For informational purposes, however, Table 10 contains illustrative per-trip costs for microtransit. Also for informational purposes, Harris County Transit pays \$51-\$64 per revenue hour for microtransit service, depending on which of the agency's contractors serves a given trip.

For the user-side subsidy program, operating costs will depend on the amount of the subsidy, the fares charged by the transportation providers participating in the program, and EPATS and sponsor policies (e.g., the maximum number of subsidized trips a rider can take per month). If a representative TNC fare in the study area is \$10.00 and the program subsidizes 50% of the fare, then the operating cost borne by EPATS and/or sponsors would be \$5.00 per trip on average. (For informational purposes, Harris County Transit subsidizes trips at 60%.) Correspondingly, the fare paid by riders would be \$5.00 per trip, even for a same-day trip. If all of the forecasted 11,600 annual trips for DAR are carried by the subsidy program's participating providers instead of DAR, and the amount of the subsidy is 50%, the annual cost to EPATS and/or sponsors would be \$58,000. Additional operating costs might result from managing farecards, depending on how the program is designed.

For the VDP, operating costs are likely to consist mostly of reimbursing volunteer drivers for mileage. Existing VDPs in the US reimburse mileage at a range of different rates. If mileage is reimbursed at the 2025 US General Services Administration rate of \$0.70/mile,<sup>10</sup> VDP annual operating costs are \$33,600 (\$5.60 per trip). If mileage is reimbursed at the US Internal Revenue Service rate of \$0.14/mile,<sup>11</sup> VDP annual operating costs are \$6,720 (\$1.12 per trip). VDP programs do not typically reimburse volunteer drivers for deadhead miles. TTI notes that, based on research currently underway for the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, lower reimbursement rates could dissuade volunteer drivers from participating in a VDP.

### **Fleet Need**

TTI estimated that DAR service would require two revenue vehicles, based on dividing average daily revenue hours by the service span (assumed to be 14 hours) and rounding up. In calculating average daily revenue hours for DAR, TTI assumed six days of service per week.

As the Outer County and its communities do not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit, TTI did not estimate the number of vehicles needed for microtransit, for the purposes of evaluating preliminary scenarios.

For the user-side subsidy program, the fleet will be provided by the transportation providers that participate in the program.

A VDP fleet typically consists of the personal vehicles of the volunteer drivers. While some operating VDPs will provide agency-owned vehicles to their volunteer drivers, particularly if there is a need for a WAV, TTI

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-a-trip/transportation-airfare-rates-pov-rates-etc/privately-owned-vehicle-pov-mileage-reimbursement?gsaredirect=mileage>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

assumed that this would not be the case for ETA. TTI notes that operating costs for a VDP might be lower if an agency provides volunteer drivers with agency-owned vehicles in lieu of providing mileage reimbursement.

**Capital Costs**

TTI assumed no capital costs for DAR under Preliminary Scenario #1, as DAR trips would be carried on ETA access vehicles currently in the ETA access fleet. TTI notes that additional vehicles may be needed over time, as demand grows. Also, Transdev’s license fee for Trapeze technology is currently woven into per-vehicle-hour rates charged by Transdev for operating ETA access. If ETA were to carve out the responsibility for technology—and license it directly—this would be a capital cost.

Under Preliminary Scenario #2, TTI estimated a capital cost of \$510,000 for acquiring two DAR vehicles for revenue service plus one spare vehicle, based on a unit cost of \$170,000 (provided by ETA). TTI assumed that the new vehicles would be similar to those currently in the ETA access fleet.

As the Outer County and its communities do not appear to have the demand density to support microtransit, TTI did not estimate the capital costs of microtransit, for the purposes of evaluating preliminary scenarios. If a contractor that operates microtransit service provides the vehicles for the service, capital costs would be reflected in the rates charged by the contractor.

TTI assumed no significant capital costs associated with the user-side subsidy program or the VDP. Depending on the design of the user-side subsidy program, there may be costs associated with components such as farecards; TTI is unsure if costs from a farecard vendor would be deemed a capital cost or an operating cost.

**Summary**

Table 15 summarizes the ridership estimates and costs of the preliminary scenarios. In the table, estimated annual operating costs were not reduced by estimated annual fare revenues. Administrative costs are not included.

**Table 15. Summary of Preliminary Scenarios**

Preliminary Scenario	Component	Annual Ridership	Annual Operating Cost	Operating Cost/Trip	Capital Cost
#1	DAR	11,600	\$283,439	\$24.43	\$0
	VDP	6,000	\$6,720-\$33,600	\$1.12-\$5.60	\$0
#2	DAR	11,600	\$283,439	\$24.43	\$510,000
	VDP	6,000	\$6,720-\$33,600	\$1.12-\$5.60	\$0
#3	Microtransit	Insufficient demand density in Outer County and its communities			
	DAR*	11,600	\$283,439	\$24.43	\$0
	VDP	6,000	\$6,720-\$33,600	\$1.12-\$5.60	\$0
#4	User-Side Subsidy Program	11,600**	\$58,000**	\$5.00**	\$0
	VDP	6,000	\$6,720-\$33,600	\$1.12-\$5.60	\$0

\*Scenario #1 model

\*\*Assumes a 50% subsidy, an average TNC fare of \$10.00 per trip, and sufficient availability of participating transportation providers to meet all of the estimated DAR demand

## 4.8 Chapter References

1. Volinski, J. *Microtransit or General Public Demand-Response Transit Services: State of the Practice*. TCRP Synthesis 141. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, 2019.
2. Sherman, A. *Rural Mobility for Older Adults: Matching Georgia's Future Needs with Potential Capacity for Volunteer Driver Programs*. Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, 2019.
3. Goudreau, M. *Understanding the Operational Attributes of Volunteer Driver Programs to Support Incorporation into Transportation Planning*. Thesis. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB, 2019.
4. KFH Group. *A Step by Step Guide to Implementing Rural Microtransit in Texas*. Texas Department of Transportation and Capital Area Rural Transportation System, Austin, TX, April 2023.

## 5.0 PREFERRED GPDRT SCENARIO

As stated in Chapter 4, the preliminary scenarios were developed and evaluated in an effort to explore a range of service options. A single preliminary scenario was not expected to represent the service that is most suitable for the Outer County. Rather, components of multiple preliminary scenarios might be combined to create the service that is most suitable across the Outer County and within specific parts of the Outer County.

Considering the outcomes of the evaluation documented in Chapter 4, input from County staff, input from the EPATS board, and input from the public in the Round 2 public engagement effort (documented in Appendix B), TTI identified the following preferred GPDRT scenario:

1. Provide DAR in the Outer County. This service would also include Sun Metro transit centers that are allowed destinations for outgoing trips and allowed origins for return trips. The DAR service would operate on days and at times similar to ETA access. The DAR service would use the current ETA access vehicles (i.e., DAR trips commingled with ADA trips) until demand suggests additional vehicles are needed.
2. Operate microtransit within San Elizario and Clint, with connections to MVTC and EPCC. Run the initial microtransit service as a pilot service under the ETA ándale brand.
3. Operate a user-side subsidy program throughout the Outer County. Adjust the amount of the subsidy and establish policies to manage demand and operating costs. A user-side subsidy program and a VDP could use the same vouchers or app, if the programs are designed for it.
4. Operate a VDP service in the Outer County.

The above structure provides riders with more than one transit option to meet their needs, and it allows for less expensive types of service to be provided where it is more cost-effective to do so. Table 15 showed that the per-trip cost for a VDP is potentially lower than that of DAR, so it makes financial sense to use a VDP to serve as many trips as possible—particularly the trips that occur in the parts of the Outer County with the lowest demand density (and where DAR trips would be the most expensive to provide). Table 15 also showed that the per-trip cost for a user-side subsidy program can be lower than that of DAR service, so it also makes financial sense to include a user-side subsidy program as a component of EPATS transit service and encourage Outer County travelers to use it. The potential supply of VDP service and user-side subsidy program service is not likely to be adequate to meet all demand in the Outer County, however, so DAR must be a significant component of Outer County transit service.

In the longer term, as communities within the Outer County grow and develop, microtransit might become appropriate in additional zones or subareas—potentially replacing one or more fixed routes or resulting in their restructuring. The transit need maps in Chapter 2 suggest that such subareas could include Horizon City/Sparks and Homestead Meadows, as well as San Elizario and Clint. Subarea DAR ridership can be monitored over time and, when it can sustain 3.0 or more trips per revenue hour (a threshold suggested by the data in Table 10), microtransit is an option that could be considered.

## 6.0 GPDRT USE CASE EXAMPLES

This chapter explores how ETA GPDRT services could be used by illustrative residents of the Outer County under the preferred GPDRT scenario, so as to provides insights for developing the GPDRT Service Plan presented in Chapter 7. The illustrative residents are:

1. *A resident of Hueco Tanks.* Hueco Tanks is a very low-density community that is outside of walking distance to existing fixed-route transit service. Figure 9 shows the general location of the illustrative resident of Hueco Tanks.
2. *A resident of south San Elizario.* ETA paseo operates in the north and east parts of San Elizario (where ETA access ADA paratransit service is also available) but not in the south part of San Elizario. The ETA ándale pilot microtransit service covers the entire city. Figure 10 shows the general location of the illustrative resident of south San Elizario; the illustrative resident is not within walking distance of ETA paseo fixed-route service.
3. *A resident of Canutillo located within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo.* Portions of Canutillo are currently within walking distance of ETA paseo Route 10. Route 11 is planned. As the illustrative resident is located within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo fixed routes, the resident is ineligible for commingled ETA access service (unless ADA-eligible) and the user-side subsidy program. Figure 11 shows the general location of the illustrative resident of Canutillo.

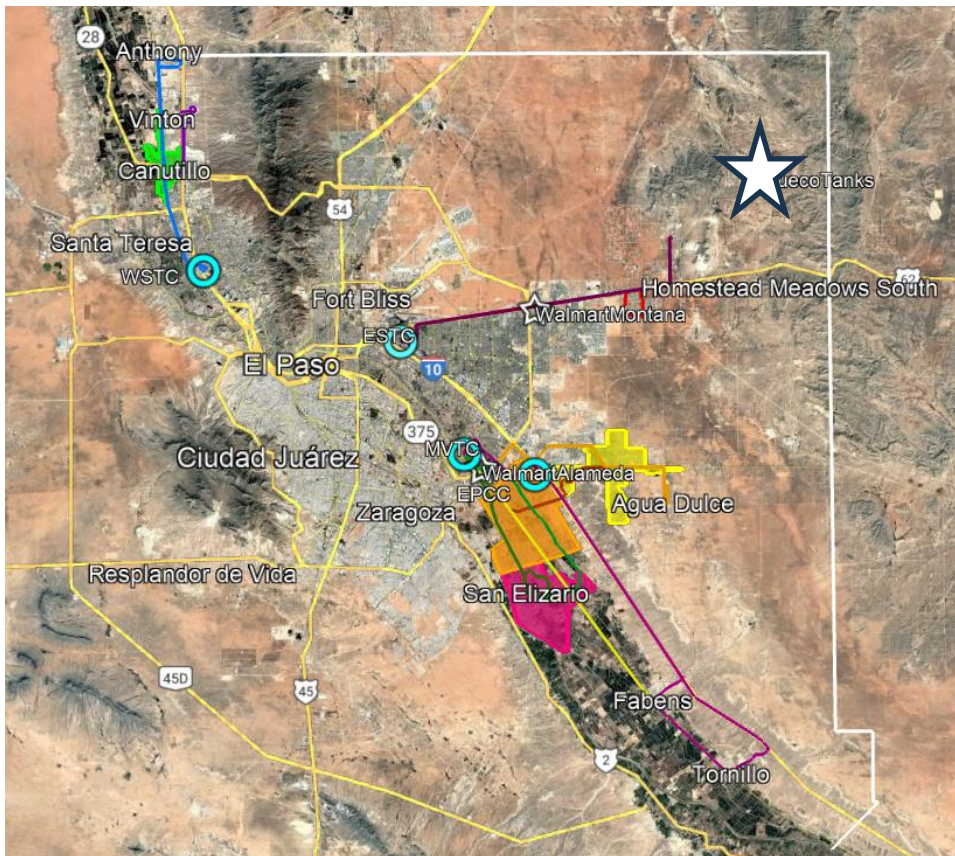


Figure 9. Location of Illustrative Resident of Hueco Tanks

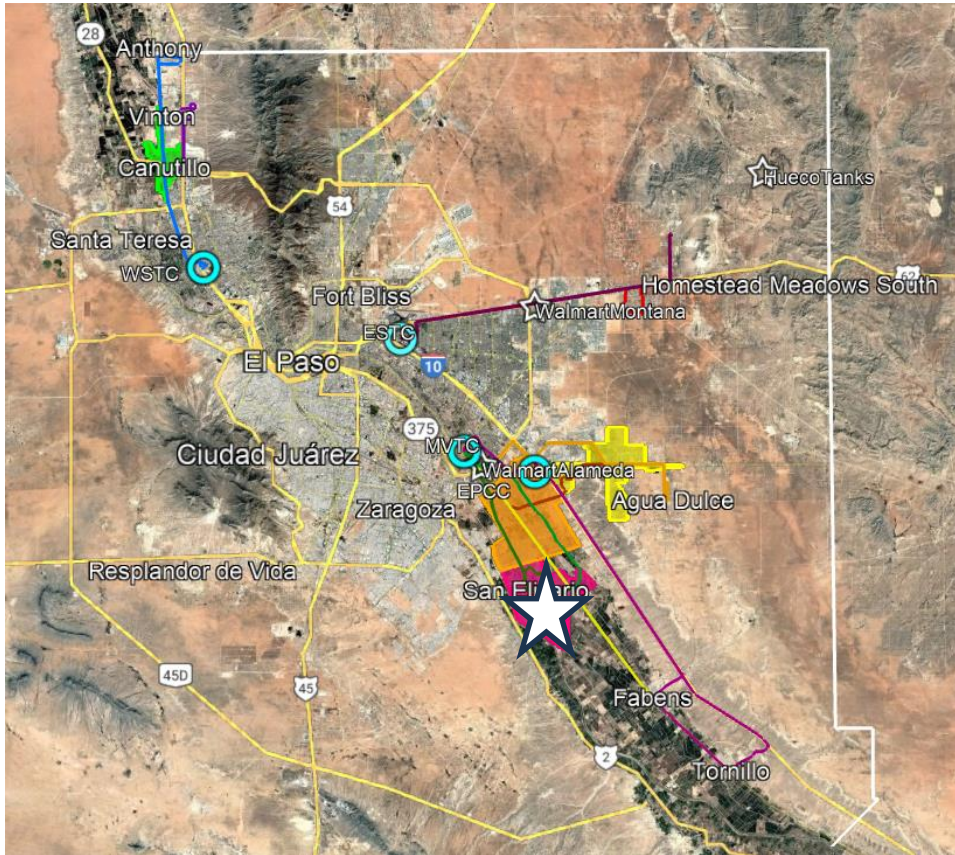
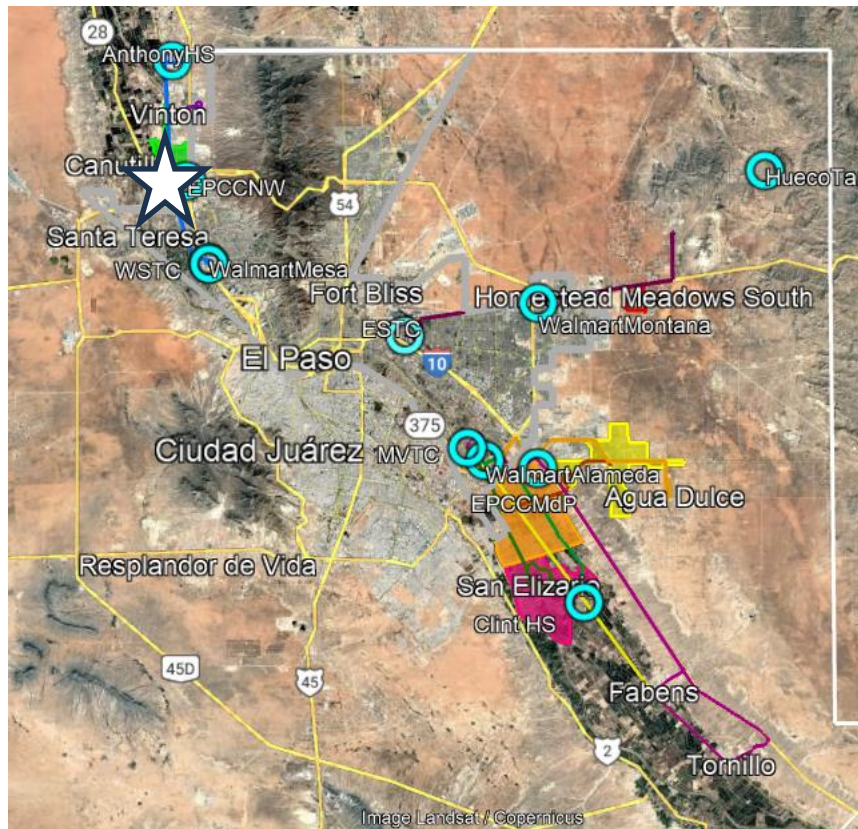


Figure 10. Location of Illustrative Resident of South San Elizario



**Figure 11. Location of Illustrative Resident of Canutillo**

Table 16 describes representative transit trips from Hueco Tanks, south San Elizario, and Canutillo to the following destinations:

- Downtown El Paso (representing the largest trip generator in the region as well as a destination that is outside the service area)
- A nearby Walmart (representing a shopping and employment destination)
- The nearest EPCC campus (representing an education and employment destination)
- Anthony High School or Clint High School (representing an interzonal trip)

For each origin-destination pair, the table assesses the following:

- *Service Options.* These are link-by-link transit trips that could be used to travel from the origin to the destination. Options that are not consistent with the service planning guidelines in Chapter 3 (e.g., a direct ETA access trip to downtown El Paso) are not included.
- *Cost to Rider.* This is the fare paid that would be paid by the rider—if fares are charged—expressed relative to other service options for the same origin-destination pair. A "Lower" cost is the base fare for ETA service or a lower value. A "Higher" cost is the premium fare for ETA service or a higher value. Cost to Rider assumes no fare-free service. Cost per Rider also assumes all transfers are free. Note: ETA adopted a fare-free policy for its services in 2025.
- *Trip Length.* This is the duration of the full trip, expressed relative to other service options for the same origin-destination pair. A "Shorter" trip is a direct trip or a trip with only one transfer (depending on the origin-destination pair). A "Longer" trip has at least one transfer; it could have as many as three transfers. Riders are likely to prefer shorter trips to longer trips, all else being equal.

- *Guaranteed Trip.* A guaranteed trip is one that ETA (any service) or Sun Metro (fixed-route service) will provide, subject to ETA and Sun Metro operating policies. Other providers can choose to provide a trip or not, depending on their own policies and driver availability. An Uber driver can *choose* to pick up a rider or not, for example, whereas an ETA access driver *must* pick up a rider who has booked a trip.
- *On Demand.* This means that service is available for spontaneous trips. Advance reservations are not required. The rider could be picked up within 30-60 minutes of booking the trip, or within whatever response time window the provider has established.
- *Advance Reservation.* Riders who want to use the service must book their trip at least one day in advance. Advance reservation trips on ETA access will be available for the general public, but capacity will be prioritized for ADA-eligible riders; this means general public riders might not receive their preferred pickup or dropoff time. ETA access may be able to accommodate same-day trips, if capacity is available, but this is not the default case for the purposes of the table.
- *Service Days.* This means the days of the week when the service is available. "ETA" means that the service days are as established by ETA, which is typically seven days a week. "Depends" means that non-ETA providers (including VDP drivers) have established their own service days, which may or may not be seven days a week.
- *Service Span.* This means the hours during which service is available on the service days. "ETA" means that the service span is as established by ETA, which is typically 13-16 hours; it varies by corridor and service. "Depends" means that non-ETA providers (including VDP drivers) have established their own service hours, which may or may not encompass ETA's service hours.

Key conclusions drawn from Table 16 are the following:

- Multiple service options are available for each origin-destination pair, allowing users to make choices between fares, trip lengths, how soon the trip can be made, and—subject to individual providers' policies and availability—when trips can be made. **The GPDRT Service Plan should allow users to choose among multiple transit trip options where possible, so as to best meet individual needs.**
- Some service options are duplicative, meaning that the only choice riders can make is trip length. The duplicative options are shaded in the table. The longer trip option would likely be underutilized. **The GPDRT Service Plan should eliminate duplication so that resources are used efficiently and services are simplified.**
- Some service options are complex, requiring multiple transfers and relying on multiple providers with different operating policies and fare structures. **The GPDRT Service Plan should simplify service options where possible to maximize service usage and rider convenience and comfort.**
- If riders whose trips originate within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo fixed routes are not eligible for the commingled ETA access service (excepting ADA-eligible riders) and ETA ándale is not available in their area, their options for some trips could be considered excessively long. **The GPDRT Service Plan should allow general public riders to use the commingled ETA access service if at least one trip endpoint is more than 3/4 mile from ETA paseo.**
- In some cases, it might not make sense to strictly limit zone boundaries to existing EPATS member jurisdictional boundaries. **The GPDRT Service Plan should establish zone boundaries that account for areas of significant density or trip generation potential that are located just outside the jurisdictional boundaries.**

**Table 16. ETA GPRDT Options for Illustrative Riders in the Outer County (Exploratory)**

Use Case	Origin	Destination	Service Options	Cost to Rider	Trip Length	Guaranteed Trip	On Demand	Advance Reservation	Service Days	Service Span
1A	Hueco Tanks	Downtown El Paso	1. ETA access to ESTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes*	ETA*	ETA*
			2. User-side subsidy partner to ESTC to Sun Metro	Higher	Longer	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			3. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
1B	Hueco Tanks	Walmart on Montana Ave	1. ETA access direct trip	Lower	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			2. ETA access to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			3. User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			4. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
1C	Hueco Tanks	EPCC Mission del Paso	1. ETA access to ESTC to Sun Metro to MVTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes*	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA access direct trip	Higher	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			3. User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			4. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
1D	Hueco Tanks	Anthony High School	1. ETA access to Eastside TC to Sun Metro to WSTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes*	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA access direct trip	Higher	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			3. User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			4. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
2A	South San Elizario	Downtown El Paso	1. ETA access to ETA paseo to MVTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes*	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA access to MVTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes*	ETA*	ETA*
			3. User-side subsidy partner to MVTC to Sun Metro	Higher	Longer	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			4. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
			5. ETA ándale to MVTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Longer	Yes	Yes*	No	ETA*	ETA*
2B			ETA access to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			ETA ándale to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	Yes*	No	ETA	ETA

Use Case	Origin	Destination	Service Options	Cost to Rider	Trip Length	Guaranteed Trip	On Demand	Advance Reservation	Service Days	Service Span
	South San Elizario	Walmart on Alameda Ave	User-side subsidy partner to ETA paseo	Higher	Longer	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
2C	South San Elizario	EPCC Mission del Paso	ETA access to ETA paseo to MVTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
			ETA ándale direct trip	Lower	Shorter	Yes	Yes	No	ETA	ETA
2D	South San Elizario	Anthony High School	ETA access to ETA paseo to MVTC to Sun Metro to WSTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	No	Yes	ETA*	ETA*
			ETA ándale to MVTC to Sun Metro to WSTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	Yes*	No	ETA*	ETA*
			ETA access direct trip	Higher	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			User-side subsidy partner direct trip	Higher	Shorter	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
3A	Canutillo	Downtown El Paso	1. ETA paseo to WSTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Longer	Yes	N/A	N/A	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA access (if ADA-eligible) to WSTC to Sun Metro	Higher	Longer	No	Yes	No	Depends	Depends
			3. ETA access (if ADA-eligible) direct trip	Higher	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			4. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
3B	Canutillo	Walmart on N Mesa St	1. ETA paseo to WSTC	Lower	Shorter	Yes	N/A	N/A	ETA	ETA
			2. ETA access (if ADA-eligible) direct trip	Lower	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			3. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
3C	Canutillo	EPCC Northwest	1. ETA paseo to WSTC to Sun Metro	Lower	Longer	Yes	N/A	N/A	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA paseo and walk/bike (~2 miles)	Lower	Longer	Yes	N/A	N/A	ETA	ETA
			2. ETA access (if ADA-eligible) direct trip	Lower	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA
			3. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends
3D	Canutillo	Clint High School	1. ETA paseo to WSTC to Sun Metro to MVTC to ETA paseo	Lower	Longer	Yes	N/A	N/A	ETA*	ETA*
			2. ETA access (if ADA-eligible) direct trip	Higher	Shorter	Yes	No	Yes	ETA	ETA

Use Case	Origin	Destination	Service Options	Cost to Rider	Trip Length	Guaranteed Trip	On Demand	Advance Reservation	Service Days	Service Span
			3. VDP direct trip	Lower	Shorter	No	No**	Yes**	Depends	Depends

Note: MVTC = Mission Valley Transfer Center, ESTC = Eastside Transfer Center, and WSTC = Westside Transfer Center.

\*ETA-operated link only

\*\*The driver might be available on demand if the VDP model is one in which the rider recruits their own driver, but pre-approval of the trip might be required to qualify for mileage reimbursement.

## 7.0 GPDRT SERVICE PLAN

### 7.1 Introduction

The GPDRT Service Plan describes the GPDRT components to be operated/funded by ETA, describes how the components will be operated (individually and systematically), and recommends service standards and performance measures. The service plan provides guidance for the development of relevant operating policies.

GPDRT components included in the GPDRT Service Plan are:

- Dial-a-ride (DAR) commingled with existing ADA paratransit
- Microtransit
- User-side subsidy program
- Volunteer driver program

Section 7.2 provides the following information, as applicable, for each GPDRT component:

- Service description
- Service areas and zones
- Service days and hours
- Eligible riders and population served
- Trip purposes served
- Trip reservation process
- Response times
- Scheduling and dispatching process
- Fares and fare payment methods
- Technology used
- Ridership estimate
- Revenue hours and revenue miles estimates
- Vehicles used
- Operator
- ADA and accessibility issues
- Performance measures and monitoring approach
- Other relevant policies and parameters

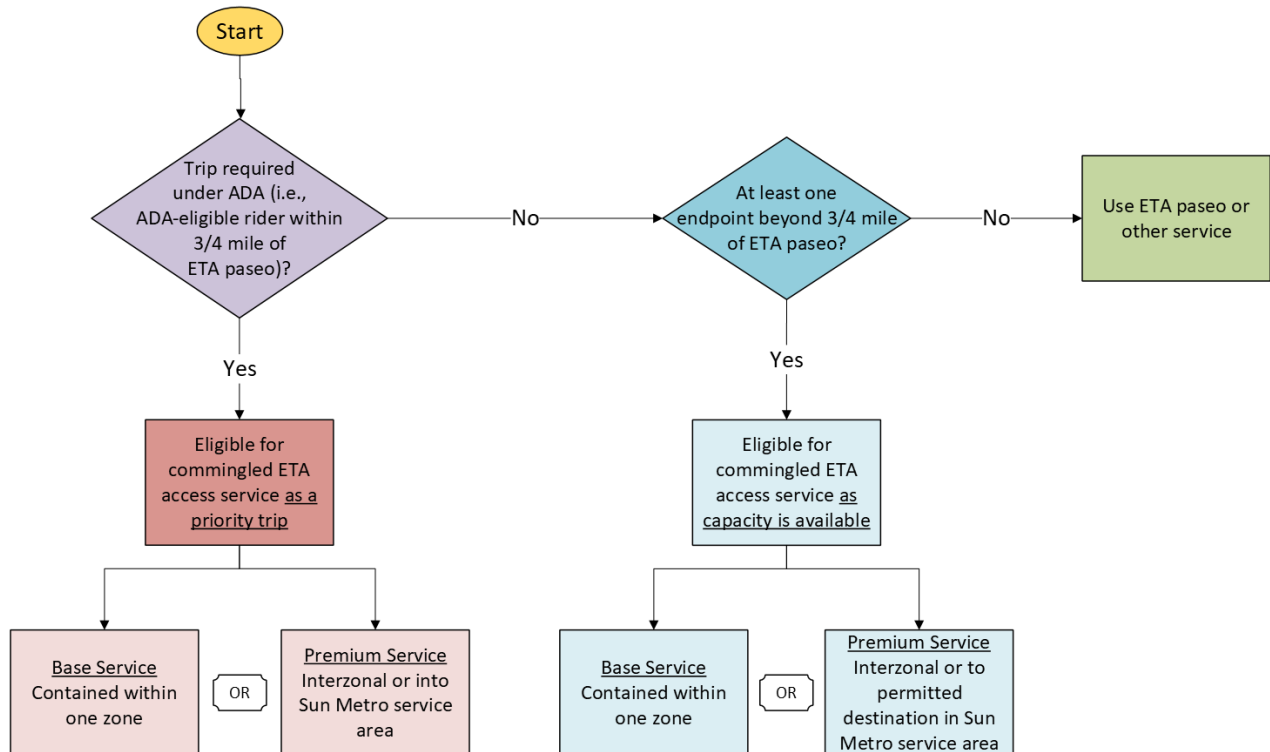
### 7.2 Component: Dial-a-Ride Commingled with Existing ADA Paratransit

#### Description

The large service area of the Outer County and its lower population density and limited local resources suggest that commingled transit services is a feasible transportation solution (Gerty et al., 2011 as cited in TCRP Report 183). Commingled trips occur when two different trip types—ADA paratransit and general public trips, in this case—occur on the same vehicles with the same drivers and software. Commingled services use the same resources (e.g., vehicles, drivers, and administration) and can share resources to potentially lower operational costs while expanding access to underserved areas of the county. Trips are commingled regardless of trip purpose, though scheduling software will tend to group trips by destination for efficient

service delivery. Advance reservations are required for all trips on the commingled service.

The commingled service operates under the ETA access brand. ADA paratransit trips are prioritized, while excess capacity is used to provide general public trips in the Outer County where fixed-route service is not within walking distance for at least one trip endpoint. Figure 12 illustrates how a given trip request might be accommodated on the commingled ETA access service. The commingled ETA access service would primarily feed ETA paseo fixed routes and existing transfer centers as a first-mile, last-mile connection. Selected major demand generators could also be designated origins and destinations for the commingled ETA access service.



Note: The definition of ADA-eligible in this figure includes riders whom ETA determined to be eligible for the premium ADA service offered on ETA access prior to commingling.

**Figure 12. Accommodation of Trip Requests in Commingled ETA access Service**

ADA paratransit trips required to be accommodated under the ADA (e.g., within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo fixed routes) become the basis for the commingled ETA access service to maintain ADA compliance. General public trips (including trips by individuals who are not located within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo fixed routes but are otherwise ADA-eligible) would be provided on an advanced reservation basis using excess vehicle capacity.

For the purpose of managing ETA access capacity, trips on the commingled service are prioritized as follows:

1. ADA-eligible rider within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo traveling within one ETA access zone
2. ADA-eligible rider within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo traveling interzonally or into the Sun Metro service area
3. All other riders with one or more trip endpoints beyond 3/4 mile of ETA paseo traveling within one ETA access zone

4. All other riders with one or more trip endpoints beyond 3/4 mile of ETA paseo traveling interzonally or to a permitted destination (e.g., a Sun Metro transfer center)

ETA access may allow same-day trips if capacity is available after the above-listed types of trips have been accommodated.

### **Service Area and Zones**

Prior to implementation of commingled ETA access service, there were three ETA access zones—West, East and South—as shown in Figure 13. These zones are restructured for use in commingled ETA access service as shown in Figure 14. The restructuring involves the following:

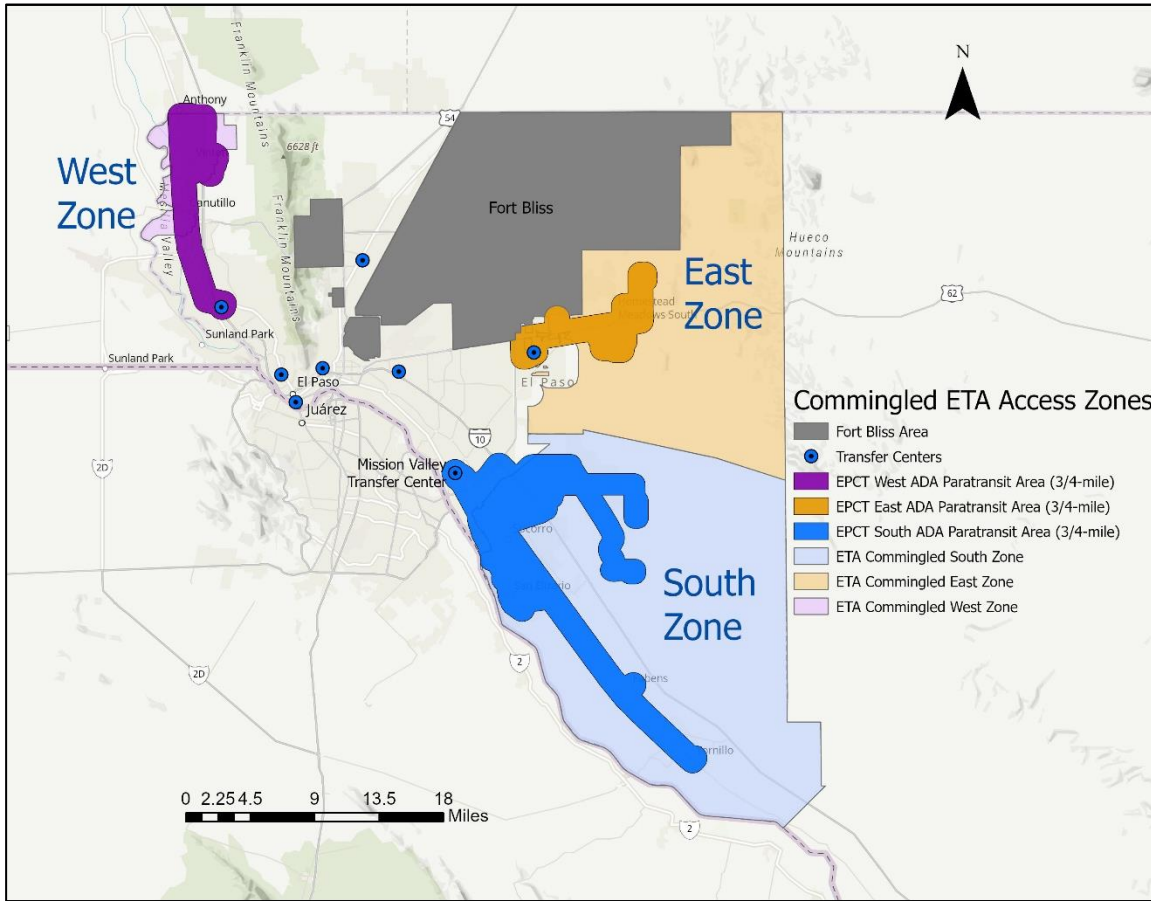
- The original ETA access zones become West Zone ADA, East Zone ADA, and South Zone ADA. Each is the core area of a new, larger zone.
- The larger zones are expansions of the original zones to cover the full Outer County.

The ADA Zones are for ETA's use to inform scheduling and ensure that ETA's ADA obligations are met. Rider maps need show only the larger zones (i.e., West, East, and South).

Zones are useful as they allow ETA to track demand to and from different parts of the Outer County and can help with scheduling non-dedicated or partner vehicles in certain circumstances. The zones are expected to also be useful for determining true capacity and in ensuring the commingled ETA access service allows for longer-distance Outer County service without interfering with ADA paratransit obligations. If it proves difficult to serve longer trips with the commingled ETA access service, longer trips could be phased in or provided using volunteer drivers, other non-dedicated vehicles, or partner services already operating in the Outer County.

Note: While there are similarities between microtransit and commingled service, microtransit differs from commingled service in that it usually provides same-day service using an app and Continuous Dynamic Optimization (CDO) in the scheduling process. Microtransit also can use virtual stops instead of designated stops and is typically implemented with smaller zones.





Source: Modified from the ADA Plan

**Figure 14. Commingled ETA access Zones**

**Service Days and Hours**

The service days and service hours for the commingled ETA access service are as follows:

- Weekdays from 5:00 a.m. to 8:20 p.m.
- Saturdays from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Sundays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Trips outside of these days and times can occur using the user-side subsidy program or the VDP.

**Eligibility/Population Served**

All ADA-eligible individuals within 3/4 mile of ETA paseo are eligible for commingled ETA access service at the highest priority. ADA eligibility will be determined using an application and an interview/functional screening.

All other individuals in the Outer County whose trips have at least one endpoint more than 3/4 mile from ETA paseo fixed routes are eligible for the commingled ETA access service.

**Trip Purposes Served**

All trip purposes are eligible for the commingled ETA access service.

The percentage of ADA service that is a subscription trip should be examined regularly, as subscription trips can create capacity issues.

### **Trip Reservations**

Trip reservations must be made no later than the day before travel (i.e., on a next-day basis) and up to seven days in advance. ETA access customers can make reservations by phone between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. While the planned app is likely to be the most commonly used booking method, a call-in option for booking trips must remain available. The call-in option is needed due to gaps in internet coverage in the Outer County and some Outer County residents not using smart phones (evidenced in previous public outreach efforts).

Subscription trips are allowed for trips that occur at least once a week at the same time and between the same origin and destination.

ETA access may allow same-day trips if capacity is available, after eligible advance reservation trips are accommodated.

### **Response Time**

Not applicable.

### **Scheduling and Dispatching**

The contracted operator of commingled ETA access service is responsible for using and maintaining software that allows for effective and efficient scheduling and dispatching.

The reservation window may differ between ADA-eligible and general public riders or be standardized to simplify operations. Trip prioritization strategies are as stated above.

All ETA access drivers are ADA-trained and certified, enabling flexible scheduling across vehicles and operators without concerns about compliance. This approach ensures that ADA requirements are consistently met throughout the service.

To maintain reliability and compliance, the trip confirmation process should ensure that scheduled rides occur within the designated pick-up window, and a notification should be provided to general public riders about any changes. Trips must remain anchored in the schedule to prevent deviations outside the given window. This approach supports operational consistency and maintains rider confidence in service reliability.

Personal care attendants (PCAs) and companions should be identified by ADA paratransit riders when trips are booked to ensure adequate capacity is available for them.

The ADA prohibits limiting the availability of complementary paratransit service provided to ADA-eligible individuals by any of the following:

- Restrictions on the number of trips an individual will be provided (for example, no more than four trips per day) and waiting lists for access to the service
- Significant untimely trip pickups and untimely drop-offs
- Trip denials (including trips that cannot be scheduled within one hour of the requested pick-up time)
- Missed trips (which trips that are scheduled but do not take place due to a fault of the transit agency)

- Trips with excessive trip lengths (in comparison to the length of a similar trip using fixed-route service)
- Poor telephone performance

### **Fares and Fare Payment**

ETA adopted a fare-free policy in 2025.

If fares are re-implemented in the future, the planned app is likely to be the most commonly used method of paying fares. However, cash payment and pay-over-the-phone options should be available. These options are needed due to gaps in internet coverage in the Outer County, some Outer County residents not using smart phones, and some Outer County residents not having access to electronic payment methods (evidenced in public outreach efforts conducted by ETA). Further, the ADA mandates that the one-way fare charged to ADA paratransit riders must not exceed twice the full fixed-route fare for a comparable trip. PCAs can ride free of charge, while companions are permitted at the applicable fare.

### **Technology**

The planned app could support trip requests and electronic fare payment and could offer features such as displaying bus location or expected arrival time.

Scheduling software should allow for effective and efficient scheduling and dispatching. If ETA opts to allow same-day trips when capacity is available, CDO might be a desirable feature of the software.

The contractor's license fee for scheduling and dispatching technology is currently woven into per-vehicle-hour rates charged by the contractor for operating ETA access. If ETA were to carve out the responsibility for technology—and license it directly—this would be a capital cost.

### **Ridership**

The estimated annual one-way trip demand for general public ridership on the commingled ETA access service is 11,600 at service maturity. The methodology for this estimation is described in Section 4.7 of the GPDRT Study Final Report.

ADA-eligible trips will be prioritized over general public trips to ensure ADA compliance. This capacity constraint on general public trips may depress general public ridership once a commingled service is implemented.

### **Revenue Hours and Revenue Miles**

Accommodating general public trips on ETA access with a dedicated fleet would require an estimated additional 5,249 annual revenue hours at service maturity. This calculation was based on forecasted ridership and an average trips/revenue hour of 2.21 derived from peer data.

### **Fleet**

The commingled ETA access service will use the same vehicles used for the current ETA access service. In addition, non-dedicated service providers—like taxis, volunteer drivers, or other partner organizations already providing service in the Outer County—may be engaged for overflow, special accommodations, will-call requests, or long-distance travel.

### **Vehicles/Fleet Need**

Accommodating general public trips on ETA access will require two additional revenue vehicles based on

estimated ridership at service maturity. Additional vehicles may be needed if ridership exceeds estimates.

Adequate spare vehicle capacity must be maintained to address breakdowns or service disruptions. Contracted vehicles can supplement vehicle capacity and may also be designated for specialized trips such as long-distance travel. ETA may use overflow service providers at the discretion of scheduling staff.

### **Operator**

A contractor will operate the commingled ETA access service, as is the case for the current ETA access service.

### **ADA/Accessibility Issues**

The vehicles currently used in ETA access service are accessible. The same vehicles will be used for the commingled ETA access service. A benefit of commingling general public trips with ADA paratransit trips is that all vehicles in the shared fleet are wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs). This maximizes operational flexibility, as trips do not need to be assigned to specific vehicles. Additionally, leveraging the same WAVs for the commingled ETA access service will allow ADA-eligible paratransit riders to travel beyond traditional ADA service boundaries, thereby expanding access.

Curb-to-curb service will be provided by the commingled ETA access service, as is the case for the current ETA access service.

### **Performance Measurement and Monitoring**

See Section 7.8.

Commingled ETA access service requires performance measures that reflect both efficiency and compliance while accommodating different service characteristics. For example, ADA trips typically occur in denser areas with shorter travel distances and higher passenger loads, while DAR trips typically cover larger geographic areas with longer travel times and lower density. The goals identified for commingled ETA access service, including meeting ETA's ADA obligations and increasing service coverage in the Outer County, should guide the selection of performance measures and the setting of performance standards.

## **7.3 Component: Microtransit**

### **Description**

Microtransit services in the Outer County will operate under the ETA ándale brand and provide same-day, on-demand service. Microtransit services support local circulation and access within defined zones. Microtransit trips are contained in their zones unless otherwise specified in zone design and operating policies.

### **Service Area and Zones**

Table 17 describes existing and potential microtransit zones in the Outer County. The potential zones were identified in part using ridership forecasts documented in Section 4.7. TxDOT's 2023 *Rural Microtransit Implementation Guidebook (4)* suggests that microtransit is suitable in areas that have a population density of 700-1,500 persons per square mile and which have ample local trip destinations (e.g., shopping centers) to attract riders. The Guidebook also suggests that there should be at least 5,000 residents in the service area. Areas with larger populations and/or higher population densities could be successfully served by microtransit but might be more *cost-effectively* served with fixed-route transit.

The implementation time frames in Table 17 allow time for pilot evaluation, transition of the pilot ETA ándale service to permanent service (if determined to be justified), maturation of other new GPDRT services, and implementation and maturation of new and modified ETA paseo fixed-route services.

The existing and potential zones are illustrated in Figure 15 through Figure 19. The zone boundaries in these figures generally follow existing city, town, and community boundaries as represented in Google Earth. Adjustments to the boundaries should be made to account for recent annexations and proximate areas of higher population density and major destinations that are part of the community but not officially within the city, town, or community boundary.

**Table 17. Existing and Potential ETA ándale Zones**

Zone Name	Zone Description and Evaluation	Population	Population Density (persons/ square mile)	Implementation Time Frame
San Elizario-Clint (existing)	San Elizario and Clint (with connections to Socorro, MVTC, and EPCC). San Elizario alone meets the TxDOT population and population density thresholds but does not contain many major destinations. Clint does not meet either threshold but is geographically adjacent to San Elizario. Addition of connections to destinations in Socorro adds necessary major destinations.	11,039	1,245.4	Currently operating (pilot)
Socorro (potential)	Socorro meets the TxDOT population threshold, and its population density is slightly above the TxDOT threshold. Socorro contains major destinations, and the City's 2024 transit development plan (TDP) identified microtransit for the community. Connections to MVTC and EPCC could be allowed; this might compete with fixed-route service.	34,306	1,556.2	Mid term (3-10 years out)
Horizon City-Sparks (potential)	Horizon City meets the TxDOT population threshold and is well above the population density threshold; it contains major destinations to which microtransit service could connect. Sparks does not meet either threshold but is geographically adjacent to Horizon City. Horizon City's population density justifies fixed-route service. The city is currently served by two fixed routes, and two fixed routes are planned; microtransit may not be as cost-effective as fixed-route service. Connections to MVTC and EPCC could be allowed; this might compete with fixed-route service.	27,249	2,694.2	Mid term (3-10 years out)
Canutillo (potential)	Canutillo meets the TxDOT population threshold and is well above the population density threshold; it contains major destinations to which microtransit service could connect. Canutillo's population density justifies fixed-route service. The city is currently served by one fixed route, and another fixed route is planned; microtransit may not be as cost-effective as fixed-route service. Connections to WSTC and The Outlet Shoppes could be allowed; this might compete with fixed-route service.	6,212	2,262.2	Mid term (3-10 years out)

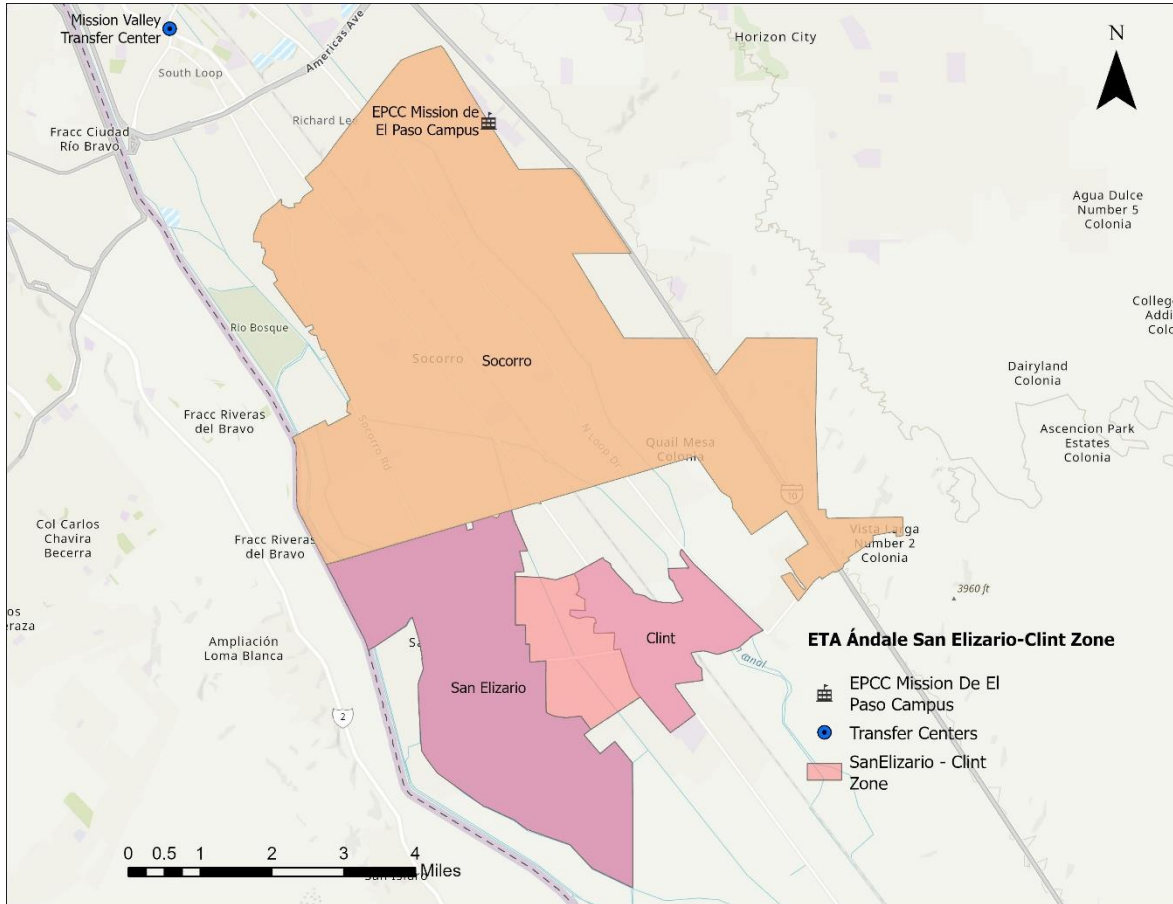
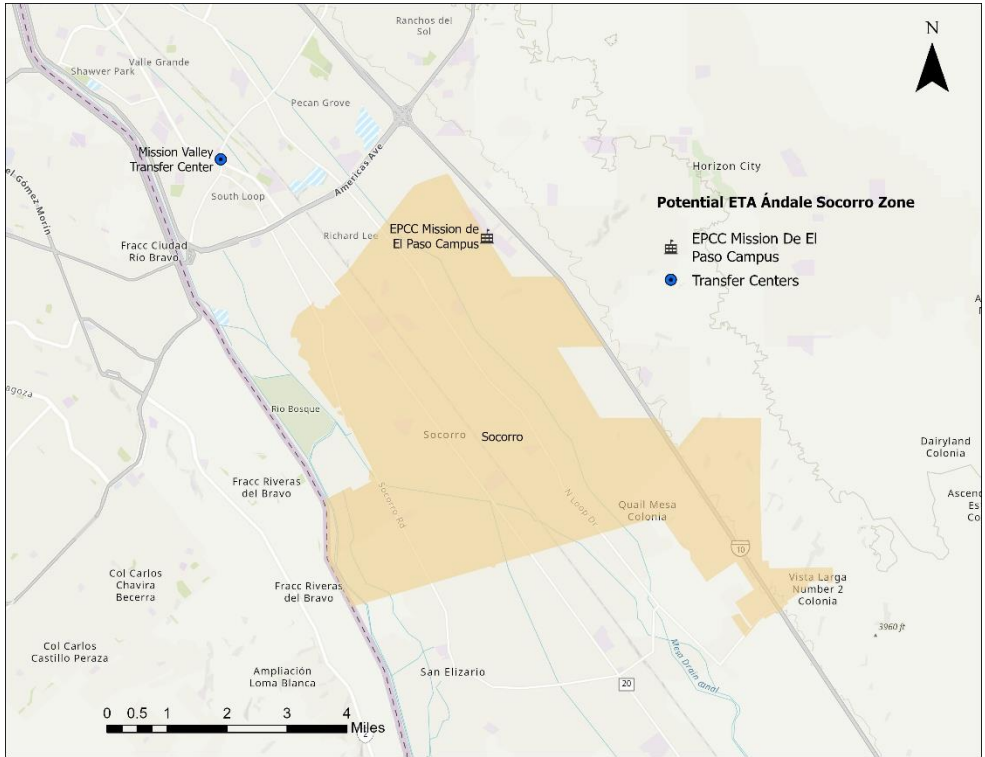


Figure 15. Existing ETA ándale San Elizario-Clint Zone (Pilot)



Note: The service area is as described in Socorro ¡Avanzando! 2025-2028 Transit Development Plan.

Figure 16. Potential ETA ándale Socorro Zone

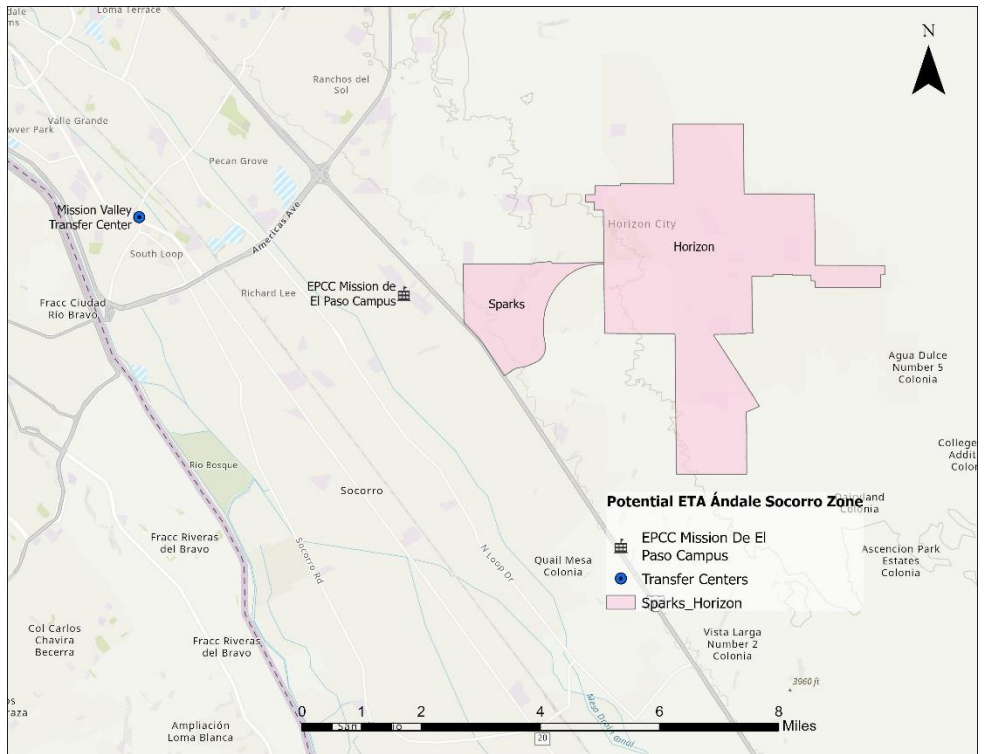


Figure 17. Potential ETA ándale Horizon City-Sparks Zone

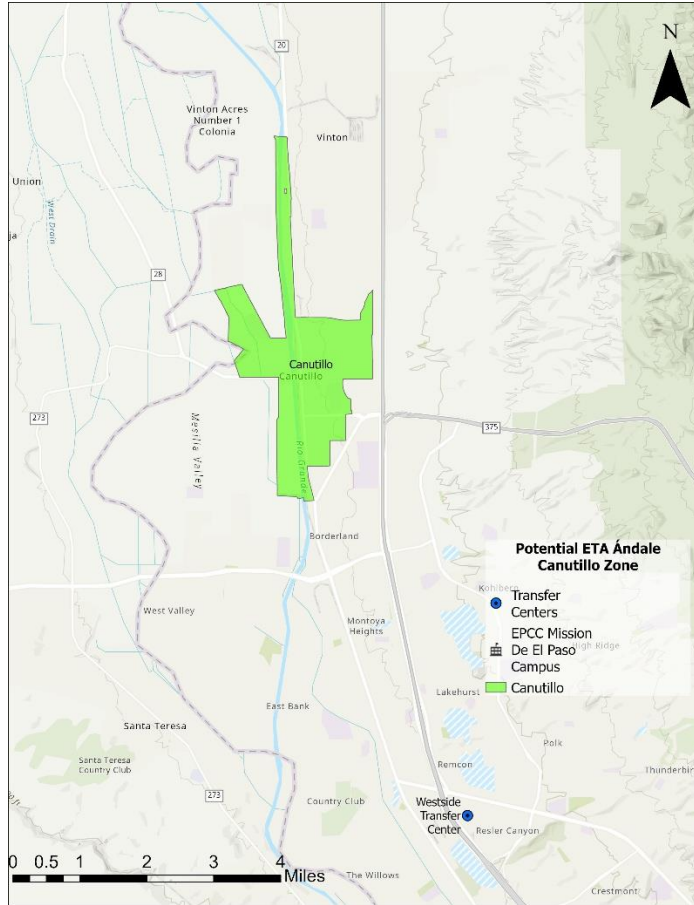
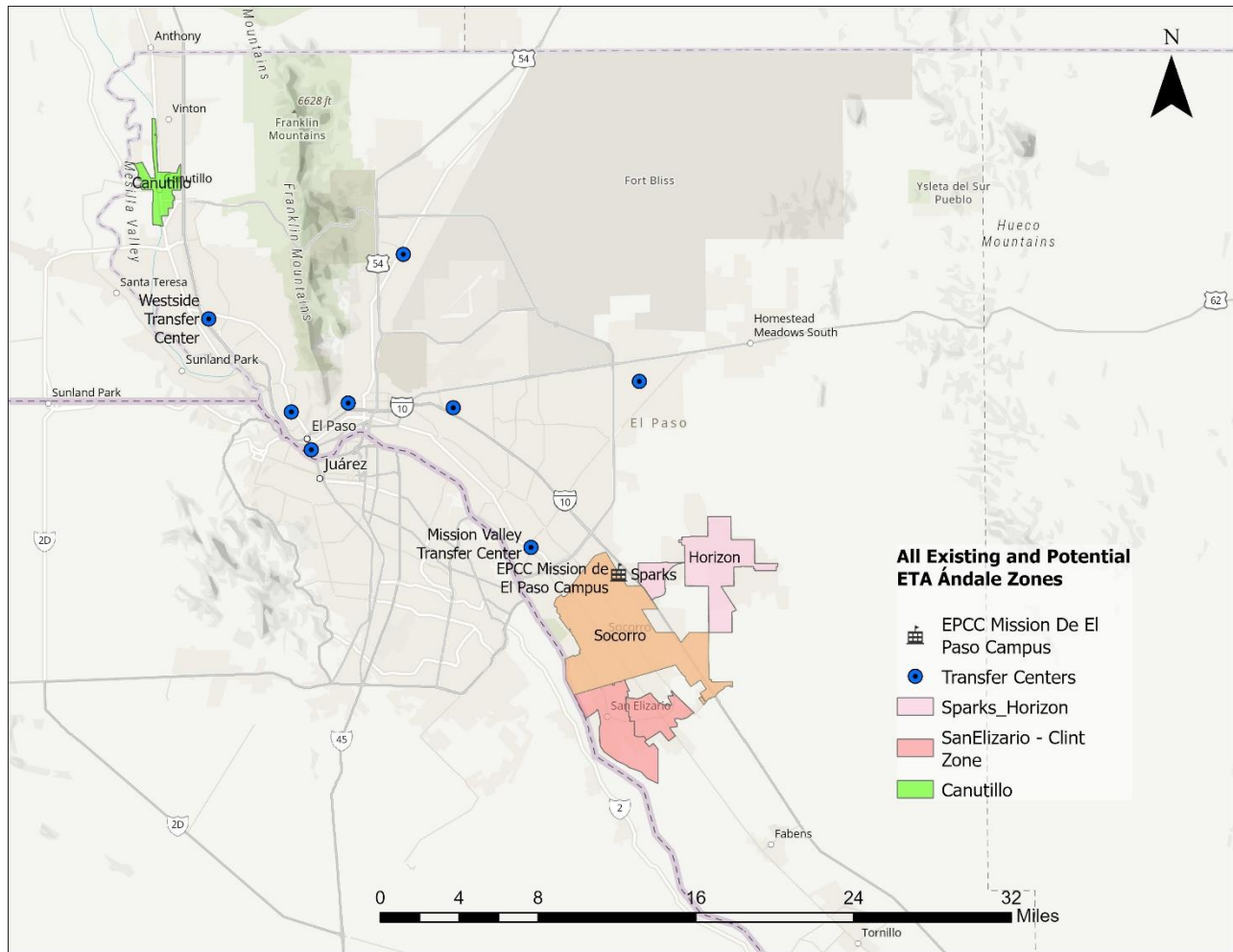


Figure 18. Potential ETA ándale Canutillo Zone



**Figure 19. All Existing and Potential ETA ándale Zones**

**Service Days and Hours**

At minimum, the service days and service hours for ETA ándale must include the same service days and service hours as ETA paseo and ETA access. An exception to this can be made for ETA ándale services that are designed to serve a very specific market or need (e.g., peak period microtransit service that supplements another ETA transportation service).

ETA access service days and service hours are currently as follows:

- Weekdays from 5:00 a.m. to 8:20 p.m.
- Saturdays from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Sundays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Trips outside of ETA ándale's service days and hours can occur using the user-side subsidy program (Section 7.4) or the VDP (Section 7.5).

**Eligibility/Population Served**

All individuals in the Outer County are eligible for microtransit service.

With one exception, all microtransit trips must have both endpoints in the same zone. The exception is that, in the San Elizario-Clint zone, trips beginning or ending in Socorro, at MVTC, and at EPCC must have one endpoint in San Elizario or Clint.

Interzonal trips must occur on ETA paseo or the commingled ETA access service. Microtransit service can feed riders to ETA paseo service. Microtransit service could support transfers to other microtransit zones at zone boundaries, if the zones are adjacent.

### **Trip Purposes Served**

All trip purposes are eligible for microtransit service.

### **Trip Reservations**

While the planned app is likely to be the most commonly used booking method, a call-in option for booking trips must remain available. The call-in option is needed due to gaps in internet coverage in the Outer County and some Outer County residents not using smart phones (evidenced in previous public outreach efforts).

### **Response Time**

The target response time (i.e., the time between booking a trip and arrival of a vehicle at the pickup location within the zone) is 15-30 minutes.

### **Scheduling and Dispatching**

The contracted operator of ETA ándale service is responsible for using and maintaining software that allows for effective and efficient scheduling and dispatching. This software may make use of virtual stops in the future, but curb-to-curb service must be available for riders who cannot walk to a virtual stop.

### **Fares and Fare Payment**

ETA adopted a fare-free policy in 2025.

If fares are re-implemented in the future, the planned app is likely to be the most commonly used method of paying fares. However, cash payment and pay-over-the-phone options should be available. These options are needed due to gaps in internet coverage in the Outer County, some Outer County residents not using smart phones, and some Outer County residents not having access to electronic payment methods (evidenced in previous public outreach efforts).

### **Technology**

The planned app could support trip requests and electronic fare payment and could offer features such as displaying vehicle location or expected arrival time.

Scheduling software should allow for effective and efficient scheduling and dispatching. CDO is a desirable feature of the software.

The contractor's license fee for scheduling and dispatching technology is currently woven into per-vehicle-hour rates charged by the contractor for operating ETA access. If ETA were to carve out the responsibility for technology—and license it directly—this would be a capital cost.

**Ridership**

The October 2025–December 2025 performance report for the ETA ándale pilot service shows that ETA ándale transported 26-45 passengers per month, which is 0.11-0.54 passenger trip per revenue hour (assuming all passengers make two one-way trips). The productivity standard for microtransit stated in Section 7.8 is 4.0 passenger trips per revenue hour. The ETA ándale pilot service was launched in October 2025 and has not yet reached maturity, but the current data trend suggests that it might not achieve 4.0 passenger trips per revenue hour at maturity (i.e., after 12 months). Assuming (a) the pilot zone achieves 1.0 passenger trip per revenue hour after 12 months, (b) ridership in the other potential microtransit zones will use pilot zone ridership as a baseline but increase in proportion to population density in those zones, and (c) the same amount of revenue hours of microtransit service is provided in each zone, microtransit ridership forecasts are shown in Table 18. ETA will continue to monitor pilot service ridership and may adjust the ridership forecasts as new data are obtained and evaluated.

**Table 18. Potential ETA ándale Ridership at Service Maturity**

<b>Zone Name</b>	<b>Population Density (persons/ square mile)</b>	<b>Passenger Trips/Revenue Hour*</b>	<b>Annual Passenger Trips</b>
San Elizario-Clint (existing)	1,245.4	1.00	5,340
Socorro (potential)	1,556.2	1.25	6,675
Horizon City-Sparks (potential)	2,694.2	2.15	11,550
Canutillo (potential)	2,262.2	1.80	9,700

\*Assumed

**Revenue Hours**

The October 2025–December 2025 performance report for the ETA ándale pilot service shows that ETA ándale provided 453, 167, and 437 revenue hours of service per month, respectively. If the average revenue hours of the two higher months is projected for a full year, then the pilot service will provide 5,340 annual revenue hours of service. Each of the potential zones is assumed to provide the same amount of service. ETA will adjust these estimates as more data from the pilot is obtained and evaluated.

**Vehicles**

The vehicles used for ETA paseo and ETA access are also used for the pilot ETA ándale service.

When the pilot service is evaluated, the fleet used for ETA ándale can be re-evaluated. Other vehicle types may be more fuel-efficient, easier to drive on some roads, and easier to maintain. Van, minivans, and SUVs can be operated without a commercial driver's license (CDL). WAVs must continue to be available and should provide equivalent service (e.g., comparable response times for riders who do not need WAVs and riders who do need WAVs).

**Operator**

A contractor is operating the ETA ándale pilot. This can be re-evaluated after the pilot concludes and with respect to future microtransit zones.

**ADA/Accessibility Issues**

The vehicles currently used for ETA paseo and ETA access are accessible and are being used for the ETA ándale pilot.

Currently, curb-to-curb service is provided by the ETA ándale pilot. If virtual stops are used in the future—which may be necessary to optimize service efficiency—curb-to-curb service must continue to be available for riders who cannot walk to a virtual stop. The need for curb-to-curb service could be integrated into the future app or a customer profile record.

### **Performance Measures and Monitoring**

See Section 7.8.

The ridership per revenue hour standard for microtransit in Section 7.8 is aggressive compared to the data in Table 10, which presented microtransit productivity ranging from 2.4 to 4.7 passengers per vehicle service hour for existing microtransit services in the US. ETA will continue to monitor pilot service ridership and may adjust the performance standard in Section 7.8 as new data are obtained and evaluated.

## **7.4 Component: User-Side Subsidy Program**

### **Description**

The user-side subsidy program relies on partnerships between ETA and TNCs, local taxi companies, and other local transportation providers. Eligible riders book trips with the participating provider of their choice, and the fares they pay are subsidized by ETA and/or partner agencies. The program offers flexible, same-day transportation for residents of the service area. The program is intended to be used to (1) support general public travel when ETA access and ETA ándale are at capacity, (2) support general public travel on days and at times when ETA services are not operating (subject to the participating providers' policies), and (3) operate as a premium "alternative service" for ADA-eligible riders where WAVs are available.

ETA may opt to use TNCs, taxi companies and other local transportation providers to supplement ETA access service where ETA access trips would be cost-prohibitive to provide (e.g., in the most remote parts of the Outer County). This is a decision to be made by ETA's contracted operator and its scheduling staff, however, and is not part of the user-side subsidy program. If ETA opts to use a nondedicated provider in this way, the ETA access fare structure applies to the trip.

### **Service Area**

The program can be used for trips contained within the Outer County and trips that feed Outer County residents to ETA fixed routes or permitted destinations.

Participating providers might not operate in the entire Outer County, either by design or as a result of driver availability and interest. One TNC has indicated that they may be able to provide an incentive payment of \$5-\$10 per trip to encourage their drivers to accept trips in the more remote parts of the Outer County. ETA will coordinate with each participating provider about offering incentives, as appropriate.

### **Service Days and Hours**

The service days and service hours for the program are those of the participating providers.

### **Eligibility/Population Served**

All individuals in the Outer County are eligible for the program. They must register for it in advance. The number of trips that registered users can make under the program is limited as follows:

- Monthly limit: 40 one-way trips
- Daily limit: 2 one-way trips

Trip caps support essential travel without encouraging excessive discretionary use. ETA may choose to cap the monthly subsidy amount instead of capping the number of monthly trips, after program evaluation.

### **Trip Purposes Served**

All trip purposes are eligible for the program.

### **Trip Reservations**

Participants reserve trips according to the policies and procedures of the selected provider. This may occur via an app or a call center.

### **Response Time**

Response times are those established by the selected transportation provider.

### **Scheduling and Dispatching**

Trip scheduling and dispatching occurs according to the policies and procedures of the selected transportation provider.

### **Fares and Fare Payment**

The base fare paid by the rider is \$3.00 per trip. ETA covers up to \$25 per trip beyond the base fare. Any fare beyond \$28 is paid by the rider. The base fare and subsidy amount will be reviewed annually and designed for affordability at the median household income level in the Outer County. ETA may choose to institute distance-based subsidies, after program evaluation.

Fares are paid according to the policies and procedures of the selected transportation provider.

If fares are paid via a mobile app, an electronic voucher can be redeemed at the time of trip booking to apply the subsidy. Electronic vouchers can be transmitted by ETA to registered riders on a monthly basis. Alternatively, registered riders can receive a code to enter into the app at the time of trip booking. Subsidy funds can be used only for transportation on the participating providers' services

If trips are booked via a call center, the subsidy can be applied by call center staff.

### **Technology**

Technologies supporting reservations and management and operation of trips are those of the participating providers.

Trip reservations might be integrated with ETA's planned app.

### **Ridership**

TTI estimated that the user-side subsidy program would provide 2,900 annual one-way trips. Depending on the policies and procedures of the participating providers and ETA's subsidy policies, ridership levels may vary from this forecast. ETA will monitor usage of the program after it is established and may adjust the

ridership forecasts as new data are obtained and evaluated.

### **Revenue Hours and Revenue Miles**

Revenue hours and revenue miles would be provided by the participating providers.

### **Fleet**

The vehicles used to deliver trips are those of the participating providers. ETA requires participating providers to offer WAVs with equivalent response times and at equivalent cost to the user.

### **Operator**

Trips will be provided by drivers employed or managed by the participating providers.

### **ADA/Accessibility Issues**

ETA requires participating providers to offer WAVs with equivalent response times and at equivalent cost to the user.

Curb-to-curb service must be available for riders who cannot walk to a virtual stop, if the participating provider uses virtual stops.

### **Performance Measures and Monitoring**

See Section 7.8.

## **7.5 Component: Volunteer Driver Program**

### **Description**

A VDP can complement other services to increase transportation options in the Outer County, such as where demand density is low. A VDP provides transportation for eligible populations when volunteer drivers use their own vehicles (as is most often the case), or agency-owned vehicles. Volunteer drivers may be compensated through mileage reimbursement or other perks. VDP trips might be available on days and at times when other GPDRT services are not available, depending on availability of volunteer drivers. Various VDP models are possible.

ETA does not anticipate being the administrator of a VDP but, rather, anticipates contributing funding toward reimbursing volunteer drivers for mileage under certain conditions. The VDP administrator might be the AAA, a local transportation provider, or a local non-profit organization. *This section of the GPDRT Service Plan focuses on policies relevant to ETA reimbursing VDP drivers for mileage.*

### **Service Area**

To be eligible for driver mileage reimbursement from ETA, VDP trips must have at least one endpoint in the Outer County and must be fully contained in El Paso County.

The VDP might restrict the service area in which trips can be made.

### **Service Days and Hours**

There are no restrictions on VDP trip days or hours to be eligible for driver mileage reimbursement from ETA.

The VDP might restrict program days and hours.

**Eligibility/Population Served**

To be eligible for driver mileage reimbursement from ETA, VDP trips must have at least one endpoint in the Outer County and must be fully contained in El Paso County. ETA reserves the right to pre-approve trips for mileage reimbursement.

The VDP might restrict program eligibility.

**Trip Purposes Served**

There are no restrictions on VDP trip purpose to be eligible for driver mileage reimbursement from ETA.

The VDP might restrict trip purposes.

**Trip Reservations**

Riders book trips according to the policies and procedures of the VDP. This does not affect driver mileage reimbursement from ETA.

VDP trip reservations might be integrated with ETA's planned app.

**Response Time**

Response times are determined by the policies and procedures of the VDP. This does not affect driver mileage reimbursement from ETA.

**Scheduling and Dispatching**

Scheduling and dispatching policies and procedures are those of the VDP. This does not affect driver mileage reimbursement from ETA.

VDP trip scheduling might be integrated into ETA's scheduling and dispatching software.

**Fares and Fare Payment**

ETA does not charge a fare or fee for VDP trips.

The VDP might charge a fare or fee or accept donations.

**Mileage Reimbursement**

ETA will reimburse mileage for eligible VDP trips at a rate of up to \$0.70 per mile when eligible riders are being transported. This rate is based on the 2025 US General Services Administration mileage reimbursement rate and will be reviewed and updated annually.

The reimbursement rate may depend on the availability of other funding sources to offset the cost of specific trips (e.g., funding to support veterans' travel). ETA will coordinate with the VDP to determine the mileage reimbursement rate for trips that are eligible for funding from other sources.

**Technology**

Technologies supporting management and operation of VDP trips are those of the VDP.

VDP trip reservations might be integrated with ETA's planned app, and VDP trip scheduling might be integrated into ETA's scheduling and dispatching software.

**Ridership**

The estimated annual one-way trip demand for VDP service is 6,000 trips at maturity. On average, this is 500 one-way trips per month and 16 one-way trips per day. This estimate assumes that there are sufficient volunteer drivers available to meet demand. The methodology for this estimation is described in Section 4.7 of the GPDRT Study Final Report.

Depending on the policies and procedures of the VDP, ridership levels may vary from this forecast.

**Revenue Miles**

TTI estimated annual VDP revenue miles of 108,000 by multiplying average one-way VDP trip length (assumed to be 18.0 miles based on the use cases described in Chapter 6.0) by estimated annual VDP trips.

Depending on the policies and procedures of the VDP, revenue miles may vary from this forecast.

**Fleet**

ETA will coordinate with the VDP regarding provision of a WAV for VDP use. The conditions and terms under which the WAV will be made available will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Operator**

Trips will be provided by volunteer drivers managed by the VDP.

**ADA/Accessibility Issues**

ETA will coordinate with the VDP regarding provision of a WAV for VDP use, if a WAV is needed. The conditions and terms under which the WAV will be made available will be negotiated with the VDP.

**Performance Measurement and Monitoring**

See Section 7.8.

## 7.6 Component Integration

This section describes coordination of the GPDRT service components.

### Mobility Management

FTA refers to mobility management as an “innovative approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to customers...”. Mobility managers focus both on meeting individuals' needs as well as the coordination of transportation in the overall transportation system. The key functions of mobility managers can include convening stakeholders, coordination planning, coordinated service delivery, and travel navigation.

### Background

A mobility manager can play a multifaceted role. According to the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), mobility managers maintain awareness of available community transportation options and share this knowledge with customers to improve access and system usability (1). NCHRP Project 20-65, Task 68 (*Successful Mobility Management Practices for Improving Transportation Services in Small Urban and Rural Areas*) provides guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating mobility management programs.

Although common components of mobility management programs include community outreach and engagement, needs assessment and program design, program evaluation, and funding strategies, no two programs are identical. Variations arise from differences in local services and system requirements. Mobility management fosters partnerships among agencies and service providers, such as taxi companies, offers individualized trip planning, and often serves as a centralized resource for travel information (2).

### Funding

Mobility management is considered an eligible capital expense according to Federal Transit Law (49 U.S.C.5302) and is funded at up to 80%. Funding programs Section 5307, 5310, 5311 and Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) grants can all contribute to funding a mobility management program. The required 20% local match can be attained through local or state funds or other federal programs including Older Americans Act funding. Partnering to create a mobility management program benefits all transportation providers in streamlining transportation access and coordination, and it also creates opportunities for additional match contributions.

### Job Duties and Competencies

NCMM compiled job descriptions for mobility managers. Example job descriptions from NCMM include the following (1):

- Pike’s Peak Area Agency on Aging, Like Peak, CO (2007)
  - Facilitate communication between agencies
  - Develop incentives to encourage agency participation
  - Interface with coordination committee and strengthen partner network of human services agencies
  - Identify and use fully allocated service costs in evaluating projects and service options
  - Establish a system for the shared use of vehicles
  - Investigate a system of shared resources including those related to vehicle maintenance, sharing of backup vehicles, and cost-saving fueling options
  - Establish provision of alternative services such as mileage reimbursements, volunteer drivers/vehicle sharing, mobility training, and vouchers for gas or car repairs, in order to meet

- diverse human service transportation needs at the lowest cost
- Develop and implement common standards of driver training to provide safe drivers who can be cross-trained for different services and clientele
- Develop a simple and uniform system of eligibility for all services in the network
- Develop customer information that explains the range of services and encourages rider responsibility for choosing the most appropriate and cost-effective option that will meet the customer's needs
- Cobb County, GA (undated)
  - Promote the enhancement and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services
  - Support state and local coordination planning and policy bodies such as regional partnering agencies and funding partners
  - Develop and maintain the Mobility Action Council, a proactive stakeholder group, and coordinate public involvement activities
  - Develop strategies for seeking other funding sources and to leverage existing funding with non-FTA federal programs
- Rural Central Iowa (undated)
  - Research needs and demands of users, funding, and regulatory processes, and develop incentives for participation
  - Investigate the feasibility and eligibility requirements of VDPs and a one-call center for transportation
  - Develop a travel training program
  - Develop new ways to remove barriers for transportation to and from jobs and employment support services for individuals with disabilities in rural areas
  - Develop an informational and outreach program for current transportation services and mobility options through public speaking and media presentations, including development of outreach materials and a marketing plan
  - Identify and research corporate, foundation, and government sources of funding for matching funds and new or ongoing programs

### **ETA Mobility Manager**

ETA's mobility manager will serve as the primary coordinator for GPDRT service and provide consumer support in registering for and navigating the diverse GPDRT options available through ETA. The mobility manager will ensure that customers are aware of and able to use the most appropriate service for their specific trip needs. The mobility manager will play a critical role in coordinating service delivery, managing funding arrangements, and maintaining and developing new partnerships within the service area.

### **Role: GPDRT Service Registration**

One of the primary points of contact between the mobility manager and riders is registering riders for GPDRT services. Registration applies to ETA access, the user-side subsidy program, and the VDP. Installing an app (e.g., to book trips on ETA ándale) is not considered to be registration.

The registration task consists of educating riders about the ETA services available to them; confirming that the rider is eligible for ETA services (e.g., is a resident of the ETA service area); establishing if the rider is ADA-eligible and/or needs a WAV or other accommodation; explaining fares, subsidies, and mileage reimbursements (as applicable); setting up accounts for managing fares, subsidies, and mileage reimbursements; and explaining how to book trips, manage trips, and provide input on existing and planned

ETA services. Educating riders about available services includes providing a list of transportation providers participating in the user-side subsidy program and providing the rider with a referral to the VDP.

**Role: Trip Booking**

Another primary point of contact between the mobility manager and riders is assisting riders in booking trips. If a rider calls ETA to request assistance in booking a trip, Table 19 is a matrix that the mobility manager could use to identify the transit services that are suitable for the requested trip. Using the matrix correctly will require the mobility manager to be familiar with (1) the areas in which ETA services operate, as well as their service days and service hours; (2) the policies and procedures guiding the operation of ETA's services and those of ETA's transportation partners; (3) opportunities for riders to transfer between ETA services or between ETA and Sun Metro services; and (4) the individual rider's specific trip needs (e.g., need for a WAV). The mobility manager should consider that ETA paseo, Vamonos Vanpool, and the Gold Route may be options for the rider's requested trip. The mobility manager may need to make a determination if a trip is eligible for the user-side subsidy program or VDP mileage reimbursement.

**Table 19. GPDRT Service Selection Matrix**

	<b>Subscription Trip</b>	<b>Advance Reservation Trip</b>	<b>Same-day Trip</b>	<b>Spontaneous Trip</b>
<b>Trip Contained within One Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETA access</li> <li>• VDP</li> <li>• User-side subsidy program*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETA access</li> <li>• VDP</li> <li>• User-side subsidy program*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User-side subsidy program</li> <li>• ETA access*</li> <li>• VDP*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETA ándale</li> <li>• User-side subsidy program</li> </ul>
<b>Intrazonal Trip or Trip into the Sun Metro Service Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETA access</li> <li>• VDP</li> <li>• User-side subsidy program*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETA access</li> <li>• VDP</li> <li>• User-side subsidy program*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User-side subsidy program</li> <li>• ETA access*</li> <li>• VDP*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User-side subsidy program</li> <li>• ETA ándale**</li> </ul>

\*If allowed by the specific provider and/or capacity is available

\*\*If used to facilitate a transfer to another service

Note: ETA paseo might also support spontaneous trips.

Once suitable service options are identified, the mobility manager can review trip options with the rider. The mobility manager can provide information such as expected travel time and out-of-pocket cost to the user. The mobility manager can then refer the rider to the appropriate entity for trip booking (e.g., to the ETA access operations contractor). If the mobility manager has access to the operator's scheduling staff or scheduling software, the mobility manager may be able to book the trip on behalf of the rider.

**Scheduling Software**

Scheduling software that includes schedules of volunteer drivers could support VDPs being used to provide trips in the Outer County. The reservations, scheduling, and call center systems that support ETA access can potentially be used to support the VDP.

**ETA App**

ETA's planned app may be able to support identifying service options and making trip bookings across different services and providers.

## 7.7 Implementation

This section describes a high-level approach to implementing the GPDRT service components. This approach supplements the content of the 2023 Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan also contains guidance and describes relevant best practices.

### Near and Mid Term

#### ETA access

Commingle ADA and general public trips on ETA access starting in FY2027. Monitor ridership and track the number of general public trip requests that cannot be accommodated due to service capacity. Revise the operations contract and/or acquire additional vehicles to meet general public demand. Continue to ensure there are no capacity restrictions for ADA paratransit trips.

#### ETA ándale

Continue the pilot service in San Elizario and Clint. Evaluate service performance after one year of operation (i.e., in October 2026). Evaluate the service with respect to the microtransit performance measures in Section 7.8, and solicit input from riders through on-board surveys, as part of phone-based trip bookings, and (if applicable) through ETA app trip ratings. Adjust the service to improve performance (if applicable) and re-evaluate after six months. Implement the service as a permanent service or terminate the pilot depending on performance after six months. Use lessons learned from the pilot to plan the potential new ETA ándale zones.

#### User-Side Subsidy Program

Form a working group to investigate development of a user-side subsidy program that serves the Outer County. Through the working group, identify program participants. Develop and implement a user-side subsidy program based on the following schedule:

- *Phase 1: Planning.* Define goals, finalize the fare structure, and secure funding. Duration: 2 months.
- *Phase 2: Provider Agreements.* Negotiate contracts with providers. Duration: 1 month.
- *Phase 3: Pilot Launch.* Launch a limited service in one or more select areas of the Outer County and monitor performance. Duration: 3 months.
- *Phase 4: Evaluation.* Analyze costs, ridership, and user feedback. Duration: 1 month.
- *Phase 5: Full Rollout.* Expand the program to the full Outer County and conduct ongoing monitoring. Duration: 6 months.

#### VDP

Form a working group to investigate development of a VDP that operates in the Outer County. Through the working group, identify a potential VDP administrator in the region. Share resources with the VDP administrator to inform VDP development, such as National RTAP's *Volunteer Driver Program Toolkit* (3) and Aging Forward's "Volunteer Driver Program TurnKey Kit" (4). Provide input on VDP development, namely on the topics of VDP model, service area design, funding, trip eligibility policies, mileage reimbursement policies, data-sharing, WAV availability, performance measurement, and integration with ETA services.

Support a pilot implementation of the VDP that will last three to six months; the pilot implementation might cover only a portion of the Outer County, depending on the VDP administrator's mandate and authority. Evaluate usage and costs of the pilot VDP, including rider and driver feedback, after six months. Assist the VDP administrator in revising the VDP as needed to address the findings of the evaluation.

Encourage expanding the VDP to the full Outer County if the pilot was limited to only a portion of the Outer County and re-evaluate after six months. Provide input into transforming the pilot VDP into a permanent service or terminating it based on performance after the second six-month period.

### **Long Term**

As thresholds for sustaining successful microtransit service standards are met in more communities in the Outer County—and with consideration of the outcomes of the ETA ándale pilot in San Elizario and Clint—ETA may consider phasing out local fixed-route services in favor of a combination of ETA ándale and commingled ETA access. This could reduce service duplication and lower operating costs.

### **Considerations**

Available funds might constrain what new GPDRT services can be implemented in any given fiscal year. If funds are limited, commingled ETA access could be the priority new service, as it would cover the entire service area (100% coverage being one of ETA's goals), it leverages existing contracts and resources, and its viability does not depend on the participation of other providers (including TNCs and taxis), other agencies, and volunteer drivers. Funding limitations might also make it necessary to limit the initial implementation of the VDP and/or user-side subsidy program to zones or subareas within the service area.

The timelines for VDP and user-side subsidy program implementation will depend on the participation of other providers or agencies, which introduces uncertainty in the timelines. A goal of the working groups should be developing more exact timelines.

User-side subsidy program trips might not be reportable to the NTD. Program parameters can be adjusted to manage usage and costs if the program has an adverse effect on federal or state funding. When evaluating the program, ETA should investigate if riders who use the program are making brand-new trips using the program or are making trips that would otherwise be made on ETA service.

## **7.8 Performance Measures**

The performance measures and performance standards in Table 20 were originally developed in the Implementation Plan and supplemented as part of GPDRT Service Plan development. Additional standards as established in the ADA Plan apply to ADA-eligible trips on ETA access.

Data needed to calculate some performance measures in the table may or may not be available from providers participating in the user-side subsidy program and the VDP administrator. ETA should address reporting requirements when developing agreements with these entities.

ETA is developing performance measures and service standards for ETA Board adoption in 2026. The adopted performance measures and service standards will consider the content of Table 20 and may include additional performance measures and service standards (e.g., spare ratio, which can inform fleet planning). The adopted performance measures and service standards are expected to be incorporated into operations contracts, as applicable.

**Table 20. GPDRT Performance Measures and Standards**

Performance Measure	Description	Standard
Total passenger trips	<p>ETA access and ETA ándale: Number of times a passenger boards a vehicle</p> <p>User-side subsidy program: Number of passenger trips to which the program subsidy is applied.</p> <p>VDP: Number of VDPs trips for which mileage is reimbursed</p>	<p>ETA access and ETA ándale: To be set by zone and adjusted as zones mature and new generators of service are established or disappear</p> <p>User-side subsidy program: To be determined based on characteristics of participating providers and subsidy amount</p> <p>VDP: To be determined based on scale of VDP</p>
Passenger trip distribution	The percentage of passenger trips served by ETA access, ETA ándale, the user-side subsidy program, and the VDP	To be determined based on optimizing budget impact (once new services are established) and goals for reportable ridership
Passenger trips per revenue hour	The number of passengers carried per 1 hour of revenue service	ETA access: Minimum of 2.0 ETA ándale: Minimum of 4.0
Returning riders	The number of repeat or returning customers, calculated through scheduling of unique riders	Number of unique riders that take at least four trips per month (two round trips)
On-time arrivals	<p>ETA access: The percentage of trips in which the vehicle arrives within the confirmed pickup or drop-off window and the trip is completed</p> <p>ETA ándale: The percentage of trips in which the vehicle arrives to pick up a passenger within the scheduled pickup time window. Standard might depend on zone size.</p>	<p>ETA access: At least 90%</p> <p>ETA ándale: At least 92%</p>
Onboard time	The percentage of excessively long trips	<p>ETA access: 95% of trips completed with customer ride times not exceeding 60 minutes</p> <p>ETA ándale: 98% of trips completed with customer ride times not exceeding the maximum established for the zone</p>
Missed trips	The percentage of trips in which vehicle does not arrive, vehicle arrives early and departs early, vehicle arrives on time and departs early (before the five-minute driver wait time), driver does not carry out specific instructions associated with a trip (e.g., waits at the wrong entrance), or vehicle arrives after the pickup time and customer no-shows or cancels.	ETA access and ETA ándale: 0.5% of total trips scheduled

Performance Measure	Description	Standard
	Represents events in which the trip does not occur due to no fault of the rider.	
Fixed-route feeder trips	The percentage of trips in a zone transferring to the fixed-route system	To be set by zone and service
Completed trips	The percentage of requested trips completed. Trips not completed include trips that are cancelled late and trips in which the rider no-shows.	ETA access: No more than 5% no-shows plus late cancellations ETA ándale: 85% or more completed
Percent shared rides	The percentage of rides that are shared with other customers	To be set by zone and service
Operational cost per passenger trip	The cost of providing one passenger trip. Differs for ETA access and ETA ándale based on resources used to deliver service and zone characteristics.  User-side subsidy program: Average subsidy per passenger trip  VDP: Average mileage reimbursement per passenger trip	ETA access: To be set by zone  ETA ándale: Measured against the cost of providing equivalent fixed-route service in the zone with similar headways (after the zone has matured)  User-side subsidy program: To be determined based on fare structures of participating providers.  VDP: To be determined based on mileage reimbursement rate and extent to which other entities can provide mileage reimbursement
Operational cost per revenue mile	The cost of providing one unit (mile) of service. Includes labor, fuel, and maintenance costs	ETA access: To be set by zone ETA ándale: To be set by zone
Number of passenger trips by individuals with disabilities	The percentage of customers using a mobility device or requesting a higher level of mobility assistance  ETA access: The number of individuals scheduled as door-to-door and/or who use a mobility device  ETA ándale: The number of individuals requesting a WAV trip or curb-to-curb service at booking  User-side subsidy program and VDP: The number of users requiring a WAV	ETA access: To be set by zone ETA ándale: To be set by zone  User-side subsidy program and VDP: To be determined based on data availability
Number of passenger trips to essential services	The number of trips to essential services, including school, medical, grocery, shopping, affordable housing, senior housing, dental, pharmacy, financial institutions, government offices, and social service agencies.	ETA access: To be set by zone ETA ándale To be set by zone  User-side subsidy program and VDP: To be set by service based on available data

Performance Measure	Description	Standard
Number of passenger complaints	The number of complaints relative to the number of passenger trips	ETA access and ETA ándale: Fewer than 10 complaints per 10,000 passenger trips  User-side subsidy program and VDP: To be set by service based on available data
Preventable incidents	The number of preventable incidents (e.g., breakdowns) occurring per 100,000 total miles	ETA access and ETA ándale: No more than 1.20 preventable accidents per 100,000 total miles
Revenue miles between vehicle failures	Total revenue miles between mechanical failures (e.g., wheelchair lift failures) based on agency policy and NTD definitions	ETA access and ETA ándale: Minimum of 50,000 revenue miles between mechanical failures

As an integral component of the broader transit system, mobility management should include clearly defined performance measures to evaluate its effectiveness and justify continued funding. The following measures may be applicable:

- Direct user benefits resulting from increased access to medical care and jobs
- Economic benefits to the community resulting from increased access to medical care and jobs
- System metrics such as number of active partnerships, number and quality of connections between services and service providers, passenger trips for all public transportation services, transportation gaps filled, and new funding sources applied (2)

Performance measures identified by NCMM for establishment of a one-call, one-click, or centralized call center and/or a travel training program address usage of services, customer satisfaction, and the number of destinations customers can reach (5).

## 7.9 Chapter References

1. "About NCMM." Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Technical Assistance Center, accessed February 6, 2025. Available at <http://www.ccam-tac.org/>.
2. KFH Group and Cambridge Systematics, Inc. *Expanding Access to Our Communities: A Guide to Successful Mobility Management Practices in Small Urban and Rural Areas*. NCHRP Project 20-65/Task 68 Contractor's Final Report. Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC, 2018.
3. Washington State Department of Transportation, Colorado Association of Transit Agencies, KFH Group, and Socius Amica, LLC. *Volunteer Driver Program Toolkit*. National Rural Transit Assistance Program, Washington, DC, 2025. Available at <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Volunteer-Drivers-Toolkit/Welcome>.
4. "Volunteer Driver Program TurnKey Kit." Aging Forward, Kansas City, MO, undated. Available at <https://aging-forward.org/turnkey-kit/>.
5. *Performance Measures for Mobility Management*. Mobility Management in Practice Series. National Center for Mobility Management, 2014. Available at [https://www.ccam-tac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Performance\\_Measures\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ccam-tac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Performance_Measures_Final.pdf).

## APPENDIX A: ROUND 1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### A1. INTRODUCTION

The Phase 1 Public Engagement Technical Memorandum was the third major deliverable for the GPDRT Study. Its purpose was to describe the conduct and execution of Round 1 public engagement. This appendix summarizes the Round 1 public engagement effort.

### A2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

The GPDRT Study included a robust public engagement component that informed the investigation to determine how best to develop a comprehensive demand response service plan. In Round 1, the public engagement efforts identified the needs, documenting those that are currently accommodated by existing services and what unmet needs remain.

With input from the ETA board and staff, the study team designed an engagement program that was premised on engagement activities that are convenient, accessible, and engaging. The team focused on making engagement as easy as possible for as many people as possible so that the team could obtain a thorough understanding of needs. This was accomplished through multiple methods including pop-up events, visiting senior centers, and tabling at locations that are highly trafficked (including libraries and universities). Materials were engaging to attract attention. The team also wanted to make communicating the public's needs as easy as possible. This was accomplished by developing an easy-to-use survey. Finally, an online version of the survey and a website made it convenient for the public to provide input.

### A3. OUTREACH METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Using the public engagement purpose and principles as a guidepost, the study team developed several collateral materials to support the engagement activities. Initially this effort was to be supported by Barracuda Public Relations agency. However, the untimely closing of the office meant that graphic support services were conducted in-house by TTI graphic designers.

#### Survey

To understand the needs in the county, the study team developed a user-friendly, bilingual (English and Spanish) survey instrument to ask users and potential users about their needs for transportation and/or transit service. The survey asked about trip origins and destinations, how trips are currently being made and for what purpose, what type of assistance might be required and trip frequency.

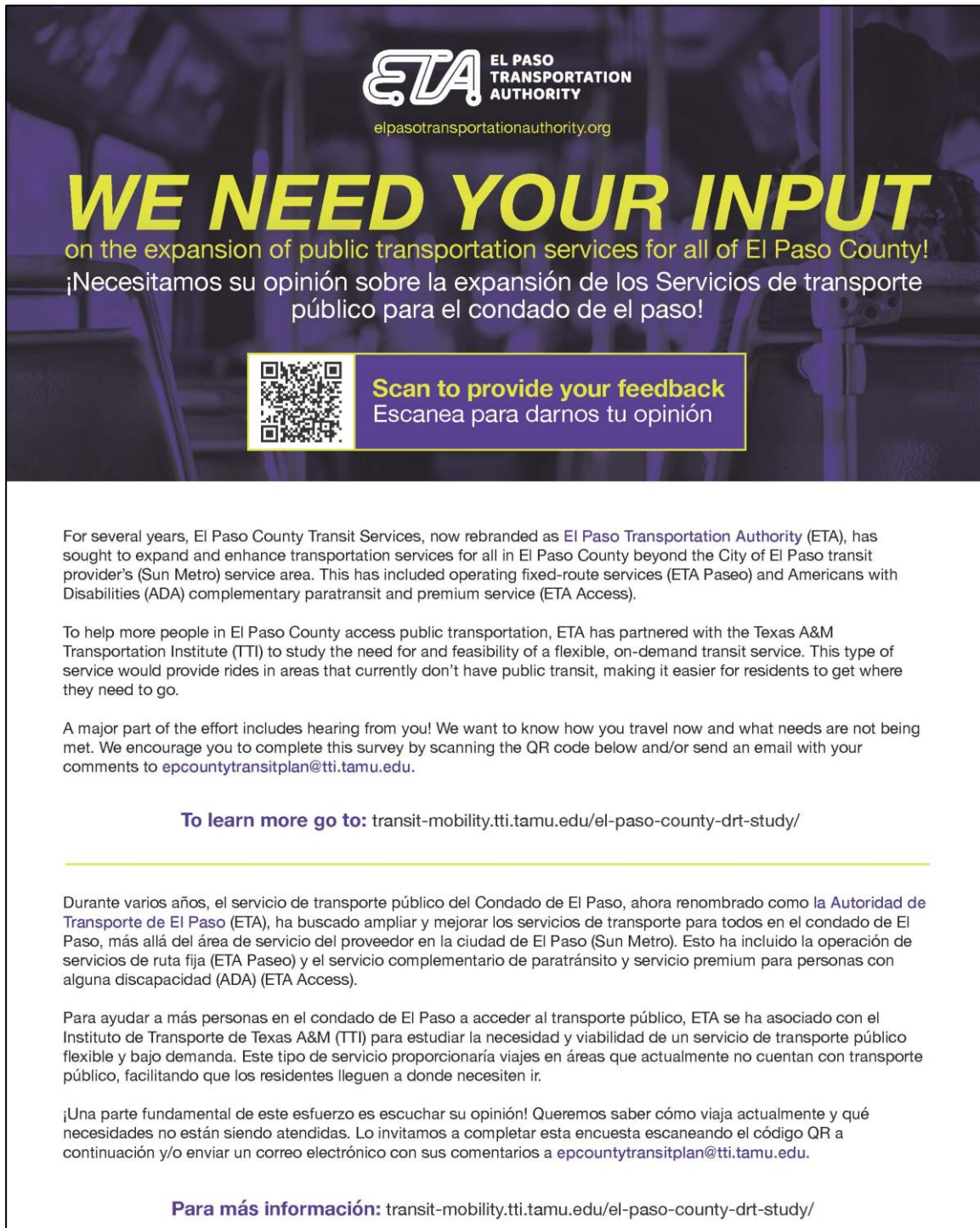
The survey then asked about trips needed or wanted but are not being made. For this section, the survey asked again about origins and destinations, accessibility needs, frequency and specifically why the trips are not being made. The next section of the survey asked respondents about their willingness to support demand response service in the outer County and what they consider a reasonable fare for this service. Finally, the survey asked for respondents' zip codes and a few sociodemographic questions.

The survey was available in English and Spanish and available online or in a paper version. It was reviewed to ensure it was compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Survey distribution was handled through existing distribution networks and at in-person events. Collateral materials all advertised the availability of the survey and encouraged people to scan a QR code to take the survey. A water bill insert was used successfully in previous County engagement efforts. As such, Barracuda


developed an insert (shown in Figure A1) and had planned to contact several water utilities in the county to use the inserts with their monthly billings. Due to Barracuda's closing, the only water utility that sent the inserts was Faben Water District. However, other materials were developed to generate awareness about and encourage completion of the survey. Social media posts were created for Facebook and Instagram to advertise the survey. These materials were distributed to the ETA Access Advisory Committee members who were asked to share with all of their mailing lists, newsletters, and distribution networks. The information and associated collateral materials were also shared with the EPATS Board, and they were asked to use the distribution networks of their respective communities. El Paso County Communications was also engaged to promote the survey. Finally, the survey was advertised on the ETA website.

Study team members also visited several popular gathering places to promote the survey and to provide information about the study. At these pop-up events and tabling opportunities, study team members were able to communicate with the public about the importance of completing the study to help inform development of potential solutions to improve transportation for all of El Paso County. To attract attention, several other collateral materials were developed.



**ETA** EL PASO  
TRANSPORTATION  
AUTHORITY  
elpasotransportationauthority.org

**WE NEED YOUR INPUT**  
on the expansion of public transportation services for all of El Paso County!  
¡Necesitamos su opinión sobre la expansión de los Servicios de transporte  
público para el condado de el paso!

 **Scan to provide your feedback**  
Escanea para darnos tu opinión

For several years, El Paso County Transit Services, now rebranded as El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA), has sought to expand and enhance transportation services for all in El Paso County beyond the City of El Paso transit provider's (Sun Metro) service area. This has included operating fixed-route services (ETA Paseo) and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complementary paratransit and premium service (ETA Access).

To help more people in El Paso County access public transportation, ETA has partnered with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to study the need for and feasibility of a flexible, on-demand transit service. This type of service would provide rides in areas that currently don't have public transit, making it easier for residents to get where they need to go.

A major part of the effort includes hearing from you! We want to know how you travel now and what needs are not being met. We encourage you to complete this survey by scanning the QR code below and/or send an email with your comments to [epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu](mailto:epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu).

**To learn more go to:** [transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/](https://transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/)

---

Durante varios años, el servicio de transporte público del Condado de El Paso, ahora renombrado como la Autoridad de Transporte de El Paso (ETA), ha buscado ampliar y mejorar los servicios de transporte para todos en el condado de El Paso, más allá del área de servicio del proveedor en la ciudad de El Paso (Sun Metro). Esto ha incluido la operación de servicios de ruta fija (ETA Paseo) y el servicio complementario de paratransito y servicio premium para personas con alguna discapacidad (ADA) (ETA Access).

Para ayudar a más personas en el condado de El Paso a acceder al transporte público, ETA se ha asociado con el Instituto de Transporte de Texas A&M (TTI) para estudiar la necesidad y viabilidad de un servicio de transporte público flexible y bajo demanda. Este tipo de servicio proporcionaría viajes en áreas que actualmente no cuentan con transporte público, facilitando que los residentes lleguen a donde necesiten ir.

¡Una parte fundamental de este esfuerzo es escuchar su opinión! Queremos saber cómo viaja actualmente y qué necesidades no están siendo atendidas. Lo invitamos a completar esta encuesta escaneando el código QR a continuación y/o enviar un correo electrónico con sus comentarios a [epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu](mailto:epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu).

**Para más información:** [transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/](https://transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/)

**Figure A1. Water Bill Insert**

### Website

The study team developed and hosted a website about the study (<https://transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/>). The website (depicted in Figure A2 and Figure A3) included background information about the study, a map of the study area, and an informative section on types of transit services. Providing this information allowed users to offer educated and informed opinions about the types of services that would best meet their needs. The website included a link to the survey and asked for viewers to complete the survey. The

website also included an email address where viewers could send any comments or concerns directly to the study team. Additionally, the ETA website included a link to the study website.

### El Paso County Community Demand Response Transportation Service Planning Study

También disponible en español.


#### Background

For several years, El Paso County Transit Services, now rebranded as **El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA)**, has sought to expand and enhance transportation services for all in El Paso County beyond the City of El Paso transit provider's (Sun Metro) service area. This has included operating fixed-route services (ETA Transit) and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complementary paratransit and premium service (ETA Access).

With the goal of expanding the reach of public transit in unserved parts of the County (i.e., beyond the service areas of ETA Transit and Access and beyond Sun Metro's service area), ETA has retained the **Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)** to explore the need for and feasibility of implementing a community demand response transportation (DRT) service — or a network of different types of DRT services — to address this need.

#### Study Area

Below is a map of the DRT study area.



The logo for the El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA) is located on the right side of the screenshot. It features the letters 'ETA' in a stylized, blue, outlined font. Below the letters, the words 'EL PASO TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY' are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font, stacked on three lines.

Figure A2. Screenshot of Study Website

**Description of Service Types**

**Current Service:** A bus operates along established routes with set schedules, and passengers can get on and off the bus by flagging the bus driver. *This is the service that existed prior to 2025.*

**Fixed-Route Local Bus:** A bus operates along an established route with a set schedule, and passengers get on and off the bus only at marked stops. ADA Paratransit service is provided to areas within ¼ mile of the route.

**Flexible Route Local Bus:** A bus operates along an established route with a set schedule, and passengers get on and off the bus at marked stops. If requested in advance, the bus may flex, or leave the established route to travel to places within ¼ mile of the route.

**ADA Paratransit:** A small bus provides service to individuals with disabilities, according to the ADA, who call ahead and schedule a pickup. ADA paratransit service is provided to areas within ¼ mile of fixed routes.

**Local Bus:** A bus operates along an established route and serves local trips (i.e., trips that do not include other parts of the region).

**Dial-a-Ride:** A small bus provides service to passengers who call ahead and schedule a pickup. Dial-a-Ride service does not follow an established route but provides rides within a community or zone. Passengers who want to travel between zones transfer at existing transfer centers.

**Transit Service Terms**

**Hours of service:** How long a transit service or route operates on a particular day. For example, a bus route's hours of service on weekdays (Monday through Friday) may be from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Peak:** The times of day when more people travel and sometimes more transit service is provided. For example, peak time periods might be 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Off-peak:** The times of day when travel is lower than peak and sometimes less transit service is provided. Off-peak time periods are all the hours of service that are not in the peak time periods.

**Frequency:** How often a bus arrives on a route. For example, a bus may come once per hour. Increases in frequency mean that buses will come more often, and passengers will wait less time for a bus to arrive. Decreases in frequency mean that buses will come less often, and passengers will have to wait longer for a bus to arrive.

**Your Feedback**

A major part of the effort includes hearing from you! We want to know how you travel now and about what travel needs are not being met. We encourage you to complete [our online survey](#) and/or send an email with your comments to [epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu](mailto:epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu). You can also go to the survey by clicking the button below.

**TAKE THE SURVEY**

Figure A3. Additional Content on Study Website

**In-Person Outreach**

During the week of April 14, 2025, the study team visited several popular locations in or near the study area to encourage survey participation. The pop-up type events were intended to leverage participation while minimizing respondent burden by going to where potential transit users were already gathered.

The first opportunity was a stakeholder meeting for the El Paso Border Pedestrian and Transit Connectivity for Economic Development (EPTConnect) project, which provided an opportunity to brief additional potential partners with target networks on the opportunity for survey participation. The survey link was shared via email with the Chief, Center for Development and Civic Engagement at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and with TxDOT – El Paso district staff working on public transportation.

Study team members arranged for and manned a tabling location at EPCC Northwest Campus. Promotional items were offered to entice survey participation.


Additionally, the study team visited the following locations and posted collateral materials:


- Clint Senior Center
- Department of Public Health
- Fabens Senior Center
- Montana Vista Community Center
- Oz Glaze Senior Center
- San Elizario Senior Center
- Sun Metro Eastside Transit center
- Town of Anthony Town Hall
- Town of Horizon City Town Hall
- Village of Vinton Community Center
- Volar Center for Independent Living
- On-board ETA vehicles

At some of the above-listed locations, the study team was able to communicate directly with would-be survey respondents. At other locations, collateral materials containing a QR code to the survey were posted.

### **Collateral Materials**

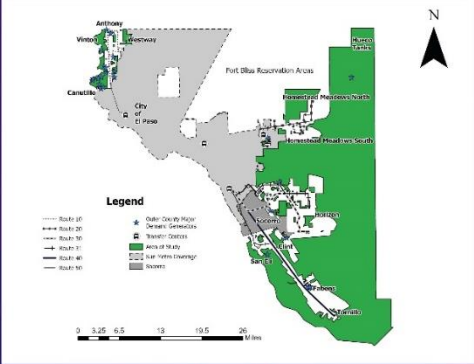
As noted previously, several materials were created to provide information about the study and to encourage and remind people who wished to complete the survey at a later date. Most of the materials contained the same or similar information. These materials included water bill inserts, social media post content, flyers, posters (one of which is shown in Figure A5), postcards, and comment cards.





**Can you get to where you need to go?**  
 El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA) needs your input on the expansion of public transportation services for all of El Paso County!

**¿Puede llegar a donde necesita ir?**  
 ¡La Autoridad de Transporte de El Paso (ETA) necesita su opinión sobre la expansión de los servicios de transporte público para todo el condado de El Paso!



For several years, El Paso County Transit Services, now rebranded as El Paso Transportation Authority (ETA), has sought to expand and enhance transportation services for all in El Paso County beyond the City of El Paso transit provider's (Sun Metro) service area. This has included operating fixed-route services (ETA Transit) and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) complementary paratransit and premium service (ETA Access).

Durante varios años, el servicio de transporte público del Condado de El Paso, ahora renombrado como la Autoridad de Transporte de El Paso (ETA), ha buscado ampliar y mejorar los servicios de transporte para todos en el condado de El Paso, más allá del área de servicio del proveedor en la ciudad de El Paso (Sun Metro). Esto ha incluido la operación de servicios de ruta fija (ETA Transit) y el servicio complementario de paratransito y servicio premium para personas con alguna discapacidad (ADA) (ETA Access).

Figure A5. Depiction of Large Format Poster

**Social Media Advertising**

To increase the likelihood of participation in the survey, the study team purchased ads on Facebook and Instagram. The following zip codes were targeted: 79821, 79835, 79849, 79836, 79838, 79853, 79928, 79916, and 79938. Ads ran for two weeks prior to the survey closing, for a total ad purchase of approximately \$200. One week prior to the survey closing, the ads were run again, with a notice that the survey was closing in one week.

**A4. OUTREACH RESULTS**

The following sections provide details about the findings from the outreach.

**Survey Conduct**

The study team visited several locations during the week of outreach. Unfortunately, the postponement from March resulted in the outreach being conducted during Holy Week. As a result, opportunities were more limited. Nonetheless, the purpose of the Round 1 public engagement was to spread the word about the study and the survey and encourage people to complete the survey. The activities performed served the purpose of creating opportunities to provide input, mostly focused on how respondents are currently getting to self-identified destinations and their unmet mobility needs.

While speaking with the public during these interactions, study team members were able to provide guidance to interested individuals in completing the survey in real time. The survey instrument did prove somewhat difficult to complete, especially for older adults, despite pre-deployment testing. In all cases, though, when team members did engage with the public, there were often expressions of gratitude to El Paso County for undertaking the GPDRT Study.

**Survey Findings**

Survey questions focused on current and desired travel behaviors, barriers to mobility, service preferences, and demographics. The first set of questions focused on current travel. The remaining questions focused on unmet needs.

This geographic distribution of the origins of respondents' top three most frequent trips emphasized the rural character of the survey sample and aligns with the stated objective of assessing transportation needs beyond the reach of existing services. The dispersed nature of these trip origins further supported the feasibility and necessity of implementing a flexible demand response transit system that can serve low-density areas where conventional routes are not cost-effective or practical.

A distinct concentration of respondents' trip destinations was observed within and around the Sun Metro coverage area, particularly in central and eastern El Paso. This pattern indicated that, while many respondents reside in rural parts of the county, they travel into more urbanized areas for essential services and activities. The destinations were clustered along major corridors and near key urban centers, suggesting trips are likely related to work, medical services, shopping, and education. This interpretation was supported by the survey's trip purpose data.

This spatial relationship between rural trip origins and urban destinations strongly reinforced the case for a demand response transit service. Such a transit service would function as a crucial link between underserved rural communities and the Sun Metro network, providing first- and last-mile connectivity that is currently lacking. The survey thus provided compelling evidence of transit need and trip patterns that cross jurisdictional and service boundaries in El Paso County.

Other survey findings are the following:

- The majority of respondents (83%) typically make round trips. This highlighted the importance of round-trip scheduling capabilities in any demand response system.
- Only a small portion of respondents (2 out of 21) indicated a need for a WAV. While the vast majority do not require such accommodation, the presence of even a few individuals with accessibility needs highlights the importance of maintaining a portion of the fleet that is ADA-compliant to ensure universal access.
- Most of the respondents (18 out of 20) reported that they do not require assistance getting in or out of a vehicle. While physical assistance from the driver is not a prevalent need among the respondents, it remains an important consideration for certain riders. A demand response system should still incorporate supportive accommodations to ensure accessibility for all, including those with occasional or non-visible mobility limitations.
- Regarding respondents' top three trip purposes, the most common purposes were essential and recurring: shopping, medical care, and work. These findings emphasized the critical need for reliable transportation to support basic daily functions in the rural outer areas of El Paso. A demand response system tailored for these trip types could see strong usage and improve quality of life.
- The majority of respondents take their key trips several times per week, with 2-3 times per week being the most common. About 30% make these trips daily or nearly daily, underscoring their regular and essential nature. The consistency of these trips highlights the need for dependable, frequent transit options, especially for work, medical work, medical, or shopping purposes.
- Most of the residents rely on themselves or informal networks (e.g., walking or getting rides from family) to meet essential travel needs. This was followed by being driven by family or friends and catching the bus at a transfer center.
- Regarding unmet trip needs:
  - A spatial analysis of origins of unmet trip needs revealed that the majority of these origins are situated in the rural southern and eastern sectors of El Paso County, including communities such as Fabens, San Elizario, and Tornillo. These locations lie well outside the Sun Metro coverage area, reinforcing the gap in public transportation infrastructure serving rural populations.
  - The spatial distribution of destinations of unmet trip needs revealed a strong concentration within and near the urbanized Sun Metro coverage area, particularly in central and east El Paso. Unlike the origins of unmet trip needs (which are predominantly located in rural, underserved areas), these destinations cluster around locations associated with employment, health care, education, retail, entertainment, and other essential services. This contrast clearly reflects the spatial disconnect between where respondents live and where critical services are located.
  - Virtually all of the respondents mentioned the desire to make daily trips or to make trips 4-6 times a week. School was the most frequently mentioned trip purpose (13 times), followed by social visits and church attendance.
  - The top three barriers to making desired trips were lack of information about options, no personal means to make the trip, and affordability of options.
- Of the respondents, 78% said they would use a new GPDRT service, and the remaining 22% said they might use a new GPDRT service.
- Most respondents (74%) preferred fares below \$3.00, indicating sensitivity to cost.
- A majority of respondents (56%) said they would use the service if the service provided on-demand

service (for immediate fulfilment) or had a same-day request option (with a two-hour advance notice). The remaining 46% of the respondents indicated that they would still use the system if the service offered advance reservations up to two days in advance.

## **A5. CONCLUSIONS**

The survey findings indicated a strong interest in and need for a demand response service in the Outer County. The service should focus on:

- Educating the public on eligibility and access
- Keeping fares affordable (under \$3.00, and ideally under \$2.00)
- Allowing short-notice bookings
- Serving (at the very least) essential destinations like stores, medical facilities, and workplaces

These characteristics will increase the likelihood that the service will be well-utilized and address the most pressing transportation barriers in the study area.

Because current transportation options are limited, there is strong interest in a new, accessible, and affordable demand response transportation service. To attract ridership, such a service should offer short-notice bookings—as well as advance and subscription service bookings—and be priced affordably. Equally important is raising awareness about the service to ensure community members know how to access it. By focusing on these priorities, a demand response transit system could significantly enhance mobility, independence, and quality of life for residents in the outer areas of El Paso County.

## APPENDIX B: ROUND 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### B1. INTRODUCTION

The Phase 2 Public Engagement Technical Memorandum was the fifth major deliverable in the GPDRT Study. Its purpose was to describe the conduct and execution of the Round 2 Public Engagement Plan. This appendix summarizes the Round 2 public engagement effort.

### B2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

The work scope for the GPDRT Study included a robust public engagement component that informed the investigation to determine how best to develop a comprehensive demand-responsive service plan. In Round 1, public engagement efforts identified needs by documenting existing services and any unmet needs. Using the information gathered in Round 1 engagement and documentation of existing conditions, the study team developed potential service scenarios to meet these needs. In Round 2, the public engagement efforts sought to vet the potential service scenarios to determine how well they would meet residents' needs.

With input from the ETA Access Advisory Committee and ETA staff, the study team designed an engagement program and activities that were convenient, accessible, and engaging. The study team focused on making engagement as easy as possible for as many people as possible using multiple methods, including hosting an open house style of meeting, visiting a senior center, tabling at the Upper Eastside Transfer Center, and riding Route 20. Materials were informative and engaging to attract attention. The study team also sought to make communicating the public's needs as easy as possible by developing an easy-to-use survey. Finally, an online version of the survey and a website made it convenient for the public to provide input.

### B3. OUTREACH METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Using the public engagement purpose and principles as a guidepost, the study team developed a comprehensive booklet that described the potential service scenarios. The study website was originally developed as an engagement tool in Round 1 and was updated for Round 2. As in Round 1, Round 2 public engagement also included in-person outreach, development and distribution of collateral materials, and social media advertising.

#### **Booklet**

Excerpts of the booklet are shown in Figure B1 through Figure B4.

The booklet began with an introductory letter from the executive director of ETA, inviting people to learn about the study and directing readers to additional resources, including the study website and email addresses of study staff. The booklet then provided background information about transit services in El Paso County, including general public transportation and complementary paratransit services required by the ADA. Next, the booklet outlined guidelines for county transit service, bus routes, and bus stops; described various types of transit services; and defined common transit terminology. These introductory pages set the context for the types of services that might be offered as part of a GPDRT service.

The booklet included a short survey at the end asking respondents how likely they were to use each service scenario and how often they might use each service scenario. The survey also invited them to leave any other open-ended comments, suggestions, or questions. The booklet was available in Spanish and English in hard copy format and was also posted on the study website. The website version of the booklet was reviewed to ensure compliance with Section 508 of the ADA.

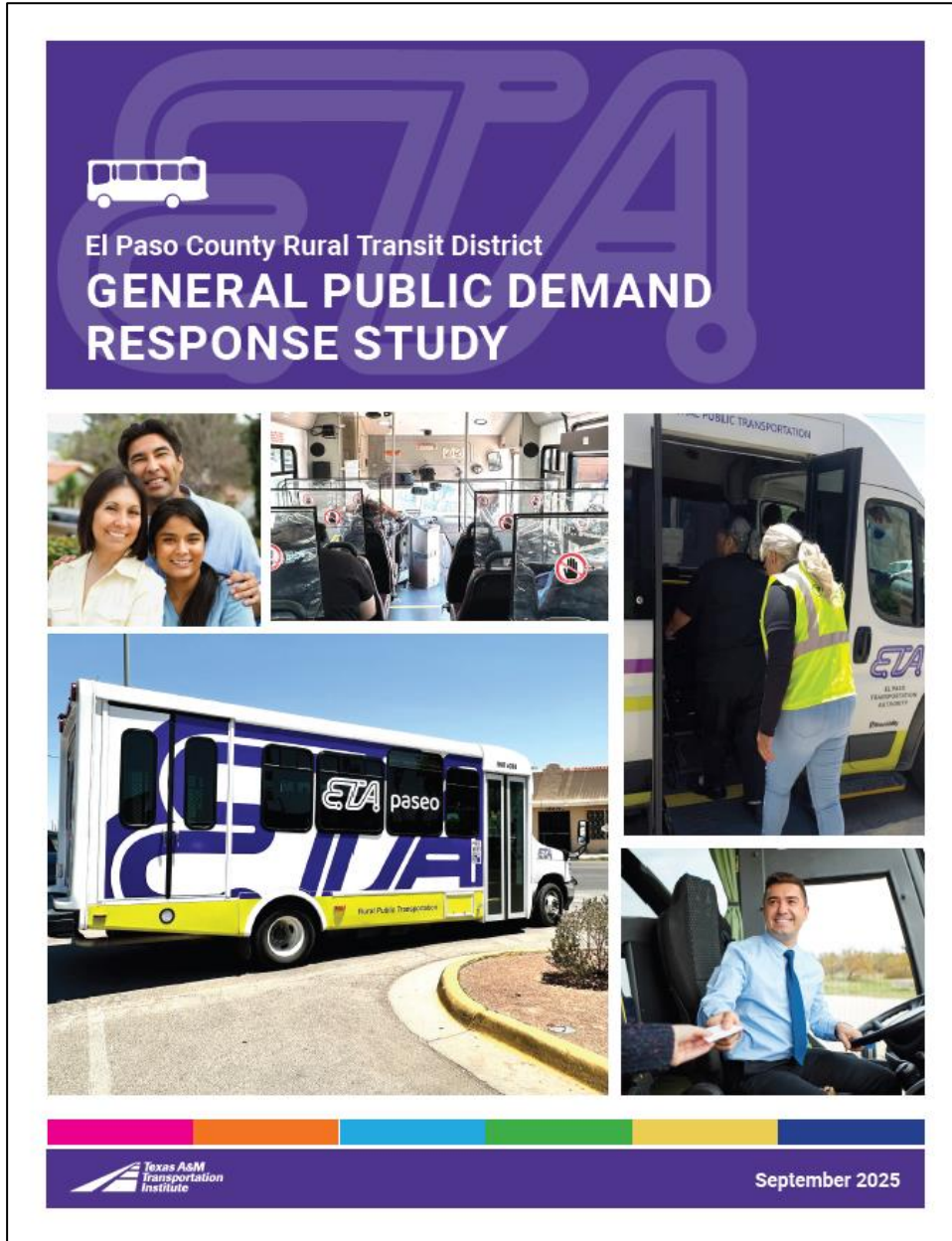


Figure B1. Booklet Excerpt #1

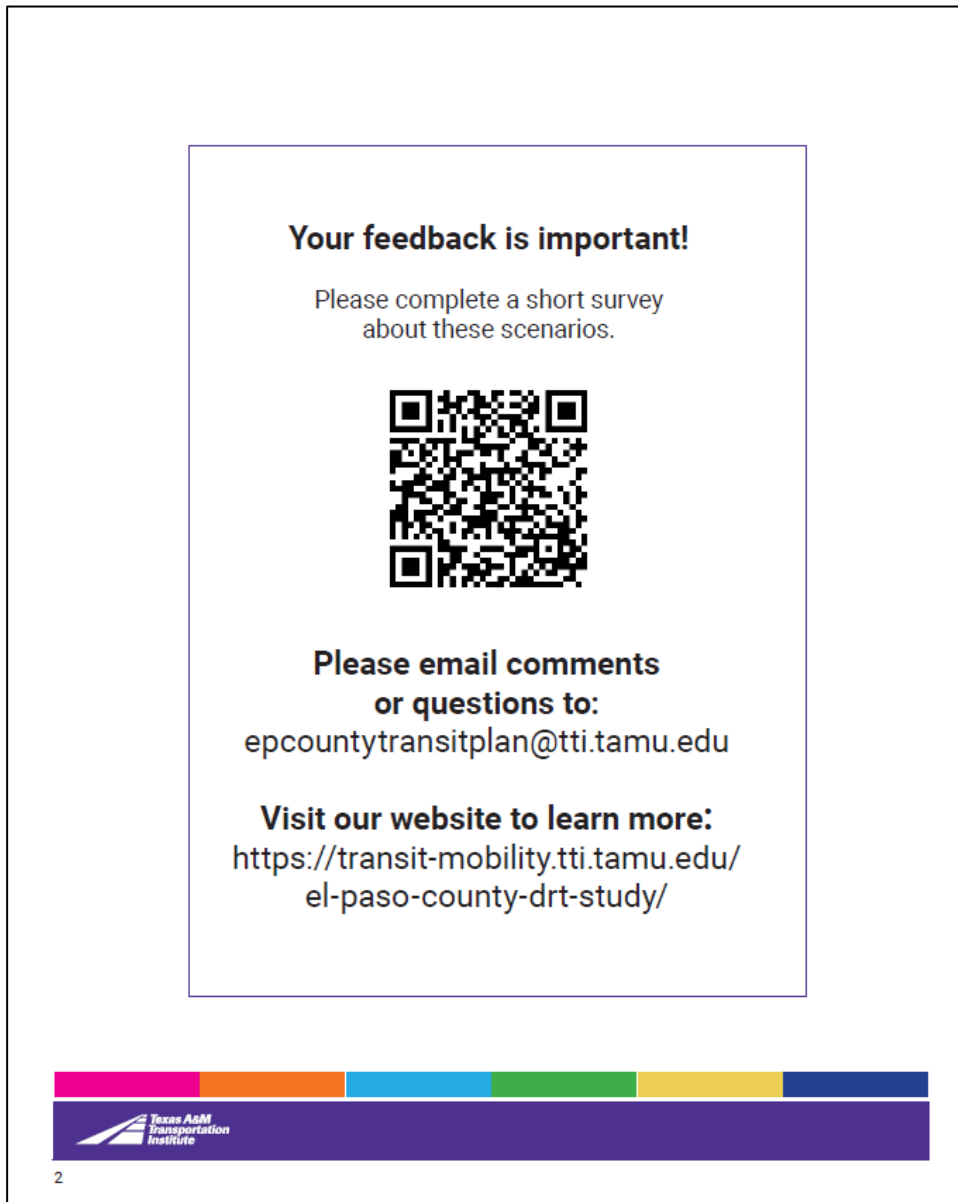


Figure B2. Booklet Excerpt #2

**POSSIBLE SCENARIOS**

**Preliminary Scenario #1: Consolidated DAR and ADA Paratransit with VDP**

Implement a traditional DAR service in areas of the Outer County that have the highest demand density (which are close to the ADA paratransit service area). Design the system to provide trips within these areas but also to feed the ETA paseo and Sun Metro fixed routes at existing transfer centers. Use the existing ETA access fleet to provide trips. Same-day rides can be accommodated when capacity allows. A VDP complements service in parts of the Outer County where demand density is low.

Advantages	Disadvantages
The services could be used by riders who cannot use cashless fare payment media and/or do not have reliable mobile and internet access.	DAR tends to be more expensive per trip than fixed-route service.
The reservations, scheduling, and call center systems that support ETA access can be used to support DAR and possibly the VDP.	The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service makes the need to transfer more likely.
Using ETA access vehicles for DAR allows for more efficient use of the vehicles.	DAR trips by ADA-eligible riders will be prioritized over trips by the general public, due to ADA regulations that prohibit capacity constraints and require service equivalence
The fixed-route feeder design of the DAR service reduces service duplication and increases the availability of vehicles in the Outer County.	The VDP is available only when and where volunteer drivers are willing and available to drive.
The VDP may be able to serve trip demand outside of DAR operating days and hours.	
VDP per-trip costs are less than DAR per-trip costs. Shifting DAR trips to the VDP could reduce overall operating costs.	
VDP vehicles are typically provided and maintained by volunteer drivers.	

**Figure B3. Booklet Excerpt #3**

**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

Please answer the following questions and add any additional comments you might have. You can leave your responses in the box or scan and email to us at [epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu](mailto:epcountytransitplan@tti.tamu.edu). Be sure to visit the website for more information <https://transit-mobility.tti.tamu.edu/el-paso-county-drt-study/>.

Thinking about the different services, how likely are you to use it?

Service	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
Scenario #1: Consolidated DAR and ADA Paratransit with VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #2: Separate DAR and ADA Paratransit with VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #3: Microtransit with DAR and VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #4: User-Side Subsidy Program and VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about the different services, how often do you think you would use it?

Service	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Scenario #1: Consolidated DAR and ADA Paratransit with VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #2: Separate DAR and ADA Paratransit with VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #3: Microtransit with DAR and VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenario #4: User-Side Subsidy Program and VDP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13

Figure B4. Booklet Excerpt #4

**Website**

The TTI team updated the study website. As in Round 1, the website included background information about the study, a map of the study area, and information regarding transit service types. This information allowed users to offer educated and informed opinions about the types of services that would best meet their needs. The website included a link to the survey and encouraged viewers to complete it. The website also included an email address where viewers could send any comments or concerns directly to the TTI team. Additionally, the ETA website also included a link to the website and survey.

**In-Person Outreach**

Public engagement is often most successful when it can be conducted in conjunction with activities that people are already doing. The study team took advantage of such an opportunity with the Area Agency on

Aging's 2025 Health Expo: Aging to Perfection, held at the El Paso Convention Center on August 20, 2025. This conference brought together many potential service users, as well as social service agencies that help connect residents in the Outer County to various opportunities. The conference was attended by several hundred people, allowing the study team to connect with many people and explain the potential service scenarios. A booth—provided free of charge—allowed the study team to provide booklets, comment cards, and small tokens to visitors. The booth attendants were able to engage in both English and Spanish.

The study team also organized the following opportunities for public engagement in September 2025:

- *Open house at Vinton City Hall.* No one attended the open house, but booklets were left with City staff in case residents inquired about the study.
- *Pop-up event at Upper Eastside Transfer Center.* Operated for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. While the number of engagements was low, people expressed genuine interest in the potential scenarios.
- *On-board outreach on Route 20 buses serving Upper Eastside Transfer Center.* In the afternoon, the transfer center was less busy, so the study team rode Route 20 buses to engage directly with riders. ETA staff had posted notices of the outreach activities on board the buses.
- *One-on-one engagement at Fabens Senior Center.* The study team engaged with approximately 20 people and assisted many with completion of the survey. The study team encouraged the participants to complete comment cards, but, in most cases, attendees preferred to verbalize their comments and have study team members document it. One participant requested several booklets to take to others.

Participants consistently commented that the service elimination in Socorro had detrimental effects and requested that the County provide clearer information about its bus schedules (e.g., buses not running on holidays). Another comment noted the need for better access to ETA Board meetings; a few participants wanted the County to provide transportation to the ETA board meetings. Many people in the rural areas do not have access to reliable Internet, so remote participation is not a viable option.

### **Collateral Materials**

Collateral materials were developed and distributed to generate awareness and advertise opportunities for engagement. The materials directed people to the website where they could read about the preliminary service scenarios, complete the survey, and/or leave comments. The materials were sent to ETA staff as well as the El Paso County Marketing and Communication Department, where the county took the lead on providing information via their distribution channels. Additionally, the information materials were shared with the ETA Access Advisory Committee members, who, in turn, shared them with their distribution networks. In addition to the comprehensive booklet that detailed the scenarios, the study team also drafted a press release, printed material, and a social media post advertising engagement opportunities. ETA staff posted this information on fixed-route buses and at bus stops.

### **Social Media Advertising**

Similar to Round 1 engagement efforts, the study team purchased Facebook ads during the week prior to the in-person engagement. The ads targeted the 79821, 79835, 79849, 79836, 79838, 79853, 79928, 79916, and 79938 zip codes. The purchase cost was approximately \$100.00.

## **B4. OUTREACH RESULTS**

As noted previously, the booklet was a useful tool to describe service types, fare structures, potential operating hours/costs, etc. However, the feedback mechanism—a simple survey asking which scenario was

preferred and how often it might be used, along with some demographic information—proved somewhat difficult for the audience. The scenarios were difficult to envision without explanation from a study team member. While most people were willing and anxious to engage in conversation, the number of survey responses received was limited. As such, the results of Round 2 public engagement reflect the thoughts and opinions of a small number of potential users. Moreover, many comments expressed throughout the engagement events revealed a lack of awareness and information about existing County transportation services. Therefore, any expansion of service should be predicated on a significant and substantial public education/awareness campaign.

### **Key Themes from Open-Ended Responses**

Respondents highlighted several positive aspects of the proposed services. Many emphasized the convenience and comfort of the system, particularly in reducing walking distances and serving seniors or individuals without access to a car. Others saw these services as an important benefit to Outer County communities, with specific mention of ADA accessibility and support for the local economy. Weekend service availability was also frequently mentioned as a valuable feature.

Suggestions for improvement focused on frequency, coverage, and reliability. Participants requested better adherence to schedules; expanded service into underserved areas (such as Montana Vista); and longer hours of operation, particularly on weekends. Several respondents also expressed interest in the development of an app for trip planning and fare payment. Other improvements included expanding services for seniors, adding buses with restrooms, and implementing a broader fixed-route network.

Additional comments revealed both support and concern. While many respondents emphasized the importance of transit services in the Outer County region, at least one participant expressed opposition to expanding service into rural areas. Other comments included volunteer offers, safety concerns about unleashed dogs near bus stops, and recognition of the limited transportation options available to older populations.

### **Scenario Preferences**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how likely they were to use each of the four different service scenarios using a five-point Likert scale (Very Likely, Likely, Neutral, Unlikely, or Very Unlikely). Similarly, survey respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they would use each of the four different service scenarios using a five-point Likert scale (Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never).

## **B5. CONCLUSIONS**

Despite the very small sample size, the survey findings indicated a strong interest in Scenario 1, with more moderate interest in Scenario 4. The majority of participants were users aged 50 and older, which is also the most common age group using the ETA fixed routes. This group generally preferred not to use apps or digital tools for booking trips. In contrast, younger riders (though they represented a smaller portion of potential users) showed a stronger preference for microtransit services and booking same-day trips through an app. When speaking one-on-one with participants, many expressed an interest in a VDP, indicating that this type of arrangement already happens on an informal basis.

Comments collected through engagement cards provided additional insight into public sentiment. Several participants emphasized the need for fare discounts, particularly for seniors and students, arguing that such measures could increase ridership and improve accessibility. Concerns were raised about the lack of adequate transit service in Socorro, with specific reference to long wait times, inconvenient operations for

older riders, and the overall quality of Socorro's current transit services. Participants expressed strong support for maintaining service in San Elizario and restoring service in Socorro, underscoring the idea that public transportation is not simply a convenience but a vital service for residents in need. At the same time, some comments reflected satisfaction with existing ETA services, highlighting that positive experiences coexist with calls for improvement.