

ARKANSAS

Statewide Transit
Coordination Plan



Executive Summary

January 2023





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Prepared by:



Introduction

The Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan's overall goal is to improve the availability, quality, and efficiency of transportation services for seniors, persons with disabilities and those with limited mobility options. The plan achieves this goal by recommending transportation service coordination strategies and providing analysis findings that support more effective matching of limited transportation resources to transportation needs.

The Transit Coordination Plan aims to eliminate barriers to transportation services, fill service gaps, maintain public awareness, enhance mobility for older adults and individuals with disabilities, and foster collaboration between providers. The overarching goal of the plan is to improve the accessibility to and quality of public transportation, particularly for target populations such as seniors and individuals with disabilities.

The information presented in this plan will serve as a baseline for measuring the performance of Arkansas' coordinated transportation system and the effectiveness of the coordination efforts over the next 5 years. To accomplish this, the plan provides an analysis of transit needs and existing resources, interprets and responds to public input, and recommends best practices for improved agency coordination.



Vision

To provide efficient, accessible, and quality public transportation for communities with limited mobility through clear and balanced coordination.

What is Coordination?

Public transit coordination is the ongoing process of transportation providers and human services agencies communicating and working together to manage limited transportation resources more efficiently. Coordination is about building trust and relationships among organizations and fostering a willingness to share power, responsibility, funding, and benefits to eliminate service duplication, deliver more cost-effective service, address service gaps, and improve information communication.

Coordination happens at three different levels: federal, state, and local. This plan focuses on coordination at the state level.

Federal Transit Administration's Required Elements for Transit Coordination Plans



An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and nonprofit)



An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors



Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery



Priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified

Examples of Coordination



Cross Training Staff



Equipment Sharing



Regional Fare Structure



Joint Marketing Campaign



One-Call Center

Why Coordinate?

Regulatory Compliance

Federal regulations mandate that Section 5310 funded programs or projects be consistent with a transit coordination plan. Programs or projects using Sections 5311 and 5307 funding are expected to participate as essential partners in the planning process.

Arkansas state law also requires Section 5310 applicants to confirm which coordination activities they have pursued and to provide information about agreements in place. The Arkansas Public Transportation Coordination Council (APTCC) oversees and encourages policy that “promotes planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of transportation systems provided to the general public, particularly the transportation-disadvantaged.”

Benefits to Coordination



- Wider range of funding, staff, and resources
- Increased productivity
- Reduced operating costs
- More streamlined processes
- Expanded service areas and hours of operation
- Smoother connections
- Affordable services
- Greater access

Barriers to Coordination



- Regulatory and funding restrictions
- Resistance among riders to unfamiliar services
- Jurisdictional limitations
- Differing technology
- Unique rider needs
- Competition among providers

Coordination Planning Process

1

Public and Stakeholder Outreach

An important part of the coordination planning process is the outreach to the public and stakeholders. Receiving feedback and local expertise helps to ensure the outcomes address the needs and challenges of those who are most impacted by the plan and its recommendations.

2

Identifying Resources and Needs

The next step involved an assessment of the available transportation resources and development of a Transit Needs Index (TNI). Both demographic data and public input were recorded and analyzed to cultivate a complete assessment of the state of transit in Arkansas.

3

Develop Strategies to Address Gaps

After identifying the gaps in transportation services, the planning team developed strategies to address the gaps and find other opportunities to improve transportation services. Final recommendations consist of specific coordination activities and more opportunities for coordination.

4

Establish Performance Measures & Monitor Progress

After strategies and goals were obtained through the development stage, the final stage involved creation of a performance matrix and establishment of prioritization. The performance measures are meant to act as a baseline to compare the quality and availability of transportation services over time.

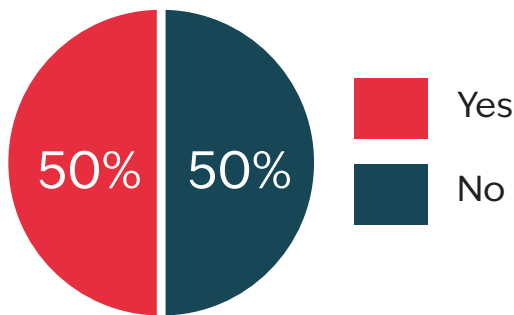
Public and Stakeholder Outreach

Public engagement consists of community input to help define existing concerns in the region and foster a dialogue among respective parties. Public engagement strategies used for the ARDOT Statewide Transit Coordination Plan centered on the collaboration of human service agencies, public transit agencies and transit riders. Public meetings and online surveys were the two primary methods used to obtain input for the plan.

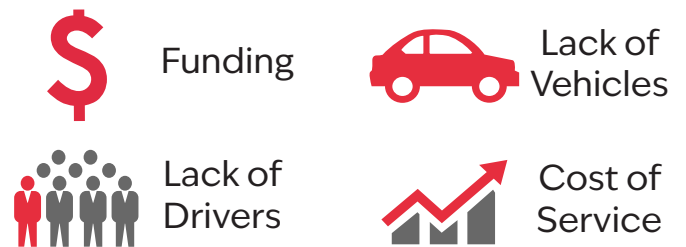
With the information obtained from the surveys and public meetings, the planning team can better identify gaps in service, understand the needs of the community, and create a space for providers to discuss opportunities for collaboration and coordination moving forward.

Provider Feedback

Does Your Agency Coordinate with Others?

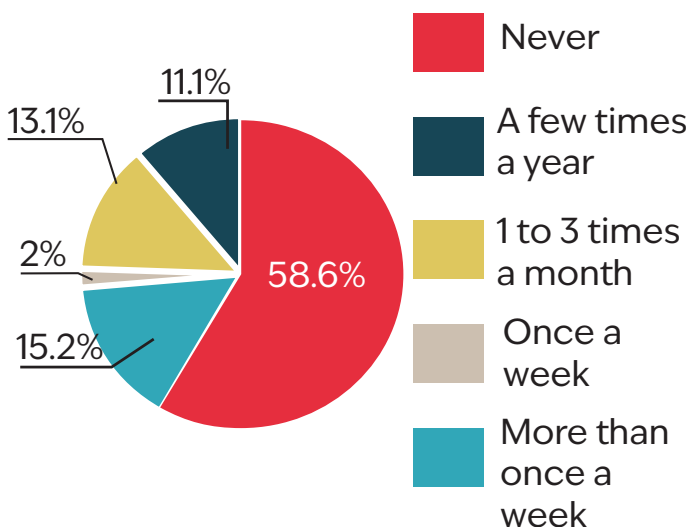


Major Areas for Improvement



Rider Feedback

How Often Do You Use Public Transit?



Destinations Most Often Traveled To

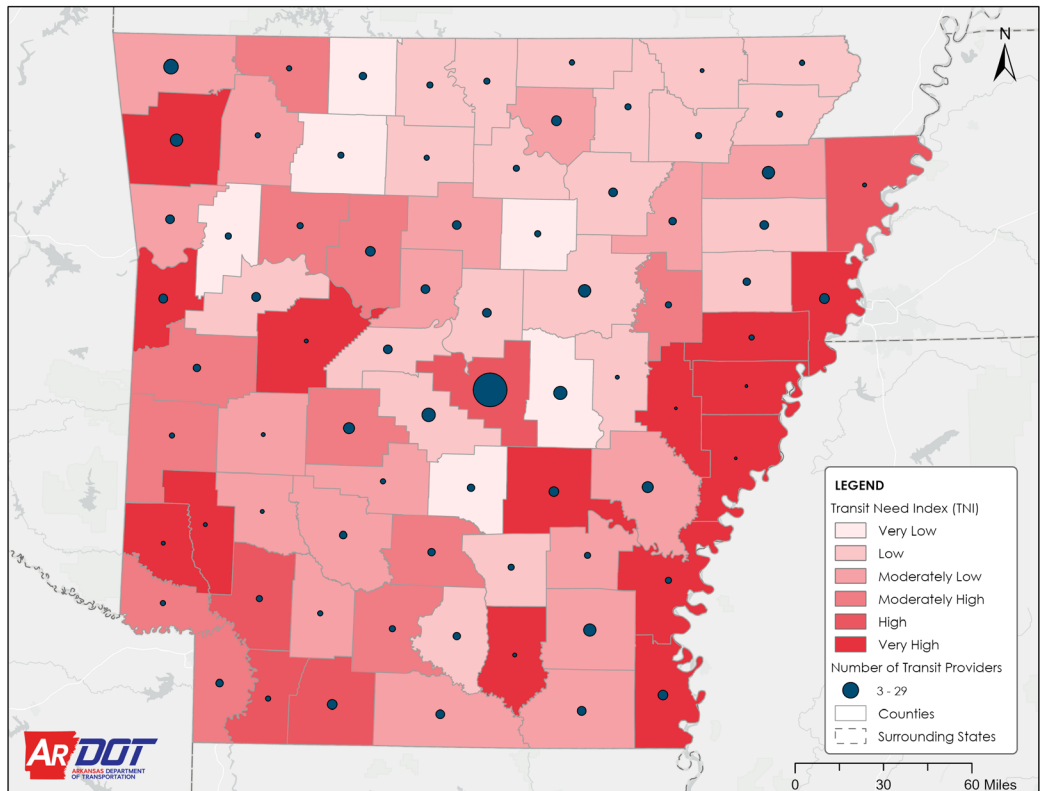
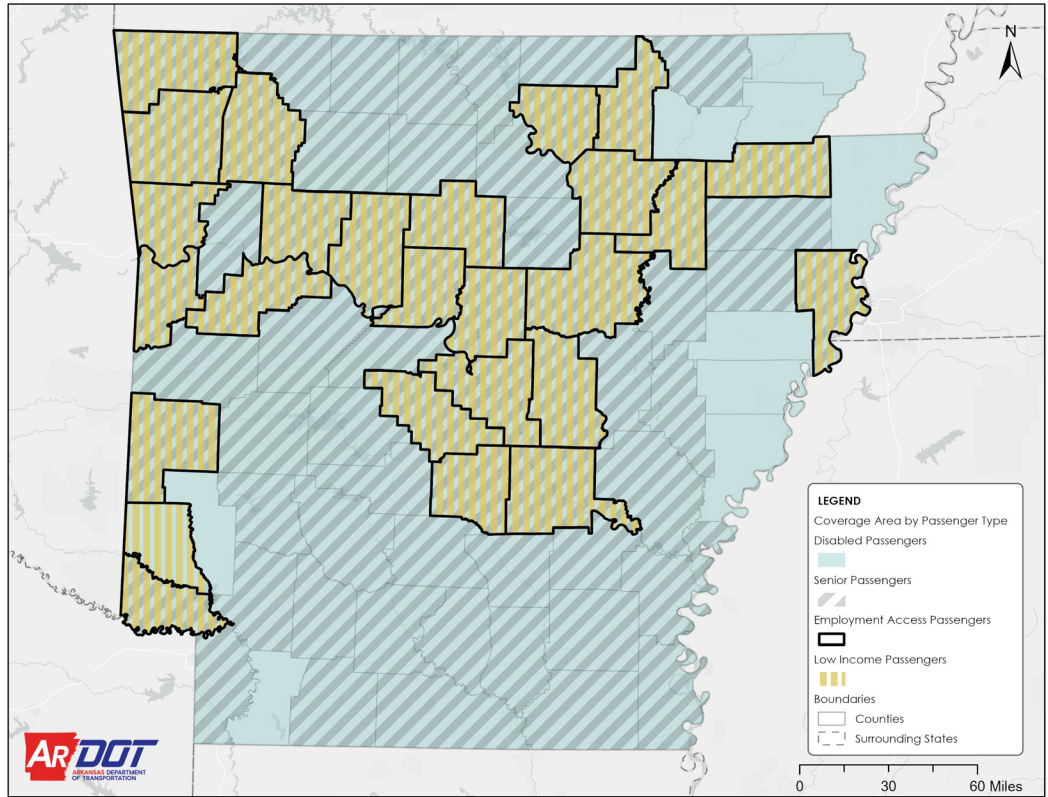


Identifying Resources and Needs

Review of the gaps in existing transit service revealed additional areas of need. Seven counties in Arkansas are currently not served by any public transit provider. While each county is served by some type of human services transportation provider, not every passenger type has access to the same level of service.

The Transit Needs Index evaluates whether counties in Arkansas have disproportionately high amounts of populations with significant transit needs. The results of the Transit Needs Assessment reveal high transit needs across the state, especially in population centers.

The considerations and observations drawn from the needs analysis allowed progress to be made toward improving and updating the Statewide Transit Coordination Plan.



Develop Strategies to Address Gaps

Strategy	Action Items
<p>Invest in new technologies and methods to improve operations and public information about services.</p>	<p>1 Establish a one-call/one-click transportation service center, including a tool for real-time service updates across general transit providers.</p>
	<p>2 Develop an online map version of the public transportation directory.</p>
	<p>3 Develop an online directory of services (e.g. maintenance) and trainings offered by transportation providers to other providers.</p>
	<p>4 Expand outreach and information on existing transportation options.</p>
	<p>5 Conduct yearly passenger satisfaction surveys.</p>
<p>Expand availability of demand-response and specialized transportation services.</p>	<p>1 Encourage regional services to employment, shopping, medical, and social centers.</p>
	<p>2 Invest in new transit service where none presently exists.</p>
	<p>3 Identify and contact agencies that could provide transportation in areas where transportation service gaps exist.</p>
	<p>4 Encourage vehicle sharing by providers with similar coverage areas.</p>
	<p>5 Establish a centralized volunteer driver program.</p>
	<p>6 Provide support for coordinated dispatch programs.</p>
<p>Foster partnerships with providers and state agencies to maintain communication and ensure that needs and opportunities are being addressed.</p>	<p>1 Organize quarterly coordination work sessions that providers are required to attend.</p>
	<p>2 Establish regional coordination districts to lead local coordination efforts.</p>
	<p>3 Identify and appoint statewide and/or regional mobility managers.</p>
	<p>4 Support new mobility managers and coordination programs among public transit providers.</p>

Critical
Strategies with the highest level of importance and should be prioritized.

Important
Strategies that will play an important role in the future of transit coordination.

Desirable
Strategies that are still important, but are not a primary need.

Strategy	Action Items
Maximize financial investment and support of providers.	1 Preserve and maintain existing vehicles and equipment.
	2 Bring new funding partners to public transit service.
	3 Continue to support capital and operating needs of public transportation providers.
	4 Coordinate partnerships between providers to offer free/reduced transfers between services.
	5 Award state funding to help make services possible.
Provide educational tools to agencies to enhance knowledge, promote funding opportunities, and increase safety.	1 Develop informational materials to provide coordination examples and best practices to transportation providers on topics such as vehicle sharing and volunteer programs.
	2 Coordinate development of model contracts or agreements for sharing resources.
	3 Create workshops for annual educational opportunities to improve transit, consider best practices, driver training, and review safety information.
	4 Provide templates for grant applications.
	5 Establish a qualified driver application and job opening directory.

Critical
Strategies with the highest level of importance and should be prioritized.

Important
Strategies that will play an important role in the future of transit coordination.

Desirable
Strategies that are still important, but are not the primary need currently.

Establish Performance Measures and Monitor Progress

Performance measures for the Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan are meant to help evaluate and monitor how well Arkansas public transit and human service transportation providers are meeting the demands of their communities and how well they are coordinating among one another. Performance measures established for this plan include:

- Ridership (5307/5311)
- Vehicles per 1,000 people (5307/5311)
- Percent of transit demand met
- Average cost per trip (5307/5311)
- Productivity (5307/5311)
- Percent of key destinations served
- Percentage of counties with public transit services