
SECTION 8 Transit Plan

The City of Georgetown does not independently provide or support transit services. The City is not in the Capital Metro Transit Agency (Capital Metro) service area and does not have direct access to Capital Metro bus or rail services. In order for residents to use the Capital Metro transit system, they travel to Round Rock or Leander to ride the existing bus and rail lines.

Limited transit service (Community and Connector Transit services) is provided by Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS); however, the routes are limited with regard to drop-off points and service times. During the development of the OTP, transit issues and concerns were continually raised by local residents and officials. The consensus was that they would like some type of local and regional service provided; whether or not this is independent, on-demand or affiliated with Capital Metro was open for discussion. The following sections detail existing transit operations and outline potential future transit opportunities. The goal of this plan is to outline the steps the City has taken to study transit operations and provide direction as to how the City can move forward and achieve the transit system the citizens desire.

8.1 Background

There is no existing local transit service, so the residents must utilize the CARTS connector service to Round Rock and Leander, or utilize the limited CARTS community service. From Round Rock and Leander, residents are able to take a variety of bus lines into Austin, the University of Texas campus and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, or they can ride the train, which serves a total of nine transit stations: Leander, Lakeline, Howard, Kramer, Crestview, Highland, MLK, Jr., Plaza Saltillo, and Downtown. While the exact number of Georgetown residents currently riding Capital Metro is unknown, there were a large percentage of people who attended the public meetings wanting to explore this opportunity.

CARTS local facility is located at Georgetown – Carts Metro Connector at the northwest corner of Austin Avenue and SE Inner Loop (east of IH 35). This facility is both a Park-n-Ride facility and a bus station for local and regional transit

connections. The Park-n-Ride facility offers bus, carpool, and vanpool services to the central Texas community. The Lakeline Station offers connections to Capital Metros' MetroRail and MetroBus services. While the CARTS station provides connectivity, it is limited both by time of day and service location. The facility opened in 2010 and there are currently six departure times – three in the early morning and three in the afternoon.

In addition to this fixed facility, CARTS offers Door-to-Door, on-demand services – “Community Services”. Door-to-Door service includes local services that operate daily during the week between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. Community Service is also provided to the cities of Austin and Round Rock on a limited, alternating daily service:

- Austin - Monday, Wednesday and Friday (8:00 am to 2:00 pm)
- Round Rock - Tuesday and Thursday (8:00 am to 12:00 pm)

Monthly service is provided to the city of Temple on the first and third Wednesday of each month between 8:30 am and 2:00 pm. While these services are on-demand and door to door, fares are associated with each trip, and reservations and advanced notice are required.

8.2 Georgetown Fixed-Route Action Plan

During November of 2008, the City of Georgetown partnered with CARTS and TxDOT to develop a transit pilot program. The *Georgetown Fixed-Route Action Plan* was funded using \$75,000 from CARTS and was anticipated to last for seven months. The stated purpose of the service was to design a fixed-route transit service and implementation plan that would provide services from selected locations within the City. The program consisted of two separately-funded phases.

The pilot project (Phase 1 and Phase 2) included four buses serving six routes for seven months of service. The initial startup-up costs included completion of full bus shelters - including shelter, signage, hub, and bicycle racks – at a total of 5 stops.

Since this was a joint project, many of the startup costs were covered by the grant from CARTS.

8.3 Phase 1

This phase began on November 28, 2008 and continued through February 7, 2009, completing the 600 service hours as stated in the Notice to Proceed. The buses operated two fixed routes, Monday through Saturday between 11:00 am and 8:15 pm for a total of 9.5 service hours a day. Route 1 began and ended at the Sun City Social Center and traveled to HEB, Rivery, Wolf Ranch, and the City Lights Theater. Route 2 began and ended at 14th Street and Maple, primarily serving the Central Business District, HEB (University), Georgetown medical facility, and Target (Wolf Ranch). The two routes overlapped at the Target located in Wolf Ranch, where people from Route 1 could access the Central Business District by transferring to Route 2.

Phase I ended with a total of 598.5 hours of transit service. Phase 1 details are shown in **Table 8.1** and the route is shown on **Figure 8-1** (blue line).

Table 8.1: CARTS/City of Georgetown Pilot Transit Program

| Program Detail | Phase 1 |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Total Ridership | 1,475 |
| Average Riders per day | 34.3 |
| Riders per hour (service) | 3.4 |
| Riders per hour (bus service) | 3.7 |
| Fare box | \$813 |
| Total Cost to City | \$21,850 |
| Cost per rider (to City) | \$14.81 |
| Cost per rider (minus farebox) | \$14.26 |

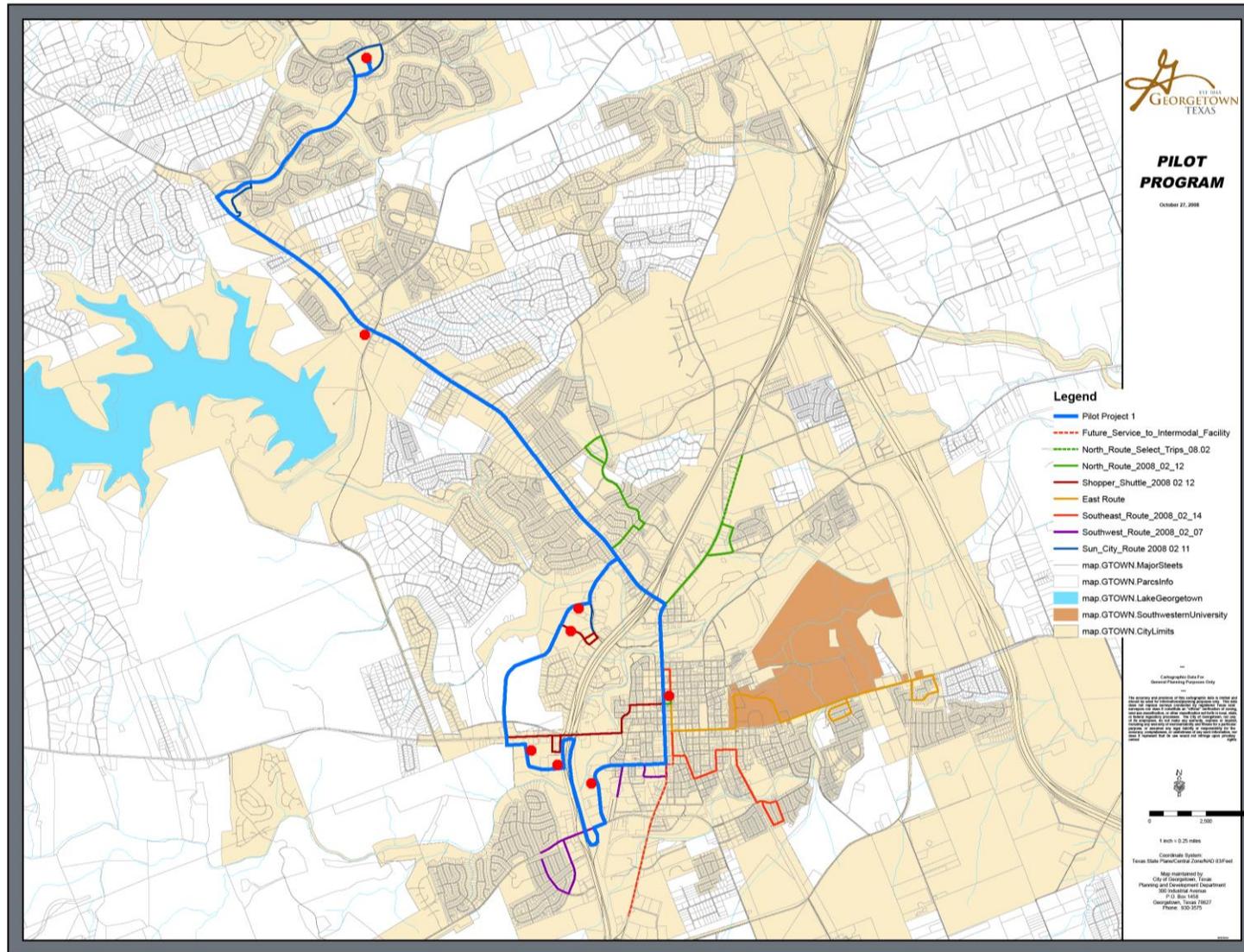


Figure 8-1: Phase 1 CARTS Pilot Program

8.4 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned during this phase were similar to the issues discussed during the public meetings, including the need for additional stops and expanded operating times. The only true origin during Phase I was Sun City, and while the buses stopped at many other locations, they were primarily destination locations as opposed to residential locations. In addition to the limited service issues, there are “hidden” costs that tend to drive up the overall costs associated with the implementation of transit services, including advertising, signage, bus and transit stop maintenance, and other costs not generally associated with the operation of a transit line. These costs were not included in the estimated \$50/hour to provide service. They are not part of the on-bus service time and are not specifically related to the bus service itself. These hidden costs are not typically included in the calculation of “Cost per Rider”, which is the City’s cost in providing the service divided amongst the total number of riders (i.e. 21,850 divided by 1,475).

With respect to the public comments regarding additional stops and expanded operating times, the primary concern appears to be the limited time of operation, which made it difficult for people to get to and from the hospital or other facilities with time-specific appointments.

8.5 Phase 2

After reviewing the metrics from Phase 1, CARTS and the City began Phase 2 of the pilot program. Lessons learned from Phase 1 were incorporated into new operating characteristics for Phase 2, which began on March 2, 2009 and continued through April 11, 2009. During Phase 2, CARTS operated the same two fixed routes; however, Route 1 (from Sun City) continued out to SH 195 and came back to Williams Drive via Shell Road, adding three additional stops in Sun City and one additional stop along Wesleyan. Route 2 added stops at the Boys and Girls Club, HEB (SH 29) and Caring Place. The days of service were limited to weekdays and the hours of service were extended to 8am and 8pm. Phase 2 ended with a total of 888 hours of transit service.

8.6 Transit Service Summary

The pilot program was in service for a total of 1,486.5 hours and the CARTS agreement was for a total of 1,500 hours. While the project allowed City staff to gain some preliminary insight into the need and desire for transit service, it was ultimately not cost effective for the City to develop self-contained (local, within the City service) transit service, so the City opted to discontinue the program until either funding or demand warrant it.

8.7 Future of Georgetown Transit

It was hoped that the City would reach the 50,000 residential threshold during the 2010 United States Census, which would have significant implications on both state and local levels. The City of Georgetown would then potentially qualify for more funding opportunities for transportation, pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements. However, the City



Georgetown CARTS Station

did not meet the 50,000 threshold. The following provides a brief overview of the transit implications once the City reaches a population of 50,000.

In order to accurately gauge the population impacts, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) completed a report entitled “Estimated Impacts of the 2010 Census on the Transportation Funding Formula”. In this report, TTI suggests that if the City attains the 50,000 population level, it could become a newly classified Small Urbanized Area, along with four other cities in the state.

The Small Urbanized Area classification means the City is not tied to the City of Austin and it becomes a separate Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This designation has significant implications on the area, especially with respect to transit capabilities. The City will become eligible to receive separate funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and will not be combined with Capital Metro. The City is not part of Capital Metro’s service, and

being in the same MSA as Capital Metro would not allow for separate funding (i.e. the funding of multiple transit agencies within one MSA). The FTA allocation would be up to 50% of operating expenses and potentially 80% of capital expenses. As highlighted in the report, the newly established areas are not expected to have the ability to allocate the funds immediately; thus, they may become eligible for transit funds of approximately \$200,000. In addition, the designation does not guarantee the City will receive the funds, but it does allow them to apply for the funds once a transit district is authorized.

This transit district is important because it gives the City autonomy in determining the future of their transit program, developing their own transit agency, and providing service directly to the citizens.

Under this new designation, the City would develop its own transit system or connect to existing Capital Metro system. The City needs good transit service – locally and regionally – to provide its citizens with mobility choices. There are on-going discussions taking place that would make the City of Georgetown the northern terminus of the proposed Austin-San Antonio Commuter Rail Line – Lone Star Rail District (LSRD). The location currently under consideration is near the intersection of FM 1460 and SE Inner Loop; however, the completion date and funding mechanisms are yet to be determined and the City could potentially have its own transit system prior to this date.

The Lone Star Rail District’s Environmental Impact Study-Notice to Proceed was published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A Record of Decision (ROD) is expected in 36 months (October 2017). LSRD is working on local funding agreements with jurisdictions along the preferred route.

In order to develop a more thorough transit understanding and an overall plan, the City should undertake the initial steps toward the completion of a Master Transit Plan to ensure that the City is prepared for future transit opportunities as they arise. The City is already taking steps for the inclusion of transit by moving forward with the development of a TOD located at the intersection of Inner Loop and FM 1460, and working with the Lone Star Rail District to ensure the TOD becomes a Lone Star Rail designated stop. The construction of this TOD can form the spine for on-street transit (bus) operations.

The initial steps should include the following:

- Establishment of plan objectives
- Determination of transit service operation – partner with surrounding communities or Georgetown only
- Determination of funding availability - locally, regionally, and federally
- Determination of areas needing transit connectivity, both locally and regionally
- Determination of the major transfer points

Once this information has been gathered and analyzed, the City may begin the process of developing a Master Transit Plan. This provides the foundation for the City to move forward, obtain funding and implement the Plan as necessary.

Current Conditions

According to the 2010 Census, the City of Georgetown has a population of 47,400. This represents a 67% increase between 2000 and 2010. If the City continues to grow at this rate, it is possible that the City's population could reach 100,000 residents by 2020. However, the City's Planning and Development department estimates the population to be 79,000 by 2020 and exceed 125,000 by 2030. These estimates are consistent with the CAMPO population model and the updated TDM. This rapid growth and development indicates that the City should begin considering transit options in its future transportation planning efforts.