



EL PASO COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSIT STUDY

CSJ (0924-06-527)

FUNDING FROM TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Report to El Paso County Commissioners Court

August 23, 2018

Study Purpose

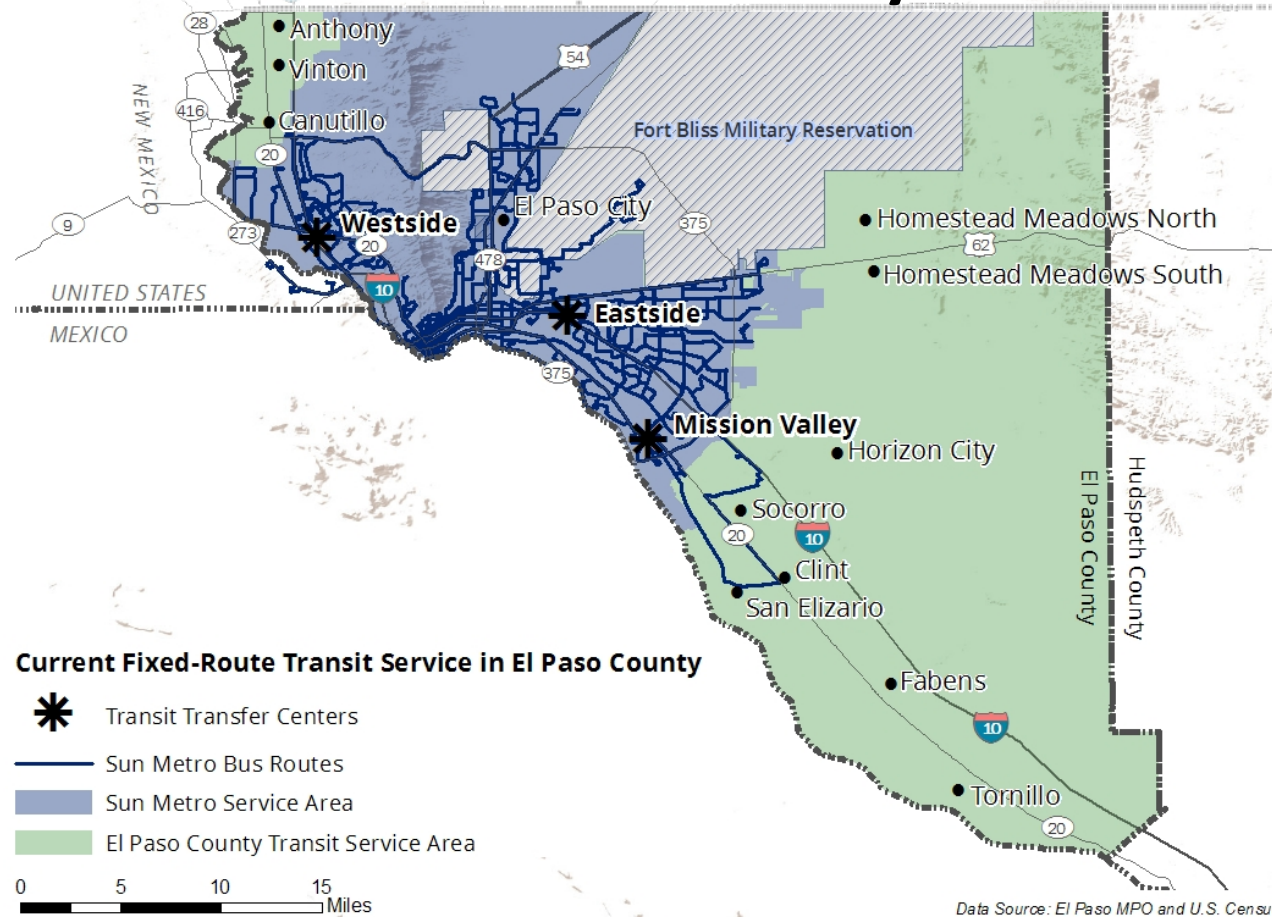
- Define options for a seamless, countywide transit system for all of El Paso County
- Assess economic impact of improved transit for access to jobs, education, medical, shopping, personal business
- Identify organizational options and potential funding sources

Presentation Overview

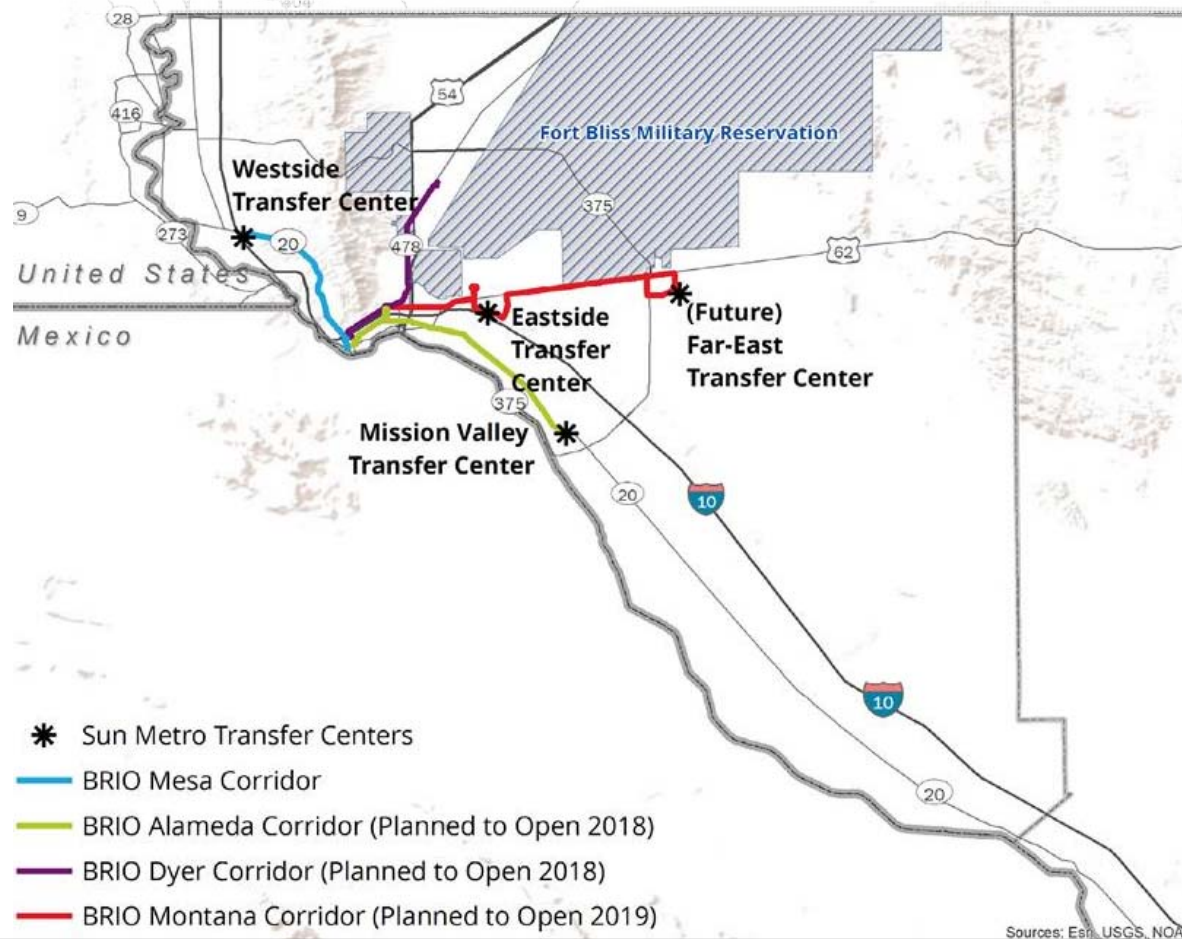
- Current transit services
- Need for countywide transit
- Scenarios for countywide transit
- Stakeholder and community discussion
- Impact for economy and transit users
- Sources of revenue and organizational options
- Implementation strategies

CURRENT TRANSIT SERVICES

Sun Metro and El Paso County Service Areas



Sun Metro BRIO Lines and Transfer Centers

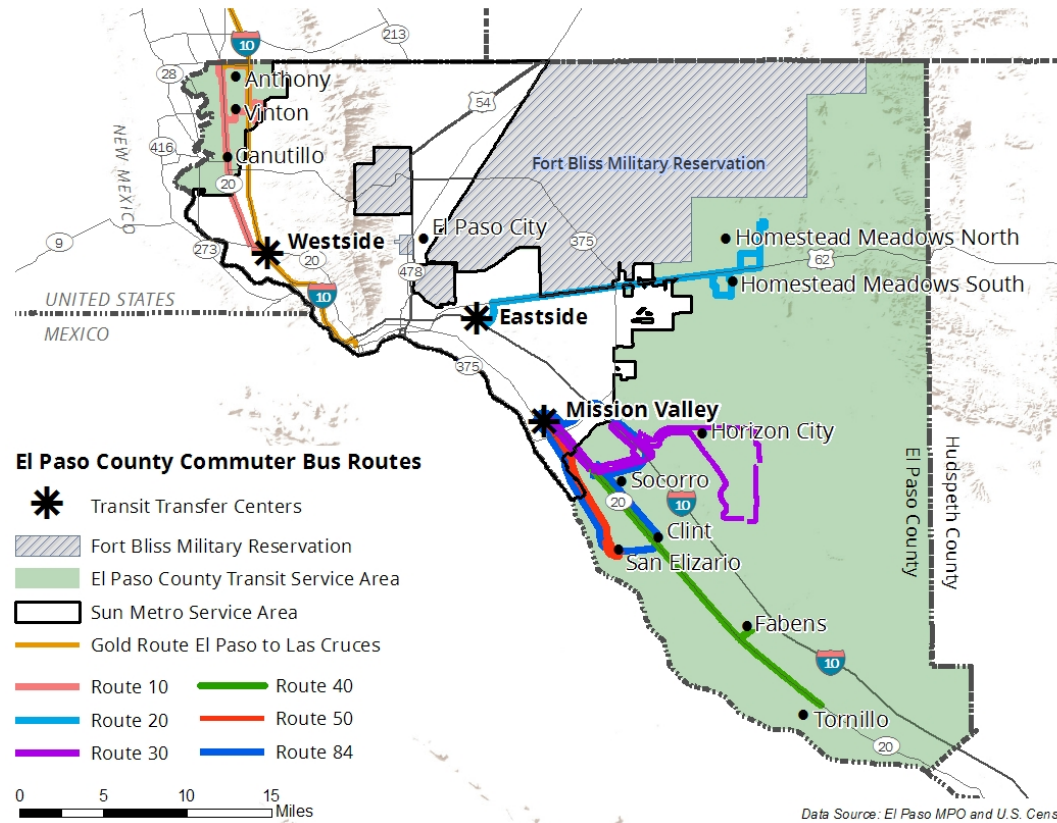


Current Services

El Paso County Transit

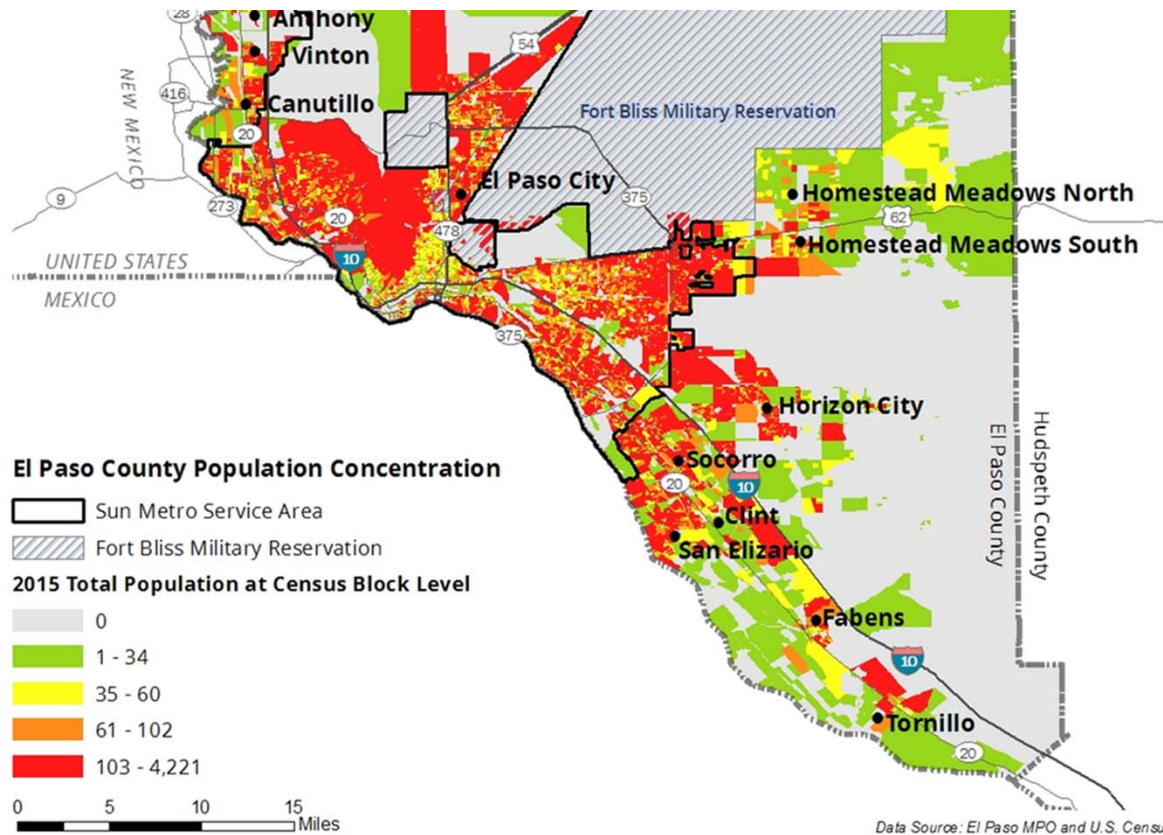
- **County Bus Routes:** Six scheduled, fixed-routes connecting urban and rural communities Sun Metro transfer centers
 - Routes 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 by First Transit
 - Route 84 is operated by Sun Metro
- **Gold Route:** Intercity bus service that operates between Las Cruces and El Paso with stops in Anthony, Westside Transfer Center, and Downtown El Paso.
- **Vanpool:** Program that matches commuter groups with similar origins and destinations, provides vans, and offers incentive for lower commuting costs

El Paso County Transit Routes

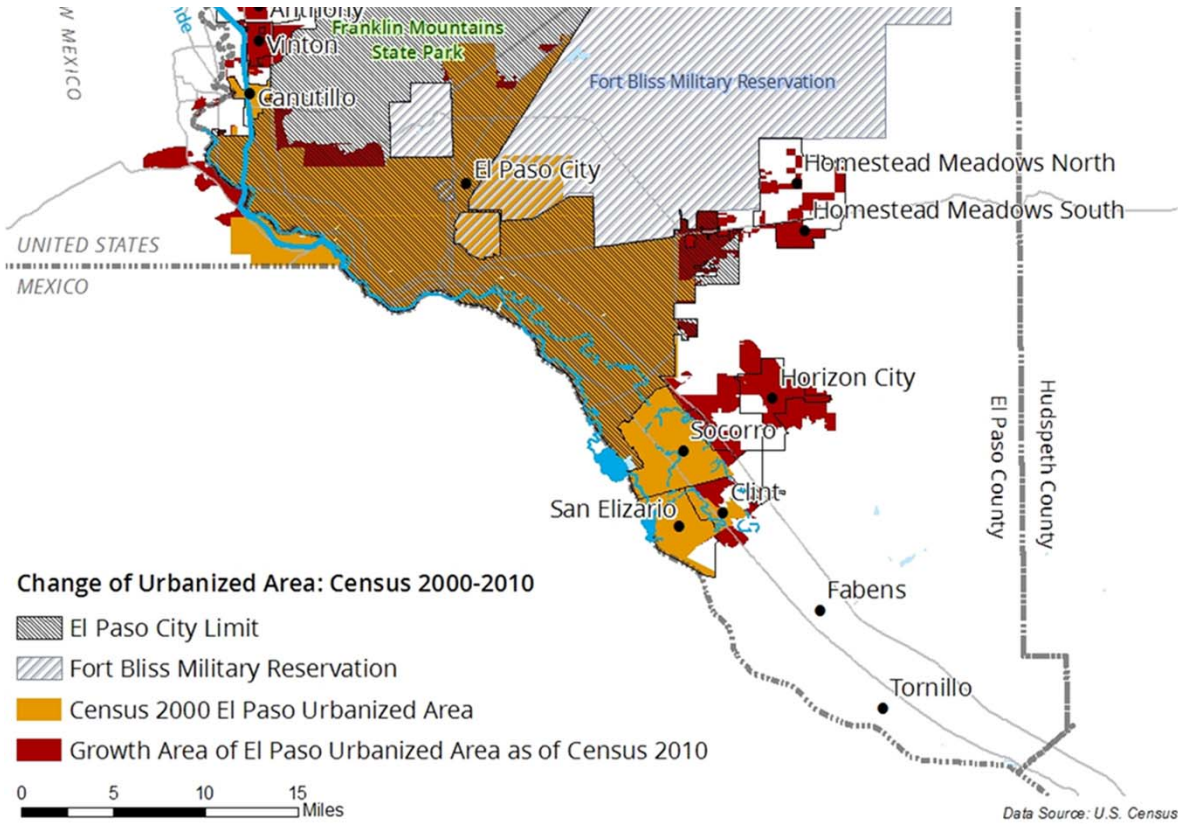


NEED FOR COUNTYWIDE TRANSIT

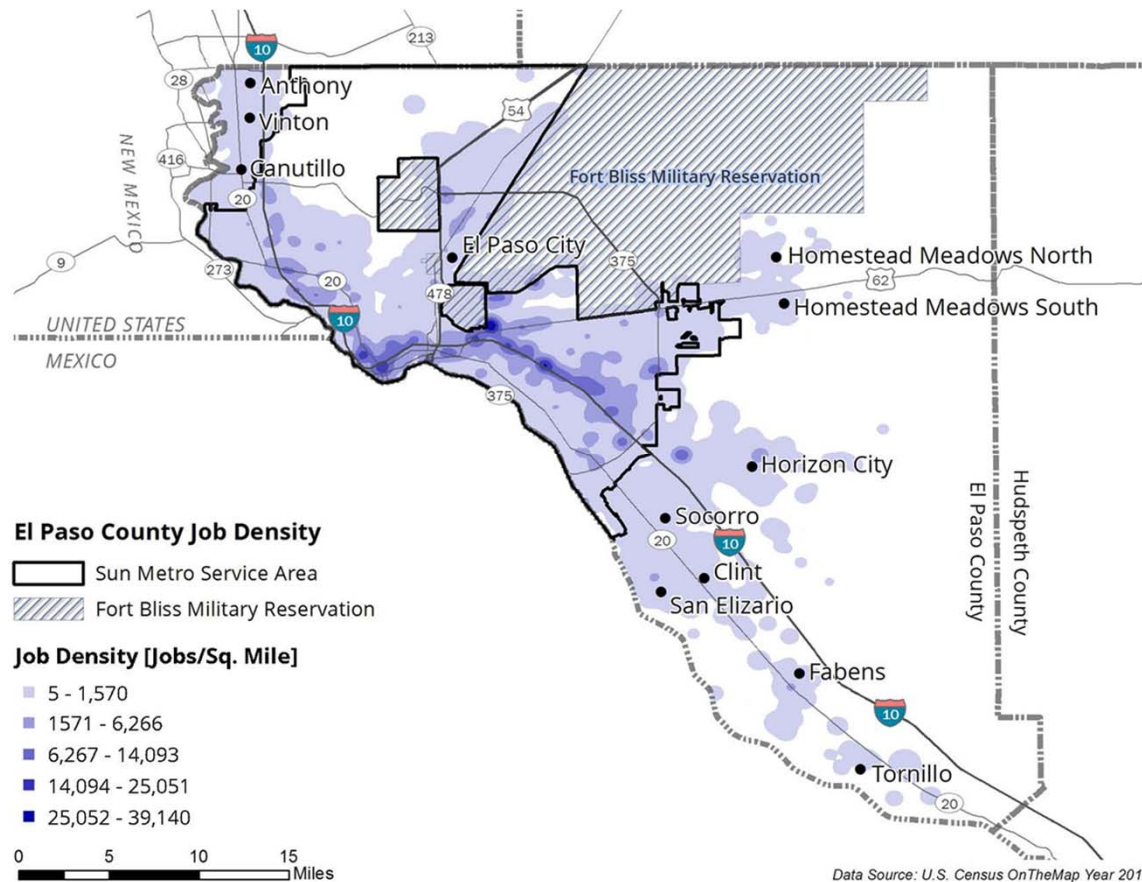
Population Concentration in El Paso County



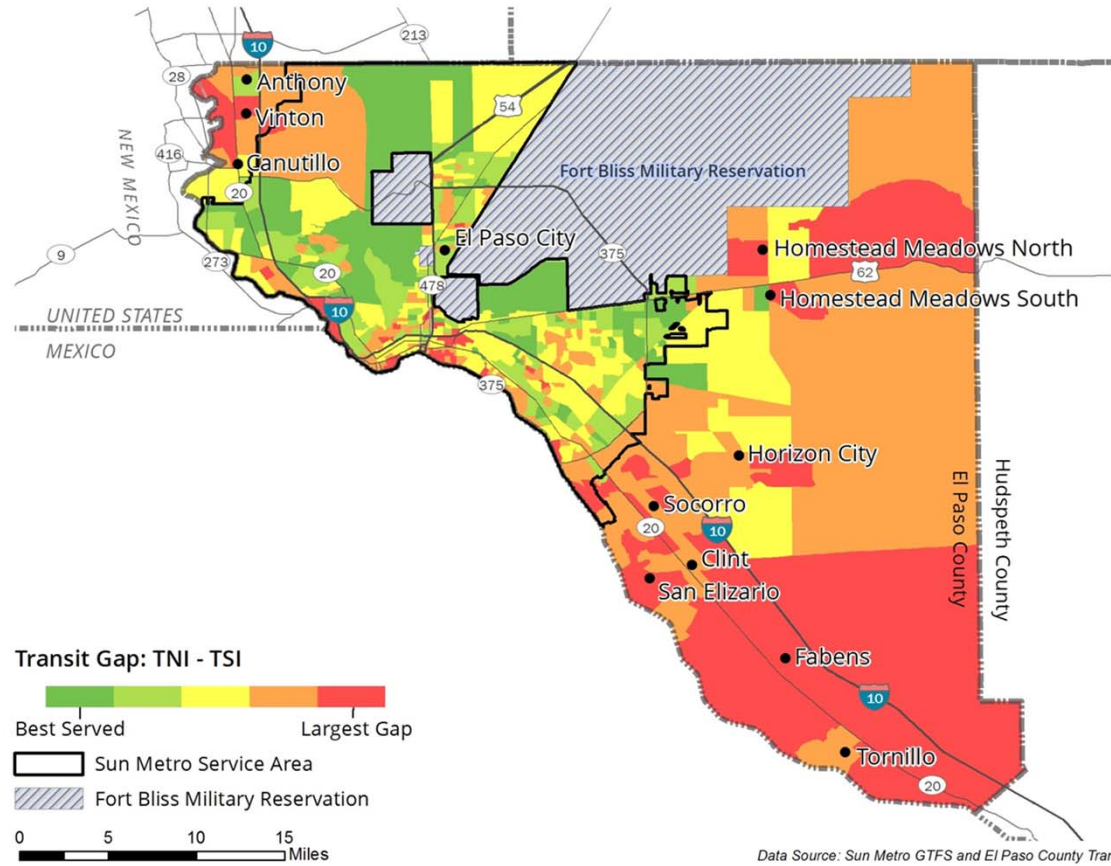
Urban Area Growth



Job Density



Transit Gap: Transit Need – Transit Supply



El Paso County Transit Riders

Who are they?



Without a Driver's License

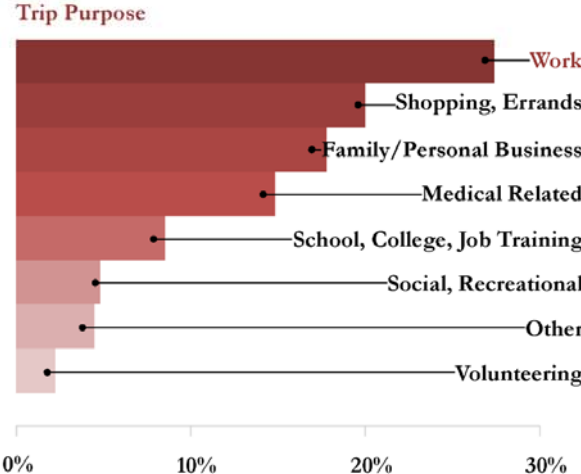


Annual Income < \$15K



No Access to a Vehicle

Where do they go?



75% Transfer to Sun Metro



74% Travel Long Distance

74% survey respondents travel to destinations outside their local community/area.



56% Transfer on County Routes

What is the necessity of transit?

59% Have no Independent Means of Travel

Over half of current survey respondents would have to ask a friend or family or would not travel if El Paso County Transit were not available.

83% Consider Transit Crucial to Quality-of-Life

42% consider transit "absolutely essential" and 41% consider transit of "high importance" to their quality-of-life.

SCENARIOS FOR COUNTYWIDE TRANSIT

Goals and Measures for Transit Service

Goal	Description	Measure
Rural Area Coverage	Provide transit service to all residents in the rural areas of El Paso County	Percent of rural population with transit access
Urban Area Coverage	Provide transit service to all residents in the urban areas of El Paso County	Percent of urbanized county population with transit access
Utility	Improve the utility of transit to serve many passenger trip purposes	Number of scheduled vehicle trips + demand-response revenue hours
Effectiveness	Improve the effectiveness of transit service	Passengers per revenue hour
Complement Sun Metro	Improve connections between El Paso County and Sun Metro transit service	Percent of routes serving non-downtown Sun Metro transfer centers and presence of pulsed-timed transfers

Types of Transit Services in the Scenarios

Current Service



Fixed Route Local Bus



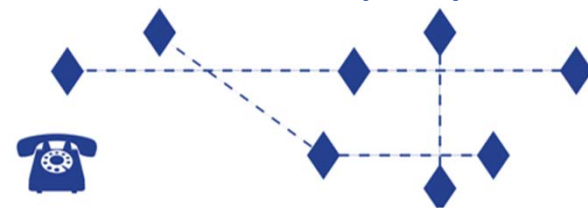
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit



Flexible Route Local Bus



Dial-a-Ride (DAR)



Existing Gold Route Intercity Bus and Vamonos Vanpool do not change in the proposed scenarios.

Current Service

Description

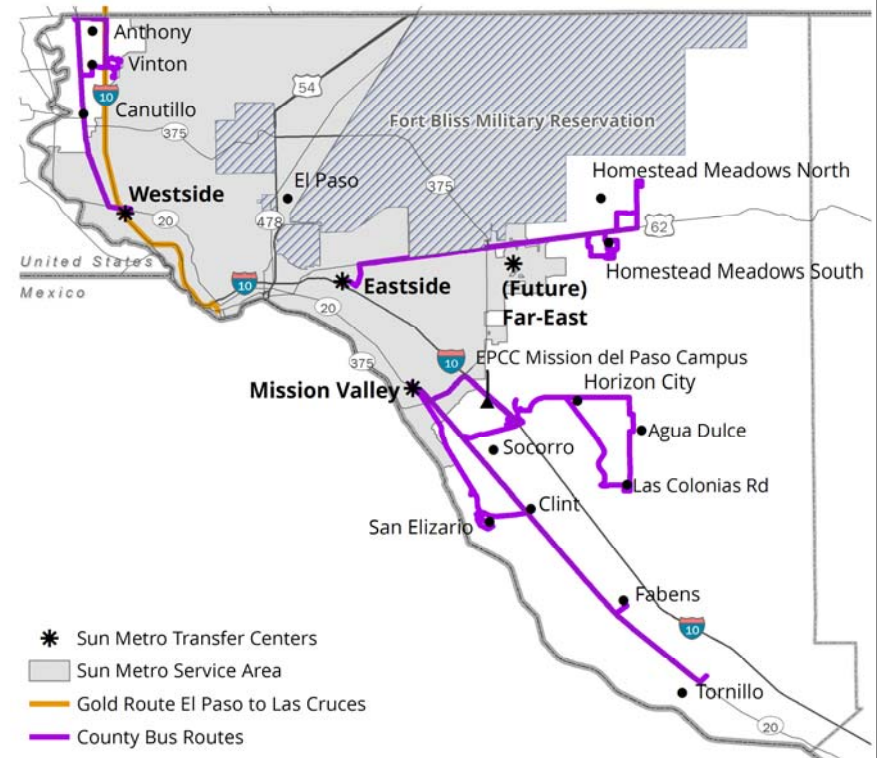
- Six county bus routes.
- Passengers get on the bus by flagging the bus driver.
- Several one-way loops.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$4.2 million
- Capital: \$200,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 371,400
- Passengers per hour: 4.4
- Operating cost per passenger: \$9.13
- Rural population with transit access: 53%
- Urban population with transit access: 59%



Scenario 1: Rural Dial-a-Ride

Description

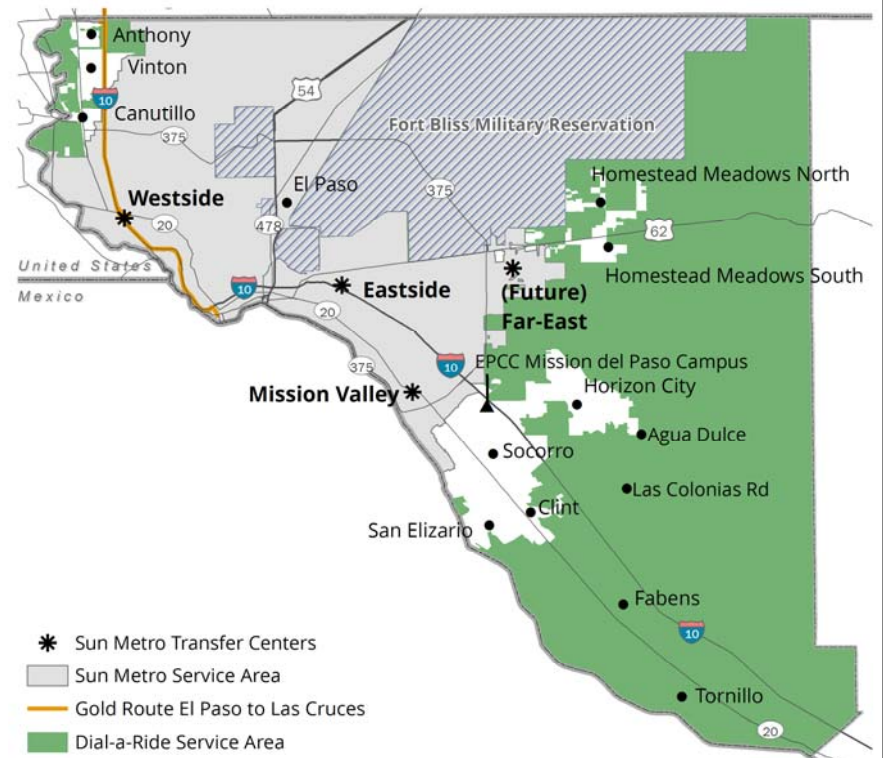
- Dial-a-Ride service throughout the rural county areas.
- Current El Paso County bus routes would be discontinued.
- Limits transit service to the rural areas and does not include urban areas.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$3.5 million
- Capital: \$90,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 297,400
- Passengers per hour: 4.0
- Operating cost per passenger: \$9.41
- Rural population with transit access: 100%
- Urban population with transit access: 0%



Scenario 2: Baseline Flexible-Route Local Bus

Description

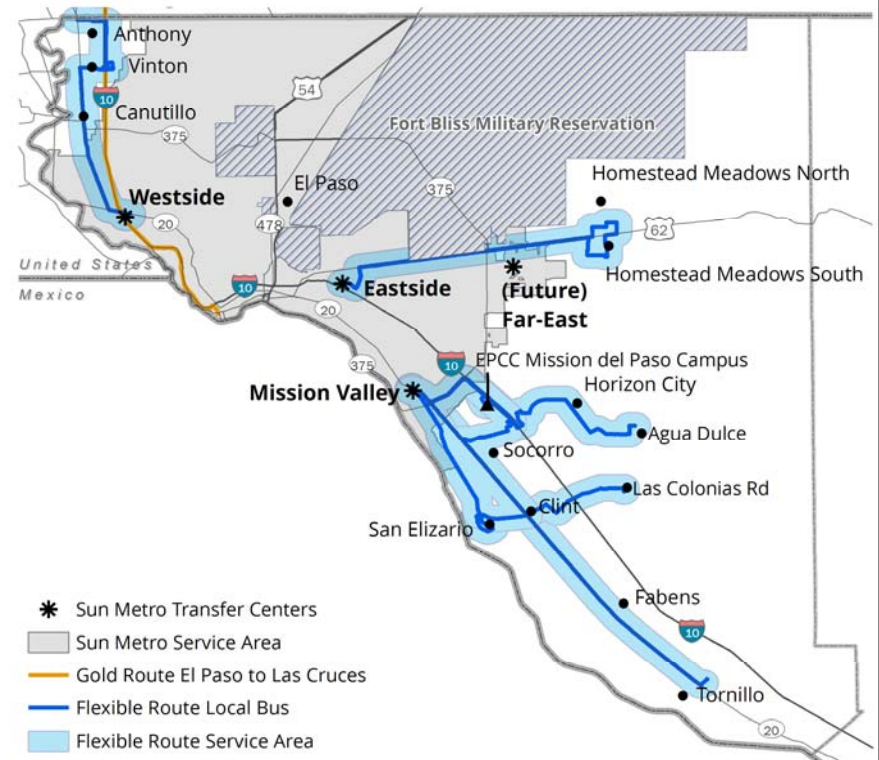
- Flexible-route local bus service to almost all currently served areas.
- Some changes in routing, frequency, or hours of service.
- Passengers can travel either direction on routes.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$4.6 million
- Capital: \$480,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 442,400
- Passengers per hour: 4.9
- Operating cost per passenger: \$8.18
- Rural population with transit access: 58%
- Urban population with transit access: 71%



Scenario 3: Flexible-Route Local Bus and Rural Dial-a-Ride

Description

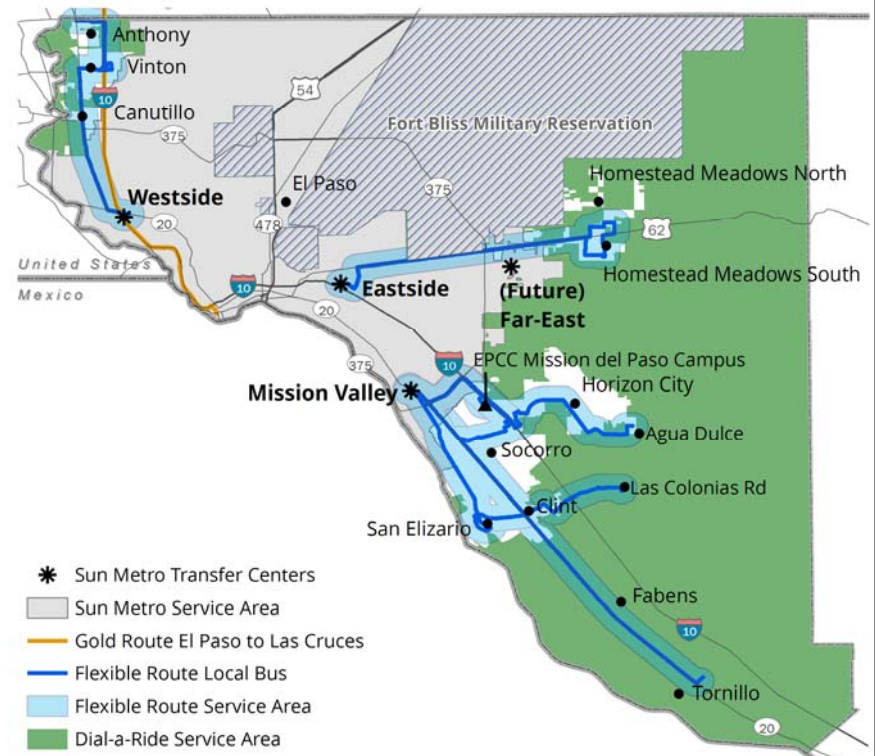
- Flexible-route bus to currently served areas.
- Some changes in routing and improvements in frequency and hours of service.
- Passengers can travel either direction on routes.
- Dial-a-Ride in rural parts of the county.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$6.9 million
- Capital: \$610,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 642,200
- Passengers per hour: 5.1
- Operating cost per passenger: \$8.88
- Rural population with transit access: 100%
- Urban population with transit access: 71%



Scenario 4: Fixed-Route Local Bus and ADA Paratransit

Description

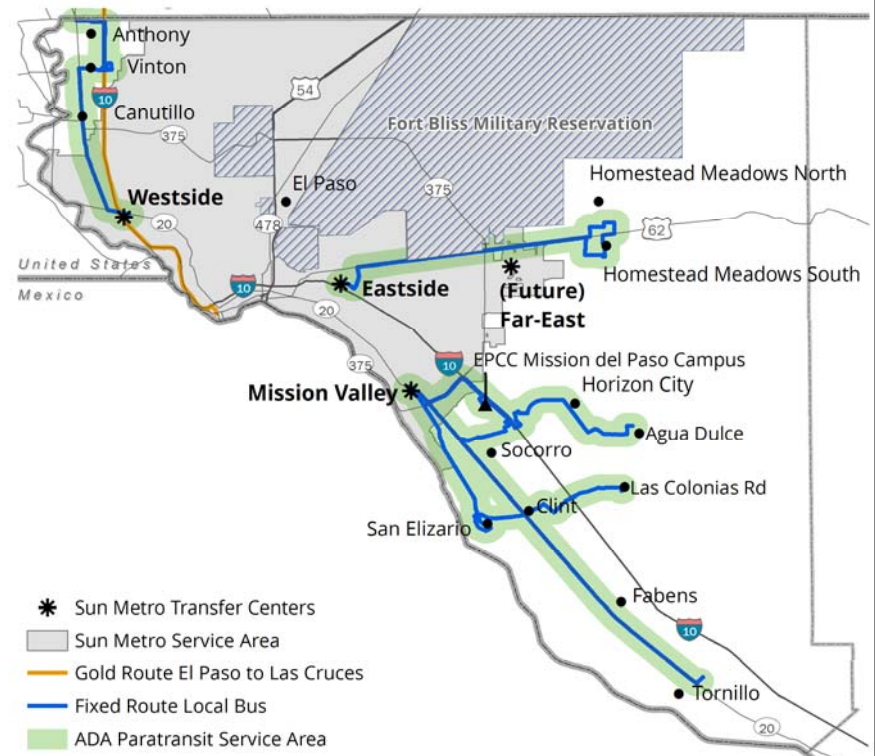
- Fixed-route bus service to currently served areas.
- Some changes in routing and improvements in frequency and hours of service.
- Passengers can travel either direction on routes.
- Improved transfers.
- ADA paratransit within 3/4 mile of local fixed route

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$6.4 million
- Capital: \$610,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 549,500
- Passengers per hour: 4.7
- Operating cost per passenger: \$9.61
- Rural population with transit access: 44%
- Urban population with transit access: 57%



Scenario 5: Increased Flexible-Route Local Bus and Rural Dial-a-Ride

Description

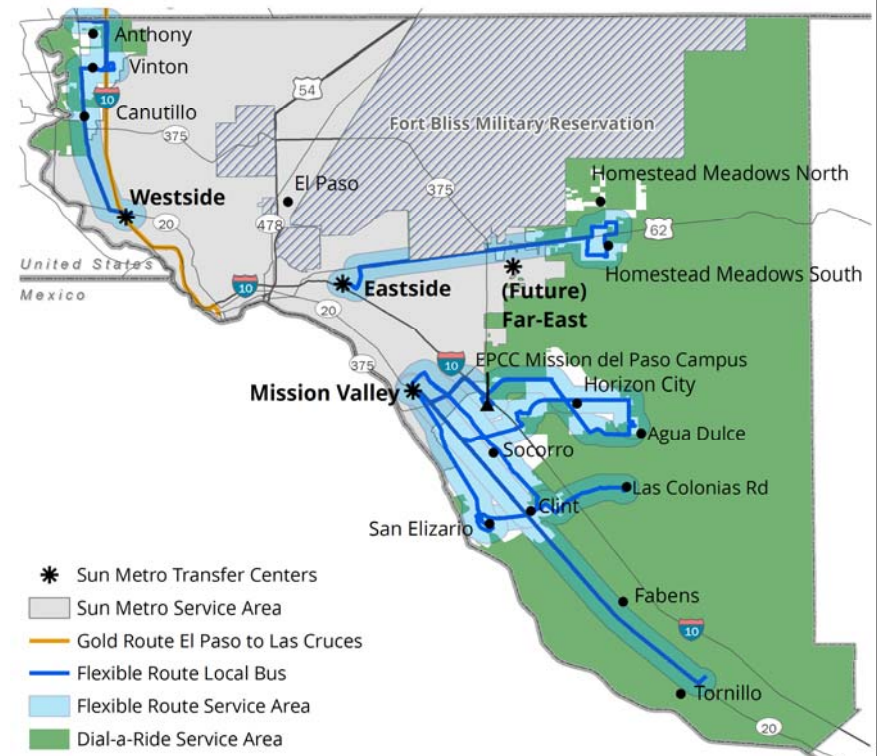
- Flexible-route bus service to currently served areas
- New routes, changes in routing, and improvements in frequency and hours of service.
- Passengers can travel either direction on routes.
- Improved transfers.
- Dial-a-Ride in rural parts of county.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$7.7 million
- Capital: \$880,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 794,500
- Passengers per hour: 5.8
- Operating cost per passenger: \$7.89
- Rural population with transit access: 100%
- Urban population with transit access: 84%



STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Stakeholder Committee

- Area Agency on Aging
- Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority
- City of Anthony, NM
- City of El Paso Mass Transit (Sun Metro)
- City of San Elizario
- City of Socorro
- City of Sunland Park, New Mexico
- Dona Ana County, New Mexico
- El Paso County Transit
- Far West Texas/El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee
- El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Project Amistad
- Rio Grande Council of Governments
- South Central Regional Transit District, NM
- Town of Anthony
- Town of Clint
- Town of Horizon City
- Texas Department of Transportation
- University of Texas – El Paso
- Village of Vinton
- Volar Center for Independent Living
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex
- Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo

Community Meetings

December 2017

- Fabens
- Montana Vista/Homestead Meadows
- Vinton/Westway
- Socorro



Pop-up Meetings

- Sun Metro Westside Transfer Center
- Sun Metro Eastside Transfer Center
- Sun Metro Mission Valley Transfer Center
- El Paso Community College, Northwest Campus
- El Paso Community College, Rio Grande Campus



Community Feedback

- Prefer Scenario 3: Flexible-Route Local Bus and Rural Dial-a-Ride
- Communities in south El Paso County prefer Scenario 5: Increased Flexible-Route Local Bus and Rural Dial-a-Ride
- Concerns about gaps in service in urban areas beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of the flexible routes in Scenario 3 and Scenario 5
- Expanded service hours were well received
- Service on Saturdays and Sundays is important
- Need further public involvement opportunities to discuss actual routes and bus stop locations are made

Scenario 6: Increased Flexible-Route Local Bus and Rural/Urban Dial-a-Ride

Description

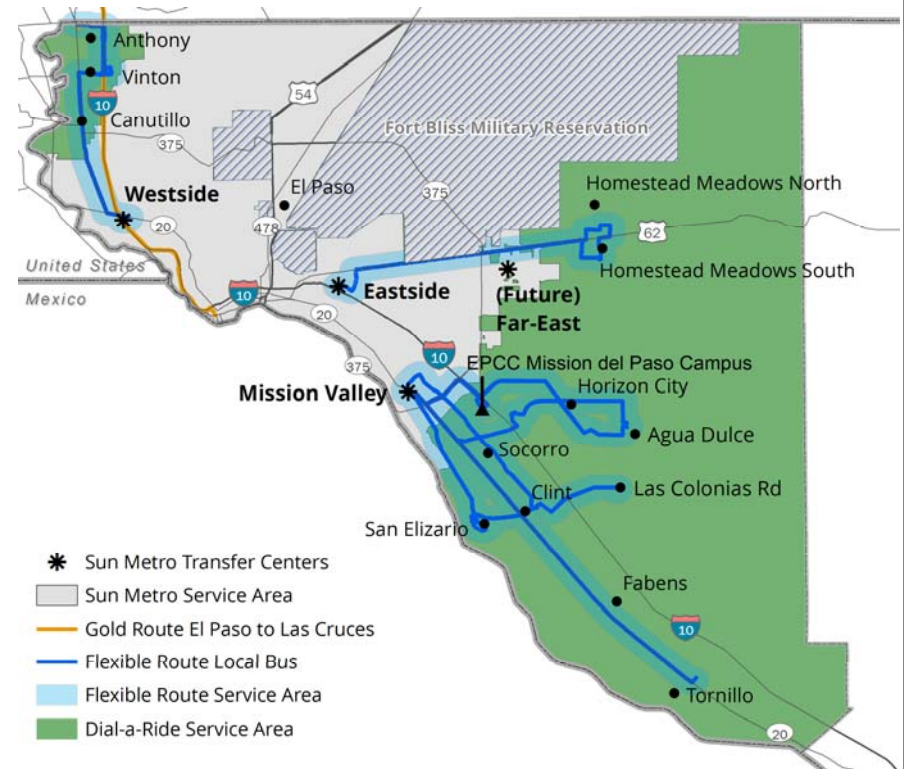
- Flexible-route bus service to currently served areas
- New routes, changes in routing, and improvements in frequency and hours of service.
- Passengers can travel either direction on routes.
- Improved transfers.
- Dial-a-Ride beyond flexible routes, rural and urban areas.

Annual Cost

- Operating: \$8.0 million
- Capital: \$910,000

Performance Measures

- Annual passengers: 806,700
- Passengers per hour: 5.7
- Operating cost per passenger: \$8.09
- Rural population with transit access: 100%
- Urban population with transit access: 100%



Transit Service Scenarios – Performance Measures

Scenario	Rural Area Coverage	Urban Area Coverage	Utility	Effectiveness	Complement Sun Metro	Ops Cost Estimate
Current Service	○	◐	○	○	◐	\$\$
#1 – Rural DAR	●	○	○	○	○	\$\$
#2 – Baseline Flexible Route	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	\$\$
#3 – Flexible Route + DAR	●	●	●	◐	●	\$\$\$
#4 – Fixed Route + ADA	○	◐	◐	◐	●	\$\$\$
#5 – Enhanced Flexible Route + Rural DAR	●	●	●	●	●	\$\$\$\$
#6 – Enhanced Flexible Route + Urban/Rural DAR	●	●	●	●	●	\$\$\$\$

IMPACT FOR ECONOMY AND TRANSIT USERS

Approach to Economic Impact Analysis

- Transit supply - Impacts of additional operating and capital expenses in terms of employment and value added to the local economy
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects
 - Induced effects
- Transit user benefits - Economic benefits of different types of new trips using an improved countywide transit system
 - Transportation cost savings
 - Low-cost mobility benefits

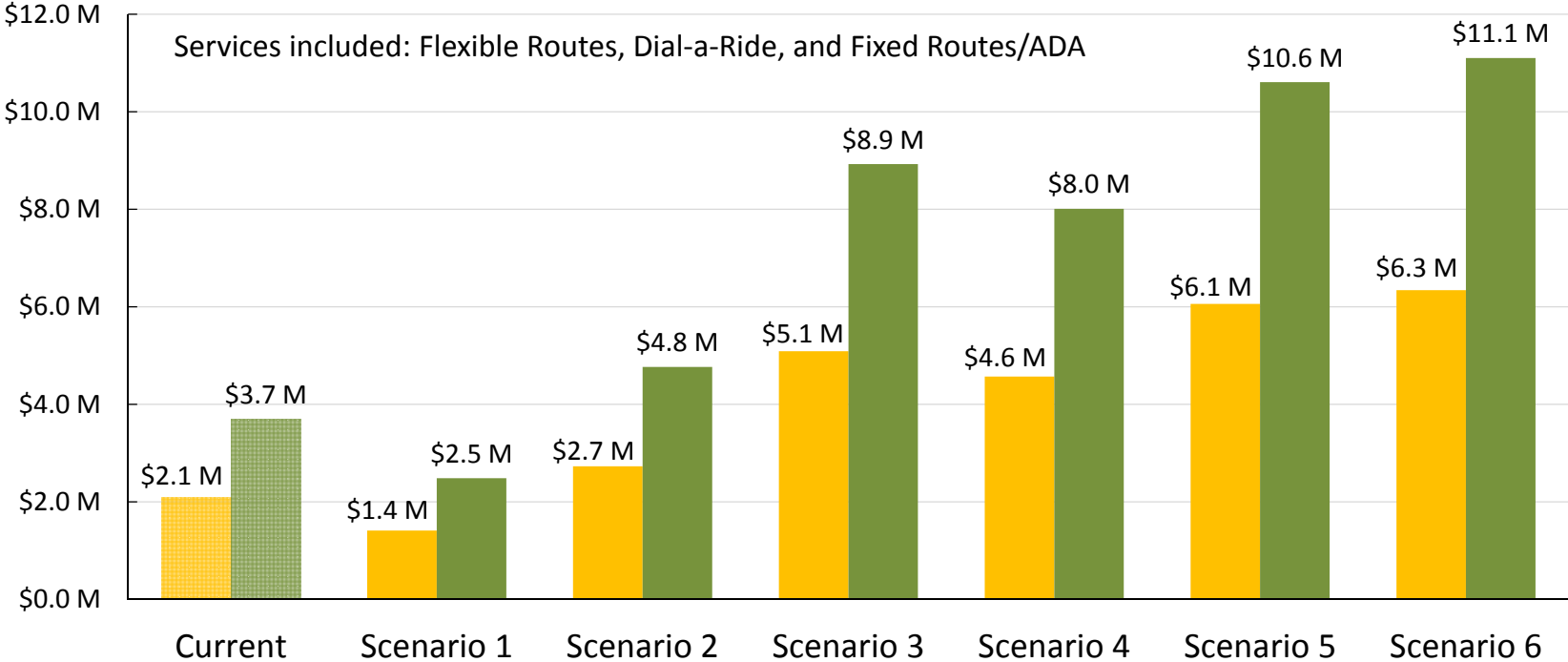
Assumptions for Transit Supply Economic Impact

- Economic impact applies to new services
 - Flexible routes
 - Dial-a-ride
 - Fixed routes/ADA paratransit

Excludes Gold Route and Vanpool because the same in each scenario
- Transit supply is based on operating expenses and amortized annual capital, excluding transit vehicles (because vehicles are not manufactured locally)

Transit Supply Economic Impact by Scenario

Expense Economic Impact



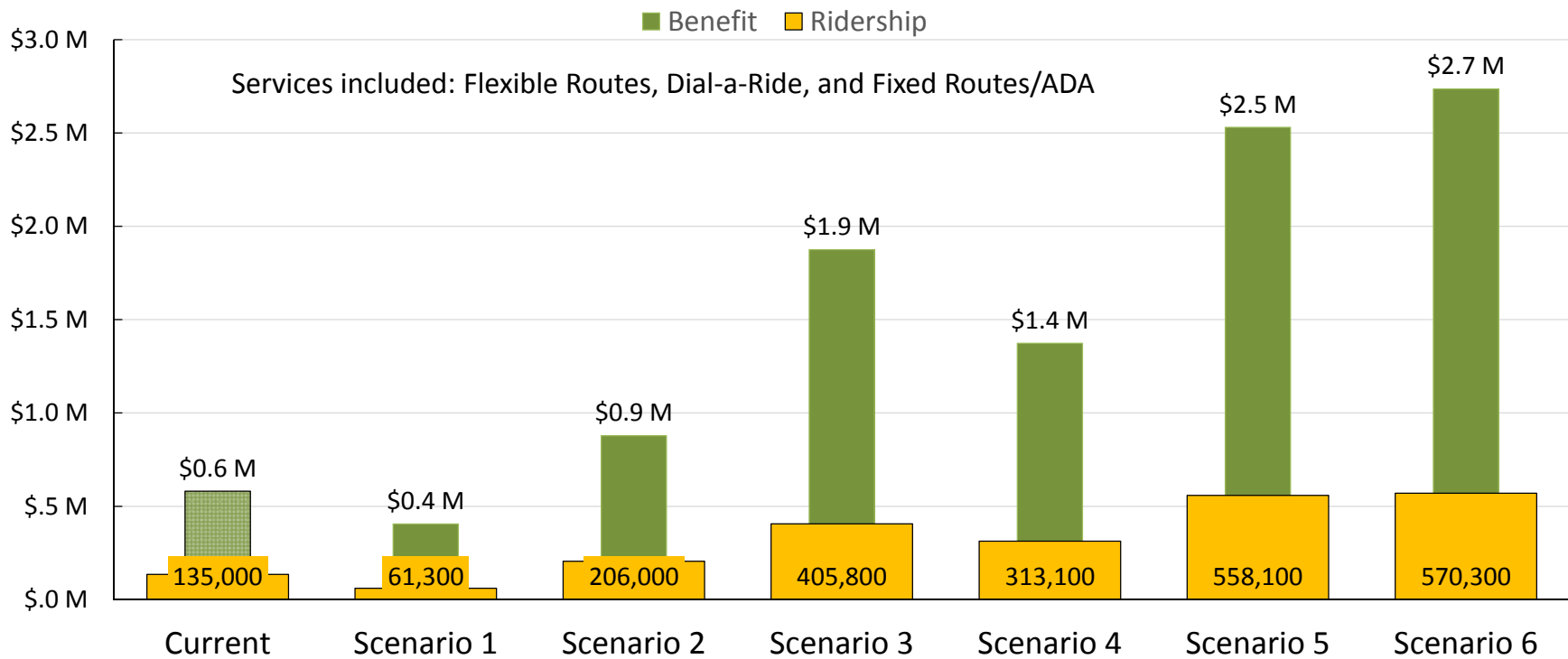
Assumptions for Transit User Benefits

- Transit user benefits applies to transit riders using these services
 - Flexible routes
 - Dial-a-ride
 - Fixed routes/ADA paratransit

Excludes Gold Route and Vanpool because the same in each scenario

- Transit user benefits looks at the transportation cost savings and the economic benefit of the opportunities that transit provides for employment, medical, and other types of trip purposes

Transit User Benefit by Scenario



SOURCES OF REVENUE AND ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS

Sources of Funds for Public Transit

- Federal Transit Administration
 - Urban
 - Rural
- Federal Highway Administration
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)
 - Flexible Funds
- State of Texas
 - Rural Public Transportation Fund
 - Transportation Development Credits
- State of New Mexico
 - Intercity Bus (Gold Route)
- Transit Generated Funds
 - Passenger Fares
 - Advertising/Concessions
 - Revenues for Contracted Services
- Local Funds
 - Sales Tax Dedicated to Transit
 - Local Sales Tax
 - County General Revenue
 - City General Revenue
 - Non-DOT Federal Funds, for example Community Development Block Grants
 - Contributed Services

Organizational Options for Countywide Transit in El Paso County

- County Mass Transit Authority
Transportation Code Chapter 457
- Regional Mobility Authority (RMA)
Transportation Code Chapter 370
- Interlocal Agreement (ILA)
Government Code Chapter 791
- Local Government Corporation (LGC)
Transportation Code Chapter 431

Possible Alternatives for Local Funds Countywide Transit in El Paso County

- County Mass Transit Authority
 - Sales Tax Dedicated to Transit
- Regional Mobility Authority
 - Vehicle Registration Fees
 - Other Sources of Revenue within RMA Portfolio
- Interlocal Agreement
 - Local Government General Fund or Other Local Revenue
- Local Government Corporation
 - Local Government General Fund or Other Local Revenue

County Mass Transit Authority Not Feasible

Under current state statutes, an El Paso County Mass Transit Authority requires a 0.5% countywide sales tax dedicated to transit. Such a sales tax is not feasible. The combined rates of all sales and use taxes imposed by the taxing authority and all local political subdivisions cannot exceed two percent.

Jurisdiction	EPC Emergency			Total Local
	El Paso County (EPC)	District 2	City	
City of El Paso	0.5%		1.0%	2.0%
El Paso County	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%
Anthony	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Borderland	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%
Canutillo	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%
Clint	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Fabens	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%
Horizon City	0.5%		1.5%	2.0%
San Elizario	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Socorro	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Tornillo	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%
Vinton	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%
Westway	0.5%	0.5%		1.0%

Regional Mobility Authority (RMA)

- Possible funding options
 - Vehicle registration fee or other sources of revenue within RMA portfolio
- Transfer of a transit system to the RMA is addressed under Transportation Code Chapter 370.361
 - City of El Paso Municipal Transit Department (Sun Metro), created under Transportation Code Chapter 453
 - El Paso County Rural Transit District under Transportation Code Chapter 458
- Example
 - No current example of RMA as the regional transit provider
 - RMAs have funded transit projects from toll revenues and served in the project management role

Interlocal Agreement(s) (ILA)

- Possible funding options
 - Local government general revenue contributions
 - Contributed services
 - Any non-U.S. Department of Transportation source of federal funds
- Benefits of ILA
 - Ease of implementation
- Example
 - Sun Metro and El Paso County Transit currently have an ILA for Route 84
 - Capital Metro (Austin) service in Georgetown and in Round Rock (cities outside the regional transit authority's service area)

Local Government Corporation (LGC)

- Similar to ILA with additional steps
 - Local government(s) adopt a resolution supporting formation of LGC
 - Secretary of State of Texas approves the LGC and issues a certificate of incorporation
 - The LGC names a board of directors and adopts bylaws to guide its operation and governance
- Benefits of creating an LGC
 - By creating a separate corporation, the LGC limits financial risk of participating local government(s)
 - Participating local governments are protected against lawsuits or claims that may be brought against the LGC
 - The LGC can focus on specific goals and objectives
- Example
 - DART created an LGC to implement service beyond the authority's service area as feeder to rail and then entered into an ILA with City of Mesquite and Star Transit (rural transit) to operate the service

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Next Steps

- Confirm interest in coordination for countywide transit with local governments
- Define the goals, objectives, and scope of countywide transit
- Evaluate organizational options, decide best approach
- Determine feasible approach to funding
- Request approval of governing bodies

Before implementing new services

- Public engagement to confirm specifics for route alignments, location of bus stops, and schedules