

# GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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## Transit Planning Services

### RURAL AND HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION STUDY - PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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# CHAPTER 1      CONTEXT OF RURAL AND HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

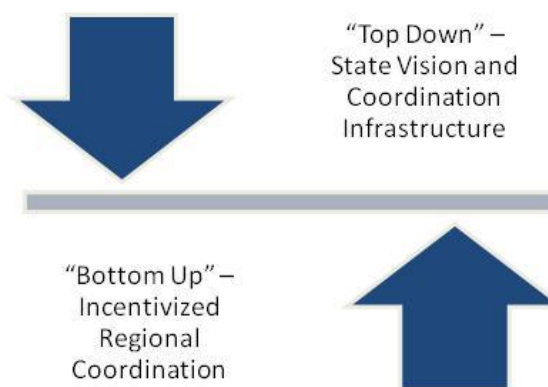
## 1.1 Introduction

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) initiated the Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation (RHST) Plan 2.0 as an update to the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan completed in 2007. The purpose of the RHST Plan 2.0 is to increase coordination among the public and human services transportation providers to achieve improved service delivery for the customers. Furthermore, increased coordination lends itself to improved cost-effectiveness and reduced redundancy in service provision.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan includes the step-by-step strategies and recommendations to guide and advance the coordination of RHST throughout the state. This plan considers a combination of ‘Top Down’ and ‘Bottom Up’ actions in recognition of the dual efforts required at the state and regional level to increase coordination. ‘Top Down’ strategies refer to direction or guidance the State of Georgia (GDOT as well as other state agencies) can take to ensure coordination requirements are established and implemented consistently throughout the state. To this end, a State Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) has been established to include representatives from the three primary agencies that fund and manage public transportation services: GDOT, Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Community Health (DCH). In addition, other agencies with an interest in facilitating mobility also participated in the TCC: the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), Department of Labor (DOL), and the Governor’s Development Council (GDC)/Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). The TCC was formed to provide an ongoing forum to discuss coordination efforts to streamline process and procedures at the state level. ‘Bottom Up’ strategies refer to steps that can be taken at the regional level, recognizing that each region is unique and these regions vary in their current state of coordination. These recommendations are based on findings from the data collected at both the regional and state levels during the needs assessment phase of the study, as well as during three rounds of regionally-based workshops and meetings.

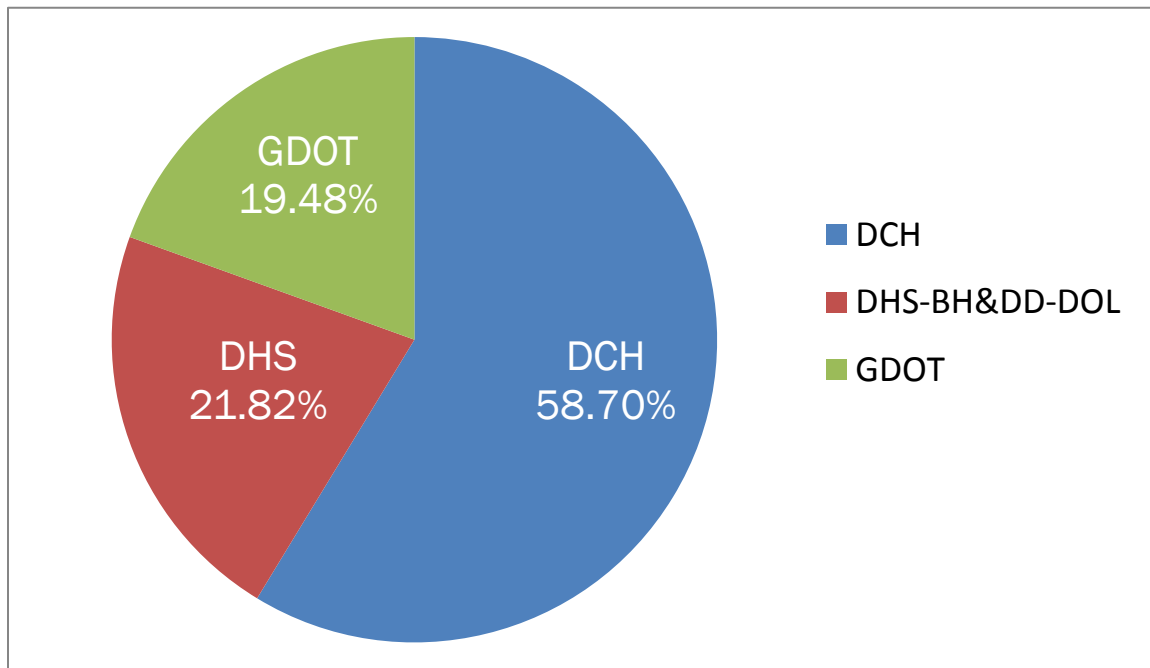
**Figure 1.2.1: Developing a Balanced RHST Model**



## CHAPTER 2 STATEWIDE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

As noted in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Alternatives Analysis*, the State of Georgia spent approximately \$137.8 million (FY 2010) in federal, state, and local resources funding the RHST providers and supportive administration. These funds are distributed to GDOT, DCH and DHS as reflected in the chart below.

**Figure 2.1: Georgia’s FY2010 RHST Funding**



The DCH funding includes Medicaid funded transportation services. The GDOT funded services includes the FTA 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program. The DHS funding includes FTA 5310, Division of Aging, and the Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) programs, as well as funding from both the DBHDD and the DOL.

There are additional federal and state programs include transportation as an eligible expense. These include Veteran’s Assistance programs funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. All of these programs are highlighted in Chapter 3 of the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

These programs were created and have evolved over time to serve specific program objectives and client needs. The current system has created a fragmented approach to the delivery to transportation services across the state. While the specifics of this fragmentation is addressed in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*, the objective of this memorandum is to present recommendations to streamline and coordinate how transportation services are programmed and delivered in Georgia while still complying with federal program requirements.

## 2.1. Agency Roles and Responsibilities

There are multiple agencies involved in the funding and delivery of public transportation services in Georgia. These agencies largely reflect the framework of the federal programs created to provide support across a range of human services. Except for certain FTA funded programs which are specifically intended to fund public transportation, most of the other programs fund transportation as an eligible expense associated with the primary mission of the program.

This section provides a brief overview of the different programs, functions and procedures required by the three primary state agencies responsible for the provision of RHST services. The extent to which these funded services are currently used and coordinated provides the framework to develop the state level recommendations.

Table 2.1.1 presents an overview of the three primary agencies in Georgia that fund public transportation services, program and non-program related. This table and a more detailed discussion of these programs and all federal and state agency programs that fund RHST services statewide can be found in Chapter 3 of the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Table 2.1.1: Georgia’s RHST Program Operating Parameters**

	GDOT	DCH	DHS*
<b>Payment Approach</b>	Pays on a “fully allocated” eligible cost basis	Pays on a “capitated rate” basis	Pays on a “per trip” basis
<b>Number of Regions / Providers</b>	114	5 Brokers, 100+ providers	12 regions, 100+ providers
<b>Agency Staffing</b>	7	2.25	27
<b>Program Cost</b>	\$26,853,058	\$80,869,944	\$30,064,842
<b>Number of Trips</b>	1,924,007	3,104,756	2,491,373
<b>Average Cost per Trip (statewide average)</b>	\$13.96	\$26.05	\$13.91

\*- includes Aging, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS), & Department of Labor

### 2.1.1. GDOT Division of Intermodal – Section 5311

The GDOT Division of Intermodal supports and manages the General Public Transportation program, and thus, is responsible for administering and implementing federal funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to support RHST (i.e., Section 5311, 5316, and 5317.). These funding sources provide mobility options for citizens in Georgia in rural areas, including those who are elderly, disabled, and low-income- traditionally targeted populations for RHST.

One of the most widely used funding sources to assist GDOT in improving access in rural areas/small towns to shopping, medical, employment and activity/educational centers are FTA Section 5311 Grants. These funds are allocated to states on a formula basis and can be used for capital, operating, planning and administrative functions. The program is intended to be available to all members of the public as long as they are using service during operating hours. FTA provided 5311 grants to approximately 114 jurisdictions in FY 10. These funds can also be used for:

- Capital costs to provide a match of up to 90 percent for a start-up service (with a 10 percent local match).
- Pays 50 percent of the deficit operating costs (net of fare revenue). Georgia's fare revenue is currently at 10 percent which allows the state to pay almost 45 percent of the costs for operations. This requires the remaining local match to be paid by local funds or non-DOT federal funds.

### **2.1.2. Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation System**

The DHS Coordinated System provides transportation for various human services programs funded by DHS, Division of Aging, DBHDD, DFCS, and DOL. This includes senior services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), that fund or sponsor client-related transportation, and for contracted transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation services and other workforce transportation. DHS also administers FTA 3510 Elderly and Disabled program for the state largely through purchase of service (POS) on existing 5311 systems.

DHS contracts with regional agencies or providers to provide transportation service in specific areas through a single primary contractor/provider that administers the subcontracting process. Also, DHS programs have different trip rates. Some pay on a 'per trip per hour' basis while others have features that are based on prioritization, service hours, and reporting. Some of the DHS transportation providers also perform as contractors for other programs (i.e., Medicaid brokers or rural public transportation).

### **2.1.3. Department of Community Health (DCH) – Medicaid Non-Emergency (NET)**

Within the state Human Services Transportation program, DCH is the state agency in Georgia responsible for receiving and administering Medicaid funding to eligible recipients. Service includes transporting Medicaid participants to and from specified health care services. One in particular is the administering and funding Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NET), that provides transportation for those participants who have limited means of mobility to activities such as medical appointments (treatment), medical evaluations, and obtaining equipment and prescriptions. In Georgia, the service is 'broker-based' and organized into five regions across the state. Typically not direct providers of direct services, primary responsibilities of DCH brokers include:

- Negotiating a contract based on a 'per capita per month' that is based on a negotiated rate multiplied by an estimate of the number of Medicaid participants enrolled in the region each month.
- Confirming the eligibility of and coordinating with participants within their respective county for trips (i.e., non-emergency medical appointments).
- Compensated by Medicaid on the first of each month, payment to providers after completing trips.
- Negotiate with providers and assign trips based on availability and price.

In each region, a vendor is selected through a bidding process and is able to be the broker to administer programs and transportation services to Medicaid participants. The broker can purchase trips in a variety of ways including from approved NET providers (private, non-profit and community service organizations) or from others such as ADA paratransit providers. In Georgia, there are currently three brokers that work in five regions across the state, two of which are 'private for-profit entities', while a public governmental agency is the broker in the Southwest Region.



## 2.2. Policy and Programmatic Obstacles to Coordination

Based on the different functions and procedures of the agencies discussed above, there are several issues, constraints and impediments that hinder a coordinated effort. These obstacles were identified in meetings with the regional commissions and are consistent with findings reported in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment and Alternatives Analysis Technical Memorandum*. The major obstacles and challenges to coordination include the following:

- **Inconsistent service in all areas** - Rural public transportation does not operate everywhere, is limited in terms of service days and hours, and may not always be available. People dependent on RHST have difficulty getting to work or accessing other basic services because the services do not operate either where and/or when needed.
- **Inconsistent Program Boundaries** - DHS works within 12 regions, which coincide with Regional Commissions, while DCH's has established five brokerage regions. While county boundaries typically serve as functional service areas, the boundaries of the 12 DHS regions do not correspond into the five DCH brokerage regions. Meanwhile, GDOT's service areas tend to focus at the city or county level because service is provided locally.
- **Duplication of services/trips** - In some of regions there are examples of service duplication with three different networks of providers offering similar services to the same areas. Reducing such duplication would result in savings to potentially expand or provide new mobility options.
- **Need for expanded stakeholder engagement** - In some regions where stakeholders meet to discuss transportation issues, the group is not always as inclusive as needed and/or focuses more on agency concerns rather than the broader network of RHST services.
- **Lack of consistent administration** - Administration is not consistent within DHS: some transportation grants go to the DHS regional office and are administered by them; some are transferred to the Regional Commission and administered by the RC; and some have a combination of both. Not all DHS transportation programs are included in all regional grants and service provider contracts. The service providers' administrative burdens associated with different reporting requirements are challenging. This is not only the case for the various DHS programs, but also those funded by GDOT and Medicaid.
- **Inconsistent Rates/Fees from Providers** - Some DHS programs (i.e., TANF) reimburse service providers at a higher trip rate than other programs. This means that most providers are likely to prioritize higher paying trips over lower paying trips. This practice also creates budget issues for transportation providers because they count on a certain number of the higher paying trips to make their budget work. Without these trips, a transportation provider may struggle to keep in business.
- **No consistency in programs** - The service providers in uncoordinated regions sometimes have taken on the mantle of coordinating compatible trips funded by different programs. It is these providers who often decide what program(s) to charge for the transportation of a certain trip. On the positive side, this flexibility often enables the provision of transportation services to customers/clients who otherwise wouldn't be transported. On the negative side, these decisions sometimes favor the financial interests of the service provider which can sometimes result in certain customers not being able to access services at desired/needed times.
- **Large number of existing grantees for GDOT** - Managing 5311 grants for 114 grantees is a major administrative undertaking. Reducing this number to a more manageable 12 Regional Commissions will save time, labor and increase the quality of the effort since fewer entities will translate into more time available to devote to the needs of each regional commission. With too many provides, the time available to spend quality time on each contract was challenging.

- **No set procedures for cost allocation/cost Sharing** - With the exception of the Coastal Georgia and Southwest Regions, there is a lack of consistency in how costs are allocated/shared in cases where trips funded by different funding streams are co-mingled.
- **No common software to support coordinated service** - GDOT is undertaking a procurement effort that may lead to the use of – or interface with -- one software product to support RHST providers.

## 2.3. Summary of Working Group Coordination Efforts

In order better understand the issues and potential for improves to RHST delivery at the state level, a State Agency Working Group also known as the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) consisting of representatives of DOT, DHS and DCH was formed. Participation in the State Agency Working Group was also extended to agencies with an interest in public mobility including: the department of Community Affairs, DBHDD, and DOL. In addition, representatives from the Governors Development Commission participated. Three monthly meetings of this group were held. A summary of the discussion topics is provided below:

- **Meeting #1: January 13, 2011** – Each agency described their role in RHST in the state. Discussion followed regarding opportunity areas for better coordination at the state level. .
- **Meeting #2: February 10, 2011** – The group discussed both a long-term vision and short term opportunities – including a unified policy and procedures manual and formation of a state coordination committee.
- **Meeting #3: March 10, 2011** – Draft recommendations for the statewide-level policy actions to streamline RHST services, and related organizational structures, were presented for feedback.

In conjunction, these meetings served to gather the input needed to develop a state-level plan to guide the direction of RHST services with consensus of those responsible for implementing associated policies and procedures to drive the plan. As such, the following highlights the significant input from these meetings that ultimately led to the recommendations for statewide policy presented in this document. The full minutes and presentation materials from each meeting are available in the Appendix A of this report.

### Discussion Summary - Meeting #1

- No real concern was voiced about the potential to funnel all RHST services through one entity, but additional review and understanding of the parameters would be required to ensure provider oversight.
- Assuming the approach provides better economies of scale, DCH is open to considering other regional boundary approaches. The biggest concern is that the regions have a critical mass because private entities prefer larger regions. Changing the procurement process in the short-term would be difficult, but it is possible to consider opportunities for the future if it would improve the system.
- Travel outside of regional boundaries was discussed as a potential issue for coordination. DHS has some regional trips that travel outside their regional boundaries however the more problematic trips are those for clients who need to travel across state boundaries.
- To facilitate Regional Commission participation, both DHS and DCH believe better coordination of funding is needed.
- Common procedures for both intake and reporting should be developed at the regional level - centralizing intake would also help maximize efficiencies.
- The implementing agencies of RHST services would consider moving to a single reimbursement approach if the benefits are clearly understood and the method correctly covers the cost of service.

### Discussion Summary - Meeting #2

- The question was presented, “why are there multiple (three plus) transportation programs all operating differently, when one program serving all RHST entities may work better”. The reason is because the various programs that fund RHST services were created and evolved largely independently at the federal level and developed
- It was understood that the steps needed and the issues to be considered to move from the current state of operations to the coordinated approach being proposed will take multiple years to complete.
- The group was in favor of a long-term vision as long as it was kept broad and leads to a common goal of providing adequate transportation for all groups.
- There needs to be some understanding of legitimate needs versus comfort needs.
- Coordination meetings with all three agencies, while recognized as potentially problematic, are preferable for addressing the pragmatic matters and facilitating an acceptable approach to accomplishing coordination.
- Client service is a major concern with a centralized approach to call in-take functions but it is recognized that a centrally coordinated approach delivers the greatest management control.
- A standardized cost updated based on recent trends that consider trips on a per-mile or per-minute basis will likely be needed to be able to blend DOT, DHS and DCH programs effectively.

### **Discussion Summary - Meeting #3:**

- The consultant team presenting the findings and preliminary recommendations arising from the meetings with the executive leadership of the Regional Commissions with regard to the concept of coordinating RHST services at the Regional Commission level. It was reported that the Regional Commissions were supportive of a mobility management concept and RHST delivery role, however, support for the concept was conditioned upon the creation of a mandate from the state for the Regional Commissions to take on the responsibility coupled with the authority and funding to carry out the responsibility.
- The consultant team also provided an overview of state level recommendations including the formation of an expanded TCC and State Mobility Manager.
- The role of the TCC was presented and it was largely agreed that this body would need to be empowered and expanded to include broader representation of the community of programs, providers and users of RHST services.
- It was tentatively agreed that a neutral body, such as the Governors Development Council, or other state entity (new or existing) would likely be the correct type of body within which to sponsor the State RHST Working Group and to house the State Mobility Manager.
- There was unanimous agreement that a short and longer term structure and framework for coordination was necessary to initiate and complete the process of implementing coordination at the State and regional levels.
- There was general agreement that the existing RHST consulting team should be used in the interim to initiate coordination activities and provide technical assistance toward this end at the state and regional levels.

## **2.4. Statewide Policy and Programmatic Recommendations**

### **2.4.1. State Mobility Manager Framework**

The overarching recommendation at the state level is the creation of a Mobility Manager framework to streamline and coordinate policies, procedures, requirements, and reporting across the transportation funding programs managed by DOT, DHS and DCH. This framework is referred to as the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The proposed TCC is recommended to be comprised of designated senior staff from DOT, DHS, DCH and other state level agencies that fund

transportation services for their clients. The TCC is recommended to be housed in a new or existing, preferably neutral, entity that will serve as the RHST Office. The concept is for the RHST Office to function as the facilitator of state level coordinator of transportation services by working cooperatively and constructively with each agency to minimize programmatic and organizational obstacles to coordination.

As determined from the Working Group meeting, the HB 277 RHST Advisory Subcommittee (which already includes the agency representatives) would be the initial starting point to establish the TCC with recommended expansion to include a wider membership. To this end, it is recommended that the TCC be an inclusive group to foster a wide range of coordination of public transportation programs and services. Membership on the TCC should include designated representatives from the following entities:

- Georgia Department of Transportation
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Community Health
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Labor
- Department of Education
- Department of Community Affairs
- Private Philanthropic / Advocacy organizations
- Georgia Transit Association
- Georgia Association of Regional Commissions
- Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Georgia Hospital Association
- At least one business community representative
- At least one citizen / public transportation user

Within the created statewide RHST Office a position should be created for a State Mobility Manager who will function as the lead staff person responsible for facilitating coordination activities at the state level. The State Mobility manager will be housed in the RHST Office and work as lead staff for the TCC. To provide sufficient authority and responsibility to carry out the mission of coordinating transportation service policies and programs at the state level, it is further recommended that the TCC and the RHST office be established by executive order or legislative action. The Governor's Development Council (GDC) is one existing entity that may potentially serve as the RHST Office, house the State Mobility Manager and TCC. The creation of a new or designation of other existing neutral entities may be considered for the purpose of being designated as the RHST Office. The idea of the GDC serving as the RHST Office is offered for consideration because it has official capacity, its purpose is to address transportation issues, it is a neutral party and it already interfaces with a broad range of representative agencies that impact and influence transportation.

It is the intent that the TCC will hire a qualified professional to serve as the State Mobility Manager as the lead staff dedicated to overseeing the mobility management responsibilities and to work with the members of the TCC to refine policies, procedures, requirements and reporting to facilitate transportation coordination at the state level. The State Mobility Manager will provide support and direction to the Regional Mobility Managers as is discussed later in this report. The State Mobility Manager is envisioned to serve as the administrative staff for the TCC. The State Mobility manager will be the point person for planning, implementing, managing and evaluating state-level RHST programs and other TCC initiatives. The State Mobility Manager will be the lead for providing technical assistance to regional mobility managers.

The process for achieving RHST coordination in Georgia requires commitment at the highest level which must be manifest in a series of official actions. Technically, once the State commits to coordinate, the act of coordinating programs and services is largely a matter of making sense out of the details of what the State and local programs and

service providers are already doing. For this reason, the formation of a State RHST Office and designation of a State Mobility Manager are critical to provide the authority, responsibility and process for coordination. The general steps to coordinating RHST services in Georgia are outlined below.

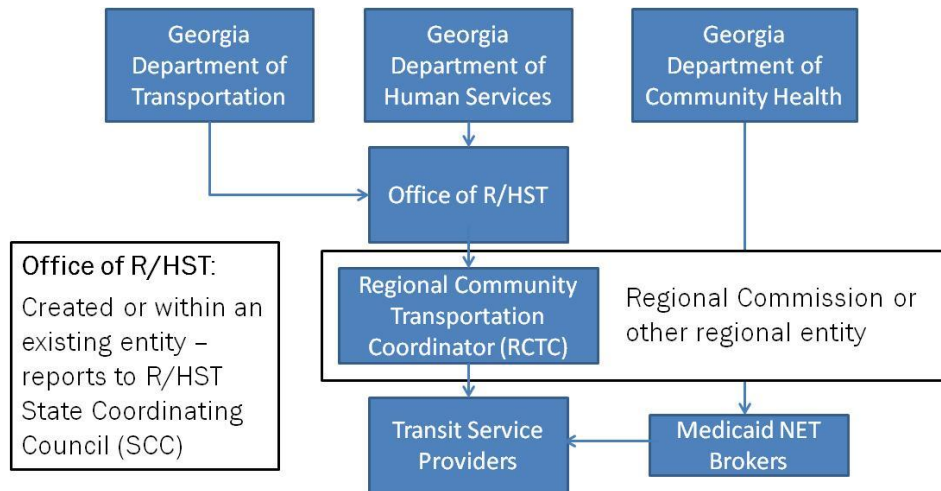
- The State RHST Working Group recommends the formation of a State RHST Office through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) executed by DOT, DHS and DCH.
- The MOU may establish the HB 277 RHST Advisory Subcommittee to be formalized as the TCC and expanded to include broader representations as described previously.
- The DOT directs the RHST Study Team to serve in the capacity of the State Mobility Manager and provide technical assistance to the TCC to hire and train a State Mobility Manager; prepare a Unified RHST Policies and Procedures Manual; and provide technical assistance to support state coordination efforts and to assist Regional Commissions to form and enhance RHST coordination.
- The TCC will examine and adopt recommendations for streamlining program and reporting requirements, coordinating and delivering transportation services, and bundling funding streams.
- The TCC will support the regional efforts to coordinate RHST programs and service delivery by funding and providing technical assistance for the Regional Community Transportation Coordinator.
- Ultimately, the Legislature or Governor takes action to formally authorize the RHST structure.

The recommended process for facilitating the designation of the TCC and the State Mobility Manager recognizes the need for short term and longer term actions. The subsequent sections present additional steps to facilitate RHST coordination efforts at the State level.

### **2.4.2. Short-Term Recommendations**

In the short term, the structure must recognize the existing framework for programs that provide and or fund transportation services in the state. The recommended short term structure would create an RHST Office, to facilitate the recommended TCC which in the interim would be constituted by the existing HB 277 RHST Advisory Subcommittee and expanded to include broader representation by entities and organizations with a stake in the provision and use of public transportation services. The State RHST Office would be the entity for whom the State Mobility Manager works and the entity that sponsors the TCC. The model for the short term state level RHST infrastructure is presented in Figure 2.4.1. In the interim, the existing RHST consulting team may be used to facilitate the transition, provide technical assistance and function as and train the State Mobility Manager that is hired.

**Figure 2.4.1: State-Level RHST Infrastructure (Short-Term)**



The benefit of the short term model assuming the authorization of an intermediate State RHST office (through the existing State Agency Working Group, the RHST consultant team, and the GDC) is that it can immediately serve as the conduit for DHS and DOT programs and funding thus furthering efforts to coordinate these programs at the State level. The existing DOT and DHS structures and funding mechanisms are easier to coordinate in the short-term primarily because many of the DHS trips are already served by purchase of service from 5311 systems. Both DHS and DOT would only need to interface with the State RHST Office rather than 12 regions (as currently by DHS) or 114 providers (as currently by DOT).

DCH, on the other hand, provides funding in advance based on a per eligible member rate for the area served. Thus coordinating the DCH NET program with the DOT and DHS programs will require a longer lead time to develop a compatible cost allocation and reimbursement basis. For this reason, in the short term, the model reflects a continuation of the DCH program to work directly with the DCH contract providers (also known as third party operators – TPOs).

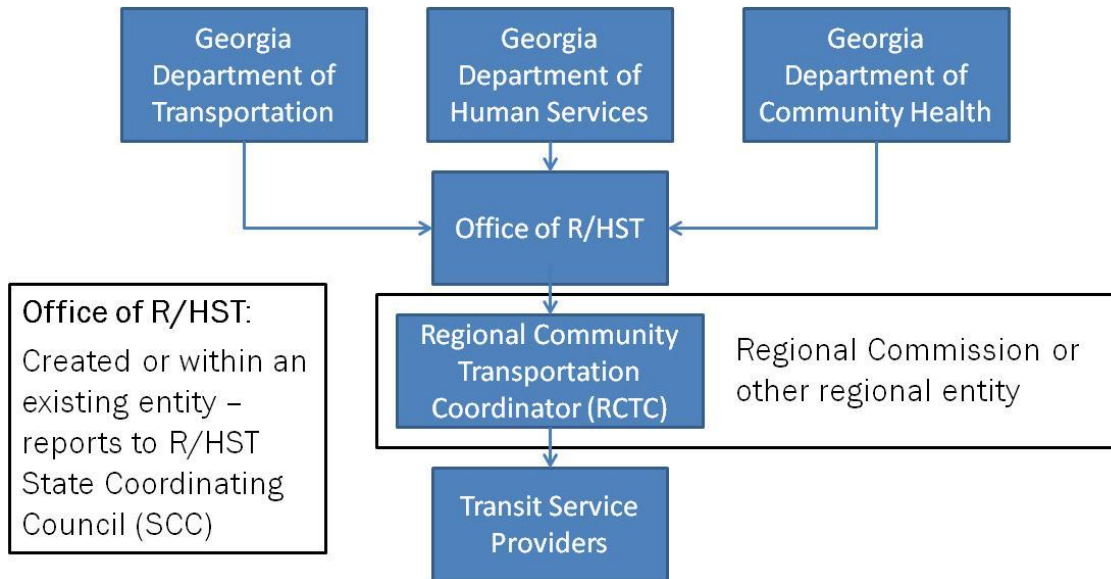
### 2.4.3. Long-Term Recommendations

Building on the short-term recommendation, in addition to the creation of the State RHST Office to coordinate funding and administrative services for GDOT and DHS, the long-term recommendation includes coordination with DCH (Figure 2.4.2). As with the short-term structure, the long-term the structure for coordination at the state level should be comprised of the TCC and the creation of a State Mobility Manager both of which should be housed within a neutral state agency that has sufficient authority. It is recognized that the formation of the TCC, the hiring a State Mobility Manager, and the reorganization of programs and policies will all take time. Therefore a short term structure, as discussed in the previous section, is recommended to help facilitate the transition period. The recommended structure facilitates the combined ‘Top Down’ and ‘Bottom Up’ approaches to coordination that is strongly recommended for Georgia.

The strength of the ‘Top Down’ and ‘Bottom Up’ approach received positive response from both the Regional Commissions and from the State TCC. Coordination of transportation funded and governed by multiple programs requires coordination at the State level where policy and requirements are set and at the Regional Commission level where services are requested, contracts with providers are let, trips are delivered and record-keeping, invoicing and

reporting is accomplished. The formalization of a designated RHST entity is viewed as a critical recommendation towards facilitating operationally efficient coordinated services that continue to comply with federal requirements.

**Figure 2.4.2: State-Level RHST Infrastructure (Long-Term)**



In addition to the formation of the State Mobility Manager, one of the products proposed in support of coordination at the State level and at the Regional Commission level is the development of a Unified Transportation Policies and Procedures Manual to be adopted and implemented by DOT, DHS, DCH and other agencies. This recommendation is described more fully in the following section.

### 2.4.4. Unified Transportation Policies and Procedures Manual

The primary emphasis for action to facilitate transportation services coordination, after the designation and authorization of the TCC to advance coordination, is the creation of a Unified Transportation Policies and Procedures Manual (Unified Manual). This effort is essential for streamlining program rules, requirements, regulations and practices that historically have acted to create program silos in the provision of program related transportation services.

A Unified Manual is substantial and will have a far reaching effect on simplifying and streamlining transportation coordination at the state and regional levels. Imperative in this effort will be to identify state requirements, requirements for federal program compliance, and development of a cost allocation and cost sharing model that can equally be applied to DOT, DHS and DCH services.

Therefore, the development of a unified manual is critical to facilitate coordination at the state level and the streamline service delivery and reporting at the regional level. The Unified Manual will be developed through the approach described below.

1. Identification and review of GDOT, DHS, , DCH and other relevant manuals, policies, and programs that facilitate transportation service provision;
2. Identify federal requirements within each program;
3. Identify consistencies and inconsistencies within each program ;

4. Document policies, practices and requirements that can be changed by the State without compromising federal compliance;
5. Develop recommendations for streamlining policies and procedures ;
6. Develop recommendations for bundling funding across departments and programs to enhance the facilitation of transportation coordination;
7. Develop recommendations for reporting;
8. Develop recommendations for common cost allocation and cost sharing;
9. Develop recommendations for third party contracting; and
10. Develop recommendations for information sharing and regular communications between the State Mobility Manager and the Regional Mobility Managers.

During the Pilot Phase of this study, the RHST consulting team will initiate the task of creating the Unified Transportation Policies and Procedures Manual.

### **2.4.5. Summary of State Level Recommendations**

There are several key actions at the state level that, if completed, would serve to foster transportation coordination at the regional level were identified through the RHST study.

- The State should designate an RHST office and state-level Mobility manager;
- The State should create an authorized body (the proposed State Coordinating Council) to facilitate coordination of programs and requirements of GDOT, DHS, DCH, etc.;
- Empower Regional Commissions to become Regional Mobility Managers through adoption of an RHST Infrastructure;
- Delineate uniform boundaries for multiple program service areas with consistent Regional Commission boundaries and the DHS boundaries;
- Develop streamlined and consistent reporting/program requirements across programs while fulfilling federal requirements;
- Designate a source of ongoing funding for O&M and capital for public transportation;
- Develop a standardized set of program policies and procedures across programs while fulfilling federal requirements;
- Establish a common cost allocation methodology across programs;
- Develop consistent contracts and contracting process for third party operators ;
- Allow greater flexibility to bundle program and non-program funds for transportation;
- Provide technical support in the form of scheduling software (this is currently being accomplished through an effort by the DOT); and
- Provide technical support to the Regional Commissions.



## CHAPTER 3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR COORDINATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

This chapter details the final recommendations and strategies to facilitate and further expand RHST coordination at the regional level. In addition to the findings derived from the needs assessment and the review of potential alternatives, the data and feedback received from three sets of regionally-based meetings have been particularly useful in creating an implementation plan that tailored to each region. The following needs were considered in the development of the regional level recommendations.

- Allow flexibility of service delivery designs on the region/local level.
- Utilize existing building blocks to be sustainable: start with existing DHS contract and add on rural public transportation and DCH NET services; and preserve coordination occurring at the provider level.
- Streamline funding and reporting through common regional networks.

### 3.1 Mobility Manager Framework

As described in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Alternative Analysis Technical Memorandum*, a RHST Mobility Manager or Regional Community Transportation Coordinator (RCTC) approach has been selected for implementation at the regional level. It is proposed that a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) be created for each Regional Commission to serve the purpose similar to the TCC at the State level. The RCC would be the body of representatives engaged at the regional level in the RHST programs and services and will function through the RCTC. At this point it is recommended that the RCTC be the Regional Commission.

As noted previously, a Mobility Manager would be the lead staff person who provides operational, administrative and financial oversight in mobility management functions. The RCTC would be designated by the Regional Coordination Council (RCC) in conjunction with the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) or RHST Office. This Regional Mobility Manager/RCTC would be the focal point of organizing the coordination of RHST service delivery in the region. The implementation of the Regional Mobility Manager/RCTC concept is detailed in the subsequent sections.

The Mobility Manager concept can be implemented and manifest in a wide range of ways. The constant for the Mobility Manager concept is that there is a lead entity and agreement among the participating program entities and service providers to coordinate. Figure 3.1 was developed to reflect a range of levels or degrees of coordination from loosely coordinated information sharing to coordinated decentralized operations to consolidated operations.

**Step 1: Information Gathering** - In every case, coordination must begin with knowing who, what, how and where transportation services are being provided.

**Step 2: Information Sharing** - This step involves developing and/or providing:

- A directory of programs;
- A referral procedure to direct calls to the appropriate entity in the region;
- A directory of services for internal (programs and providers) and external (clients and the public) use;
- A contact list for each all programs and providers in the region regardless of their participation in coordinated services;
- A regional framework for coordination of programs and services; and
- A forum for the participating entities to engage in discourse.

**Step 3: Coordinated information** - Coordinated information builds on step two and further facilitates coordination through the practice of directly transferring callers to the appropriate program or provider for their particular request. This little extra step of transferring a call makes a significant jump in the level of customer service provided and enhances trust and strengthens the bond between program and provider entities. The ability to transfer calls will require this functionality in the phone systems used by the Regional Commission, the programs and the providers.

**Step 4: Facilitated Coordination** - Facilitated coordination builds on the previous steps and included the development of a regional phone number into a one stop call center. This further simplifies and unifies the delivery of information and services for the customers. This is also known as a 211 center concept where calls for community, human and transportation services are funneled to one regional number. The actual location of the persons receiving the calls and providing the information, and services may be distributed. This use of technology is an excellent way to balance the need to simplify the process for consumers to obtain information and services and yet maintain a distributed service delivery structure if it is more cost-effective to do so.

The preceding four steps in facilitate coordinated information and service delivery. The next steps facilitate the coordination of resource sharing and may be undertaken at any step in the coordination continuum.

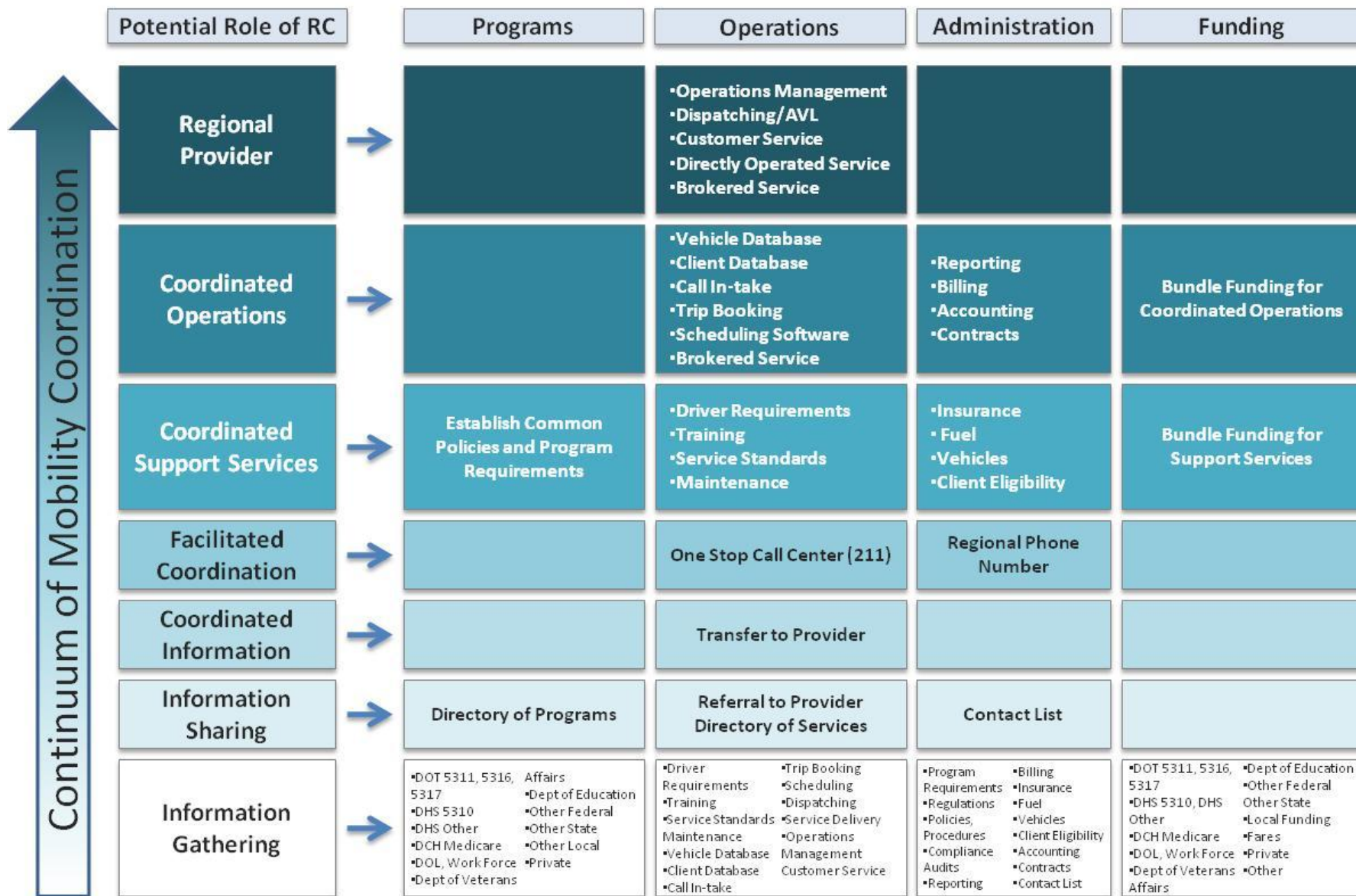
**Step 5: Coordinated Support Services** - This step may take place anywhere after information gathering. These may include shared purchase of fuel, insurance, maintenance services. These may also involve the development of streamlined program requirements, reporting and billing functions. These may also include bundling of program funding streams to leverage service delivery and capital match.

**Step 6: Coordinated Service Delivery** - This level of coordination typically requires Steps 1 through 5 to already be at some level of existence to have the infrastructure in place for coordinated service delivery. Coordinated service delivery can take the form of a decentralized coordinated system whereby trip requests are received centrally and routed to providers responsible for all trips within their area to be scheduled and delivered. This may also take the form of a centralized coordinated service delivery where all requests are processed and scheduled centrally and then sent to providers to deliver the trip within the region.

**Step 7: Regional Provider** - The regional provider will centrally book, schedule and dispatch trips to be operated directly or brokered to contractors. In this case the regional provider maintains full control of the services delivered directly or through contractors within the region.

The implementation of the Mobility Manager concept in each region is detailed in the subsequent section.

Figure 3.1.1: Mobility Manager Building Blocks



## 3.2 Regional Outreach Findings

Opportunities for coordination at the regional level have been explored through an outreach process which included three rounds of workshops and meetings held at each region. The approach, the results of the workshops, and the findings are detailed in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

- The first set of workshops was held in May 2010 and focused on data collection and needs assessment.
- The second set of workshops was held in November 2010 to validate the information heard previously and assist in the development of alternatives.
- The third and final set of meetings was held in March 2011 to engage regional commission leadership to review potential recommendations and discuss their interest in playing a greater role in coordinated service delivery.

The outcome of the final meetings was used to refine and tailor the strategies for each region. Refer to the appendices and the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum* for more information about these activities.

The following bullets provide the common themes heard from the discussions:

- The Mobility Management concept was very well received;
- The Regional Commissions recognize a need for state-level commitment to facilitate regional coordination;
- The Regional Commissions noted the need for a State mandate or incentives to lead coordination;
- The Regional commissions noted the need for on-going funding for coordination activities;
- Uniform boundaries are needed for program service areas;
- Consistent reporting/program requirements would streamline efforts and facilitate coordination;
- Technical support is needed to facilitate coordination and enhance staff capacity and capabilities;
- The Regional Commissions would like to learn from their peers through collaboration with other regions to benefit from lessons learned by SWGA, Coastal and Three Rivers;
- The Regional Commissions need their Council approval to take on responsibility as the Regional Commission Transportation Coordinator;
- The regional Commissions anticipate the need for intensive outreach to constituencies; and
- The Regional Commissions noted the need for sensitivity to the budget cycle in planning for pilot projects (new budget will be adopted by May for fiscal year start in July).

Based on the discussion with Regional Commission leadership, Table 3.2.1 summarizes their level of interest on the Mobility Management concept. The subsequent section details the recommendations and action items for each Regional Commission to further coordination.

**Table 3.2.1: Major Findings from Round 3 Regional Commission Leadership Meeting**

Regional Commission	Existing Coordination Activities	Interest in Mobility Manager Concept	Key Comments
Middle Georgia	Participation in coordinated DHS system	Ready to Start	RC is interested in exploring the concept of a provider that would only serve specialized transportation needs (door-to-door, stretcher, CPR, etc.) for a higher rate of reimbursement
Northeast Georgia	Involvement in provision of service delivery through AAA	Ready to Start	RC is coordinating with providers for their buy-in to the regional system (inclusion of transit O&M funds in HB 277)
River Valley	Participation in coordinated DHS system	Ready to Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of 4-County rural facility is complete</li> <li>• RVRC is in the process of identifying issues and opportunities for a coordinated 4-County GDOT and DHS system</li> </ul>
Three Rivers	RC serves as Mobility Manager (interested in expanding coordination activities)	Ready to Start	RC currently operates a coordinated system for a portion of the region and would like to expand the system
Heart of Georgia-Altamaha	Participation in coordinated DHS system	Strong Interest	RC is interested in expanding the 5311 programs to additional counties
Georgia Mountains	No direct involvement in provision of service delivery (Independent AAA)	Strong Interest	RC operates with the smallest number of staff and receives the least amount of funding
Central Savannah River Area (CSRA)	Participation in coordinated DHS system	Strong Interest	Suggested that a state mandate for coordination may need to include DCA since they govern the RCs and regional planning
Atlanta	Limited involvement in provision of service delivery - strong stakeholder engagement through HST Advisory Committee	Strong Interest	ARC would benefit from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility Management</li> <li>• Enhanced technology</li> <li>• Legislative mandates for RHST cross-agency coordination at the state level</li> <li>• A public-private model to offset the significant federal and state funding limitations</li> <li>• Single resource dedicated to coordinating multiple agencies/providers. Complexities associated with multiple 5307 providers and ADA service mandates makes coordination very desirable but very challenging</li> </ul>

Regional Commission	Existing Coordination Activities	Interest in Mobility Manager Concept	Key Comments
Northwest Georgia	No direct involvement in provision of service delivery (TDP development)	Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RC recognizes need for a regional public transportation plan</li> <li>• RC is interested in opportunities for faith based and volunteer programs</li> <li>• There are coordination opportunities- i.e., City of Rome buses currently transport students and the general public</li> </ul>
Southern Georgia	Participation in coordinated DHS system	Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RC will do what is best for the counties – improved mobility services and the fiscal capacity of the counties</li> <li>• Valdosta is planning to start a 5307 program and would like to coordinate with 5311 and DHS programs</li> </ul>
Coastal	RC serves as Mobility Manager (interested in expanding coordination activities)	Other	CRC would benefit from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling software to provide the requisite operations management and administrative/billing tools</li> <li>• Single point of contact for all GDOT programs at the regional level</li> <li>• Elimination of GDOT requirement for documentation of every expense</li> <li>• Unified manual of policies and procedures for RHST services</li> <li>• Standardization of operator (driver) requirements</li> <li>• Permit RCs to Directly Operate and hold DCH contract</li> <li>• Regulatory changes related to revenue reporting, POS match issues, minimum farebox recovery</li> </ul>
Southwest Georgia	RC serves as Mobility Manager and coordinates all three existing RHST systems	Other	SWRC would benefit from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a unified manual of policies and procedures for RHST services</li> <li>• Regulatory changes related to revenue reporting, POS match issues, minimum farebox recovery</li> <li>• Streamlined reporting and invoicing requirements at the state program level</li> <li>• Common cross-agency RHST service delivery boundaries</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Recommendations for Regional Coordination Implementation Projects

This section describes the perceived level of interest by each Regional Commission in leading coordination efforts (Table 3.3.1). In addition, this section presents the key objectives of each Regional Commission towards furthering transportation coordination. These objectives are presented in a brief functional statement of work for each Regional Commission. The regional recommendations are grouped based on the readiness of each Regional Commission to take on coordination. The last group includes those Regional Commissions assigned to “Other”. These Regional Commissions are exceptions. The Regional Commissions in this group are already significantly engaged in the coordination of RHST services or have unique complexities that may impact implementation. Therefore, the focus of continuing efforts for these groups tend to be comprised of more specific and pragmatic actions to make transportation coordination more streamlined and to obtain tools that will yield greater management control of service scheduling, trip delivery and reporting.

**Table 3.3.1: Summary of Regional Commission Interest in the Mobility Management Concept**

Ready to Start	Strong Interest	Interest	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle Georgia</li> <li>• Northeast Georgia</li> <li>• River Valley</li> <li>• Three Rivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart of Georgia-Altamaha</li> <li>• Georgia Mountains</li> <li>• Atlanta</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southern Georgia</li> <li>• Central Savannah River</li> <li>• Northwest Georgia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southwest Georgia</li> <li>• Coastal</li> </ul>

#### 3.3.1 Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC)

**Status:** The Middle Georgia Regional Commission currently serves as the prime contractor for the Region’s Coordinated DHS system. The MGRC region also includes several counties that participate in the 5311 rural public transportation program. Given their current role, MGRC is well positioned to participate in future coordinated service delivery, since several of the third party operators hold contracts for both DHS (as subcontractors to MGRC) and DOT 5311 services in the same counties. For more information on MGRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The MGRC expressed that they are **ready to start** and are willing to take on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services. The MGRC has been identified as a Phase 2 pilot region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The MGRC expressed interest in exploring the concept of facilitating the creation of a regional specialized transportation provider. This provider would focus on the delivery of transportation services for persons that need stretched and other specialized assistance. The specialized transportation provider would only serve specialized transportation needs (door-to-door, stretcher, CPR, etc.) for a higher rate of reimbursement. A regional contract for this type of service might free up existing third party operators to focus on general public and less specialized program trips.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the MGRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager position;
2. Create a Regional Directory of Services;

3. Work with Quality Trans, Pineland CSB and member counties to establish 5311 service where none currently exists;
4. Establish a regional single point of contact for transportation for public (external) and inter-agency (internal) use;
5. Create a working group (a RCC) of 5311 Providers and Counties, the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), DHS and 5310 providers to identify opportunities for the RC to support existing services and facilitate coordination of transportation services; and
6. Update the Regional Transportation Development Plan (TDP) and create a Regional Mobility Action Plan.

### **3.3.2 Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC)**

**Status:** The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission currently participates in a coordinated DHS system through the Area Agency on Aging. The NEGRC includes counties that participate in the 5311 rural general public transportation program and a 5307 urban transit provider. For more information on NEGRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The NEGRC expressed that they are **ready to start** and are willing to take on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services. The NEGRC has been identified as a Phase 2 pilot region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The NEGRC is currently working with programs and providers in the region to build support for the formation of a regionally coordinated transportation system. The NEGRC is developing a list of projects, including transit operations and maintenance funding to be submitted for inclusion on the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) unconstrained project list.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the NEGRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager position;
2. Create a Regional Directory of Services;
3. Expand coordination beyond the senior programs to include other DHS programs, 5311 providers and counties, and 5307 providers;
4. Define opportunities to coordinate transportation service delivery;
5. Define strategy for contracting/brokering in the region;
6. Establish a working group (RCC) to facilitate regular discourse and cooperation;
7. Develop Regional Mobility Plan; and
8. Establish Regional Single Point of Contact for Transportation.

### **3.3.3 River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC)**

**Status:** The River Valley Regional Commission currently participates in a coordinated DHS system in about half the counties in the region. The RVRC is involved in the development of four county coordinated 5311 general public rural transportation system. For more information on RVRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.



**Interest in Coordination:** The RVRC expressed that they are **ready to start** and are willing to take on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services. The RVRC has been identified as a Phase 2 pilot region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The RVRC, working with four counties has nearly completed design and construction of a joint operating and maintenance facility for a four county coordinated 5311 system. The RVRC is currently addressing issues related to the start up of the coordinated 5311 operation. The RVRC has expressed the need for technical assistance to help facilitate the remaining start-up process.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the RVRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager Position;
2. Update the Directory of Services;
3. Obtain technical assistance for start of the four county coordinated 5311 operation;
4. Work with Southern Star CSB and the 5311 providers and counties to define opportunities for coordinated service delivery;
5. Establish a working group (RCC) to foster continuing cooperation in coordination;
6. Define opportunities for coordinated support services; and
7. Create a Regional Mobility Action Plan.

### 3.3.4 Three Rivers Regional Commission (TRRC)

**Status:** The Three Rivers Regional Commission operates a coordinated 5311/DHS transportation system for five of its member counties. About half of these trips are Mental Health related client trips and the next largest share are Aging client trips. For more information on TRRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The TRRC expressed that they are **ready to start** and are willing to take on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate additional regional transportation services. The TRRC has been identified as a Phase 2 pilot region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The TRRC is particularly interested in facilitating the coordination of 5311 and DHS program trips in counties not already involved in coordination, recognizing this is how the third party operators are able to generate enough vehicle utilization to make service delivery profitable. TRRC noted that some legacy DHS programs are not supportive of trip coordination. This position creates a potentially precarious balance for coordination efforts and the ability to provide a sufficient volume of trips to make it worthwhile for third party operators. TRRC would like to see a State level initiative to encourage and authorize coordination at the State and regional levels.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the TRRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager Position;
2. Create a Directory of Services;
3. Utilize RC working groups to foster continuing cooperation in coordination regionally, particularly to blend DHS and 5311 programs;
4. Obtain technical assistance to prioritize and quantify actions for advancing coordination of existing services;

5. Define opportunities for coordinated support services; and
6. Create a Regional Mobility Action Plan.

### **3.3.5 Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC)**

**Status:** The Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Commission currently serves as the prime contractor for the DHS Coordinated System in the region. HOGARC also has several counties with 5311 rural transit programs. For more information on HOGARC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The HOGARC expressed that they have a **strong interest** in taking on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The HOGARC is particularly interested in expanding the 5311 programs in non-participating counties in the region.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the HOGARC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager Position;
2. Create a Regional Directory of Services;
3. Work with Quality Trans, Pineland CSB and Counties to establish 5311 service;
4. Establish Regional Single Point of Contact for Transportation;
5. Create working group (RCC) of 5311 providers and counties, the AAA, DHS and 5310 providers to identify opportunities for the Regional Commission to support existing services and facilitate coordination of transportation services; and
6. Create Regional Mobility Action Plan (updated TDP).

### **3.3.6 Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC)**

**Status:** The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is not currently directly involved in providing transportation services. The Area Agency on Aging currently provides DHS services within the region and these services tend to be focused on Aging programs. Within the GMRC, 5311 rural general public trips are provided in participating counties in the region. For more information on GMRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The GMRC expressed that they have a **strong interest** in taking on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The GMRC has the smallest staff of all the Regional Commissions. The GMRC is interested in better understanding the RHST needs and opportunities within the region. The GMRC is interested in preparing a plan and process for transitioning to a regionally coordinated system.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the GMRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager Position;
2. Create a Regional Directory of Services;

3. Create working group (RCC) of 5311 providers and counties, the AAA, DHS and 5310 providers to identify opportunities for the Regional Commission to support existing services and facilitate coordination of transportation services; and
4. Update the Regional Transportation development Plan (TDP) and create Regional Mobility Action Plan.

### **3.3.7 Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)**

**Status:** The Atlanta Regional Commission currently participates in planning transportation services within the region but is not involved in the operation of transportation services due to the existence of multiple designated entities with the authority to operate HST and Urban 5307 services. For more information on ARC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The ARC is in the **strong interest** category with regards to their position on coordinating transportation services. ARC is highly interested in and motivated to coordinate services, however, the challenges facing the region are more complex. The circumstances in the Atlanta region are complicated by the existence of MARTA and other 5307 operators that have associated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complimentary paratransit service requirement mandates and authority for the provision of transportation services. The multiple layers of local and regional jurisdictions in this region requires a more regionally and operationally focused examination of the met and unmet needs of the region before developing sound recommendations for coordination. ARC has developed an extensive HST Coordination Plan in addition to the comprehensive Transportation development Plan for the region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** ARC has invested a lot of time and resources in HST planning over the last five years but has struggled to find a champion and dedicated resources to bring the complexities of a long-term vision to reality. There are many internal players that have an interest in RHST as well as regional stakeholders. A look at the internal relationships between aging, transportation planning, and workforce development could be very beneficial for the agency. State-level support through mandates, technical assistance, and financial resources could help make service coordination a reality for the organization.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the ARC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Identify champion for the Regional Mobility Management Concept;
2. Develop an internal cross-division working group to represent all internal interests and facilitate a unified plan to move toward a mobility management approach;
3. Identify short- and long-term opportunities for implementation based on a review of the ARC's 2010 HST Coordination Plan and previous planning activities; and
4. Develop a regionally-based action plan with assigned roles and responsibilities for a designated mobility manager to implement.

### **3.3.8 Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (CSRC)**

**Status:** The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission currently participates in a coordinated DHS service. For more information on CSRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The CSRC expressed that they have an **interest** in taking on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services and would consider participating in a pilot.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The CSRC expressed a strong desire to see a State mandate for coordination. The CSRC would like to see the DCA involved at the State level in coordination efforts since the DCA governs the RCs and regional planning.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the CSRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Mobility Manager Position;
2. Create a Regional Directory of Services;
3. Work with 5311 providers and counties and with DHS providers and counties to identify opportunities for the Regional Commission to support existing services and facilitate coordination of transportation services; and
4. Develop Regional Mobility Plan.

### **3.3.9 Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWRC)**

**Status:** The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission does not currently participate in a coordinated DHS service. For more information on NWRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The NWRC expressed that they have an *interest* in taking on the responsibility as the lead agency (RCTC) to coordinate regional transportation services and would like to further explore what that could mean for the regional agency.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The NWRC expressed support of concept but needs a mandate from State. The NWRC recognizes need for a regional public transportation plan. They expressed interest in exploring the role of faith based and volunteer programs. The NWRC wants the concept to be elevated to DCA policy and planning involvement.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the NWRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Regional Directory of Services; and
2. Pursue direction from the NWRC Council to agree that staff should explore transportation program coordination opportunities.

### **3.3.10 Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC)**

**Status:** The Southern Georgia Regional Commission currently participates in a coordinated DHS system. For more information on SGRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The SGRC expressed that they have an *interest* in taking on the responsibility as the lead agency (RHTC) to coordinate regional transportation services.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** The SGRC expressed support of concept but SGRC will do what is best for their counties in terms of balancing improved mobility services and the fiscal capacity of the counties. SGRC expressed support for plans for a 5307 system in Valdosta and the SGRC would like to coordinate with 5311 and DHS programs.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the SGRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination.

1. Create a Regional Directory of Services;
2. Establish a working group (RCC) with Pierce Transit, Tift-Lift, MIDS and 5311 providers and counties to identify coordination opportunities; and
3. Develop a Regional Mobility Plan.

### **3.3.11 Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWRC)**

**Status:** The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission currently operates a fully coordinated RHST system that can serve as a model for other regions across the state. SWRC offers DHS, DCH, and 5311 services for the region. For more information on SWRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The SWRC is in the *other* category with regards to their position on coordinating transportation services because SWRC currently holds the DCH NET contract as broker and serves counties in SWRC and the RVRC. In addition, SWRC brokers for 5311 and DHS transportation services in the region. The SWRC is the Mobility Manager for the region.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** SWRC is interested in seeing a uniform geographic footprint established for program services in the region. The SWRC strongly supports the development of a unified manual of policies and procedures for RHST services (DOT, DHS and DCH). SWRC is recommending regulatory changes related to revenue reporting, excess purchase of services revenues and over match issues. SWRC would like to see the minimum farebox recovery required of 5311 trips be eliminated or modified to allow for purchase of service revenues. The SWRC is interested in developing streamlined reporting and invoicing requirements at the state program level.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the SWRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination

1. Update the Directory of Services;
2. Obtain technical assistance to expand scheduling and AVL capabilities;
3. Examine potential to serve adjacent regional commissions; and
4. Examine alternative funding models.

### **3.3.12 Coastal Georgia Regional Commission (CRC)**

**Status:** The Coastal Regional Commission currently operates a coordinated system for 5311 and DHS service and operates as a mobility manager. For more information on CRC, please refer to the case studies in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum*.

**Interest in Coordination:** The CRC is in the other category with regards to their position on coordinating transportation services. The CRC is the Mobility Manager for the region. The CRC is interested in becoming the DCH NET broker for the region. Achieving this objective may be a challenge because CRC is also a service provider and current DCH policy does not allow for provider/brokers.

**Key Issues/Concerns/Objectives:** CRC is interested in obtaining scheduling software to provide the requisite operations management and administrative/billing tools. The State is engaged in obtaining scheduling software through a separate effort. CRC would like to have a single point of contact for all GDOT programs at the regional level, similar to DHS. CRC

would like the elimination of the GDOT requirement for documentation of every expense. They would like to be able to rely on audits as is the federal practice. The CRC supports the development of a unified manual of procedures for RHST services. The CRC would like to see greater uniformity in state policies, and procedural requirements. Standardization of operator (driver) requirements is desirable. CRC is interested in changes to allow entities to directly operate services and hold a DCH contract.

**Coordination Priorities/Project Action Items:** The following are the steps identified for the CRC to facilitate regional transportation coordination

1. Obtain technical assistance to implement scheduling and AVL capabilities;
2. Obtain technical assistance to transition to a direct operator; and
3. Obtain technical assistance for commuter choice/ridesharing.

### 3.4 Software Technology

Technology and in particular, computer based scheduling systems, provide a tremendous advantage for transportation service providers. Scheduling software makes the complex and time-consuming effort of scheduling trip requests to vehicles and driver to vehicles in an ever changing equation of time and space. Scheduling software is a critical tool for providers that seek to cost-effectively deliver transportation services and this too is essential for entities that wish to coordinate the trip booking, scheduling, dispatching and delivery of transportation services. Simply put, the cost of transportation service delivery is primarily driven by operator labor, fuel and maintenance. Therefore, the only way to realistically control operating costs is by managing service hours and labor costs. Labor costs tend to be kept low through competitive bidding of contracts and it should be noted that efficient scheduling will tend to have a greater influence on containing costs than labor in a reasonably competitive environment. Therefore, the key to providing cost-effective operations is to control vehicle hours of service. This is generally accomplished by increasing vehicle utilization (putting more customers on each vehicle) and scheduling efficient service delivery (minimizing vehicle miles and vehicle hours of travel).

GDOT is currently engaged in an effort to let a statewide contract for transit scheduling software. This is an excellent advancement that will both foster more cost-effective and efficient transit operations and provide an important tool necessary to effectively achieve transportation service coordination at the regional level. While the specifics of the DOT effort are not yet known, in generic terms that benefits described above will likely accrue to transportation service providers in the state and in particular and more significantly, for regional providers who are engaged in coordinating transportation service delivery.

The following list provides some of the opportunities and functional capabilities that may be derived from the application of scheduling software and other related technologies that are interfaced with the scheduling software.

- a) Trip schedule optimization;
- b) Operations management;
- c) Cost management;
- d) Dispatching control (in real-time with AVL);
- e) Automated vehicle location (AVL) in real-time;
- f) Centralized client database;
- g) Centralized provider/vehicle database;
- h) Client eligibility determination;
- i) Program funding streams for specific client trips, billing;
- j) Centralized call in-take and trip booking;

- k) Trip brokering, purchase of services;
- l) Direct and purchased service delivery management;
- m) Automated and computer assisted reporting and billing; and
- n) Cost conscious and goal weighted decision-making in trip assignments.

These benefits derived from computer based scheduling provide the means for the operation of coordinated transportation services to become manageable and more cost-effective. The scheduling system provides management with the tool to manage operations and thus manage costs.

## CHAPTER 4      NEXT STEPS

This document has outlined a series of recommended strategies for implementation with the intent of formalizing an infrastructure and process to successfully advance enhanced coordination of Georgia’s RHST service delivery, ultimately putting the state in a position to provide more trips at the same service quality or better service quality than currently provided to transit customers. Extensive outreach and consideration of what is currently taking place at both the state and local levels, as well as the consideration of concepts successful across the country and throughout the world, has led to the development of this combination of ‘Top Down’ and ‘Bottom Up’ recommended actions to put the State of Georgia in a position to better stretch RHST dollars now and in the future.

The success of RHST service coordination in Georgia is ultimately dependent upon the commitment of partner agencies at the state-level and local-level to implement this series of strategies that when combined together, serve to address the existing issues identified and documented in the *Georgia Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 Needs Assessment* and *Alternatives Analysis* to capitalize upon the opportunities identified and documented during these efforts. As the RHST Team begins to initiate the next steps identified in this document, it is extremely important that all state agency partners are continually engaged to drive and define the process. In order for improved RHST coordination to be a sustainable practice, many key decisions must be made and a clear vision must be established. The State-Level Pilot activities, including the designation of an RHST Office and Mobility Manager, are essential to the implementation of the process and vision and to the success of the Mobility Management program and pilot activities at the regional level.

These strategies will be implemented and evaluated in the immediate short-term as part of the State and Regional Mobility Management Pilot Projects. The short-term pilot activities will be utilized to provide lessons learned that can inform the long-term RHST infrastructure as it is formalized into policy and procedure for full roll out. This will result in a sustainable long-term RHST vision as well as a regionally coordinated RHST structure three to five years in the future that accomplishes the overarching purpose of the RHST coordination plan: getting people from Point A to Point B and back again in a cost-effective, easy to understand manner.