

1 INTRODUCTION

In partnership with the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL), Rockdale County is undertaking a transit development plan (TDP). The TDP planning effort will identify short-, mid-, and long-term transit priorities, providing direction and guidance for how the County should develop its public transportation program to best support continued growth and economic development. The plan will inform County decision-makers of the most effective way to address public transportation needs and leverage available funding.

REPORT OVERVIEW

A peer systems assessment was conducted as part of the TDP to evaluate the experiences of similar jurisdictions that have implemented microtransit services. The purpose of the Peer System Assessment is to provide a brief overview of microtransit service and describe several case studies relevant to Rockdale County. The case studies offer important insights into successful planning and implementation of microtransit service. This assessment describes each system's community and service characteristics and provides key take-aways from their experiences in launching and maintaining transit service. Interviews with transit agency personnel were conducted to collect information on implementation, service delivery, lessons learned, and the best practices.

WHAT IS MICROTRANSIT?

Microtransit is a new form of demand response transit that utilizes recent advancements in technology (e.g., ubiquitous smart phone use, automatic vehicle location technology, and trip routing algorithms) to match riders with available vehicles. It pools riders together traveling in the same direction to reduce trip costs and promote service efficiency. It typically utilizes specially branded vehicles, which can be as small as vans or as large as 10-15 passenger shuttle buses. Microtransit has the potential to provide public transportation in low density

suburban areas that is more flexible, cost-effective, and responsive than traditional forms of fixed-route transit. Microtransit has become a popular solution in recent years, with numerous transit agencies throughout the US launching services. Agencies have looked to microtransit to meet their transit service needs, such as:

- **Filling gaps in existing service:** Microtransit can be more cost-effective than expanding fixed-route services in areas with suburban densities and development patterns difficult to effectively serve through fixed-routes.
- **Replacing underperforming services:** Microtransit can be a reasonable replacement option for underperforming fixed-routes in suburban areas where the density to support fixed-route bus is not present.
- **Launching brand new systems:** It can be a popular transit solution in communities where support for fixed-route services is low.

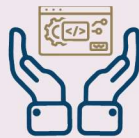
TWO TYPICAL MICROTRANSIT OPERATING MODELS

Transportation as a Service (TaaS)



In this model, the microtransit vendor provides a turnkey solution that includes microtransit technology, plus drivers, vehicles, and operations management.

Software as a Service (SaaS)



The microtransit vendor provides the necessary microtransit technology, including on-demand transit operating system and mobile applications, along with a full suite of tools and support services. This model is for agencies who prefer to use their own drivers, vehicles, and dispatchers.

Microtransit can be implemented through various system designs, dependent upon the transit needs of an area. Five common system designs are community at-large, community circulator, zone-based, flex zone, and first mile-last mile. Microtransit service can be designed to serve an entire community at-large or within service zones where pick-ups and drop-offs are limited to each zone. System designs may facilitate zone-to-zone transfers at central transfer points between zones. With the recent proliferation of microtransit there is now a significant amount of operating experience available to identify best practices and provide guidance to those considering the service. The suitability of various system designs for Rockdale County will be examined in later phases of the TDP process.

COMMON SYSTEM DESIGN OPTIONS FOR MICROTRANSIT SERVICE

Community At-Large



Service operates throughout an entire community in a many-to-many design. All pick-up and drop-off locations within a community are served.

Community Circulator



Microtransit vehicles operate at-large within a designated community boundary to accomplish a wide variety of trip purposes (employment, medical, shopping, recreation).

Zone Based



Service operates in designated geographic zones. Within these zones all pick-up and drop-off locations are served but they are limited within each geographic zone.

Flex Zone



Microtransit vehicles operate in designated zones and meet at a central transfer point at a set time (i.e. every hour) to facilitate transfers between zones.

First Mile Last Mile



Vehicles serve primarily as collector and distributors of commuters to and from regional transit connections like commuter bus park-and-ride lots or commuter rail stations, operating in a one-to-many or many-to-one design. Vehicles can be stationed at park-and-rides to coincide with commuter bus drop-offs to pick-up riders and deliver them to their home locations.