Regional Vanpool Assessment Report

Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan

Deliverable 2-3

Final Report

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Atlanta Regional Commission

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- **Section 5. Best Practices and Benchmarking** – provides an overview of innovative best practices from three other vanpool programs, and compares the Atlanta region's program to those of others around the country.

- **Section 6. Assessment of Existing Structure (SWOT Analysis)** – presents a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the region's vanpool programs, as identified in the baseline inventory and stakeholder input.

- **Section 7. Alternatives and Financial Analysis** – presents a matrix of all elements of a vanpool program.

- **Section 8. Recommendations** – presents short-term recommendations for vanpooling in the Atlanta region and identifies issues and questions that need to be answered to develop long-term recommendations that will be included in the Regional TDM Plan final report.

- **Section 9. Next Steps** – provides details on remaining activities prior to the implementation of vanpool program recommendations.

Executive Summary

Project Purpose

The Regional Vanpool Assessment is being conducted as part of a comprehensive Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The broader goal of the regional TDM Plan is to define a strategic framework for developing and integrating TDM strategies into planning, project development, and system operations investment decision-making. The TDM Plan will be help leverage and build on the existing plans and concepts within PLAN 2040, the Atlanta region's long-range comprehensive plan.

The purpose of the assessment is to provide short-term recommendations for the Atlanta region's vanpool programs and to identify issues and questions that can be addressed through long-term recommendations as part of the broader regional TDM Plan. This report summarizes all activities associated with the vanpool assessment, including an analysis of existing programs through research and interviews, peer review and best practices benchmarking, a financial analysis of alternatives, and recommendations for next steps.

The **key objectives** of the vanpool assessment are to:

A. Conduct an inventory and analysis of existing vanpool services in the region.

B. Conduct a benchmarking and peer review comparing existing vanpool services in the Atlanta region to those in other parts of the country.

C. Develop an alternatives and financial analysis for a series of options for a regional vanpool program.[1]

D. Make short-term recommendations and identify longer-term considerations for a regional vanpool program that will support and inform the broader, long-range strategic TDM Plan for the region.

Background

TDM and vanpool services have been used in the Atlanta region for nearly three decades. However, an MPO-led comprehensive regional plan to coordinate TDM, including vanpool programs, planning and operations has not

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[1] Due to the range of options included in the recommendations and pending additional key stakeholder input, a more thorough financial assessment will be conducted as part of the strategy development task for the plan. The financial assessment will be in response to those preliminary recommendations that are prioritized by the stakeholders.

Report Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used throughout the report.

Transportation Demand Management is defined by CUTR as "…helping people change their travel behavior to meet their travel needs by using different modes, traveling at different times, making fewer or shorter trips, or taking different routes."

(Source: cutr.usf.edu/programs-1/transportation-demand-management-2/) Views on TDM have evolved over time and come to include a variety of different strategies. To account for different approaches, in this report, TDM is referred to in two categories: 1) Traditional TDM and 2) TDM+.

Traditional TDM or the conventional approach, has typically been focused on commuter-based programs, often telework, ridesharing, van-pooling and employer-focused efforts.

TDM+ encompasses a broader view of strategies by expanding traditional TDM to address trips beyond those for work commutes. It makes the connection between traditional TDM (employer-based commuter programs) with livability, sustainability, transit, telework, walking and biking, systems operations, transportation planning, economic development, climate change, healthy communities, and active aging.

been conducted to evaluate regional TDM strategies and make recommendations for the future.

With increasing congestion, changing federal legislation, and a growing jobs sector and population, there will continue to be increased interest in vanpool services in the region, particularly for those commuters who live farther out from employment centers; vanpoolers tend to commute twice the distance of the average regional commuter – 35.9 miles versus 17.5 one-way. Vanpooling has strong potential as a TDM strategy to address the growing transportation demand in the Atlanta region. The vanpool assessment, including recommendations, is intended to serve as an implementation tool for the strategies and objectives mapped out in PLAN 2040 and ongoing transit planning efforts in the region.

The regional vanpool assessment is intended to:

- Identify potential improvements to existing institutional and contractual arrangements between partners to better support service delivery at a regional scale.

- Provide an opportunity for the region to increase the effectiveness of its existing programs.

- Prepare for changes to funding and performance measurement expected with new federal transportation legislation.

- Leverage ideas from other jurisdictions and markets that are successfully and innovatively addressing technology and funding changes with vanpool services.

- Identify potential approaches for local match and other funding sources pending Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) funding solvency through 2015.

- Determine the most appropriate way to market and outreach vanpooling to employers and commuters within the broader context of TDM+ and PLAN 2040 objectives.

- Review and assess appropriate roles and responsibility for regional partners and stakeholders in vanpool service delivery throughout the region.

- Identify changes that will offer optimal functionality for the program and put the most vanpoolers on the road, with a focus on leveraging existing resources and maximizing the return on investment for the program.

Methodology and Approach

The assessment is based on literature review of reports and data, best practices analysis, interviews and a meeting with stakeholders.

- To develop a detailed inventory of existing programs, policies and services related to vanpooling in the region, numerous state, regional, and local reports were reviewed. The reports were related to vanpools and supporting transportation policies in the region. Other sources included summaries from the Employer Services Committee (ESC) Vanpool Subcommittee, Transportation Management Association (TMA) mid-year reviews, and contracts and other documentation from GRTA.

- To supplement the inventory research, we conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders, including a broad representation of Employer Service Organizations (ESOs) and TDM Service

Providers, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), Vanpool Operators, Employers, and Federal, State, Regional and Local Agencies.

- Based on the baseline inventory, an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was conducted to evaluate the regional vanpool program.

- To benchmark the vanpool program, several programs from around the country were reviewed. Areas of weakness and opportunities for growth were identified for additional strategy development.

- Finally, based on the baseline inventory, SWOT analysis, and best practices, a decision tool was developed to present a series of alternatives for consideration. The alternatives were presented to a meeting of stakeholders and tailored based upon their input.

- A full set of long-term recommendations will be incorporated as part of the broader TDM Plan.

Stakeholder Input and Inventory Key Findings

Based on the interviews, input from the TDM Plan's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and detailed document review, several trends were identified as issues facing vanpool services in the Atlanta region:

- **Auto-centric development patterns and existing parking management policies have made driving alone "the easiest choice" for commuters.** Even with alternative commute options beyond driving alone, many commuters still choose to drive alone, in part due to its convenience. For example, 52% of commuters who work at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report having other commute options, but drive alone because it is the most convenient option.[2] In the Atlanta region, 82% of commuters drive alone, while 5% carpool or vanpool, according to the *2010 Metro Atlanta Regional Commuter Survey*. The vanpool program's success will depend in part on making vanpooling a more attractive option that aligns with improved parking management policies and more consistent and transparent vanpooling pricing.

- **A growing population will increase demand on the transportation system, making TDM strategies like vanpooling more important now than ever.** The average one-way commute time in 2010 was 30 minutes and 17.5 miles.[3] With the region projected to grow to more than 8 million people by 2040, the increasing demand to the existing transportation system will cause additional congestion and frustration for drivers, making vanpooling an important part of the toolbox of TDM solutions.

- **While vanpool services have a long and successful history in the region, there is continued interest in improving coordination and communication amongst the partners.** The Atlanta region has a successful track record with broad TDM service coverage, including the very first vanpooling program through the Georgia Building Authority, as well as dating back to the *1999 Framework for*

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[2] Data received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC/ATSDR Transportation Survey, Edward R. Roybal Campus respondents 2012.

[3] *Metro Atlanta's State of the Commute* report conducted by CTE on behalf of GDOT through the *2010 Metro Atlanta Regional Commuter Survey*

Cooperation to Reduce Traffic Congestion and Improve Air Quality. There are currently more than 400 vanpools in operation. However, there is greater interest across the region in increased leadership and better defining roles and expectations for service providers and partners. Additionally, TDM vision, policy and decision making is not currently made through the regional planning process.

- **The region has benefitted from a wealth of resources and partners in support of TDM at the local, regional and state level, including private investment and non-traditional partners.** Ranging from universities and technical colleges, to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Fortune 500 companies, the region benefits from broad employer and partner support, including financially. Employers and CIDs have been influential in supporting the vanpooling program with additional subsidies to reduce the cost of vanpooling for individuals.

- **There is interest in better linking program evaluation to programming and policy decisions.** Although data is collected and evaluated on a regular basis, there is a perception among stakeholders that the data could be made more available to better inform program decisions. Additionally, with the new emphasis on performance measurement in MAP-21, there will be a growing focus on transparency and accountability that will likely support investments in cost-effective transportation strategies such as TDM.

- **There is a growing interest in including broader TDM connections to vanpooling, rather than having the vanpool program operate in a silo.** PLAN 2040 has set the stage to broaden the reach of TDM with the plan's broader goals of increasing mobility options, fostering a healthy, educated population, promoting accessible places to live, improving energy efficiency, and pursuing economic development.

Benchmarking Key Findings

Based on a review of several major programs around the country, the following key themes were identified as part of the benchmarking:

- **Program Organization:** Although each program reviewed had some nuances related to its organizational structure, the success of an organizational model depends more on cooperation and clear definition of roles than the type of structure it actually follows (whether it is MPO-based, contracted, etc.) The Atlanta region benefits from a variety of supportive partners and organizations invested in vanpooling, but there remains strong interest amongst them all in better determining roles, responsibilities and expectations of partners. Other models have more clearly differentiated and articulated these roles.

- **Pricing Structure, Subsidies and Incentives:** Due in part to the variety of funding sources in the region, the vanpooling program in Atlanta offers a variety of pricing structures, ranging from competitive rate negotiation with the vendors to flat rates with some TMAs. Although the pricing strategy varies across programs, other programs have more consistent policies and guidelines regarding van pricing. There is no clear leading way in how to set pricing, but consistency and transparency are key to any approach, whether flat rates or mileage based. A combination of both flat rates and mileage based fees as used in Atlanta has not been seen in other examples reviewed.

- **Marketing, branding and promotion:** Many programs have struggled with the issues of how and when to market locally versus regionally in order to best deliver TDM messages. Across those programs reviewed, the approaches varied. The Atlanta region is in a prime position to address this challenge with GDOT's new statewide TDM re-branding approach. Currently, several brands/messages and marketing strategies exist with little integration. Although an inherent issue when dealing with local programs delivered regionally as well, others have better defined a marketing approach that caters to both local and regional needs.

- **Performance Measurement and Evaluation:** Performance measurement is critical for identifying the impact of TDM programs and activities. The Atlanta region has a strong history of data collection through GDOT's contract with Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE). Its use of surveys surpasses those evaluation activities in other parts of the country. Although others have better linked reporting to programming, Atlanta is still a model for its detailed survey and analysis evaluation approach.

SWOT Analysis Major Trends

The stakeholder findings combined with the benchmarking provided information to complete an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) to vanpool services in the region. All have been vetted by a focus group.

Figure 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Summary

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Long history of vanpool service delivery in the region and broad service coverage • Significant number of outreach specialists that promote vanpooling in the region • Positive relationships between vendors and partners and an established meeting structure to share lessons learned • GRTA subsidy offerings and additional subsidies from CIDs and employers to reduce the cost of vanpooling • Long history of data collection • Rider referral and driver incentives • Established emergency ride home program (Guaranteed Ride Home – GRH)	• Complex funding structure and lack of coordination on roles & responsibilities • Various approaches to customer service and no uniform database input or management • Lack of regional branding/messaging and different pricing structure and user requirements across region • Some perception of confusing sign-up process for vanpool riders • Vendor contract structure puts pressure on the rider to figure out the best options • Data is not always linked to policy and programming decisions; also lacking clear measurable regional goals • Current challenges in recruiting and retaining drivers with primary responsibilities

Opportunities	Threats
• Additional funding (MAP-21, CID/TMA local match & employer/private investment) • Construction corridors and traffic mitigation as sources of new vanpool riders; turning well-utilized vanpool routes into express bus service • Additional technology offerings by vendors can improve reporting and customer relationship management • Leverage survey findings to influence programming • Improve customer service/ experience and leverage GDOT's new TDM branding for a targeted marketing approach to vanpooling • Simplify user requirements to extend life of subsidies and vans • Movement towards centralized database • Improved parking management policies can influence vanpool ridership • Enable part time or occasional riders	• Decline in subsidies, loss of employer support and lack of local match may threaten vanpool funding, along with MAP-21 if performance measurement does not align • Rider dissatisfaction/confusion and turnover of drivers as primaries • Limited parking management policies make SOV driving an easy choice • Vans may lose subsidies due to 50% requirements – conflicts with promotion of telework and other alternative work programs • Limited use of technology that could be used to add new riders and manage existing riders • Vanpool services are promoted in a silo; also lacking additional infrastructure to support vanpool such as managed lanes & parking pricing • Rider concerns about safety of larger vans and parking • Lack of flexibility for occasional vanpool riders

Short-Term Recommendations and Long-Term Considerations

Based on the inventory, best practices, SWOT analysis, TAC input and focus group feedback, a preliminary set of short-term recommendations were developed for vanpool program improvements. It is recommended that some of these short-term solutions be incorporated into the vendor solicitations for the regional vanpool program in early 2013. However, GRTA, GDOT and the MPO, will ultimately determine which short-term recommendations to implement. Since this vanpool assessment report is being delivered before the overall TDM review and analysis is completed, it is expected that the final long-term vanpool recommendations will be refined to align with the overall TDM recommendations.

- The **short-term recommendations** were developed as solutions for deployment in the next 3 to 6 months. The short-term recommendations are intended to identify efficiencies and improvements that can be easily implemented to bring about better coordination, cooperation and clarity of expectations. Many of these short-term recommendations can be addressed as part of the next round of vendor solicitations.

- Considerations for **long-term recommendations** are intended to move towards improved integration of the vanpool program with overall regional TDM services. Issues and elements for consideration were identified to help address potential long-term recommendations focus for implementation within the next 9 to 18 months. It is expected that due to steps required to develop consensus and implement them effectively, a formal set of long-term recommendations will be developed to align with the overall TDM recommendations in later phases of this project.

The recommendations are organized by categories of a vanpool program. Within each category, short-term recommendations are listed first, followed by the related long-term considerations (if they apply). Categories include the following:

- Program Oversight and Coordination
- Vanpool Vendor Structure and ESO and Vendor Roles and Responsibilities
- Branding and Marketing, Outreach Placement and Customer Service
- Fare, Pricing Structure and Rider Requirements
- Database Management and Reporting

This Vanpool Report is an interim work product that was requested as an early deliverable as part of the overall TDM Regional Plan. Many of the recommendations that follow are described as if they would be stand-alone activities focused only on improvements to vanpool operations or marketing. However, many of these recommendations will be somewhat outdated in comparison to the integrated strategies in the Draft Regional TDM Plan, which addresses vanpool activities as part of overall TDM operations, marketing, and policy.

Figure 2: Key Recommendations Summary

Category	Rec #	Short-Term Recommendations (A)	Long-Term Recommendations (B)
Program Oversight and Coordination	1	**1a.** Refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	**1b.** Determine one agency responsible for program oversight and coordination
	2	**2a.** Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support management and oversight of the vanpool program	**2b.** Refine MOU according to full recommendations for overall TDM program
	3	**3a.** Modify organization of Vanpool Subcommittee	**3b.** Establish a vanpool committee that reports to the vanpool managing agency
Vendor Structure and Vendor/ESO Roles and Responsibilities	4	**4a.** Continue with any number of vendors but update contracts to align with SOPs	**4b.** Ensure all contracts clearly outline expectations through work plan, deliverables and goals
	5	**5a.** ESOs and vendors should clearly document their current roles and responsibilities	**5b.** Clarify expectations for roles and responsibilities moving forward for vendors and ESOs
Branding and Marketing, Outreach, and Customer Service	6	**6a.** Implement interim branding SOPs	**6b.** Implement one brand, a simplified message, and one web interface for TDM program
	7	**7a.** Evaluate placement of new customer service center	**7b.** Create one customer service center to respond to respond to commuter needs (including vanpools)
Fare, Pricing Structure and Rider Requirements	8	*No short term recommendations are included since any pricing changes will require a longer term approach.*	**8b.** Streamline pricing structure and make mileage-based rates the standard
	9		**9b.** Move fare collection from primary drive to vendor
	10		**10b.** Streamline rider requirements to extend life of van subsidies
Database Management and Reporting	11	**11a.** Establish an interim process to ensure potential and existing customers are entered into a shared database	**11b.** Create single centralized database
	12	**12a.** Refine and establish interim, 6-month goals for vanpool program	**12b.** Set measurable, realistic goals for each ESO and vendor

Next Steps

GRTA, in consultation with the MPO and GDOT, will ultimately determine which short-term recommendations are implemented as part of the 2013 vendor solicitation for the vanpool program. The long-term considerations will be further vetted during subsequent tasks of the Regional TDM Plan and formalized as long-term recommendations at the conclusion of the overall project**.**

1. Regional Vanpool Assessment Report – Objectives and Background

1.1   Objectives

The Regional Vanpool Assessment is being conducted as part of a comprehensive Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The broader goal of the regional TDM Plan is to define a strategic framework for developing and integrating TDM strategies into planning, project development, and system operations investment decision-making. The TDM Plan will be an implementation tool that leverages and builds on the existing plans and concepts within PLAN 2040.

The purpose of the vanpool assessment is to provide recommendations for Atlanta's regional vanpool programs. The report summarizes all activities associated with the vanpool assessment, including an analysis of existing Atlanta programs based on research and interviews, peer review and best practices benchmarking, a financial analysis of alternatives, and recommendations for next steps.

The **key objectives** of the vanpool assessment are to:

A.   Conduct an inventory and analysis of existing vanpool services in the region.

B.   Conduct a benchmarking and peer review comparing existing vanpool services in the Atlanta region to those in other parts of the country.

C.   Develop an alternatives and a concept-level financial analysis for a series of options for a regional vanpool program.

D.   Make recommendations for a vanpool program that will support the broader, long-range strategic TDM plan for the region.

Defining the Region's Boundaries

The Regional TDM Plan will address the Atlanta Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area. This includes all or parts of the following eighteen counties: Barrow, Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton. Two additional counties are part of the non-attainment area, Carroll and Hall, and are included in this assessment as they are subject to the air quality conformity responsibilities of the Atlanta MPO.
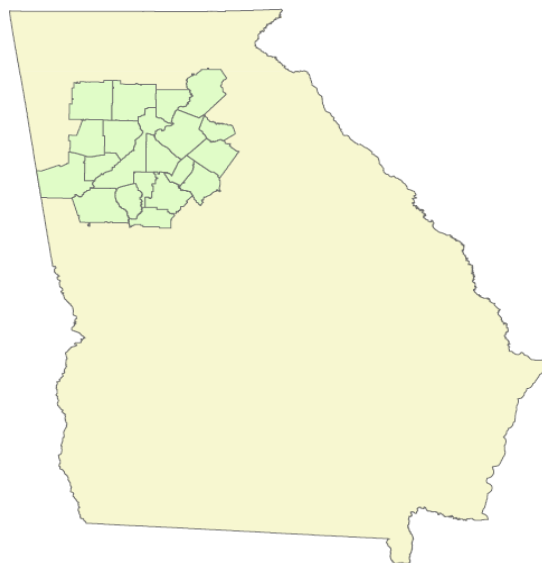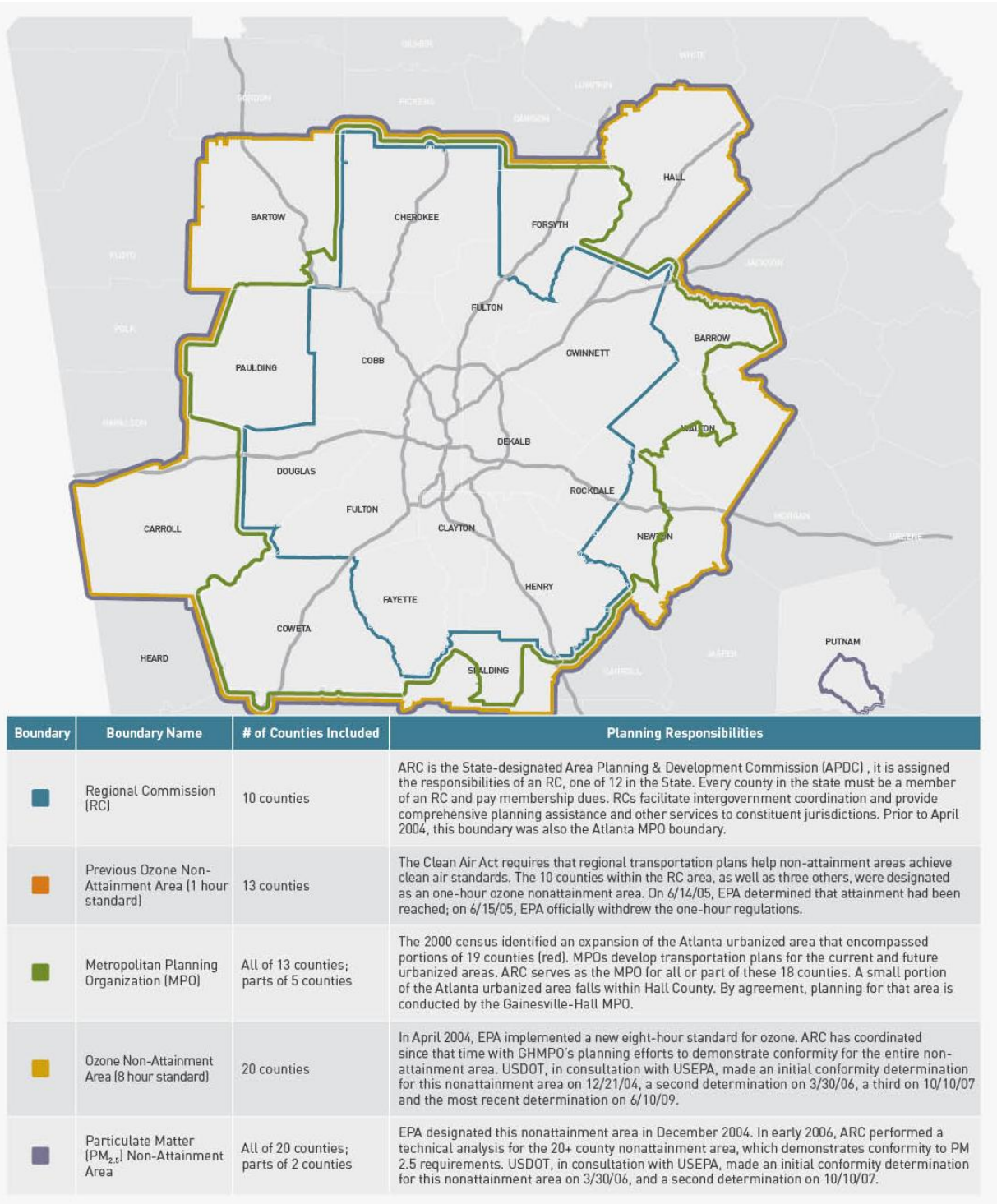
Figure 3: Planning Area of the Atlanta Regional Commission

Boundary	Boundary Name	# of Counties Included	Planning Responsibilities
■	Regional Commission (RC)	10 counties	ARC is the State-designated Area Planning & Development Commission (APDC) , it is assigned the responsibilities of an RC, one of 12 in the State. Every county in the state must be a member of an RC and pay membership dues. RCs facilitate intergovernment coordination and provide comprehensive planning assistance and other services to constituent jurisdictions. Prior to April 2004, this boundary was also the Atlanta MPO boundary.
■	Previous Ozone Non-Attainment Area (1 hour standard)	13 counties	The Clean Air Act requires that regional transportation plans help non-attainment areas achieve clean air standards. The 10 counties within the RC area, as well as three others, were designated as an one-hour ozone nonattainment area. On 6/14/05, EPA determined that attainment had been reached; on 6/15/05, EPA officially withdrew the one-hour regulations.
■	Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	All of 13 counties; parts of 5 counties	The 2000 census identified an expansion of the Atlanta urbanized area that encompassed portions of 19 counties (red). MPOs develop transportation plans for the current and future urbanized areas. ARC serves as the MPO for all or part of these 18 counties. A small portion of the Atlanta urbanized area falls within Hall County. By agreement, planning for that area is conducted by the Gainesville-Hall MPO.
■	Ozone Non-Attainment Area (8 hour standard)	20 counties	In April 2004, EPA implemented a new eight-hour standard for ozone. ARC has coordinated since that time with GHMPO's planning efforts to demonstrate conformity for the entire non-attainment area. USDOT, in consultation with USEPA, made an initial conformity determination for this nonattainment area on 12/21/04, a second determination on 3/30/06, a third on 10/10/07 and the most recent determination on 6/10/09.
■	Particulate Matter (PM$_{2.5}$) Non-Attainment Area	All of 20 counties; parts of 2 counties	EPA designated this nonattainment area in December 2004. In early 2006, ARC performed a technical analysis for the 20+ county nonattainment area, which demonstrates conformity to PM 2.5 requirements. USDOT, in consultation with USEPA, made an initial conformity determination for this nonattainment area on 3/30/06, and a second determination on 10/10/07.

1.2   Background: Why Conduct a Vanpool Assessment?

Although TDM and vanpool services have been used in the Atlanta region for nearly two decades, a regional, MPO-led comprehensive plan has never been developed to coordinate TDM, including vanpool programs, planning and operations, and to evaluate regional TDM strategies and make recommendations for the future. With increasing congestion, changing federal legislation, and a growing jobs sector and population, there will continue to be increased interest in vanpool services in the region. Moreover, vanpooling could move to the forefront of potential strategies to address the growing challenges on the transportation system in the Atlanta region.

The vanpool assessment will primarily provide recommendations to Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) on its regional vanpool program. However, Douglas County and Cherokee County's vanpool programs will also be reviewed. Recommendations will also address the linkage between vanpool operations and the broader regional transit system, including data collection/performance measurement, funding, policy, etc. The vanpool assessment, including recommendations, is intended to serve as an implementation tool for the strategies and objectives mapped out in PLAN 2040 and ongoing transit planning efforts in the region. A vanpool program that efficiently leverages all resources in the area will provide the maximum return on investment for the region.

The regional vanpool assessment is intended to:

- Identify potential improvements on the existing institutional and contractual arrangements between partners and organizations to better support service delivery at a regional scale.

- Provide an opportunity for the region to increase the effectiveness of its existing programs.

- Prepare for changes to funding and performance measurement expected with new federal transportation legislation.

- Leverage other ideas from jurisdictions and other markets that are successfully and innovatively addressing technology and funding changes with vanpool services.

- Identify potential approaches for local match and other funding sources given that GRTA funding is only solvent through 2015.

- Determine the most appropriate way to market and outreach vanpooling within the broader context of TDM+ and PLAN 2040 objectives.

- Review and assess appropriate roles and responsibility for the MPO and its partners in vanpool service delivery throughout the region.

- Identify changes that will offer optimal functionality for the program and put the most vans on the road, with a focus on leveraging existing resources and maximizing the return on investment in the program.

Going Beyond Traditional TDM in the Atlanta Region: TDM+

TDM is defined by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) as "…helping people change their travel behavior to meet their travel needs by using different modes, traveling at different times, making fewer or shorter trips, or taking different routes."[4]

TDM can help people change their travel behavior by enhancing or expanding the following choices:

- **Travel choice** – identifying whether travel is necessary, as technology advances and lifestyle practices change;

- **Mode choice** – shifting demand from single occupancy vehicles to other modes of transportation such as transit, carpools or vanpools, bicycling, or walking;

- **Time choice** – shifting travel times to reduce peak period congestion;

- **Location choice** – reducing the distance of required travel through land use planning and urban design strategies; and

- **Route choice** – helping travelers to choose less congested facilities by providing real-time information.

- It is important to note that views of TDM have evolved over time and come to include a variety of different strategies. Some programs still take more traditional or conventional views of TDM while others have begun to see TDM in a broader context. To account for different approaches, in this report, TDM is referred to in two categories: Traditional TDM and TDM**+**.

Figure 4: Defining TDM: Traditional versus Broad

Traditional TDM	**TDM+**
- Traditionally focused more narrowly on commuter-based work trips, through employer strategies, such as ridesharing and telework. - Traditionally focused on increasing rideshare applicants as key objectives - Less often linked to broader objectives for livability, economic development, public health, etc.	- Broadens the view of TDM strategies by expanding TDM to address trips beyond those for work commutes. - Seeks to address broader objectives for livability, sustainability, transit, walking and biking, systems operations, transportation planning, economic development, climate change, healthy communities, and active aging.

. TDM+ strategies within consideration include:

- Ridematching programs and support for vanpooling and carpooling

- Transit information and integration

- Financial incentives and pricing,

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[4] CUTR, cutr.usf.edu/programs-1/transportation-demand-management-2/

- Services, such as carsharing and bicycle sharing

- Walking, biking, and transit access programs

- Marketing, education, and outreach

- Telecommuting and other alternative work arrangements

- Parking management

- Road and parking pricing

- Land use, livable communities, and smart growth programs

- Transit and transit supportive infrastructure

- Active living, active aging, and healthy communities

- Regional one-click transportation system

- Human services transportation, voucher systems, travel training

- Freight strategies to shift time, mode or route choice of goods movement

- Traffic management, work zone management, and special events management strategies to influence travel choice and demand

- Traveler information systems

While the Atlanta region is already pursuing many TDM**+** strategies, the Atlanta Regional TDM Plan will focus on formalizing a TDM**+** approach on a regional level. The Regional Plan will seek to leverage the success of existing TDM**+** strategies within the region, such as:

- ARC's Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) and Lifelong Communities program

- Various transit and mobility management activities aimed at expanding travel options and choices, reducing trips during the peak period and increasing the efficiency of the existing transportation system.

- The inclusion of public health in TDM activities, including Emory's public health community's participation and CDC participation in the Clean Air Campaign Board.

- TMA involvement in land use decisions, such as BATMA's close coordination with Buckhead CID. Both groups work very closely with property owners to address their sites and fund many of their own studies and infrastructure projects.

- Use of TDM for managing travel during construction projects, such as the successful 14th Street Bridge Project.

- ESO promotion of biking and walking.

Well-known for regional and local livability and sustainability initiatives, ARC and its partners have expressed the intent to build this TDM framework on the adopted PLAN 2040, which focuses on livability and sustainability goals. Although the term TDM**+** is not currently part of PLAN 2040, ARC envisions the Regional TDM Strategic Plan as an implementation tool for TDM concepts within PLAN 2040.

TDM as an Implementation Tool for PLAN 2040

TDM+ activities, including core TDM programs like vanpool, when implemented in a coordinated manner, will work to simultaneously achieve many of the goals outlined in PLAN 2040, the region's long range comprehensive plan. Not only will TDM help achieve transportation, livability, and air quality goals, but it also has the potential to have enormous economic impact on the region, particularly by maximizing the value of existing infrastructure and alleviating the need to invest in costly capacity expansions in some cases.
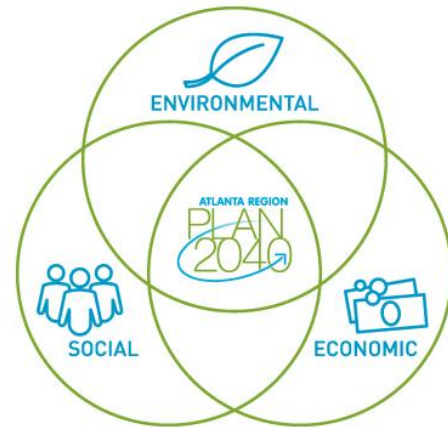
Vanpooling supports the objectives of PLAN 2040:

- **Increase mobility options for people and goods**: By providing incentives for residents of the Atlanta region, particularly commuters, to use vanpools as a non-single occupant vehicle (SOV) alternative modes of travel, vanpooling will work toward assuring the preservation, maintenance, and efficient operation of the existing multimodal system. PLAN 2040 calls for the implementation of cost effective improvements to maximize existing assets, and vanpooling works to accomplish that goal. The use of alternative modes of travel like vanpooling decreases congestion, which will further enhance the mobility of people and goods throughout the region.

- **Promote places to live with easy access to jobs and services**: Vanpooling programs can improve accessibility to transit hubs, helping employees with access to employment centers to better support the growing economy in the region.

- **Improve energy efficiency while preserving the region's environment**: Automobiles account for a large portion of greenhouse gases emitted in the Atlanta region, and emissions are exacerbated when congestion results in the idling of vehicles. Use of non-SOV transportation modes like vanpooling significantly reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in a per capita basis, improving air quality.

- **Identify innovative approaches to economic recovery and long-term prosperity**: Between 1985 and 2005, Georgia's investments in transportation infrastructure as a proportion of state GDP lagged behind that of other states; reinvestment in cost effective modes of transportation not only will achieve the goals above, but may also create thousands of jobs. Reducing congestion through employment of TDM activities can also contribute to economic growth through reduction of the current $874 per year lost to congestion through wasted fuel and increased travel time for every resident in the entire region. Reducing the burden of transportation costs on households in the Atlanta region will also increase the resources these households have to invest and spend, stimulating the economy and creating jobs.

By addressing PLAN 2040's goal areas, vanpooling can contribute to a broader TDM vision to help the region achieve results that meet PLAN 2040's "triple bottom line," by enhancing economic growth while producing environmentally friendly results and achieving key social goals of enhancing opportunity and access for residents of all income levels.

Benefits of Vanpools

Vanpool programs have become increasingly popular across the country, undoubtedly an effect of the many benefits that vanpools offer to both passengers and drivers. While vanpooling does eliminate the freedom and ease associated with driving a car alone, it also presents a number of benefits that, for many commuters, outweigh the benefits of driving alone. There are three major overarching categories of benefits: *economic*, *environmental*, and *personal*.

Economic

Rising gasoline prices, increased levels of congestion, and other travel costs contribute to increasingly expensive SOV commutes. In vanpools, passengers pay a monthly fee that goes toward gasoline, maintenance, and repairs of the van, and often receive subsidies from employers or transit agencies that make the cost even lower. In many programs, drivers ride for free.

> **Why Vanpooling?**
>
> - Reduced employee stress
> - Reduced SOV trips
> - Reduced emissions
> - Reduced fuel consumption
> - Reduced GHG emissions
> - Very low operating costs per vehicle revenue hour
> - Reduced financial commuter costs
> - Reduced wear and tear on personal vehicles
> - Increased employee retention and satisfaction
> - Addresses gaps in transit service
> - In some cases, addresses first and last mile issues

Companies have also found vanpool programs to be useful ways to improve employee morale and support employee retention goals. A New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) survey of employers/employees in New York and Philadelphia showed that more than 70% of employees developed more favorable opinions of employers due to the offering of transit/vanpool fringe benefits.[5] Additionally, 48% saw transit/vanpool benefits as "very important" to an employee benefit package. Vanpool benefits can be cost-effective, economic ways to offer employer benefits and support employee retention.

In Atlanta, commuters often cite financial savings and reduced wear and tear on personal vehicles as the most important factors in a decision to join a vanpool.[6] The Clean Air Campaign's Commute Calculator compares the costs of driving alone with carpooling, vanpooling. Considering the *2010 Regional Commuter Survey* average one way commute distance of 17.5 miles[7], current gas prices of about $3.50 per gallon[8], an average fuel efficiency of 21.7 miles per gallon[9], CAC's Commute Calculator estimated costs per mile for personal vehicle maintenance, repair, tires, as well as cost per mile for depreciation,[10] and an average of approximately 22 work days per month, vanpool participants, who pay an average monthly fare of $100[11],

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[5] http://www.bestworkplaces.org/pdf/transitvan_07.pdf

[6] *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey*, p ii

[7] 2010 Atlanta Regional Commuter Survey Highlights p 1

[8] AAA Daily Fuel Gauge Report averaged over the past six months <http://fuelgaugereport.opisnet.com/GAmetro.asp>

[9] FHWA Highway Statistics 2009 Table VM-1: Annual Vehicle Distances Traveled in Miles and Related Data <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2009/vm1.cfm>

[10] http://www.gacommuteoptions.com/Commuter-Services/Commute-Calculator

[11] *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* p ii

are likely saving just under $250 per month by vanpooling rather than driving alone. This estimate, however, does not take into account that the average vanpool participant actually travels just over twice the one-way commute of the average metro Atlanta resident at approximately 35.9 miles. Considering all the same parameters noted above, on average current vanpool participants are saving over $600 per month by vanpooling rather than driving alone in their personal vehicles. Showing the economic cost savings to a commuter is a meaningful way to promote vanpool benefits.

Environmental

Vanpooling also takes cars off the road. Fewer cars means less congestion, lower pollution levels for local residents, and reduced on-road GHG emissions, which contribute to climate change. In addition to reduced emissions on the commute trip, people who do not bring their cars to work are also less likely to use a personal vehicle for business travel during the day, lunchtime trips, or other personal business during office hours.

- One person's daily 50-mile round trip vanpool commute can result in a CO_2 emissions reduction of 0.40 tons and VOC and NOx reduction of 3.78 pounds over the course of one month of travel.[12]
- One person's daily 50-mile round trip vanpool commute can result in over $350 of costs savings on a month basis[13]
- In the metro Atlanta region, each vanpool removes 5-13 single occupancy vehicles from Atlanta's roadways.
- In 2010, Atlanta region vanpools removed over 30 million vehicle miles traveled (VMTs).

However, metro Atlanta vanpool riders do not often cite environmental concerns as a major indicator in why they chose to vanpool. Only 38% of those surveyed in 2010 cited environmental concerns as a very important in influencing their decision to vanpool.[14]

Personal

The *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* helped identify some personal benefits of vanpooling. Respondents to the survey were asked to rate how important each of twelve factors had been to their decision to vanpool. The rating scale ranged from 1 – "not at all important" – to 5 – "very important." The top rated factors included:

- Gas savings (average 4.8 out of 5, by 1,134 respondents)
- Save money (4.8)
- Reduced vehicle wear and tear (4.8)
- Reduced stress levels associated with not having to drive in rush hour traffic (4.1)
- Reduced cost to insure personal vehicle (3.9)
- Environmental concerns (3.8)

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[12] http://transportationchoices.org/reasons/commute-calculator

[13] http://www.gacommuteoptions.com/Commuter-Services/Commute-Calculator

[14] *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* p 8

- Guaranteed Ride Home program (3.7)
- Time savings (3.3)
- Enjoy riding with others (3.1)
- Increased time for leisure activities such as sleeping, or reading that could not be done while driving alone (3.1)
- Faster travel times in managed lanes, such as High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) and High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes (2.9)
- Additional time to prepare for meetings or tasks for work (2.2)

Whether the main motivating factor for people are the economics, the environment, or emotional well-being, vanpools are beneficial for all three. They save riders money, take cars off the road, reduce pollutants in the air, and provide a stress-free commute for participants.

2. Methodology and Sources

2.1   Methodology and Approach

The vanpool assessment was completed based on several steps as identified below. Input from the TDM Plan Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been incorporated throughout the project.

Figure 5: Assessment and Recommendations Approach

2.2   Sources

Many sources were used to compile the information in the vanpool assessment. Information collected came predominantly from local and national reports, local surveys, and interviews. Each is explained in greater depth below.

Reports and Data

Numerous state, regional, and local reports related to transportation in the Atlanta region were reviewed; information from these reports and plans served as the foundation for the research. These documents included:

- ARC regional plans and documents, such as the ARC Strategic Plan; PLAN 2040 Regional Assessments, Regional Transportation Plan, Regional Agenda, and 2012 Unified Planning Work Program.

- Program/mode-specific documents, such as 2007 Atlanta Region Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan, 2010 Transit On-Board Survey, Commuter Rewards Regional Incentive Program Survey Findings Technical Report (GDOT), 2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey Technical Report (GDOT), The Clean Air Campaign Cash for Commuters Program Survey Technical Report (GDOT), and the 2009 Atlanta Regional Commission RideSmart Placement Survey Findings Technical Report (GDOT).

- Other relevant documents, such as ARC Congestion Management Process, Strategic Thoroughfares Plan, Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, 2011 Household Travel Survey, Lifelong Communities Framework and Handbook, Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan, various Livable Centers Initiative Reports, various Comprehensive Transportation Plans, various ARC Regional Snapshots, ARC Transportation Fact Books, and 2010 Regional Commuter Survey Technical Report (GDOT).

- Minutes from various committees, such as the ESC Vanpool Subcommittee.

- Summaries from other initiatives and programs, such as rebranding efforts (including focus groups) managed by CTE on behalf of GDOT, and TMA mid-year reviews.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders to gather information on existing practices and programs and build a platform for coordination and cooperation amongst the partners. A selection of members of the TAC were requested to participate in in-person interviews, including a broad representation of ESOs, TDM Service Providers, CIDs, vanpool operators, employers, and Federal, State, regional and local agencies. These included:

- Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

- Atlantic Station Access and Mobility Program (ASAP+)

- Buckhead Area Transportation Management Association (BATMA)

- The Clean Air Campaign

- Cumberland CID (Commuter Club)

- Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE)

- Clifton Corridor TMA

- Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS)

- Downtown TMA

- Douglas County Rideshare

- Enterprise Rideshare

- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

- Georgia Power

- Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)

- Midtown Alliance

- Perimeter Transportation & Sustainability Coalition (PTSC)

- vRide

Additional partners will be contacted for interviews throughout the development of the TDM Plan.

Best Practices

Additionally, a number of related best practices reports and program documents on vanpooling were reviewed. Resources reviewed include those from organizations and agencies such as the Brookings Institution, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, and the Texas Transportation Institute, as well as many others. Additionally, three programs were identified for a more detailed case study review – Fairfax, VA (as part of Washington D.C. Commuter Connections), Houston Metro STAR and Raleigh-Durham's Triangle Transit. The combined review of best practices and literature provided context for the research and much of the information in the benchmarking analysis.

Focus Group

A focus group was held primarily with members of the ESC Vanpool Subcommittee to vet the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the region, as well as to vet preliminary recommendations. In order to solicit unbiased conversation, the two current vanpool operators/vendors were not included in the focus group. The vendors were interviewed and an understanding of their operations was developed and considered during the focus group. The focus group was used as a method to confirm strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the existing vanpool program and to vet initial recommendations for the program.

# 3. Vanpooling Snapshot – Trends and Analysis in the Region

3.1   A History of Vanpooling in the Atlanta Region

Although vanpooling may have occurred spontaneously in prior years, it first formally began in the Atlanta

region with a vendor's (vRide) vanpool services offered in 1980. At that time, the **Georgia Building Authority (GBA)** both operated and helped to subsidize a vanpool program, which was eventually absorbed by GRTA in 2003. Douglas County currently is the longest-standing operator/subsidizer with a program that has been run completely in-house starting in 1986; Cherokee County began subsidizing and supporting service in 2004 directly through operating contracts with vRide. Cobb County Transit also operated a program in-house for a number of years, and then began contracting out to vRide in 1997. Around 2005, Enterprise Rideshare entered the vanpool market in the region. GRTA continued to both subsidize and operate its program in-house through 2008, at which point vanpool operations were then contracted out to vendors; currently both vRide and Enterprise hold a contract with GRTA for regional vanpool services.

> **For more information:**
>
> For more information on the partners involved in vanpooling, and a description of their role and services provided, see Section 4 (Inventory: Vanpool Program Structure , Services and Approach)

Figure 6: Metro Atlanta Vanpooling Timeline[15]
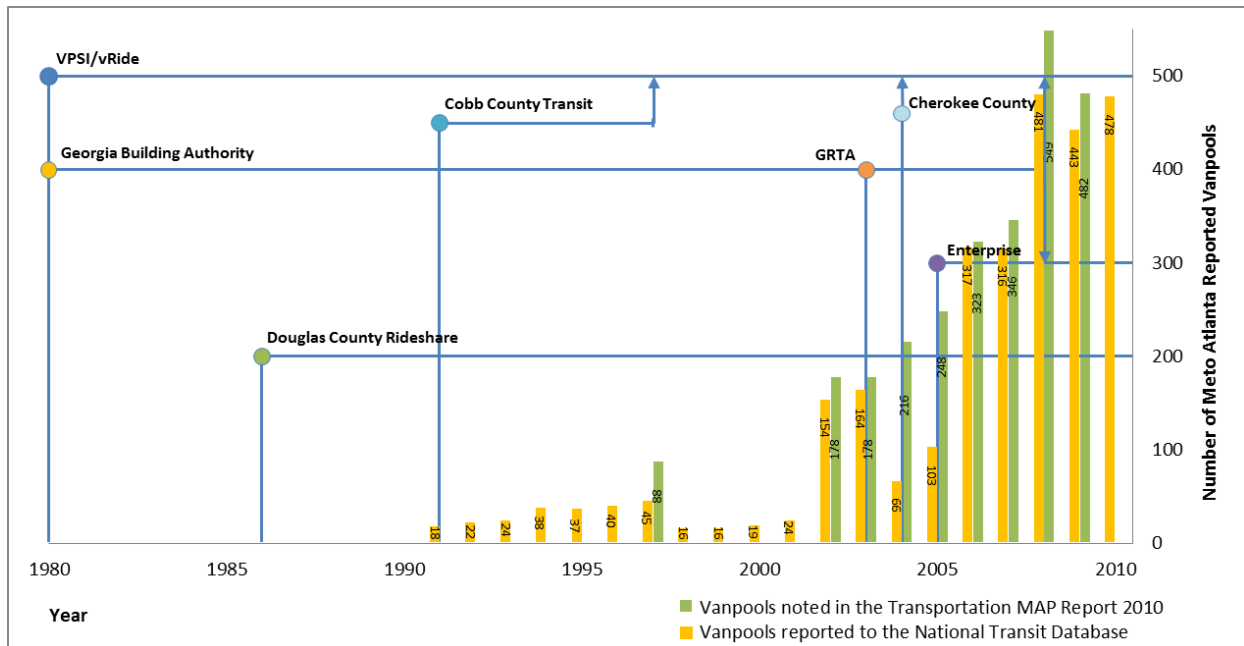
Vanpool reporting varies greatly throughout agencies within the Atlanta metro area. As noted in **Figure 6**, vanpools reported to the National Transit Database vary from those reported in the Transportation MAP Report 2010, as well as numbers reported by several other agencies in the metro area. It is notable that

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[15] Transportation MAP Report page 27, National Transportation Database

there has been a fairly consistent upward trend in the number of vanpools since vanpooling began in the region. However, under the performance measure-based MAP-21 legislation, it will be important to align reporting guidelines among regional agencies in order to present uniform regional data.

3.2   Snapshot of Current Vanpooling in Atlanta

Commuters in Atlanta can join vanpools in many different ways. They are often formed through an employer through vanpool companies like **Enterprise Rideshare** and **vRide**, and by individual riders or with the assistance of ESOs, which may use the ridematching tools available through ARC or CAC. CIDs may provide financial support, in which case the CID's associated TMA supports vanpool formation activities. Regional ridematching services are provided via two online regional databases; ARC provides ridematching services through RideSmart, and CAC hosts clean-commute based rewards and prizes along with the ability to participate in RideSmart's ridematching services through the Commuter Rewards website[16]. On some occasions, individuals join by visiting any of the providers' websites or calling them directly. Since there is no centralized system, new participants may call one of many organizations, such as their employer, a vendor, local TMA, ARC, GRTA, The Clean Air Campaign, or others.

Figure 7: Vanpools by Provider with Subsidies and Fuel Prices[17]

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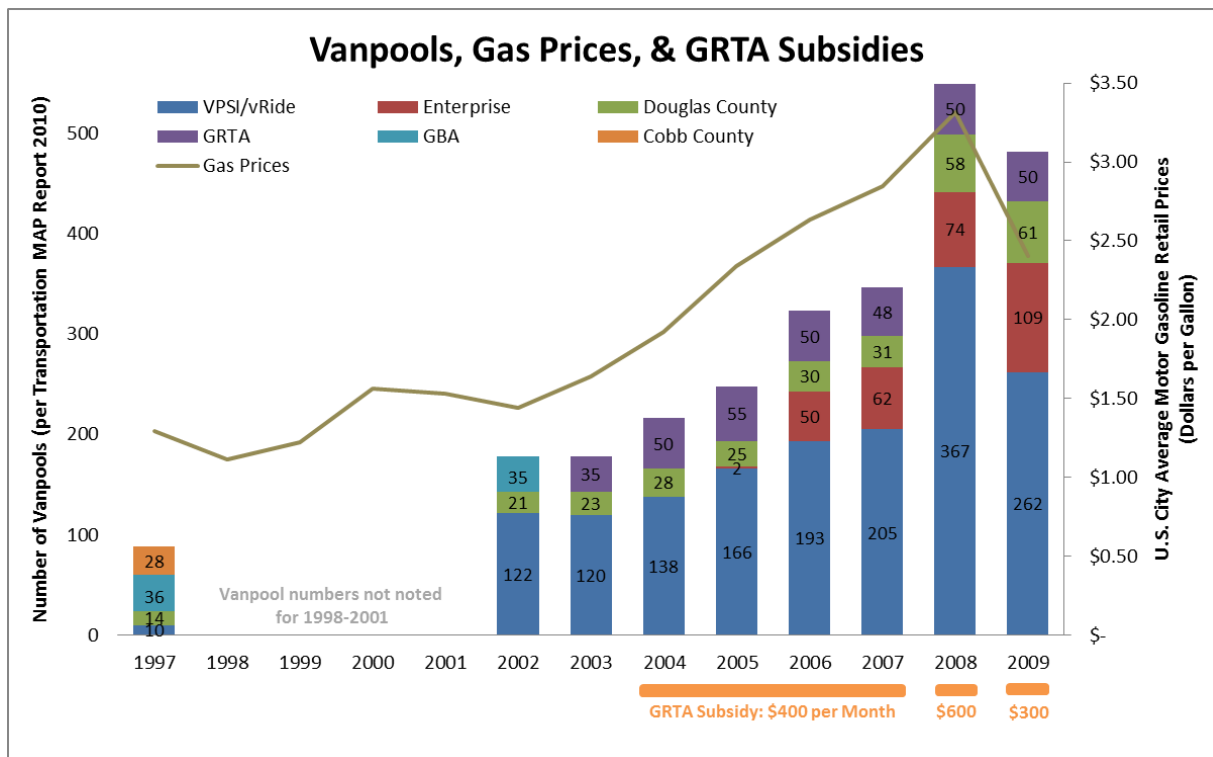
[16] GDOT's rebranding efforts will likely cause some changes in these databases and their management

[17] Number of vanpools from GRTA 2010 Transportation MAP Report Figure 19. Gas prices from U.S. Energy Information Administration www.eia.gov, U.S. City Average Motor Gasoline Retail Prices 1973-2012.Note though that reported numbers of vanpools are not consistent among separate reporting agencies; for example, the ARC Transportation Fact Book includes a different number of vanpools than both the Transportation MAP Report and the number of vanpools reported to the National Transit Database.

Through a contract with **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)**, **the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE)** has conducted surveys of the regional vanpool programs in 2002, 2006, and 2010. The data collected in the surveys has provided the region with trends that are useful in considering how vanpooling is operating today and how the program may be shaped in the future to changing needs and travel behaviors.

Ridership: *Patterns of Growth over Past Decade, but Recent Decline in Ridership*

The *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* surveyed current vanpool participants utilizing services offered only from Douglas County Rideshare, Enterprise Rideshare and vRide through GRTA and Cherokee County. While there are other providers in the region, including a few owner-operated vans, the three prominent providers likely produce a representative set of survey respondents. Conclusions of the vanpool survey note that **commuters who vanpooled in 2010 did so 4.5 days a week, traveling on average 35.9 miles one-way, more than double the regional average of 17.5** noted in the *2010 Regional Commuter Survey Technical Report*. Although ridership has fallen recently, there has been a general upward trend over the past 10-15 years in vanpool ridership.

Vanpooling Trends in Atlanta Region – 2010 Annual Survey

- **Why do people ride in vanpools?** The top 3 reported reasons for vanpooling are gas savings, money savings, and less wear and tear on the rider's personal vehicle.
- **How were vanpool riders commuting before?** Before joining a vanpool, 74% of riders commuted to work in a single occupant vehicle.
- **How often do riders use vanpools?** Vanpoolers in 2010 used the service 87% of the time
- **How many miles is a vanpool commute?** The average distance from a vanpooler's house to their workplace is 35.9 miles.
- **How long does a vanpool commute take?** The average vanpool trip is roughly 50 minutes compared to the average commute, which is roughly 30 minutes.
- **How far does a vanpool rider travel to join the van?** Vanpoolers travel an average of 7.5 miles to reach their vanpool meeting spot.

Demographics

The *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* included a question to gauge what other commute options vanpool survey respondents had available if vanpooling was not an option. The question was a multiple response question that included drive alone, carpool, express bus, local bus, train, bicycle/walk, telework, and an option for the inability to make a trip. Statistics in the report also noted results from the 2006 survey. About three quarters of responses from both 2010 and 2006 considered the drive alone option (74 and 78 percent respectively). Even with the array of other options, three percent in 2006 and four percent in 2010 noted that they would not be able to make a trip to their work location if vanpooling was not an option. While there are some riders that responded they are dependent on vanpooling for their commutes, the vast majority of vanpool commuters appear to be choice riders.

In Atlanta, 56 percent of vanpool riders are female, compared to 44 percent of riders who are male. Approximately 69 percent of riders are between the ages of 44-64, as shown in the figures below.[18] Less than one percent of riders are less than 25 years old.

Figure 9: Vanpool Ridership Distribution by Gender
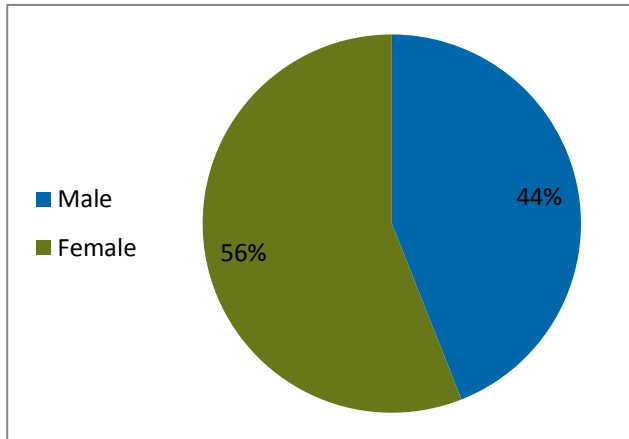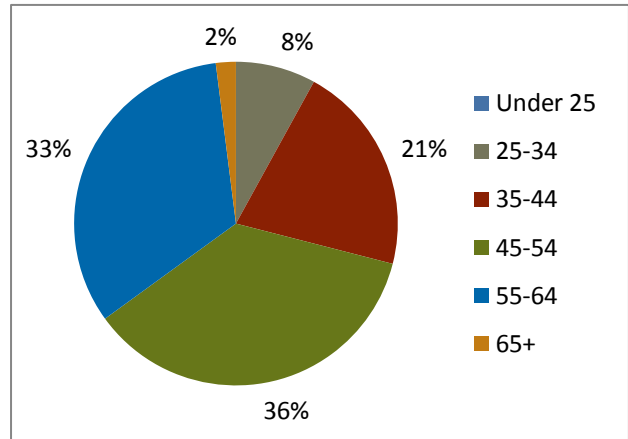

Figure 8: Vanpool Ridership Distribution by Age

Why Atlanta Commuters Start or Continue Vanpooling

Even though vanpooling, rather than driving alone, often provides substantial savings, and even though participants generally have higher incomes, financial factors are an important component of a commuter's decision to vanpool. In the 2010 survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of financial factors in their decision to start or continue vanpooling on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 meant the factor was "not at all important" and 5 meant the factor was "very important." The overall survey response had a mean rating of 4.2. In each of the previous years, 72 percent and 66 percent, respectively, rated financial assistance as "very important", which correlates with the opinions recorded in 2010. Other major financial factors that influenced vanpool participation included 'gas savings' and 'saving money in general.'   Financial factors continue to have an important influence in a commuter's decision to start and/or continue vanpooling. Of note however is that 40% of respondents in the 2010 survey either did not know or did not identify if their vanpool received financial assistance. This suggests that emphasizing either the existence of the subsidy or other financial factors (such as gas savings) are important marketing messages to capture potential vanpool riders.

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[18] 2010 Vanpool Rider Survey p 20

4. Inventory: Vanpool Program Structure, Services, and Approach

4.1   Vanpool Program Structure

Many different organizations participate in making vanpool service a success in the Atlanta region. Major players include:

Figure 10: Atlanta Region Organizations Involved in Vanpooling Programs

Agencies and Organizations	
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)	Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)
Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)	Employer Service Organizations (ESOs) (including The Clean Air Campaign and Transportation Management Associations)
Douglas County Rideshare	Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)
Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS)	Major employer partners
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)	Private vendors that operate the vanpools (vRide and Enterprise Rideshare)

There are three primary vanpool programs in the region:

- **GRTA** services in their 13-county jurisdiction (contracted out to two vendors), Enterprise Rideshare and vRide,

- **Douglas County Rideshare** (county-operated transportation program), and

- **Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS)** (contracted out to vRide).

There are also several owner-operated vans. Each of the prominent three programs offers varying types of services as well as van types.

Overview: Vanpool Service Providers and Partners

Vanpool programs in Atlanta are complex and involve a number of different agencies and operators with varying roles and responsibilities. A diagram showing the basic relationships is provided below, along with brief descriptions of each agency/partner role. Many stakeholders have expressed concerns that the existing structure for vanpool service is complicated and lacks clarity in roles and responsibilities. The figure documents the complexity of existing relationships and in part demonstrates the general lack of cohesion and coordination of funding streams and programs serving the vanpool program.

Figure 11: Roles and Relationships of Service Providers
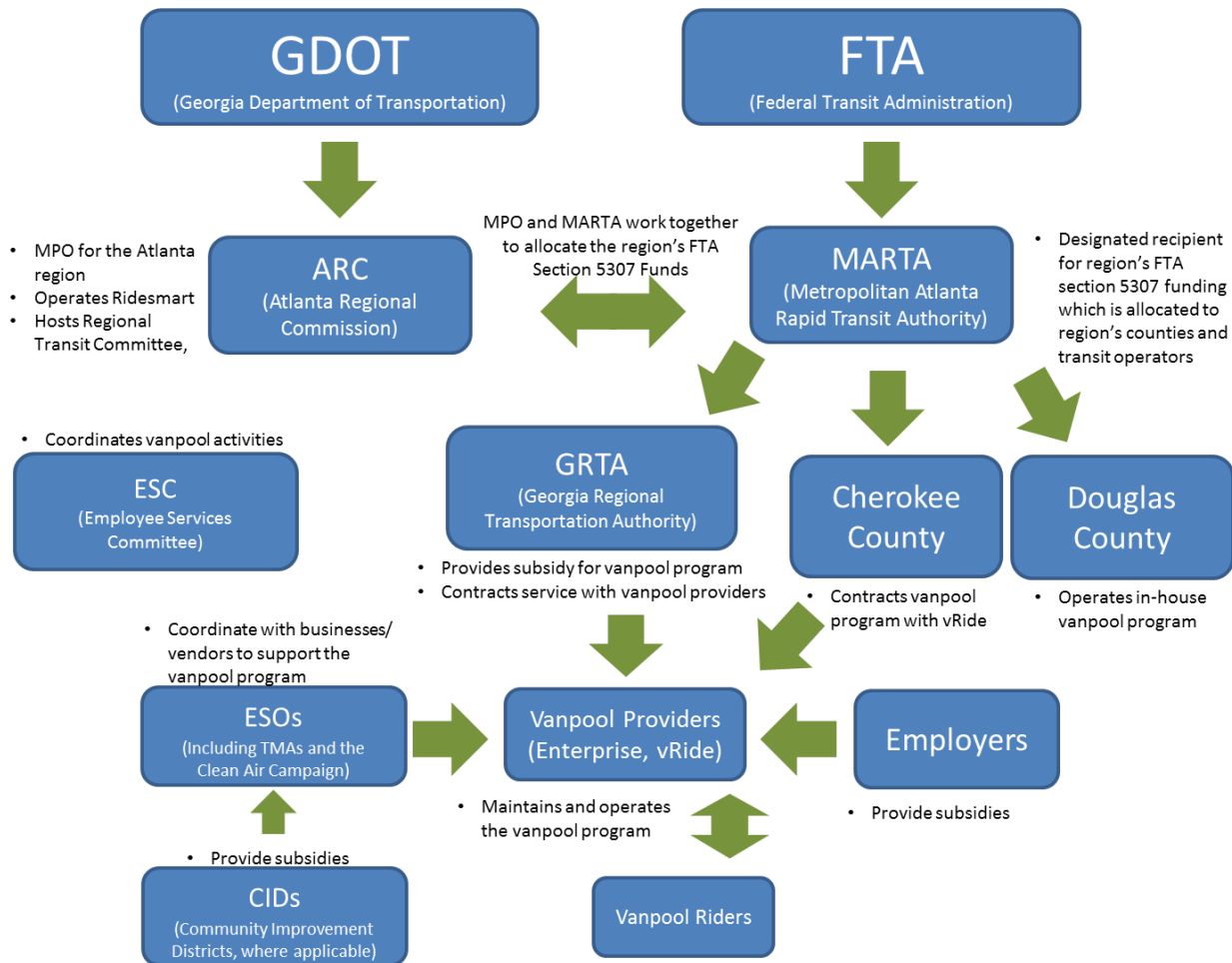
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) is responsible for overseeing the contract and funding for the regional vanpool program in their 13-county jurisdiction. GRTA contracts with the vanpool service providers within their jurisdiction and coordinates with the ESC Vanpool Subcommittee on marketing and incentives. GRTA receives Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 funds through MARTA and distributes these funds to their two vanpool service providers/vendors in the form of a subsidy to riders. The

contracts, which currently include two vendors – vRide and Enterprise –, are assigned to on a competitive basis once every few years with several one year extensions to the contracts.

GRTA also provides the Xpress regional commuter coach services on weekday mornings and afternoons to serve the Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead areas of Atlanta as well as the Perimeter Centers area. Xpress partners and coordinates with Cobb Community Transit (CCT) and Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), which provide additional routes, as well as with MARTA by allowing riders to complete their trips by transferring to MARTA bus and rail services free of additional fare charges. GRTA also monitors performance of the region's existing transportation system through the annual Transportation Metropolitan Atlanta Performance (MAP) Report which evaluates the region's progress towards the state's transportation vision laid out in the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan. GRTA additionally approves the Atlanta region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on behalf of the Governor.

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) as the Atlanta region's MPO, is responsible for overall coordination of the transportation planning efforts of the region, including multimodal transportation coordination, and the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and other major plans and initiatives. Also housed within ARC is the Regional Transit Committee, which plans, coordinates, and provides regional policy direction for transit. MARTA works with ARC to allocate the FTA Section 5307 funds to the region's counties and transit operators. ARC also manages and hosts a ridematching service called **RideSmart** to serve the entire region. RideSmart helps commuters find vanpool partners (in addition to carpooling). Vanpoolers (and carpoolers) in RideSmart are eligible for the metro Atlanta Guaranteed Ride Home program managed by ARC. ARC also provides funding to ESOs to market regional TDM programs (including vanpooling).

Douglas County has been providing vanpool service to commuters from the county since 1987, managing and operating the service completely in-house. They also receive FTA Section 5307 funds in addition to matching funds from the county general budget. Douglas County Rideshare manages everything in-house, including vehicle purchase and repair, ridematch services, and subsidy provision. As a government agency, Douglas County does not offer as many varieties of vans, nor does it have the same frequency of fleet turnover as the vendors used by GRTA. Commuters pay a monthly fare that covers costs such as fuel, maintenance and repairs, insurance, and van replacement. Douglas County provides funds for administrative costs, but also supports the program within other county departments such as Finance, Purchasing, and Personnel.

Cherokee County provides countywide transportation services for all residents of the County under the name CATS – Cherokee Area Transportation System. CATS provides vanpool services, in addition to local fixed-route bus in the City of Canton and county-wide demand response transit, for residents or workers of Cherokee County. Volunteer drivers usually ride free, and can be approved by vRide to have personal use of the vans on nights and weekends with certain limitations. Cherokee County originally ran its program in-house, but now contracts out its vanpool service to vRide with the use of FTA Section 5307 funds and a local match. While vRide provides the vans and service agreements, CATS staff works closely with potential groups during the formation process to help determine routes and schedules for the group. Cherokee buys down the fares with a substantial subsidy of 50% of the van rate including fuel. Fares range from $46-$141 each month depending on the number of members in the vanpool group (7-14 passengers) as well as the daily one-way trip distance (average of 15-60 miles).

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transportation Authority (MARTA) is the Designated Recipient of the FTA Section 5307 funds for the Atlanta region. MARTA works with ARC, as the MPO, to allocate these funds to transit operators and counties to support transit capital improvements and planning.

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), as the statewide TDM program coordinator, GDOT oversees the distribution of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds to ARC, which are used for the region's RideSmart and GRH programs and are also sub-granted to the region's TMAs to market regional TDM programs in their areas. GDOT also provides CMAQ funding to The Clean Air Campaign to market regional TDM program for the entire region, outside of TMA areas. Additionally, GDOT is leading a rebranding of the statewide TDM program to develop a common identity for TDM in Georgia that the general public can more easily understand. This brand – recently released as Georgia Commute Options – is encouraged to be associated with vanpools in the Atlanta region. GDOT also contracts the statewide TDM program evaluation through the Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE), which includes some assessment of vanpool programs. The agencies have begun discussions on how to promote vanpools under the new brand.

Employer Service Organizations (ESOs) consist of TMAs and The Clean Air Campaign. 1984 marked the year that TMAs gained a constitutional basis with an amendment to the state Constitution which expanded the function of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) to include services for public transportation, allowing them to create and operate ESOs. ESOs support and promote TDM programs (including vanpool) through their involvement with transportation-related activities that are catered through the employer services umbrella. Most of these organizations market vanpool as well as other alternative commuting opportunities within their jurisdictions, although they each do so differently. Some ESOs take a more hands-on approach and aid the private vendors in setting up vanpools, while others have little communication with vendors operating in their jurisdiction. The Clean Air Campaign manages a regional CommuteTrak database for regional TDM incentives, including those for vanpooling. CAC leads the development of guidelines and training for the regional vanpool program used by all ESOs. CAC has one dedicated staff person to assist with marketing and training for vanpool programs. CAC also processes all the registration and maintenance of vanpool commuters who participate in regional incentives programs. ARC's RideSmart database is used to help ridematching for both carpools and vanpools.

Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) are quasi-governmental entities that are created pursuant to the Georgia Constitution and are self-taxing districts that allow commercial property owners to raise revenue to address community improvement solutions (typically aimed at transportation) by conducting planning studies and funding construction. Many TMAs receive large portions of their funding from local CIDs. For instance, Buckhead Area TMA (BATMA) and Commuter Club provide additional subsidies to riders through their associated CIDs.

Some **larger employers**, such as the federal government and private organizations, have agreements with private vendors to provide vanpool services to their employees. In several cases, employers subsidize or even pay for the entire cost of vanpools for their employees interested in participating. Federal employers have had an available federal subsidy for vanpooling, which has been very importation for the success of vanpooling at federal agencies. The general trend, however, is that employers are reducing the amount of their vanpool coverage because of constricting budgets following the recent downturn in the economy.

The **Employer Services Committee (ESC)** represents a partnership of organizations receiving federal funding that provide TDM services to employers, property managers, and individuals in the Atlanta region. ESC's primary mission is to coordinate TDM activities in the Atlanta region including:

- A unified process to provide TDM services to employers, property managers, and individuals in the Atlanta region,

- A coordinated procedure to determine partnership levels and apply standards to employer and property manager programs throughout the region,

- A consistent set of reporting procedures to be used by ESOs participating in TDM programs,

- A viable regional incentive program to be available through ESOs and to individuals served by members of the ESC, and

- Other issues as directed by state and regional agencies.

The Committee meets on a monthly basis. While representatives included on this committee represent TDM program and services implementers in the region, the committee itself is not tied to any policy or decision making entity.

Additionally, a Vanpool Subcommittee of the ESC consists of ESOs and vanpool service providers that meet on a monthly basis to specifically coordinate on vanpool service delivery and marketing.

> **ESC Membership and Participation (as of November 2011)**
>
> - Employer Service Organizations
> - Atlanta Regional Commission
> - Center for Transportation and the Environment
> - Georgia Environmental Protection Division
> - Georgia Department of Transportation
> - Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
> - Environmental Protection Agency
> - Douglas County Rideshare
> - Enterprise Vanpool
> - vRide
> - Atlanta Bicycle Coalition
> - Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety (PEDS)
> - Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority

Two private vendors, Enterprise Rideshare and vRide, currently provide the region with the majority of its vanpool service. These vendors have an existing contract with GRTA that expires at the end of 2012. They have no jurisdictional boundaries and compete with each other in every market throughout the region. The Cherokee County CATS program is contracted out to vRide. Vendors are responsible for their own marketing and recruiting, management, and operations of vanpools, which accounts for much of the regional effort, although ESOs provide varying levels of supporting marketing, recruitment, and management. The vendors report directly to GRTA in order to receive subsidy money, but are able to form vanpools that do not receive subsidies as well.

4.2   Vanpool Program Management and Operations

How is the Regional Vanpool Program Contracted?

GRTA contracts with both vRide and Enterprise Rideshare to operate the regional vanpool program. Contracts are assigned to the two vendors on a competitive basis once every few years with several one year extensions to the contracts. While the contract is specifically with GRTA, the agreement allows Enterprise Rideshare and vRide to market their services with partners in the area such as counties, TMAs, and CIDs. The dual contract with both vRide and Enterprise Rideshare does not stipulate jurisdictional boundaries, but both

vanpool providers have indicated that they are respectful of their competitors' existing clients. They also sometimes work together by attending the same commuter events, and may even transfer commuters to the other vendor when there is no vanpool or route available for an individual participant. Regardless, they are competing businesses that are vying for the same market share. The contracts with the providers are based on current ridership as well as anticipated growth factors. If the programs were to grow significantly beyond the anticipated growth, the contact would be amended (within a cap).

How does the Regional Vanpool Program work?

The graphic below describes the ways in which vanpool formation currently works in the Atlanta region (specifically for the GRTA program). The figure was developed based on input from the vendors and ESOs.

Figure 12: Steps Involved in Vanpool Formation
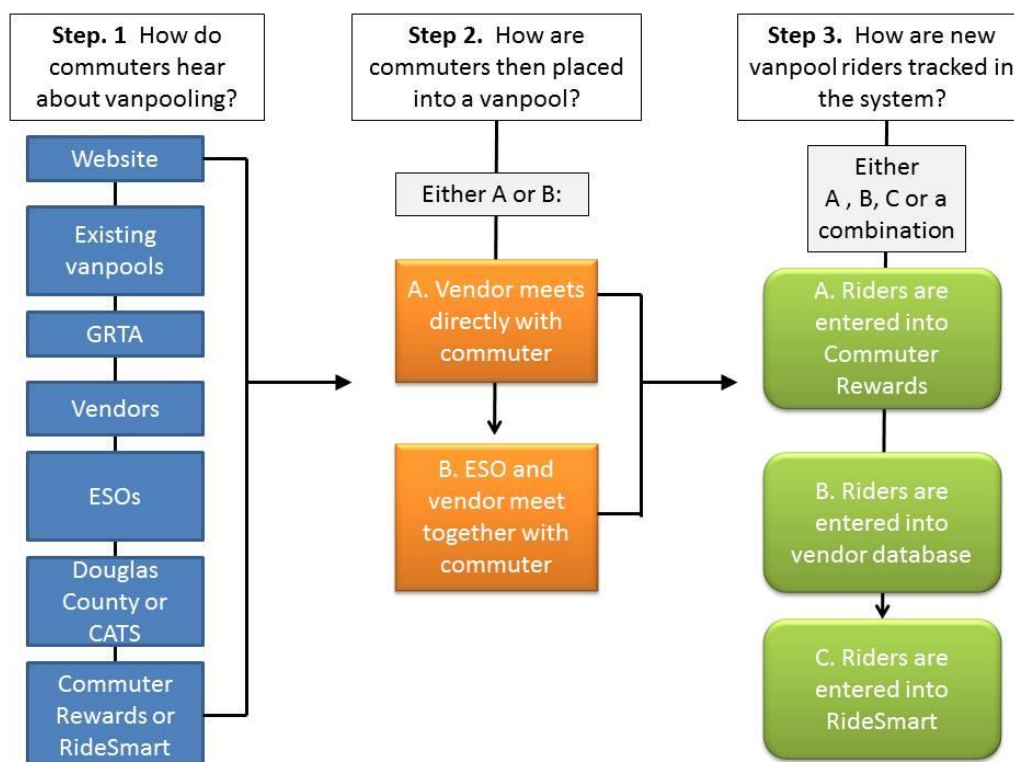
Step 1. Commuters or Employers May Hear about Vanpooling – through a variety of means, including:

- **Website** (ESO sites, Commuter Rewards site, RideSmart, vendor sites, partner agency sites, etc.)
- **Employer meetings** (ESOs or vendors may set up meetings with employers to provide education and information on vanpooling)
- **Mass marketing** (ESO campaigns or marketing, vendor marketing, partner agency marketing, etc.)

Step 2. Follow up with Commuter or Employer for Vanpool Formation Meeting – held by vendor and ESO or just vendor to begin to work out the details of a vanpool with the interested parties. As part of the vanpool formation meeting, the ESO and/or vendor may work with the employer to conduct a cluster analysis to identify other potential van riders.

Step 3. Database Entry and Management – There are currently several databases in use, including The Clean Air Campaign's Commuter Rewards database to manage incentives, RideSmart's RidePro database for ridematching, and individual vendor databases. As it stands, not all riders in the vendor databases will be included in the RidePro or Commuter Rewards databases. Vendors provide access to the ESOs and GRTA for copies of their databases as they are requested, but this is not a standard protocol. According to the contract, the vendors are required to submit copies of the database when requested.

Since a variety of databases exist, there is not a single streamlined approach yet for data entry or management. Currently, the roles and responsibilities of the vendors and ESOs in outreach and placement for vanpools vary. vRide makes an effort to work with the TMAs, but also does some marketing and rider recruitment within TMA areas without directly working with the TMA. Enterprise Rideshare also works with TMAs when possible.

Rideshare Matching and Incentives Databases

ARC – RidePro is a confidential database used by ARC's RideSmart program that matches commuters who live and work in the Atlanta region with possible carpool, vanpool, and bike partners as well as available transit options (limited currently to MARTA). RidePro is the database that manages the region's Guaranteed Ride Home program participants, as well.

CAC – CommuteTrak is a separate confidential database administered mostly through CAC for the Commuter Rewards program. CommuteTrak helps users track commute-related savings and provides the potential for financial incentives based on CAC incentive programs as well as those incentives and services provided through an employer or ESO for the use of alternative commutes.

ARC plans to merge these databases, after each has been thoroughly cleaned and updated. Ultimately having one database that combines rideshare and commuter incentives will help with many of the inefficiencies inevitable with multiple sources of information.

Guaranteed Ride Home

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) services come from two different program providers. The RideSmart Guaranteed Ride Home Program is federally funded through GDOT and administered by ARC. The RideSmart GRH program is available to workers who are registered with RideSmart and work in the Atlanta 20-county region, ride to work by carpool, vanpool, transit, or bicycle, and have an unscheduled event which causes need for the service. Some "emergency" events are not covered by GRH, and users can only take advantage of this free service limited up to five times annually. The Clean Air Campaign also offers a similar GRH program, which reimburses the cost of a ride from work to home for people who work outside the 20-county region. This program requires that a participant be a Georgia commuter registered in the Commuter Rewards program outside the metro Atlanta area with an employer that is registered as a partner of CAC. GRH is part of the marketing strategy for vanpooling in the region. However, participants must sign themselves up for GRH. Both Enterprise Rideshare and vRide encourage participants to sign up for this program, but are unsure whether or not participants actually do sign up. TMAs help advertise the GRH program, but do not directly sign participants up for the service.

4.3   Vanpool Program Funding and Sources

Federal transportation dollars have been critical in funding primary elements of the Atlanta region's transportation system. However, there has been a national downward trend in the amount of federal transportation dollars for transit and roads that are being made available to states and regions. Furthermore, diminishing local funding and tightening of state general funds, paired with a decline in the purchasing power of state motor fuel taxes, and an escalation in the prices of raw materials and construction will also result in decrease funding opportunities for the Atlanta transportation program.

Federal transportation funding is authorized through transportation bills. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) is the current federal transportation bill, which took effect on October 21, 2012 and covers fiscal years 2013-2014.

Current Funding Sources for Vanpools in the Atlanta Region

Currently, vanpool funds for capital, operating, and marketing/outreach come from several main sources:

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program - CMAQ provides funds to state and local governments that can be leveraged for TDM and other projects that help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act through measures that will reduce congestion and improve air quality for areas that formerly did not meet, or currently do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, carbon monoxide, or particulate matter. Thus, funds may be used for transportation projects likely to contribute, with a high level of effectiveness, to the attainment or maintenance of a NAAQS, and can be included in the MPOs current transportation plan and transportation improvement program or the current statewide transportation improvement program outside of MPO designated areas. In Georgia, GDOT manages the allocation of CMAQ funds in consultation with MPOs and other partners. In the Atlanta region, CMAQ funds are used by GDOT, ARC, CTE, and ESOs for TDM, including vanpool, outreach and marketing activities, which are considered eligible activities for the shift of traffic demand to other transportation modes and the increase of vehicle occupancy rates. CMAQ is also used for many other project types that can improve congestion and air quality such as operational improvements, bicycle and pedestrian projects, transit operations (for the first three years), diesel retrofits, and the HERO program along with many others.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 – The Urbanized Area Formula Funding Program makes federal resources through FTA available to urbanized areas.   Eligible activities include planning, engineering, design and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance and some Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service costs are considered capital costs. The Federal share is not to exceed 80 percent of the net project cost. Operating assistance is an eligible expense only for urbanized areas with populations less than 200,000, and not applicable to the Atlanta region. Capital investments such as public vehicle purchases fall under this program.

For urbanized areas with populations of 200,000 and greater, funds are apportioned and flow directly to a designated recipient selected locally to apply for and receive Federal funds; in the Atlanta region; MARTA is the Atlanta region's recipient. GRTA, Douglas, and Cherokee counties utilize FTA Section 5307 funds for their vanpool programs; all are required to match federal dollars at 20 percent of the net cost of the programs. GRTA anticipates having funding available for the local match through 2015. Identifying the source of local match may cause challenges in the future.

Local CIDs - TMAs may provide additional subsidies through funding provided from the local CID they may be affiliated with. Local CIDs are created to fund a wide range of public-use facilities and establish management policies and public services that benefit and fulfill the district's needs. CIDs are created by the enactment of local government(s) and in Georgia the impetus for their development typically comes from commercial property owners. The CID is essentially a government entity that raises funds by self-taxing commercial properties within a business district or activity center. Taxes raised are typically used on streets and roads projects, sidewalks, bridges, public safety, transportation management association activities, shuttle systems, streetscapes, and sanitation. Vanpool funds from CIDs flow through the TMA, which apportions funds to serve the employee population with more and better options for their commutes.

State and County Funds – Cherokee and Douglas Counties provide additional subsidies from local sources to match 5307 dollars provided by the FTA. A local match is required for most federal transportation funding programs.   Match dollars for Cherokee and Douglas come through county general funds, whereas GRTA's match dollars have historically come through a General Assembly Appropriation that was originally funded by the state legislature in 2002; future appropriations may be difficult to secure. MAP-21 may allow match funds to come from fare revenues if services are contracted out, but the implications of new match requirements are not yet clear.

Other local funds – Some **individual employers** also provide buy-downs for vanpooling and other commute-related costs.

4.4   Pricing Structure, Subsidies and Incentives

The pricing structure, subsidies and incentives vary for GRTA, Cherokee and Douglas counties. These include:

- Using Federal Section 5307 funds, GRTA is able to provide a subsidy of $20 per seat, up to $300 per van to help reduce the cost of vanpooling for all riders. The subsidy amount will never exceed 50 percent of the total lease cost of the van. If it is in excess of that amount, it will be reduced to the 50 percent mark.

- Douglas County also utilizes Section 5307 funds with operations and maintenance funded through county resources, and fuel founded with over half of the county's budget for fuel. Fares range from about $70-130 per month zones determined from the location that the vanpool originates. A recent ARRA grant helped with the last purchase of vehicles as well as some security equipment.

- Cherokee County subsidizes similar to GRTA and have fares that range from $46-$141 depending on vRide pricing. The county utilizes 5307 funds as well as county resources.

Currently, the vendors can offer prices according to the market's demands. This means that there is often not any consistency in pricing, and the customer must bargain/negotiate for the best deal. GRTA does not have a set fare structure for the vanpools. Prices currently range from $0 (fully subsidized by employers) to $200+, and depend on vendor fee structures:

- **vRide** prices its vanpool costs based on the size of the van and the mileage of the trip (based on 250 mile increments). Projected fuel costs are not included in the price. Competitive pricing is available to large employers that may have many employees participating in the programs.

- **Enterpris*e* Rideshare** Also provides vanpools on a variable pricing schedule based on the mileage of the route. Fuel costs are also not included in the monthly price.

Prices for vanpool riders fluctuate with the number of riders and the price of gas; there is a fuel program where Enterprise Rideshare fills up the gas tanks, or fuel costs are left up to the group to pay the driver. Prices for the entire van are based on a tiered structure based on how many miles are traveled each month and gas prices. Some vans have other means of subsidy support or choose to be independent from the regulations required to receive federal funds through GRTA. In many cases, drivers have reduced fares.

Additionally, some TMAs and CIDs are able to provide additional funding to reduce the cost of vanpooling. For instance, Cumberland CID currently offers a flat rate of $100 per month for vanpool riders in Commuter Club (up from $50 in recent years) Similarly, BATMA provides a flat rate ranging from $75-$100 per month depending on the daily roundtrip mileage. Monthly costs are based upon a 10 rider minimum per van and gas costs are included.

Figure 13: Incentives/ Subsidies Timeline[19]

Year	Subsidy Amount	Length of Time	Provider
2004-2005	Up to $900 Startup Up to $550 Startup ($5100 Max per year from CAC) $400	Months 1-3 Months 4-6 Months 6-On	CAC CAC GRTA
2006-2007	$425 Startup Incentive $400 Per month	12 months Yearly	CAC GRTA
2008	$600 Per Month	Yearly	GRTA
2009	$20/person, up to $300 Per Month	Yearly	GRTA
2010	$20/person, up to $300 Per Month	Yearly	GRTA
2011	$20/person, up to $300 per month	Yearly	GRTA

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[19] Does not include specific cost-reducing buy downs from CIDs, Rider Referral Incentive or Driver Credit Guarantee

The *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* indicated that the majority of riders (34%) pay from $100 to $150 per month for vanpool fares. This includes the flat fares offered by some TMAs, which at the time ranged from $75 to $100 per month. Over 40% of respondents also noted that they had experienced a fare increase in the previous two years. Nearly the same amount indicated that the fare change did not affect their vanpool ridership.

Douglas County provides a subsidy through the use of 5307 funds matched with 20% county general funds. Cherokee County provides a 20% subsidy for the cost, which is broken down with vRide. VRide handles the rest of the pricing. Douglas County O&M (Operation and Maintenance) are funded through the county, as is fuel. Douglas County may soon charge fuel costs to the 5307 subsidy.

There have been many pros and cons discussed about each of the various pricing strategies, which are addressed in more detail in the benchmarking section. Regardless of the actual pricing strategy, findings from the *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* showed that financial assistance is an important factor in metro Atlanta commuters' decision to start and or continue to vanpool. 78% of riders who noted receiving financial assistance rated that assistance as important to their decision to vanpool. Of those riders who received financial assistance (approximately 60% of vanpoolers surveyed), 81% did not vanpool prior to receiving financial assistance.

In the Transportation MAP report, GRTA notes that the overall number of vanpools in the region dropped from 549 to 482 in 2009 after several years of increased ridership. GRTA attributes the decrease to a combination of contractual issues, transfer of vanpools between the private vanpool providers, and a price increase per vanpool seat. There were likely many extenuating circumstances including the reduction of subsidies, changes in communication and marketing, as well as a change in gas prices.   In 2009, the vanpool subsidy decrease from $600 per month to $300 per month. GRTA estimates a 40% drop in ridership as a result of decreases in subsidies. However, no exit interviews have been conducted with riders to determine exact reasons for departure.

Subsidies and Incentives for Vanpoolers are administered directly by ESOs. The regional incentives program, now under Georgia Commute Options, is funded by GDOT and administered by CAC. The program has been used by thousands of vanpool commuters since 2005 and includes the following programs that vanpool users are eligible for.

- **Cash for Commuters** offers $3 per day for commuters switching to alternative modes (over a 90-day period, and up to $100).
- **Commuter Prizes** of $25 Visa cards are drawn monthly for each log of an alternative commute in the Commuter Rewards database
- **Rider Referral Incentive** of $50 for a new rider that has completed three consecutive months on a vanpool post referral.
- **Driver Credit Guarantee** is CAC's program to incentivize and provide additional subsidy amounts for vanpool drivers.

Other ESOs, such as BATMA and Cumberland CID offer subsidies in addition to those that GRTA offers. Some TMAs, including Downtown TMA and ASAP+ provide the incentive of preferential parking spots for

vanpoolers. PTSC does a similar monthly incentive drawing for alternative commute behavior; anyone who logs a certain number of trips will be put in a drawing for a discounted club card to restaurants or businesses within the TMA.

4.5   Rider Requirements

The rider requirements for vanpools vary for GRTA, Douglas and Cherokee County. Additionally, in some cases, the riders who receive additional funding/subsidies from TMAs/CIDs are subject to additional requirements. These requirements include:

- GRTA established a rider requirement in 2010 to better determine the effectiveness of the vanpools. Fifty percent of the seats must be filled at least 16 days a month in order for a van to remain eligible for federal subsidies. If a van operates fewer than 14 days a month, it will also not be eligible for the federal subsidy. Additionally, vans must originate or end in GRTA's jurisdiction.

  GRTA is currently looking into other options to address ridership since sometimes riders are pursuing other alternative modes (such as telework) on the days they are not riding in the van. In this sense, GRTA has linked programming and funding decisions to direct, measurable metrics.

- Douglas County solely uses 15-passenger vans currently, and cut off service for vans that drop below eight people, since they have identified this as a breakeven number of participants to van costs. However, the van may drop below eight passengers temporarily without penalty, since currently the requirement is not an official mandate.

- Cherokee County, on the other hand, allows vRide to handle ridership requirements. Generally, vRide has an incentive to keep vans on the road and will seek new riders to fill empty spots.

- Additionally, for those TMAs/CIDs that offer riders additional funding/subsides, the riders may be subject to additional requirements (for instance the number of days per week they must travel in the van). For instance, Commuter Club requires 10 riders per each 14-passenger van to ensure there is consistently over 50% ridership, which is required to receive federal subsidies.

4.6   Marketing, Branding and Outreach

The roles and responsibilities for marketing, branding and outreach of the vanpool program vary significantly throughout the metro Atlanta region.

Marketing and Branding

Currently there is no regional marketing/branding associated with the regional vanpool program. The vehicles and program materials are most often marketed and branded according to either the vendor's brand or the ESO. Although there is no consistent regional branding for the vanpool program, GDOT is currently pursuing a regional TDM re-branding campaign, GA Commute Options, which may affect the vanpool marketing and branding.

- GDOT provides marketing support to TMAs through The Clean Air Campaign, which helps tailor marketing to the area, and fill in other gaps when needed. Over the whole region, GDOT plans on coordinating with regional stakeholders to make consistent branding and signage throughout the region to help streamline the message and ease confusion.

- Douglas County advertises locally through newspaper announcements, posters, and promotional information spread to riders to disseminate by word-of-mouth. As an outcome of the recent county CTP, Douglas County is considering branding vanpool under an umbrella of local demand management efforts.

- Cherokee County advertises vanpools in local media and includes the CATS logo along with the vRide logo on vans contracted through the county, but generally is hands-off with marketing, leaving most up to vRide.

New Brand for Georgia Commute Options

Georgia Commute Options is a new program from The Clean Air Campaign, GDOT, ARC and metro Atlanta TMAs. It combines the region's alternate commute resources - incentive programs, ridematching, employer services, telework consulting and more.

These services, some of which were previously offered through different organizations, are now bundled together under one umbrella as a free resource for Atlanta commuters and employers.

Outreach and Placement

There are multiple entry points for potential riders to discover and join vanpool programs (through RideSmart, The Clean Air Campaign, individual TMAs, GDOT, each of the vendors, employer partners, etc.). Additionally, there are multiple "handoff" points at which riders are referred to vanpooling but no real standard protocol across the region in terms of how those referrals are handled. As a result of the different marketing and outreach approaches, there is no consistent set of information that is shared with the public. The lack of consistency or a simple interface for connecting with the vanpool program may cause some potential riders to simply "give-up" on the program altogether.

All three vanpool programs (through GRTA, Douglas and Cherokee counties), with assistance from RideSmart, provide ride-matching assistance to promote formation of and continued occupancy for existing vanpools; some TMAs additionally keep informal lists to track potential leads. Depending on the partners involved, the vendors and ESOs range in their roles in outreach and placement. The vendors and ESOs both market the programs, though to different degrees, sometimes based on existing relationships. Nonetheless, ESOs are obligated to promote each vendor equally during their presentations and meetings as part of their toolbox of services. GRTA occasionally attends lunch and learns, but conducts no direct employer outreach or onsite visits.

When vanpools need to fill a seat, the vendor and ESO may coordinate to identify new riders, but it is not always the case. The vendors keep track of potential leads that may be able to help with filling empty seats. Vendors aim to attend commuter events, work with ESOs and form groups. There are dedicated marketing and outreach staff at both vendors to handle everything from billing and invoicing to maintenance and customer support. Vendors recognize the ESOs have a foot in the door with companies and can help tailor the vanpool messaging. Vendors are continuing to aim to define their relationships with the ESOs.

Database Input and Hosting

There are currently several databases in use, including The Clean Air Campaign's Commuter Rewards database to manage incentives, RideSmart's RidePro database for ridematching, and individual vendor databases. As it stands, not all riders in the vendor databases will be included in the RidePro or Commuter Rewards databases. Vendors provide access to the ESOs and GRTA for copies of their databases as they are requested, but this is not a standard protocol. According to the contract, the vendors are required to submit copies of the database when requested. Additionally, it is unclear whether or not all vanpool riders are aware of the available incentive through the GRH program provided through RideSmart, which requires separate registration.

Customer Service

Currently, riders are told that they may contact either the ESO or the vendor for any customer service issues that arise (related for instance to van maintenance needed, billing questions, etc.) The arrangement varies according to vendor and ESO, so there is no clear policy or approach towards when the rider should contact the vendor and when the rider should contact the ESO. Additionally, while the Georgia Commute Options branding campaign is poised to become the single source for regional TDM information, there has not traditionally been a single entity that has been the single clear source of information for the public, nor has there been a single phone number and/or website for the region related to vanpool customer service or broader TDM services in general.

4.7   Technology

There is currently limited use of technology to support vanpool services in the Atlanta region. vRide has launched software in the region for customers to see routes and times, and also for vanpool groups to look for additional riders that is in use now in other areas. vRide has also recently launched an application that riders and drivers can use to make payments online in the region. They consider technology to be one tool that can help both riders and companies make the most of commuter information.

Other regions do have more advanced technology that could be considered, such as GPS devices to do automated reporting, which is expected to extend more broadly into the market to help track mileage and streamline reporting . Automated reporting could be extremely useful for vanpooling. Precise data reporting and collection on a daily basis has been a challenge, which could be overcome and improved upon through technology.

4.8   Vanpool Performance Measures and Evaluation

Performance measurement provides value to any program, policy or service. Tracking, evaluation, and assessment offer a critical feedback loop that can further improve upon those programs, plans, or services.

Types of Performance Measures

Performance measures for TDM programs can be organized into four overarching categories:

- *Inputs* – Quantifies the number of activities or efforts initiated by the **program**.

- *Outputs/Direct Effects* – Quantifies the number of activities or results initiated by the **customer or client**, often in response to the program's input activities.

- *Outcomes* **–** Quantifies the results of the input or output activities often obtained by extrapolating the input or output data.

- *Cost-effectiveness* – An overarching category that measures the cost per input or per output of any portion of a TDM program.

The types of performance measures and their relationship to one another can be seen as a progression. The program inputs (such as number of meetings held or fairs attended) feeds into the outputs/direct effects (e.g., the number of new rideshare applications as a result of the transportation fairs). Effective TDM evaluation processes will link outcomes to inputs and outputs to show the value of program activities.

In terms of vanpool programs, the following may be examples of the different types of performance measures:

- **Inputs:** Number of vanpool meetings held, number of vanpool brochures distributed
- **Outputs/direct effects:** Number of new vanpool applications and new vanpool riders as a result of outreach, number of new vanpools on the road
- **Outcomes:** GHG reduced as a result of new van added to the road, costs saved by commuter, VMT reduced by van
- **Cost effectiveness:** Return on investment (ROI) of adding a new van to the road and removing SOV commutes

Program-Level Performance Measures Continuum

CTE developed and implemented a Performance Measures Continuum in 2001 to represent the range of impacts achieved by the TDM programs in the state. It is intended to show the relationships of the various programs and how each contributes to the ultimate goal of generating travel and emission reductions. The Performance Measure Continuum covers a progression of desired behavioral changes. At the far end of the continuum are the travel and emission reductions. Preceding these impacts (and at the beginning of the

continuum) are other "precursor" behavioral changes commuters typically make before permanently adopting a commute alternative.

Performance Measure Continuum

- Increase **Awareness** –refers to resident and business leader *Awareness* of TDM programs. Measures include awareness of media campaign marketing messages, the problems/issues surrounding the need for commute alternatives, the commute alternatives available, and the commute resources and assistance services available to them.

- Change **Attitudes** – refers to the *Attitudes* residents and business leaders have about TDM programs. Key measures include how residents in the region perceive the severity of traffic problems, whether commuters or employers view the use of alternative commute modes as a solution, and whether they personally view themselves as part of the solutions (i.e., changing their commute modes now or in the future).

- Encourage Program **Participation**/Facilitate Arrangements – refers to residents and business leaders *Participation* in a desired action, such as a program that will facilitate their use of commute alternatives or adoption of commute assistance programs.

- Ensure **Satisfaction** – refers to a user's level of *Satisfaction* with TDM programs and assistance. The actions measured can include the speed with which assistance is delivered, the user's satisfaction with the assistance, and the user's perceived value of the program.

- Encourage Alternative Mode **Utilization**/Maximize Alternative Mode Use – refers to encouraging residents to try commute alternatives and to shift to these alternatives on a continued, permanent basis. Utilization impacts are determined first by determining the population base of a program and then by calculating the number of users placed in a commute alternative as a result of the program. These users are referred to as commute alternative "placements."

- Generate Travel and Emission **Reductions** – refers to reducing vehicle trips, vehicle miles of travel or VMT, and emissions in a cost-effective manner. This is the ultimate goal of TDM programs. Travel and emission reductions are calculated by measuring the vehicle trips and miles and emissions reduced by the alternative mode "placement."

CTE uses a variety of data collection techniques to measure the progression of behavioral change, including regional surveys to document changes in awareness and attitudes, collection and compilation of performance measure data submitted through ESO activity reports to document participation, and program level surveys to document participation, satisfaction, and utilization. Figure 14 below highlights the performance measures and data collection used for the various stages of behavioral change.

Figure 14: Program Level Evaluation Performance Measures, Populations, and Data Collection Sources

Performance Category	Performance Measure	Population of Interest	Information Sources/Tools
Awareness	• Media Messages • Problems/Issues/ Solutions • Commute Alternatives • Programs Offered • Assistance Outlets	Commuters and Employers	• Regional Awareness and Attitudes Survey • Regional Business Leader Survey • Employer Partner Employee Travel Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys
Attitudes	• Problems/Issues/ Solutions • SOV Use • Commute Alternatives • Programs Offered • Assistance Outlets	Commuters and Employers	• Regional Awareness and Attitudes Survey • Regional Business Leader Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys
Participation	• Commuter Contacts (e.g., web site hits, transportation fair contacts, rideshare applications, GRH registration) • Employer Contacts (e.g., employer calls, employers assisted/employer partners, employers with TDM Programs)	Commuters, Employers and Program Users	• Regional Awareness and Attitudes Survey • Regional Business Leader Survey • Regional Rideshare Database Employer Partner Employee Travel Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys • Partner Performance Measure Reports
Satisfaction	• Satisfaction characteristics (e.g., time to obtain assistance, program convenience, accuracy and quality of information, usefulness of information)	Commuters, Employers and Program Users	• Regional Business Leader Survey • Regional Rideshare Database Placement Survey • Transit Pass User Survey • Vanpool Rider Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys
Utilization	• Program User Mode Split and Alternative Mode Placements • Employer Partner Employee Mode Split and Alternative Mode Placement	Program Users	• Employer Partner Employee Travel Survey • Regional Rideshare Database Placement Survey • Transit Pass User Survey • Vanpool Rider Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys
Travel and Emission Reductions	• Vehicle trips reduced • VMT reduced • Emissions reduced • Energy and consumer savings • Program cost-effectiveness	Program Users	• Employer Partner Employee Travel Survey • Regional Rideshare Database Placement Survey • Transit Pass User Survey • Vanpool Rider Survey • Target Incentive Program Surveys

Vanpool Performance Measures in Atlanta Region

There are a range of measures tracked by partners involved in the vanpool program. However, there has not been enough coordination to effectively link those measures across organizations to influence policy or decision making for the future direction of the program.

National Transit Database Reporting

Reporting to the National Transit Database (NTD) is required of GRTA, Douglas and Cherokee Counties for their vanpool operations. Reporting to NTD, however, is not handled in a consistent manner.   The number of vehicles operating in maximum service (VOMS) as well as the number of riders and vehicle miles traveled are all reported to NTD directly by Douglas County for their vanpool service. However, vRide reports to NTD directly for those vans operated through contracts with GRTA and Cherokee County; it is possible that the numbers reported to NTD by vRide also include vans that are part of private contracts with the vendor. GRTA reports separately to NTD those vans contracted within its thirteen-county jurisdiction through Enterprise.

GRTA Program Measurement

According to GRTA, the regional vanpool program mission is to: "provide the public with an accessible and affordable commute option by coordinating and subsidizing a regional vanpool program that incentives ride-alone commuters to rideshare, thereby decreasing traffic congestion, improving air quality and contributing to the economic stability of the region."

In coordination with GDOT, GRTA identified three key components of a successful vanpool program:

- Targeted public education or marketing to inform commuters of the true benefits of the mode outside of cost.
- Active employer outreach to find, form and support potential vanpool groups.
- Financial incentive for vanpool riders.

GRTA has been working on developing vanpool success measures through coordination with the vendors and GDOT. Success measures were evaluated by GRTA in fall 2011 with support from vRide and Enterprise Rideshare. Elements of analysis included:

- Number of vanpools initiated by each vendor
- Vanpool vehicle miles traveled, vanpool passenger miles, VMT reduced and emissions savings on an annual basis.

As a part of an additional analysis conducted in 2010, GRTA and GDOT determined the following success measures for vanpooling:

- Increasing ridership on existing vans
- Increasing the number of operating vanpools by 5%

Although GRTA does track ridership to look for trends in ridership changes, an official Annual Report has not been done in recent years. However, GRTA does account for vanpool metrics in its agency-wide Transportation MAP report. The Transportation Metropolitan Atlanta Performance (MAP) Report is a snapshot of Atlanta's transportation system performance prepared by GRTA on an annual basis. For

instance, in the 2010 MAP report, GRTA notes a significant decrease in vanpool ridership in 2009 and attributes it to a variety of factors, including contractual issues, transfer of vanpools between the private providers, and a price increase of vanpool seats. As a part of MAP, GRTA incorporates vanpool measurement by linking the number of vanpools to a measure of transit accessibility. It additionally reports the number of vanpools (as attributed to the various providers) on an annual basis, comparing as far back as 1997 to 2009. However, additional measures of effectiveness are not included in the annual transit report.

Ridership Requirements as Effectiveness Measures

A ridership requirement was implemented by GRTA in 2010 in an effort to better monitor the effectiveness of the program and the investments. 50% of the seats must be filled at least 16 days a month in order to be determined a "successful" vanpool. Otherwise, if the vanpool drops below the 50% ridership, it risks losing its funding subsidy. GRTA is currently looking into other options to address ridership since sometimes riders are pursuing other alternative modes (such as telework) on the days they are not riding in the van. In this sense, GRTA has linked programming and funding decisions to direct, measurable metrics. With the increased emphasis on performance measures expected in MAP-21, GRTA and other vanpool partners recognize the value of performance measures and complying with federal requirements.

Vanpool Rider Surveys

CTE conducted a number of rider surveys completed in 2002, 2006, and 2010. The surveys are intended to:
- Provide data for calculating travel and air quality emissions for vanpool riders

- Examine the role of incentives in the decision to ride in a vanpool

- Identify the important of factors in deciding to join a vanpool

- Gauge rider satisfaction with vanpooling program

Additionally, the latest survey in 2010 was also intended to identify the impact of the fare changes in 2009 and 2010. The *2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey* made several recommendations for the region's vanpooling future based on an assessment of the survey results. These included:

1) Regional messaging promoting vanpools to potential riders should highlight the factors most influential to commuters' decision to vanpool
2) GRTA should develop a seamless communications strategy to continue to engage and educate current riders on vanpools receiving the regional subsidy
3) The region should monitor vanpool ridership to ensure the mode is serving the maximum number of commuters in the most efficient manner
4) Ensure current vanpool riders are part of a regional database to enable seamless contact and communication
5) Continue to make the regional subsidy available to qualified vanpools through NTD funding generated by vanpool activities
6) Vanpool vendors, the region's TMAs and The Clean Air Campaign should explore options and develop regional strategies to effectively engage employers in the vanpool formation and operation

These recommendations have been incorporated into the SWOT assessment and the alternative scenario development.

Vendor Reporting

Vendors are all required to report/complete performance measures according to GRTA contracts (not including Cherokee County's vendor). The contractor must submit invoices for the prior month's services. The supporting documentation should include a passenger log from each vanpool that details the van's capacity, number of operating days for the month, number of riders on each inbound and outbound trip, and number of trips each operating day.

ARC Reporting

ARC addresses performance measurement related to vanpool through PLAN 2040 and the regional planning process, the Regional Transit Committee, TMA Monthly Reporting and Mid-Year Reviews, and the RideSmart program. For RideSmart, ARC records inbound calls associated with vanpool inquiries, and some vanpool application inquiries but no additional vanpool-specific data.

PLAN 2040

An initial concern with the previous iteration of ARC's regional plan was ensuring that TDM visions, goals, objectives, decision making, investment strategies and measures would be addressed in the RTP. TDM, including vanpooling, now plays a part in a number of PLAN 2040 goals, including the Plan's five objectives:

- Increase mobility options for people and goods

- Foster a healthy, educated, well trained, safe and secure population

- Promote places to live with easy access to jobs and services

- Improve energy efficiency while preserving the region's environment

- Identify innovative approaches to economic recovery and long-term prosperity.

ARC has sought to create a performance framework to better link goals and objectives into coherent decision making processes and guidelines. ARC seeks to monitor PLAN 2040 through:

- Periodic assessments of communities to measure their progress on meeting the local performance standards

- Use of an online dashboard or other methods to communicate the key points of implementation

- Surveys of regional leaders regarding the degree of the plan's implementation

- Annual reports on accomplishments

ARC plans to measure PLAN 2040's impacts and evaluate success based on the following measures, some of which will be captured through GRTA's Annual MAP Measures or the Transportation Fact Book Measures. The results of the measurement plan (sample below) will be reported in the Annual Regional Transportation Plan Management Report. Vanpooling is included only as part of the measurement associated with PLAN 2040, as noted within the Transportation Fact Book's measures.

Figure 15: Performance Measures in PLAN 2040

PLAN 2040 RTP Emphasis Area	RTP Plan Management Measure	GRTA Annual MAP Measure	ARC Transportation Fact Book Measure
Mobility	• Peak period travel time, sample roadway monitoring network	• Freeway travel time index • Planning time index • Buffer time index • Daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per person or driver • Transit passenger miles traveled • Annual transit passenger boardings	• Average daily VMT • Registered drivers per household • Commuters registered with ridesmart • Number of vanpools • Employees in Employer Service Organization areas • HOV lane volumes • ITS inventory • Metro signal performance

TMA Reporting

Some TMAs have a contract with ARC to provide outreach and education to employers, property managers, employees and commuters in their areas. Although some goals are negotiated within each contract, not all objectives have specific, measurable goals associated. For instance, a certain number of site visits/fairs may be listed, but a measurable/quantifiable goal is not set for increasing or maintaining vanpool ridership. TMAs should "assist vanpool vendors with the creation of new vanpools and ridership maintenance of existing vanpools."

Additionally, TMAs must complete a monthly report and submit to ARC and CTE as part of its contract. The report includes a dedicated vanpool-tab, with the following details:

- **Assistance to Commuters** (including # of commuter inquiries regarding vanpooling, total # of Vanpool Related Meetings, total # of commuters attending Vanpool Related Meetings, # of New Vanpools Formed and # of Commuters Placed in existing vanpools)

- **Disbanded Vans:** Report any vans disbanded in previous month. Also provide the van # and reason van disbanded.

- **Change in vendor:** Report any vans still in operation, but that switched vendors. Also provide brief description of what promoted the switch.

- **Current Vanpools:** List current vanpools using unique van ID#

ESO Reporting

The Clean Air Campaign, an ESO that is not under contract to ARC, provides monthly reports to GDOT on measures related to advertising, public relations and education progress.

CAC also produces a State of the Commute Report each year (last released in 2010). The report is largely a compilation of data from the GDOT/CTE Regional Commuter Survey. It provides visually engaging information related to commuting patterns, such as how people get to work, how many commuters use alternatives to driving, the growth and trends in the use of alternatives to driving, the frequency of alternative commute modes, and the average commute times.

Regional Transit Committee Measurement

Additionally, ARC's Regional Transit Committee receives an annual presentation of regional transit system performance (including data based on NTD reporting). Some sample vanpool measures counted as part of the larger regional transit system include:

- Number of unlinked passenger trips
- Annual passenger miles
- Passengers per vehicle hour
- Operating cost per vehicle revenue hour
- Fare revenue per vehicle revenue hour
- Operating expense per passenger trip
- Average trip length (miles)
- Operating cost per passenger mile

Vanpool Subcommittee

The Vanpool Subcommittee within the ESC meets on a regular basis and sometimes goals are addressed as part of the meetings. For instance, early in 2012, each member provided projections for increases to vanpools in their areas or for particular fleets. The following figures were provided:

- BATMA: 4 additional vans (30% increase)
- Commuter Club – moderate growth
- The Clean Air Campaign – 10% growth
- CAP: Fill existing Turner and GA Power vans (support their programs)
- PTSC - 5% increase
- MTS – keep existing fleet filled
- Enterprise Rideshare – 10% increase
- vRide – 10-15% increase
- Douglas County – 0% increase (no capacity to order vehicles)[20]

No formal goals seem to be prescribed for each ESO in terms of vanpool program growth, so the associated figures may only be projections.

4.9   Linking Vanpooling More Broadly to TDM+

For vanpooling to be most effective, it needs to support other travel choices that participants make, both at work and at home. While the primary focus of most vanpool programs is the home-to-work commute trip, typically over longer distances, vanpool participants may also be more likely to choose other travel options during the business day and at home. When an employer vanpool program is seen as part of a larger TDM+ initiative, both the employer and individual workers can make choices that support healthier, active transportation during the business day. For downtown offices in a more walkable, transit-rich area, employees will be more likely to walk or take transit to daytime meetings, for personal trips or lunch.

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[20] 3/4/12 Subcommittee minutes

For offices in suburban or office park locations, employers could make improvements to the 'campus' (or negotiate with landlords) to make walking to lunch and nearby shopping or services a more attractive choice. As more employers in an area see results from vanpool efforts, with more employees expecting a variety of ways to get around once they are at work, suburban office park campuses can be gradually transformed to support more walking, biking and transit use. As suburban office parks and aging shopping malls are re-developed as 'transit targets' with more walkable, mixed use development, vanpool riders will be more able to get around without a car at work. Employers and landlords can also work together to implement car-sharing systems (for businesses that do not have a corporate fleet for daytime use) and bike-sharing systems.

As more communities around the region begin to transform their development patterns and infrastructure to support more livable transportation choices, commuters may find that they are able to get around their home communities without a car, or as a one-car family. When vanpooling is integrated with other non-SOV travel options, its effectiveness as a TDM**+** strategy can be increased.

5. Best Practices and Benchmarking

Approach

A set of TDM experts and existing best practices reports provided input on the development of a preliminary list of vanpool programs to research. The preliminary list included vanpool programs in regions of similar size to Atlanta, comparable complexity, and approximate geography. It also included programs in areas that have similar central business districts, inner suburbs, and development histories to the Atlanta region. The finalized initial list contained 16 programs:

- Commute Smart, Birmingham, AL
- Metro STAR, Houston, TX
- Commuter Connections, Washington, DC (with a focus on Fairfax and Montgomery counties - per request from the TAC)
- CT Rides, Connecticut
- Los Angeles, CA Vanpool Program
- Share the Ride, Orange County, CA
- Washington State's Vanpool Program
- New Jersey Vanpool Program

- Phoenix, AZ Vanpool Program
- South Florida Vanpool, Southern Florida
- DART Vanpool, Dallas, TX
- MichiVan, Michigan
- Nashville, TN Vanpool Program
- Triangle Transit Vanpool, Research Triangle, NC
- CATS, Charlotte, NC
- King County Vanpool and Vanshare, King County, WA

The outcome of the preliminary scan of the 16 programs was a decision to conduct a benchmarking analysis by further researching three "best practice" case study programs and highlighting some successful, comprehensive, and notable vanpool approaches across the country.

Detailed Case Studies

To identify the case study programs, three categories were specified, and one program was selected for each:

➢ **Programs that are known for implementing innovative TDM practices and are widely considered to be leaders in pioneering new TDM strategies or activities:** *Commuter Connections, Washington, DC (specifically The Transportation Services Group, Fairfax County's vanpool program)*

➢ **Programs in regions that are comparable to Atlanta in size, density, and transportation infrastructure :** *METRO STAR, Houston, TX*

➢ **Programs in other southern areas with similar regional characteristics to Atlanta:** *Triangle Transit, Research Triangle, NC*

The more detailed case study research involved an in-depth review of information available online and in existing reports as well as a one-hour phone interview with program contacts.

The objective of the best practices research is to both benchmark existing vanpool service operations and also generate specific recommendations for vanpool service delivery alternatives for the Atlanta region. Highlights about each program's strongest components as well as its most unique features will help to benchmark the Atlanta region's program. Understanding and documenting the strengths of other programs

will enable the development of an informed set of recommendations based on existing practices across the country.

5.1   Program Highlights

The case studies below provide information about each of the three programs reviewed. Additional information on each program is available in the benchmarking section.

Fairfax County Transportation Services Group

There are a number of key components of the Fairfax County vanpool program that make it valuable for this best practices analysis:

- Fairfax County has local vanpool service delivery within a regional TDM framework
- There is a well-established regional TDM program name and brand, but Fairfax County has a local marketing campaign and local brand
- Multiple vendors provide service to Fairfax County, but no established contracts exist
- There is construction management funding for new vanpools
- There is some coordination and partnership with the TMAs

Source: Fairfax County promotional materials

Vanpool Program Snapshot	
About	- Approximately 50 vans associated with the program 3 types of vans: owner-operated, employer-sponsored, and vendor-provided - Mini vans, 9, 12, and 15 seat vans
Program Management	Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Service Area	Fairfax County, VA and Northern Virginia
Vanpool Operators	- ABS Vans, Enterprise Rideshare, and vRide (formerly VPSI) are the three primary - A number of other companies operate vans in the area as well
Website	http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/sources.htm
Contact info	Glenn Hiner, Fairfax County DOT (FCDOT) Employer Outreach and Sustainable Transportation

More Information:

The DC metropolitan region is well known for its Commuter Connections program, which covers travel options and commute information for the region, which includes: Washington D.C., Northern Virginia, and Northern Maryland. Commuter Connections provides a broad regional marketing program, as well as the

management of a ridesharing database and Guaranteed Ride Home. Many of the actual employer outreach services are implemented at the local level and vary according to the jurisdiction. For instance, although Commuter Connections advertises and promotes ridematching and vanpooling at the regional level for the DC-Maryland-Virginia region, residents of Fairfax County would actually work with the Transportation Services Group, which is operated independently in Fairfax County. Commuter Connections provides a Guaranteed Ride Home program for all vanpools registered through the Commuter Connections database, but they do not market any vanpool programs and interested vanpoolers in Fairfax work directly with Fairfax County DOT staff.

The vanpools in the Fairfax County (Northern Virginia) area are predominantly operated into employer sites and the vans are most often leased by one of the area's vendors, but individuals who own vans can also establish and operate their own vanpools while working with Fairfax County for subsidies. There are a number of vanpool vendors in the area that Fairfax County DOT (FCDOT) recommends, but it does not contract directly with any of them. Instead, the FCDOT and the vendors have an informal partnership, and a functional working relationship. Each vanpool works directly with the chosen vendor to establish a monthly price that is based on type of van, route taken, and mileage. Each vanpool decides on their own rules for operation and cost, but nearly all split the total monthly cost between all riders, and often give the driver a significant discount or let him/her participate for free.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides funding for the Transportation Services Group, and also funds the State's vanpool assistance programs: VanStart and VanSave. Any van in the Commonwealth of Virginia can apply for these programs, which assist vanpool operators who are having trouble filling a new vanpool or who have recently lost several riders and are in the process of getting new people to join.

There are over 800 vans that operate on the I-95 corridor outside Washington, DC, and the Transportation Services Group oversees a portion of these. In coming years, FCDOT vanpool staff plan to improve their performance measurement systems to gain more data about total number of vans, vanpools in need of riders, ridership statistics, and route information.

Innovation and unique approaches:

- ➢ Local service delivery supported by a larger regional program identity
- ➢ Vendor flexibility to offer tailored van wrapping according to employer needs
- ➢ Major construction projects have included state-funded vanpooling programs and incentives to encourage additional mode switching
- ➢ Employers contribute preferred parking spots for many vanpools even if they are unable to provide additional subsidies
- ➢ Fairfax County offers tax breaks for owner-operators of vanpools that reside in Fairfax County
- ➢ Creative outreach techniques to present to people how a vanpool works and use of employer meetings as ad-hoc/impromptu vanpool formation sessions
- ➢ Pursuing innovative approach to geo-locating coding all vans to show coverage to potential riders

Houston METRO STAR

There are a number of key components of the METRO STAR vanpool program that make it valuable for this best practices analysis:

- METRO recently underwent structural program changes and placed significant effort on re-branding and revising organizational responsibilities
- METRO, the transit agency, provides service delivery in partnership with the Houston MPO
- There is existing coordination and partnerships with the TMAs
- The Houston region has a similar density and transportation infrastructure to Atlanta
- METRO uses non-exclusive vendor contracts (through a marketing subcontractor)

Source: http://www.ridemetro.org/services/CarVanPool/Van.aspx

Vanpool Program Snapshot	
About	• Approximately 7,100 riders in 700 vans • Riders can sign up as "monthly" or "part-time"
Program Management	Metropolitan Transportation Authority of Harris County, Houston, TX (METRO)
Service Area	Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Montgomery, Waller, Liberty, and Harris counties
Vanpool Operators	Enterprise Rideshare and vRide
Website	http://www.ridemetro.org/Services/StarVanPool.aspx
Contact info	David McMaster, METRO Director of Commuter Services

More Information:

METRO is the local transit agency for the Houston-area, including 15 cities and major portions of unincorporated Harris County. However, METRO also runs Houston's regional vanpool program that covers services for an 8-county region designated as a nonattainment area.

Through a formal agreement in 1996 with H-GAC, METRO converted their local vanpool program into a program that now serves Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, Waller, and Harris counties. Between 1996 and 2009, the program underwent both organizational and brand-name changes. Prior to 2007, METRO was working directly with local vendors to establish, lease, and maintain the vanpools. However, after noticing inconsistencies in the cost of individual vanpools and the lease agreements with different vendors, the decision was made to outsource program operations to a contractor who now works

directly with both METRO and the vendors. Two years later, the program underwent another change when METRO's vanpool program rebranded and became the STAR program, a decision which METRO vanpool staff indicated was one of the most important pieces in making STAR as successful as it is today.

Vanpoolers who use the STAR program are registered in METRO STAR's Ridematching Database. Requiring all riders to enter into the database allows METRO to track ridership numbers, vanpool routes, and travel reduced. Riders can sign up as either "monthly" (12 rides per month) or "part-time" participants. All monthly riders receive a seat subsidy that goes directly to the total vanpool lease cost every month, and is funded by the STP and a local match. As a result, vanpools can receive up to a $450 subsidy per month. The remaining cost, which is determined based on mileage and fees, is divided among the total number of riders.

To be an eligible vanpool, all trips must at least pass through METRO's service area. However, since the eight-county area is extremely large, all of the vans currently in operation either start, end, or both within the eligible boundaries. Approximately half of the vanpools in the Houston metro area carry riders who all work at the same employer site. Many of the others bring passengers to common business districts, "office parks," or "employer campuses."

To effectively market the STAR program, METRO has two main strategies, which together have proven very effective considering that new routes are started each month. The first is to have sales representatives who schedule appointments at employer sites and explain the value and benefits of vanpooling to a large group of employees. The other tactic is to target small, local communities with a print, online, television, and radio advertisement campaign that raises local awareness about METRO STAR.

The STAR program in Houston now manages approximately 700 vans. With a centralized leasing process that eradicates the errors and inconsistencies that existed when individuals contracted directly with the vendors, METRO is able to better serve residents of Houston with an efficient and cost-effective program.

Innovative and unique approaches:

➢ One cent sales tax helps to fund public transportation services, including vanpool

➢ Demonstrated success undergoing several program structural changes and reorganizations, including most recently a significant rebranding effort

➢ All vans branded with METRO STAR offers additional name recognition with over 700 vans on the road

➢ Successful centralization of all leases and fare structures

➢ Targeted, strategic campaigns on a community-by-community basis

➢ Part-time rider costs offered

➢ Preparing for a real-time ridematching pilot coordinated with H-GAC to fill empty seats

➢ Implementing a new driver safety training initiative to enhance value of drive safety training

Triangle Transit

There are a number of key components of the Triangle Transit vanpool program that make it valuable for this best practices analysis:

- Research Triangle, NC is geographically and regionally similar to Atlanta
- The Triangle Transit vanpool program is managed by a transit agency
- Triangle Transit does not use vendors– all vans operated in-house
- The agency recently implemented structural program changes with re-branding
- Transitioned recently to mini-vans instead of larger vans

Source:
http://triangletransit.org/vanpool/resources
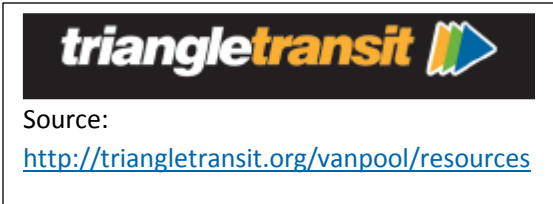
Vanpool Program Snapshot	
About	• 69 vanpools and 689 riders • 7 and 12 seat vans available • Riders commute to and/or from the service area
Program Management	Triangle Transit
Service Area	Durham, Orange, and Wake counties
Vanpool Operators	Triangle Transit staff lease and provide maintenance for the vans
Website	http://triangletransit.org/vanpool/
Contact info	Michelle Parker, Triangle Transit Sustainable Travel Services Supervisor

More Information:

Triangle Transit's vanpool program was established in 1985 and came under the management of the Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) in 1991. In 2008, after 15 years as TTA, the agency rebranded all of its programs and became Triangle Transit. Currently, the Director of Operations oversees the program, and the Vanpool Manager is responsible for daily management.

Triangle Transit operates seven- and twelve-seat vans in the area of Durham, Orange, and Wake counties. None of the 69 vans in operation are vendor-owned, and Triangle Transit does not contract with vendors. However, there have been times in the past when drivers or riders approached Triangle Transit about joining a vanpool and there were no existing vanpools with available seats or vans available for lease. In several of those cases, the agency will refer individuals to local vendors.

The monthly cost for each passenger varies depending on their particular vanpool's mileage and the fees associated with joining the program. In vans with seven seats, the riders and the driver divide the vanpool

cost between all passengers. In twelve-seat vans, drivers ride for free. Triangle Transit uses the passenger fees as well as State and Federal grants to cover the vanpool program overhead costs and vehicle purchases.

To start a vanpool, vans must be at least 75% full. The seven-seat vans are required to have at least five passengers, and the twelve-seat vans are required to have at least nine. Triangle Transit does offer an emergency seat subsidy twice a year if a van falls below the required number of riders. While there has been a slight drop in ridership in recent years due to employee lay-offs and a down economy, Triangle Transit's vanpool program has still grown. Since 1991, the vanpool program has tripled in size from 21 to 69 vans.

Innovation and unique approaches:

➢ One cent sales tax to support vanpool and transit services

➢ No vendors involved – directly managed and operated by Triangle Transit

➢ Program originally managed by Triangle Council of Governments but transitioned in early 1990s to the regional transit agency

➢ Rebranded the entire agency in 2008 – included implications for vanpooling

➢ The majority of the costs for van operations are covered by rider fees

➢ Emergency empty seat subsidies available two times per year

➢ Has moved from 15 passenger vans to 7 and 12 passenger vans – customers expressed interest in smaller vans since there were groups that could not attract 11 or more riders

➢ Submission of rider reports available through online format

➢ Fares adjusted on a monthly basis (increase or decrease) to reflect any changes in program costs

5.2   High-Level Benchmarking Analysis

This section compares the three case study programs to Atlanta's, with focus placed on several topic areas and performance measures. These are:

- Organizational structure and program management
- Funding sources
- Pricing structure, subsidies and incentives
- Rider requirements
- Operations and maintenance
- Marketing, branding and promotion
- Performance measurement
- Technology

Where appropriate, topic areas are concluded with a brief analysis of whether the Atlanta region's performance exceeds that of the comparison regions, is on par with their performance, or is lagging and/or shows opportunity for improvement - relative to the other regions.

Organizational Structure, Program Management, and Operations

About: The structure, organization, and management of a vanpool program are instrumental in determining its effectiveness. This category includes consideration of whether responsibility for key tasks is formally assigned, who handles accountability for service delivery, and who sets policy direction. Given that several funding sources are often involved in vanpool programs, formal coordination and cooperation of all partners are the most important determinants of desired outcomes.

Strategies: In general, vanpool program structures fit into one of the following models. In each case, vanpool services may be implemented at the local level.

- Direct public-sector management, implementation and operation of vanpool programs
- Pass through contracting of management, implementation and operation of vanpool programs
- Combination of public-sector management and private-sector contracting
- No direct contracting or involvement with vendors/operators
- Employer management

Figure 16: Organizational Models - at a Glance

Program	Organizational Model
Atlanta	- Overseen by regional transit agency - No single regional brand for vanpooling - Implemented at local level with some local branding - Vendors deliver services based on existing contracts
Fairfax County (Washington DC)	- Overseen by MPO - TDM brand provided by MPO - Implemented at local level with vendor branding - Vendors deliver services, but no contracts in place with local jurisdictions
METRO STAR	- Overseen by local transit agency - Regional brand provided by local transit agency - Program managed by a marketing contractor - Vendors deliver services based on contract with marketing contractor
Triangle Transit	- Overseen by regional transit agency - Brand provided by transit agency - Program managed and operated by transit agency - No contracts in place – all run completely in-house

Benchmarking: A review of several other programs shows that there are a variety of different approaches towards vanpool service delivery. The differences are mostly related to the organization ultimately responsible for service delivery, the use of marketing or outreach contractors, the use of vendor contracts, and the establishment of program branding. More detail is provided on each element in later sections of the report.

No programs took exactly the same approach, and each has specific unique elements to its structure. In **Atlanta**, GRTA manages the regional vanpool program, but there are many others involved in various roles. The contracting and funding, management and operations, and outreach and marketing tasks are distributed among a variety of different agencies and organizations. Since these roles and responsibilities are not always clearly defined, this can result in a somewhat confusing system for the riders and sometimes for the partners involved.

Fairfax County vanpool programs fall within the broader Washington, DC region's Commuter Connections program. Although Commuter Connections provides an overarching brand and marketing strategy, the vanpool services are managed and implemented at the local level according to the needs of the jurisdictions. As a result, each jurisdiction, including **Fairfax County**, runs its own program with its own local brand, Transportation Services Group. The Transportation Services Group helps individuals find and form vanpools by providing them with information about as many as 15 local vanpool vendors, including owner-operators. However, Fairfax County does not have any contracts in place with those vendors. The riders work directly with the vendors to establish a contract. While Commuter Connections has almost no role in the local vanpool programs, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), the organization that runs the regional program, provides a Guaranteed Ride Home program which can be used by vanpoolers. So, while

the vanpool program is managed at the local level, at least one service that contributes to the robustness of the program is managed and provided by a separate agency.

METRO, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority of Harris County, manages and oversees the Houston region's vanpool program. All vans that operate in the Houston area, regardless of the vendor, have the METRO STAR logo (with the exception of several specific cases). In 2007, METRO overhauled their organizational, contracting and branding structure for vanpools when the decision was made to hire a marketing/outreach contractor who would serve as an intermediary between vanpool vendors and the transit agency. Contracts are in place between the marketing/outreach contractor and the vanpool vendors.

Individuals who are interested in forming a vanpool contact METRO directly, and then work with the marketing/outreach contractor on the lease and vanpool specifics. The contractor then works with several local vanpool vendors, but most often uses Enterprise Rideshare and vRide.

Finally, **Triangle Transit**'s vanpool program is the only one of the three best practice case studies that oversees, manages, and operates their program almost entirely in-house. The Director of Operations has general oversight and the Vanpool Manager is responsible for the program's day-to-day operations.

Each example shows that there are a variety of different ways to manage and oversee a program, all quite different from Atlanta's program. Each program approach has its own pros and cons. For instance, having a contractor manage the leases and collect payments directly from the vanpools as in Houston helps to reduce and manage pricing, branding and operating inconsistencies between vanpools. However, D.C.'s approach of leaving the contracting up to the individuals allows the marketplace to set the prices and eliminates the need for Fairfax County to be involved in insurance and other paperwork associated with vendor contracting.

While each program approach has its own pros and cons, one of the keys to successful program operations regardless of organization structure is a clear definition of roles and responsibilities.

Funding Sources

About: Funding for vanpool programs may cover a range of services including the cost of staff to manage a program, the cost of contracting with vendors to maintain the vans, the cost of insurance and lease of vans, and outreach and marketing.

Sources vary and may include:

- Federal CMAQ
- FTA 5307
- Federal transit subsidy offered through employers
- State funding through Department of Transportation
- Regional funding through a MPO or other regional agency
- FTA New Freedom
- Community Improvement Districts
- Dedicated funding associated with construction management projects
- Regional or local transit or transportation agency
- Local sales tax funds and vehicle registration taxes
- Business improvement district or community improvement district funding
- Employer-specific funding
- FTA Job and Access Reverse Commute (JARC)

Benchmarking: A review of several programs shows that the amount and source of funding may vary significantly. In **Atlanta,** vanpool funds come from several sources: CMAQ, FTA 5307 funds, local CIDs and county and other local funds. CMAQ provides funds are used to fund the region's TDM programs – marketing, outreach, GRH and ridematching. GRTA, Douglas, and Cherokee counties receive FTA Section 5307 funds, which are otherwise known as Urbanized Area Formula Funds, to support the vendor operations. GRTA uses state general funds for the local match funding. Additionally, some local CIDs provide funding to their associated TMAs that can be used to provide subsidies to vanpoolers.

The **METRO STAR** marketing and administration fees are funded through CMAQ grants. METRO currently has $2.0 million in CMAQ funding in the TIP through 2014. The capital lease buy-downs that allow for van subsidies (discussed in section below) are funded through Surface Transportation Program (STP) grants. METRO currently has $3.0 million in STP funding in their TIP through 2014. During fiscal years 2009-2011, METRO also used an urbanized area JARC grant to fund some of the leases for vans that are used for reverse commutes. METRO provides a local match that comes from sales tax revenues. Last, passenger fares cover approximately 61% of total operations costs. In 2011, the total program cost was approximately $12.7 million, $7.7 million of which came from passenger fares.

Triangle Transit's program costs are covered almost entirely by rider fees. However, the program also does receive funding from the State and the Federal government. Like other vanpool programs, Triangle Transit receives Section 5307 capital funds for the purchase of the vans. In addition, North Carolina provides some State Rideshare funds to assist with program administration. Some of the State funds come from CMAQ and a regional one cent sales tax also supports the program.

Additional funding information from other programs benchmarked is not currently available.

Pricing Structure, Subsidies, and Incentives

About: The pricing structure for a vanpool program often includes covering the cost of the van lease, gasoline and insurance. They may vary depending on the van size, features included in the van, the commute distance, the number of riders in the van, etc.

Some programs offer subsidies, which may include:

- Vanpool start-up subsidy
- Driver incentives
- Empty seat subsidy
- Monthly per-passenger subsidy
- HOV/HOT lane passes
- Toll passes
- GRH incentive

Strategies: Some pricing strategies include:

- Flat rate/fixed fee established across all vanpools
- Fee specific to rider/vans based on mileage/lease cost, etc.
- Monthly, daily or part time passenger fees that may combine flat or specific fees
- Varying cost structures for vanpool drivers
- Offering discounted driver fees or waiving the fees for drivers to participate

Figure 17: Pricing Structure, Subsidies, and Incentives - at a Glance

Program	Pricing Structure, Subsidies and Incentives
Atlanta	• Various; ranges according to ESO and vendor • GRTA provides up to $20 per seat (not to exceed 50 percent of total lease cost of van); Douglas County fares range depending on origin; Cherokee County fares range according to vendor pricing • Vendors can negotiate prices to be competitive with the market • Some ESOs offer additional subsidies to provide flat rates
Washington DC (Fairfax County)	• Statewide Vanpool Assistance program – empty seat subsidies • $50 flat fee campaign in construction corridor
Houston	• Cost based on mileage, van model, and program fees • STP funding to reduce the cost of vanpooling applies directly to cost of each van
Triangle Transit	• Depends on mileage – prices set by Triangle Transit • Empty seat subsidy available

Benchmarking: In Atlanta, there is no set approach to pricing across the region – it varies according to the providers. For instance, GRTA provides a subsidy to reduce the cost of vanpooling ($20 per seat, up to 50 percent of the cost of the van), but some ESOs offer additional subsidies. Vanpoolers in ESO areas that are not receiving additional subsidies beyond those provided by GRTA reach out to each vendor and may negotiate a competitive rate. In Douglas County the fares range depending on the van's origin, and in Cherokee County the fares are based on the vendor pricing. According to the 2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey, the average fare paid per month by riders participating in the survey was $99.32. [21]

Vendors do not have any set rates publically shared. However, in the ESO areas that do provide additional subsidies, vanpool riders simply receive a flat rate. Similar to some other areas, Atlanta does have the competitive vendor pricing. However, of those areas reviewed, there are not similar mixes of flat rates and competitive vendor pricing throughout a region. Inconsistent pricing structures may cause confusion to the rider and not necessarily reflect the true cost of the mode.

In **Fairfax County**, there is competitive vendor pricing in place. Vanpoolers arrange a lease agreement with their vanpool vendor and determine a fee that is in part dependent on mileage and therefore varies each month. The cost of the van also covers maintenance and insurance and must be paid to the vendor regardless of the number of riders. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides funding for the statewide Vanpool Assistance program. This program temporarily provides subsidies to new vans that are still looking for more riders, and existing vanpools that have seen a reduction in ridership and are working to refill their seats. Fairfax County is also assisting in a $75 seat campaign for riders who join vanpools that are traveling through the Tyson Megaproject. However, this campaign, as well as its funding is only temporary.

Because **METRO STAR**'s vans are leased through a vendor, riders pay a monthly fee based on mileage that also covers maintenance and insurance. Riders work directly with a contractor hired by METRO who collects

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[21] 2010 Atlanta Region Vanpool Rider Survey, p. 13

their monthly fees and gives them to the vendor. The program is exploring some alternatives for simplifying fare structure while maintaining cost-sensitivity in pricing.

The agency supports vehicle capital cost through grant-funded buy down. METRO offers a subsidy for each person, which is supported through a grant-funded buy down. Because the grant has to fund vehicle capital, the subsidy goes directly towards the monthly cost of the vanpool, which results in the van receiving a monthly subsidy of between $150 and $450. These subsidies are funded using STP money.

The monthly cost of a **Triangle Transit** vanpool is dependent on mileage, and includes insurance and maintenance. Triangle Transit offers seat subsidies for new vans that are trying to attract riders and twice per year for vanpools that lose riders and need help covering the cost of the lease. Additionally, in 12-seat vans, drivers ride for free.

Rider Requirements

About: Requirements are often linked to the specific restrictions of funding sources (for instance, start and end location of van, percentage occupancy to justify investment, etc.) Others are related to the safety of riders (background checks for drivers, etc.) Some examples of requirements include:

- % occupancy
- Employment type
- Site of origin
- Ending site location

- Minimum commitment
- Distance minimum
- Consistent work schedule for riders
- Inclusion in ridesharing system
- Rider minimums

Figure 18: Rider Requirements - at a Glance

Program	Rider Requirements
Atlanta	• For vans receiving GRTA subsidy must have 50% of seats filled at least 16 days per month to remain eligible; also vans must originate or end in GRTA jurisdiction • There are additional requirements for those riders receiving additional ESO subsidies above and beyond the GRTA subsidies • Douglas County requires vans to have at least eight passengers in their 15 passenger vans • Cherokee County allows its vendor to determine any ridership requirements
Houston	• To receive subsidy, must be a "full time rider" = 12 round-trip commutes per month • Vans must pass through vanpool service area (either start or end)
Triangle Transit	• Vans must be 3/4 occupied for a van to be formed • Ending location requirements

Benchmarking: In Atlanta, GRTA established a rider requirement in 2010 that 50% of seats must be filled at least 16 days a month to remain eligible for the subsidy. The rider requirement was intended to help in better determining the effectiveness of the vanpools. Some challenges exist with this requirement since some riders who are not in the vans each day may be using other clean commute modes (like telework or compressed

work week) on the days they are not in the vans. Regardless of their participation in a "clean commute" on the other days, if those vanpool riders are not riding in the vanpool, they are not meeting the vanpool's requirements. Additionally, in the cases where TMAs/CIDs offer riders additional funding/subsides, the riders may be subject to additional requirements (for instance the number of days per week they must travel in the van). This may cause confusion to the rider regarding which requirements apply. Other programs, like METRO STAR have requirements apply to individual riders rather than the entire van so as to not penalize that entire van.

METRO STAR requires that to be eligible for the seat subsidy, he/she must be considered "full-time" and take at least 12 vanpool trips per month. This approach puts the responsibility on the rider to remain compliant with the vanpool eligibility requirements, rather than penalize an entire van for not meeting the eligibility. Additionally, all van routes must pass through the vanpool service area.

In the **Triangle Transit** program, which offers seven- and twelve-seat vans, there must be approximately 3/4 occupancy for the van to be formed. For the seven seat vans, this means five riders, and for the twelve seat vans it means nine riders. Additionally, all vans must originate or terminate within the 3-county service area.

Operations and Maintenance

About: The organization that operates and maintains the vans is often, but not always, different than the one that organizes the wider vanpool program. Whichever organization is responsible for van operation and maintenance likely handles customer service, van formation, fare collection, insurance payments, and routine as well as emergency maintenance.

Strategies: Research on programs across the country shows that there is no "one size fits all" formula for operations and maintenance. Several common strategies for handling operations and maintenance include:

- Vendor is responsible for all daily operational details, including van formation, van leases, insurance, monthly payments, and maintenance
- Owner-operators handle of maintenance and operations
- Payments collected and made by one designated vanpool rider directly to vendor
- Third-party contractor works directly with vendors to establish leases and daily operations
- Managing organization is responsible for all van operations and maintenance

Figure 19: Operations and Maintenance - at a Glance

Program	Operations and Maintenance
Atlanta	- For GRTA, two vendors are currently under contract – leases handled by vendors - Douglas County Rideshare has separate, entirely in-house program - Cherokee County operates its program through a vendor
Washington DC (Fairfax County)	No vendors under contract – lease handled by riders
Houston	Vendors under contract with marketing/outreach contractor (not directly through METRO) – lease handled by marketing/outreach contractor

Triangle Transit	• No vendors – all operated and maintained in-house

Benchmarking: In **Atlanta,** GRTA has formed exclusive contracts with two regional vanpool vendors who operate and maintain the majority of the region's vanpools. Enterprise Rideshare and vRide, the region's two contracted vendors, operate freely in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and at times perform their own marketing activities to attract new riders.

Currently, riders are told that they may contact either the ESO or the vendor for any customer service issues that arise (related for instance to van maintenance needed, billing questions, etc.) The arrangement varies according to vendor and ESO, so there is no clear policy or approach towards when the rider should contact the vendor and when the rider should contact the ESO. Douglas County operates its program entirely in-house while Cherokee County contracts its program to a vendor. The **Fairfax County** program is similar to Atlanta's in that it contracts out all vanpool formation, maintenance, and operations to vendors. Unlike Atlanta, though, **Fairfax County** DOT does not contract exclusively with large vendors. While they do work with vRide and Enterprise Rideshare, and those vendors make up a significant share of the region's vanpools, riders can choose from a fairly extensive list of approximately 15-20 vanpool vendors. Once riders have signed a lease with the vendors, one person collects the fee for the van and pays it directly to the vendor each month.

The **METRO STAR** program varies significantly from the Atlanta program. While **METRO** does work with vendors (predominantly Enterprise Rideshare and vRide), all leases are organized through a contractor hired by METRO to work directly with the vendors. As a result, since the leasing process is centralized, and one party is aware of all the vanpools being leased through regional vendors, riders in similar-route vans pay comparable amounts and have the same type of contract. METRO's contractor assigns one person to collect the fee for the van, and that person pays the total cost to the contractor. The contractor then pays the correct fee to the vendor each month. The vendors are still responsible for providing all required maintenance and insurance.

In Research Triangle, NC, **Triangle Transit** not only manages the entire program, but also provides a list of existing vanpools, handles all daily operations, and is responsible for routine and emergency maintenance. Triangle Transit employs several mechanics who are tasked with performing all maintenance needs.

Marketing, Branding and Promotion

About: The way that a vanpool program is marketed, branded, and promoted can mean the difference between a successful program with many riders and an unsuccessful, unpopular one. Having a strong brand serves three key purposes. First, it signals to consumers that the program is well-established in the area. Second, having a strong brand enables consumers to easily find more information about the program by performing a simple online search or by making a phone call. Third, a strong brand is in and of itself a marketing tool. Additional marketing and promotion activities serve the same purpose, and can be targeted at employers, individuals, and neighborhoods. There are many ways that programs can distribute marketing, outreach, and branding responsibilities. Several are discussed below.

Strategies: Existing vanpool programs take varied approaches to branding and marketing/outreach activities. Some of the strategies uncovered in the research include:

- Regional or statewide branding; local outreach
- Regional or statewide branding <u>and</u> outreach
- Local branding and outreach
- No program brand (vendors use their own brand)
- Employer outreach events
- Neighborhood marketing campaigns

Figure 20: Marketing and Branding - at a Glance

Program	Marketing and Branding
Atlanta	• No established regional vanpool brand – each TMA and vendor operates somewhat differently
Washington DC (Fairfax County)	• Regional brand, but local branding too
Houston	• One regional brand used for local delivery across different providers
Triangle Transit	• One regional brand

Benchmarking: A Georgia Commute Options branding campaign is poised to become the single source for regional TDM information. However, there has not traditionally been a single entity that has been the single clear source of information for the public, nor has there been a single phone number and/or website for the region related to vanpool customer service or broader TDM services in general. Other than in Douglas County, which runs its own vanpool program, and Cherokee County vans which include a CATS logo along with the vRide logo, the vendors in Atlanta generally operate under their own brands. Enterprise Rideshare vans have the Enterprise logo, vRide vans have the vRide logo, and both use their own marketing materials and strategies. GDOT provides marketing support to TMAs through the CAC, which helps tailor marketing to the area, and fill in other gaps when needed. Over the whole region, GDOT plans on coordinating with stakeholders to make consistent branding and signage throughout the region to help streamline the message and ease confusion as it develops messaging for the new brand – Georgia Commute Options.

Riders who use the **FCDOT** vanpool program register through the regional Commuter Connections database. FCDOT does not brand the vans that are leased by the area's vendors, so they have their own logos on them. However, the program does have its own marketing strategy, which mostly consists of holding fairs and staffing booths and employer sites. FCDOT is in the process of developing a new marketing strategy over the next several years.

While **METRO STAR** does not lease their own vans, they are in non-exclusive contracts with the vanpool vendors that require all vans and all materials associated with METRO STAR to have the brand name and logo on them. Like many other vanpool programs, METRO has several sales managers on staff who run employer outreach events at local employers. Beyond this effort, METRO also runs a targeted advertisement campaign for vanpools in specific communities in the Houston region. As part of these campaigns, METRO runs print, TV, radio, and online ads that are seen by a relatively small and concentrated population. After two months,

METRO moves this ad campaign to a new community, and is able to sustain this cycle for eight months out of the year. Sometimes, communities are selected because data shows that many people from one community work at a particular employer site. Other times, the selection is slightly more random.

As noted above, **Triangle Transit** does not use vendors, and so owns most of the vans in the program. As a result the vans that are branded with the Triangle Transit name and logo serve as a marketing tool, as does the website and targeted employer outreach. Also of significance is that the agency itself rebranded in 2008, switching their name (and all marketing materials and logos) from Triangle Transit Authority "TTA" to Triangle Transit.

Performance Measurement

About: Currently, carpool programs are fairly well evaluated around the country, and there is a movement toward creating more and better performance measurement systems for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and use as alternative commute modes. However, vanpool programs around the country are not always as well documented or evaluated. Nevertheless, having an effective performance measurement system in place for vanpools could help inform a more efficient operating process and could help attract riders otherwise unclear about the benefits and use of vanpools.

Figure 21: Performance Measurement - at a Glance

Program	Performance Measurement
Atlanta	• Regular reporting through CTE/vendors and ARC • Extensive surveying and analysis
Washington DC (Fairfax County)	• No set measurement at local level, but leverages State of the Commute surveys at regional level • Also tracks users through Van Start, Van Save
Houston	• Ridership and route-based reporting through RidePro

Benchmarking: Vanpool riders may be entered into one or more of several databases: Commuter Rewards, RidePro, and/or vendor databases. The individual vendors maintain their own databases of active clients and leads. Since a variety of databases exist, there is not a streamlined approach yet for data entry or management. Vanpool incentives are managed through a separate Commuter Rewards database. Having multiple vanpool rider databases in **Atlanta** makes performance measurement all the more challenging.

The region benefits from a strong programmatic evaluation approach through its vanpool rider surveys (conducted by CTE in 2002, 2006 and 2010). However, the day-to-day metrics of tracking and measuring progress towards regional vanpool goals is weak since there are few, if any, actual goals set in place.

In **Fairfax County**, there is currently some degree of performance measurement in place for the vanpool program. While vans are tracked through the statewide Vanpool Assistance program, vans that simply register with the vendors and operate in Fairfax County are not officially tracked in any way by FCDOT. However, they have indicated that with greater capacity they would like to be able to track vans more fully to

be able to report out on the total vanpool mileage, number of riders, benefits of participation, and success of the system.

METRO STAR does ridership and route-based reporting through RidePro and provides trip reduction estimates to H-GAC, which is required through the SIP. The MPO also conducts periodic financial analysis of air quality programs, including the vanpool program. There are no other quantified performance measures in place for Houston's vanpool program, though there is interest in improving program evaluation.

Much like the other best practice case studies, **Triangle Transit** also does not undertake any major performance evaluation measures other than reviewing program expenses annually and adjusting monthly fares based on the costs.

Technology

About: The use of technology in TDM programs has become more common practice as alternative commute modes and SOV trip reduction have become more popular and because of advances in web and mobile applications. Vanpool program operators are expressing more interest in taking advantage of the new technologies brought into the market by vendors, but the transition to using that technology has been somewhat slow even though interest is high. As carpooling continues to take on more technology, it's likely that vanpooling will benefit as well. Technology systems may help with reporting to NTD, it may help with tracking and performance measurement activities as well as accountability, and it can potentially help the customer to find more rides.

Strategies: Some specific technologies might include: dynamic ridesharing, on-board reporting tools and geolocating.

Figure 22: Technology - at a Glance

Program	Technology
Atlanta	• Considering dynamic ridesharing • Some vendor usage of route/time availability and paying online
Washington DC (Fairfax County)	• Pursuing geolocating to show where and when each van is operating and traveling
Houston	• Pursuing pilot program for dynamic ridesharing
Triangle Transit	• None

Benchmarking: In Atlanta, there is an evolving use of technology to support vanpool services. Additional GIS mapping is used for ridematching and could be considered for vanpooling in the region. vRide has launched software for customers to see routes and times in the region, and also for vanpool groups to look for additional riders. vRide has also recently launched an application that riders and drivers can use to make payments online in the region. They consider technology to be a tool that can help both riders and companies make the most of commuter information. GRTA has not pursued new technologies (applications or other on-board technology for use by drivers and riders). GRTA is allowed to provide technology through the 5307 funding, but has generally deferred to the vendors. The vendors are expected to use whatever technology is will provide the most efficiency.

Generally, due to the still present limitations in the vibrancy of vanpool programs, technology is taking a backseat to more immediate needs such as regular operations and service delivery. However, it is something that the case study programs seem interested in.

In **Fairfax County,** DOTFC is responsible for managing The Transportation Services Group is pursuing the use of geolocating to show where and when each van is operating and traveling. Houston's **METRO** is pursuing a dynamic ridematching service for vanpools, but has not yet tested it in real time. While technological advancements will certainly come into use more as vanpools gain in popularity and ridership, to date the use of such technologies is still minimal.

6. Assessment of Existing Program Structure

Based on the research, TAC input, focus group input, best practices benchmarking and stakeholder interviews, the regional vanpool program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were analyzed. A summary assessment is included in the table on the next two pages, along with more detail on each program element following the table.

Figure 23: SWOT Summary Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Long history of vanpool service delivery in the region and broad service coverage • Significant number of outreach specialists that promote vanpooling in the region • Positive relationships between vendors and partners and an established meeting structure to share lessons learned • GRTA subsidy offerings and additional subsidies from CIDs and employers to reduce the cost of vanpooling • Long history of data collection • Rider referral and driver incentives to generate new interest • Established emergency ride home program (Guaranteed Ride Home – GRH)	• Complex funding structure and lack of coordination on program and partner roles & responsibilities • Various approaches to customer service and no uniform database input or management • Different user requirements across the region • Perception that data is not always linked to policy and programming decisions • Various approaches to customer service and lack of regional branding/messaging; No uniform messaging or sales pitch to attract new riders • Vendor contract structure puts pressure on the rider to figure out the best options (although competitive marketplace can also be considered a strength); also different pricing structure across region creates some confusion for commuters • Lack of clear measurable, regional goals for new and existing vanpools • When interest in vanpools isn't strong, not always doing enough to get potential riders into carpools • Increasing rider concerns about safety of larger vans and availability of safe parking at Park & Ride lots • Current challenges in recruiting and retaining drivers with primary responsibilities • Vanpool options are not always well linked to other mode choices

Opportunities	Threats
• Additional funding, incl. MAP-21 provisions, CID/TMA local match and employer/private investment • Turning well-utilized vanpool routes into Express bus service • Additional technology offerings by vendors can improve reporting and customer service management • Leverage GDOT's new TDM branding for a targeted marketing approach to vanpooling • Leverage survey findings to influence programming and goals • Consider construction corridors and traffic mitigation as sources of new vanpool riders • Improve customer service/ experience (one-stop-INFO-shop) • Simplify user requirements to extend life of subsidies and vans • Improved parking management policies to influence vanpool ridership • Movement towards centralized database • Better links to other TDM activities and programs • Consider part time ridership opportunities to expand participation options for travelers	• Decline in subsidies may threaten vanpool ridership • Lack of local match for programs • MAP-21 may hinder funding opportunities if performance measurement does not align • Rider dissatisfaction/ confusion • Limited parking management policies make SOV driving an easy choice • Challenges in recruiting/retaining drivers; primary turnover • One size does not always fit all (different commuter motivations and needs across the region) • Vans may lose subsidies due to 50% requirements – conflicts with promotion of telework • Loss of employer participation/funding • Limited use of technology that could be used to add new riders and manage existing riders • Vanpool services are promoted in a silo – not part of larger TDM package • Lack of supporting infrastructure to support vanpools (such as more HOV/HOT lanes)

Program Management and Funding

- **Strengths:** The region benefits from broad service coverage, established meeting structures, a turnkey system between GRTA and contractors, and a long history of service delivery by vendors and the ESOs.

- **Weaknesses:** The region has a complex funding structure and stakeholders have expressed that there is sometimes limited communication regarding security of funding and changes to subsidy. Additionally, there is limited strategic oversight of program services and delivery and some lack of clarity on responsibilities of all involved (undefined roles for vendor and ESOs).

- **Opportunities:** MAP-21 and additional consideration for TMA/CID funding may open up additional revenue sources/options for the region. Additionally, the fact that ARC and its partners are pursuing a strategic TDM plan is in itself an opportunity for improvement.

- **Threats:** The changing structure of local funding and MAP-21 both may hinder funding opportunities, particularly with MAP-21 if performance measurement requirements are not met. Additionally, the threat of declining resources for the local match in coming years poses a threat to program funding.

Service Delivery and Operations

- **Strengths:** The region benefits from positive relationships between vendors, often sharing leads with overlapping markets. There is also broad service coverage for vanpool riders and an established meeting structure to coordinate and share ideas.

- **Weaknesses:** There are currently varying roles of the TMAs in terms of billing/invoicing, rider outreach/management, customer service, etc. There is also inconsistent user requirements across the region, which may vary if additional subsidies are provided by a CID. There is sometimes a lack of coordination between the vendors and the TMAs, and various approaches to customer service. There is also no single place or process to record information, with different information sent to different databases.

- **Opportunities:** The region may benefit from a number of opportunities, including: turning well-utilized corridors with multiple vanpools into potential new express bus service, leveraging newly dedicated vanpool support staff at CAC, connecting vanpool and human services transportation, improving connectivity and access for vanpool riders at Park and Ride lots, taking advantage of a growing suite of technology options offered by vendors, and additional county involvement in programs building off success at Cherokee and Douglas counties.

- **Threats:** The region may face threats from the continued convenience of driving alone (for instance, 52 percent of CDC commuters who drive alone and have other options, do so because it is more convenient), declining safe, convenient, park and ride infrastructure, continued challenges in recruiting/retaining vanpool drivers (administrative responsibilities of managing lease and payment), potential loss of van subsidies due to ridership requirement, even if they are using other "clean commutes" like telework or compressed work week on the days they are not vanpooling, and the waitlist to be on minivans may cause potential riders to lose interest.

Marketing/Promotions/Incentives

- **Strengths:** The region benefits from rider referrals and the driver incentive program to generate additional interest.

- **Weaknesses:** The region faces challenges in a lack of one regional brand for all vanpooling and no coordinated approach to local branding. Additionally, there is no single source of vanpool information, which lends itself to inconsistent customer service/outreach. There is also some conflicting marketing/messaging between TMAs and providers, and sometimes limited information sharing on potential leads and rider referrals when there are empty seats,

- **Opportunities:** The new branding efforts and focus groups conducted by GDOT present an opportunity to improve and coordinate marketing for vanpooling. Additionally, there are more placement opportunities if the program continues to leverage additional growth at military installations and locations with federal subsidy support.

- **Threats:** One size does not always fit all may apply to the marketing approach in the region. With different commuter motivations and needs across the region, it may be difficult to identify coordinated messaging that would work for everyone. Additionally, a decline in subsidy could pose a threat to the success of marketing, outreach and placement for vanpools. Finally, there has been some decline in employer participation in vanpool programs; additional loss may threaten the employer support of the programs.

Pricing Structure and Subsidies

- **Strengths:** The existing subsidies provided by GRTA and additional subsidies to reduce the cost of vanpooling provided by some CIDs offers a financial incentive for commuters to consider switching modes. .

- **Weaknesses:** Different subsidies across the region and different pricing structure according to the vendor put the responsibility on the rider to navigate the pricing structure.
- **Opportunities:** The upcoming contract renewal period offers an opportunity to better align the needs of the riders and partners with the current pricing structure.

- **Threats:** The current pricing strategy is confusing to riders due to its inconsistency across the region, which may cause potential riders to not pursue the program. Additionally, there always remains the threat of reduced funding to support the programs.

Performance Measurement

- **Strengths:** There is already a significant amount of data collected over the years by the ESOs, vendors, and CTE.

- **Weaknesses:** There are limited metrics established to determine the success of the program and no clear or measurable objectives/goals for each TMA and vendor or vans/riders for each year. Additionally, there is no clear mechanism to generate recommendations for service changes based on data collected, or any Annual Report.

- **Opportunities:** CTE has conducted a number of surveys with recommendations that can be leveraged moving forward. Additionally, there is a growing suite of technology options that can be provided by vendors that may make some reporting elements easier/more streamlined

- **Threats:** The additional emphasis in MAP-21 on performance measurement will make accountability and transparency all the more important, and may be linked to funding; inability to align with required performance measurement may threaten funding sources.

7. Alternatives

7.1   Decision Tool Matrix

A vanpool alternatives matrix was developed to help analyze the variety of different program structure options. The matrix includes the major elements of a vanpool program, including:

- Program Structure – Funding and administration, operations, and planning and policy

- Funding and Subsidies

- Vendor and ESO Roles and Responsibilities

- Vendor contracting structure

- Customer Service

- Marketing and Branding

- Outreach and Placement

- Database Management, Input and Reporting

- Guaranteed Ride Home program

- Driver Responsibility

- Pricing and Fare Structure

- Performance Measurement and Evaluation

- Technology

The following table outlines the options within each major category. The categories were analyzed by and discussed with the focus group; their feedback was used to help guide the development of short and long-term recommendations. The focus group was asked which category was the highest priority for improvements:

- The categories selected by most participants included *marketing, outreach and branding, roles and responsibilities*, and *pricing and subsidies*.

- Two or fewer participants selected *database management, fare structure, customer service, technology or incentives.*

Figure 24: Decision Matrix Tool - Alternatives and Options (Part 1)

	Program Oversight	Vendor Structure	Vendor Roles	ESO Roles	Contractual Process
Alternatives/Options	**About:** Includes oversight of several core responsibilities: a) Funding and administration, b) Operations and c) Planning and policy	**About:** Number of vendors that provide vanpool services	**About:** Describes roles and responsibilities of vanpool service providers - a combination of any of items below *(above and beyond providing fleet of vans and maintenance of vehicles)*	**About:** Describes roles and responsibilities of ESOs – a combination of any of items below	**About:** Describes type of contract relationship with vanpool service providers
	House all core responsibilities within one agency	No vendors (program operates vans in-house)	Marketing and outreach for recruitment of riders	Marketing and outreach for recruitment of riders	Contract relationship with program manager (Exclusive or non-exclusive)
	Split core responsibilities up amongst several agencies	Single vendor	Customer Service	Customer Service	No contract in place
	Agencies within consideration include: GRTA, GDOT, MPO and also contractors (The Clean Air Campaign)	Two vendors	Financial management (invoicing, billing, managing subsidies)	Financial management (invoicing, billing, managing subsidies)	MOUs or informal agreements
	Status quo	Three or more vendors	Database input and/or management	Database input and/or management	Contract in place between TMAs and vendors, but not between program manager and vendors

Decision Matrix Tool – Alternatives and Options (Part 2)

	Branding and Marketing	Outreach and Placement	Fare Structure	Pricing Structure	Ridership Requirements
Alternatives/Options continued	**About:** Describes the overarching marketing and brand name for the program	**About:** Describes the standard operating procedure and approach towards recruitment and leads, including roles and responsibilities	**About:** How and to who the rider fare is paid	**About:** Describes the pricing and fares for the rider	**About:** Describes responsibilities on user in order to receive subsidy
	Regional branding on all materials and vans for both regional promotion and local service delivery	Outreach lead by the TMAs; include vendors only with placement meetings	Everyone pays the driver	Mileage-based fees according to van	Van specific requirements, such as a certain amount of seats in the van (such as 50%) must be filled a certain number of days per month (such as 12) with a certain grace period
	Regional branding for recognition, but tailoring of marketing and messaging at the local level	Outreach and placement meetings led by the TMAs; vendors involved only with "behind-the-scenes" invoicing and billing	Everyone pays the vendor	Rider-specific costs (paid regardless of other costs in van)	Rider-specific requirements, such as a rider must take a certain number of trips per month (such as 12) to be eligible for funding
	Vendor branding only	Outreach and placement meetings led by the vendors; TMAs kept up to date and invited as needed	Everyone pays the TMA	Flat rate – according to categories of mileage (25-50 miles per day = $75, 50-75 miles per day= $100, etc.)	
	Local branding only	Combined outreach and placement by both vendors and TMAs (with clear protocol in place)	*(Also consideration for whether fares should be based on rider-by-rider costs or entire van cost)*	Flat rate regardless of mileage ($100)	
	Combination of vendor branding and local or regional branding			*(Also consideration for daily versus monthly pricing)*	

Decision Matrix Tool – Alternatives and Options (Part 3)

	Database Input and Management	Guaranteed Ride Home Program	Customer Service	NTD Reporting
Alternatives/Options continued	**About:** Describes who hosts the database(s), including responsibilities for data input and management.	**About:** How should the GRH program be managed?	**About:** Who should the rider call for any questions? *(Invoicing, billing, complaints, etc.)*	**About:** Describes who should report and track all data for NTD.
	One database, with all potential ridematches (including vanpool riders) and GRH applicants	Status quo – two systems (depending on the region) – with two databases	ESO handles all rider calls	Status quo – vendor and GRTA both report to NTD
	Status quo – two databases	Two systems (depending on the region) but with one database	Vendors handle all rider calls	GRTA only reports to NTD
	(If one, who should host the database? MPO? GRTA? CAC? GDOT?)	One system regardless of region (with one database)	GRTA handles all rider calls	Vendors only report to NTD
		(If one, hosted by whom? GRTA? GDOT? MPO? CAC? Other?)	One stop shop for all calls (even aside from vanpool) which are then routed to specific agencies to answer questions	
			Status quo	

8. Recommendations

The vanpool alternatives matrix in the previous section was used to evaluate the various elements of each category within the vanpool program. Based on the inventory, best practices, SWOT analysis, TAC input and focus group feedback, a set of short and long-term recommendations were developed for vanpool program improvements. Since this vanpool assessment report is being delivered before the overall TDM review and analysis is completed, it is expected that the final long-term vanpool recommendations will be refined to align with the overall TDM recommendations. The recommendations have been presented to the TAC and revisions have been made based on stakeholder input and feedback.[22]

- The **short-term recommendations** were developed as solutions for deployment in the next 3 to 6 months. The short-term recommendations are intended to identify efficiencies and improvements that can be easily implemented to bring about better coordination, cooperation and clarity of expectations. Many of these short-term recommendations can be addressed as part of the next round of vendor solicitations.

- Considerations for **long-term recommendations** are intended to move towards improved integration of the vanpool program with overall regional TDM services. Issues and elements for consideration were identified to help address potential long-term recommendations for implementation within the next 9 to 18 months. It is expected that due to steps required to develop consensus and implement them effectively, a formal set of long-term recommendations will be developed to align with the overall TDM recommendations in later phases of this project.

The recommendations are organized by categories of a vanpool program. Within each category, short-term recommendations are listed first, followed by the related long-term considerations (if they apply). Categories include the following:

- Program Oversight and Coordination
- Vanpool Vendor Structure and ESO and Vendor Roles and Responsibilities
- Branding and Marketing, Outreach Placement and Customer Service
- Fare, Pricing Structure and Rider Requirements
- Database Management and Reporting

> This Vanpool Report is an interim work product that was requested as an early deliverable as part of the overall TDM Regional Plan. Many of the recommendations that follow are described as if they would be stand-alone activities focused only on improvements to vanpool operations or marketing. However, many of these recommendations will be somewhat outdated in comparison to the integrated strategies in the Draft Regional TDM Plan, which addresses vanpool activities as part of overall TDM operations, marketing, and policy.

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[22] Due to the range of options included in the recommendations and pending feedback from key stakeholders, a more thorough financial assessment will be conducted as part of the strategy development task for the plan. The financial assessment will be in response to those preliminary recommendations that are prioritized by the stakeholders.

Recommendations Summary

Category	Rec #	Short-Term Recommendations (A)	Long-Term Recommendations (B)
Program Oversight and Coordination	1	**1a.** Refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	**1b.** Determine one agency responsible for program oversight and coordination
	2	**2a.** Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support management and oversight of the vanpool program	**2b.** Refine MOU according to full recommendations for overall TDM program
	3	**3a.** Modify organization of Vanpool Subcommittee	**3b.** Establish a vanpool committee that reports to the vanpool managing agency
Vendor Structure and Vendor/ESO Roles and Responsibilities	4	**4a.** Continue with any number of vendors but update contracts to align with SOPs	**4b.** Ensure all contracts clearly outline expectations through work plan, deliverables and goals
	5	**5a.** ESOs and vendors should clearly document their current roles and responsibilities	**5b.** Clarify expectations for roles and responsibilities moving forward for vendors and ESOs
Branding and Marketing, Outreach, and Customer Service	6	**6a.** Implement interim branding SOPs	**6b**. Implement one brand, a simplified message, and one web interface for TDM program
	7	**7a.** Evaluate placement of new customer service center	**7b.** Create one customer service center to respond to respond to commuter needs (including vanpools)
Fare, Pricing Structure and Rider Requirements	8	*No short term recommendations are included since any pricing changes will require a longer term approach.*	**8b.** Streamline pricing structure and make mileage-based rates the standard
	9		**9b.** Move fare collection from primary drive to vendor
	10		**10b.** Streamline rider requirements to extend life of van subsidies
Database Management and Reporting	11	**11a.** Establish an interim process to ensure potential and existing customers are entered into a shared database	**11b.** Create single centralized database
	12	**12a.** Refine and establish interim, 6-month goals for vanpool program	**12b.** Set measurable, realistic goals for each ESO and vendor

8.1   Program Oversight and Coordination

Recommendation #1a (*Short Term*):   Refine Standard Operating Procedures

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) appear as a key element of all recommendations, intended to provide additional clarity on roles and responsibilities. One key element of any organizational model is cooperation and clear definition of roles. As it currently stands, the program partners and vendors involved in the regional vanpool program do not all have clear understanding regarding their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to one another. For all program elements, the MPO should facilitate the development of SOPs between program managers, funders, ESOs, and vendors that can be used in dealing with one another, employers, existing customers, and potential customers.

SOPs should be developed as part of the regular Vanpool Subcommittee within the ESC, or different vanpool coordination group that may result from this assessment. Strategies to consider in the development of SOPs include:

- Document existing services and roles, including each agency's role and responsibility for recruitment, follow-up, data entry into shared database, etc.

- Document expectations of each partner.

- Address process for collecting information about customer perspectives and expectations.

- Standardize approach to customer interactions and customer service.

- Make sure process of adding riders to GRH is standardized.

- Standardize ridematching database management and data entry.

For instance, in terms of the role of the customer, when does the customer talk to the vanpool vendors currently? When does the customer need to talk to the ESO? By plotting how the process is currently operated, those involved can better discuss expectations and potential improvements.

As part of the SOP, a concept of operations (also known as "ConOps") should be developed to visually demonstrate the relationships between each partner and steps taken. FHWA uses Concept of Operations to describe in a non-technical manner how a system may be used in a way that will incorporate viewpoints from multiple stakeholders. According to FHWA, a Concept of Operations is useful to:[23]

- Achieve stakeholder agreement on how the system is to be operated, who is responsible for what, and what the lines of communication are;

- Define the environment in which the system will operate; and

- Derive high-level requirements, especially user requirements.

A sample of a Concept of Operations is shown in Appendix B.

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[23] http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/cadiv/segb/views/document/sections/Section8/8_4_5.htm

Recommendation #1b (*Long Term*):   Determine one agency responsible for program oversight and coordination

Existing program managers, funders, and regional partners should work together to determine which agency is best suited to lead the vanpool program. The results of the final recommendation on which agency(s) should ultimately take leadership are pending based on the completion of the full recommendations for the overall TDM program.

All roles and responsibilities should be clearly delineated across all partners (current roles to be fully documented as part of the short term recommendations). There are two primary components of vanpool program: 1) funding, administration, and planning/policy and 2) operations, management, programming, and marketing. While multiple agencies can be involved in the "on-the-ground" operation of these actions, there should ultimately be one organization with overarching decisionmaking and organizational oversight. Based on current statutory authority, those eligible to manage the program are GRTA, the MPO, or GDOT. GRTA's jurisdiction currently covers 13 Atlanta metro counties.[24] This jurisdiction should be extended to the current 18 county non-attainment area to be consistent with other planning jurisdictions if it maintains vanpool program management status. The recommendations on long term management should be incorporated into the long term proposal for TDM program coordination and management as a part of the next task.

Recommendation #2a (*Short Term*): Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support management and oversight of the vanpool program

To work towards improved program coordination and oversight in the short-term, all funding agencies involved (GRTA, GDOT, and the MPO) should establish an MOU to show clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. The interim responsibilities and roles may originate with the discussion of standard operating procedures described above.

Recommendation #2b (*Long Term*):   Refine MOU according to full recommendations for the overall TDM program

Any interim MOU should be updated based on the long term recommendations determined for the broader TDM program, along with updated Standard Operating Procedures.

Recommendation #3a (*Short-Term*): Modify organization of Vanpool Subcommittee

The MPO should work with the regional vanpool program manager and the existing ESC Vanpool Subcommittee to initiate a new vanpool committee structure within the MPO. The most logical structure for the new committee would be within the managing agency's existing committee structure. The managing agency could provide staff time to support the committee.

A revised subcommittee structure would allow for more resources and regional guidance and enhance coordination which would increase vanpool program performance. Participants of the new committee

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[24] GRTA's authority for some functions, such as major development review, covers a much larger area.

should be determined by the MPO and vanpool program manager. The ESC Vanpool Subcommittee would then be dissolved. The new committee should establish regular reporting items as follows:

- Empty seats – how many there are and what is being done to increase occupancy

- Goals and progress towards those goals

- Collect and share information on exist interviews, including feedback on why people leave the van each month and how many have left – (vendor report-outs)

Recommendation #3b (*Long Term*):   Establish a vanpool committee that reports to the vanpool managing agency

A vanpool committee should be established and report to/be supported by whichever agency ultimately oversees the overall TDM program and supports the regional transportation planning process.

A committee that reports to the managing agency would assist with both programming and policy decisions, as well as accountability. The region could leverage the existing partnerships established by the meeting structure for the Vanpool Subcommittee group within the ESC. Ultimately, the vanpool committee would be part of a committee structure for the overall TDM program that would be accountable to the managing agency for the entire TDM program. The managing agency could provide staff time to support the committee.

8.2   Vendor Structure and Vendor/ESO Roles and Responsibilities

Recommendation #4a (*Short Term*): Continue with any number of vendors but update contracts to align with SOPs

The regional vanpool program should continue to operate with any number of vendors provided that contracts include requirements in terms of marketing, branding, pricing, and roles that align with the greater interest of the region.

The number of vendors is less important than the larger structure in which those vendors operate. There is no preference on the number of actual vendors provided that the structure and contracts provides for consistency. Many vanpool programs around the country operate with multiple vendors, but the structure of those programs is clear and expectations on marketing, branding, pricing and outreach roles and responsibilities are well-established and understood more clearly by partners involved. A well-organized vanpool program can operate efficiently whether or not there are multiple vendors in the program. As part of the short-term recommendations identified above, the MPO could assist the vendors, ESOs and the regional vanpool program manager in discussing and agreeing upon roles and responsibilities such as outreach and management of leads. The resulting agreed roles could then be incorporated within the Standard Operating Procedures and the vendor and ESO contracts.

While the presence of only one vendor does appear to reduce the complexity of the vanpool program, well-structured program organization would provide a good framework for multiple vendors. There are demonstrated best practices of multiple vendors. Having several vendors allows for price competition, which

ultimately benefits the customers. Additionally, in an area as large as Atlanta, multiple vendors are able to service a larger population of riders more efficiently.

When the contract is released for recompete in spring 2013, the regional vanpool program managing agency should incorporate additional SOPs that better list the expectations for responsibilities and roles between the partners. This will help with communication, coordination and cooperation amongst the various organizations involved. The MPO could help facilitate the conversation between all partners.

Recommendation #4b (*Long Term)*: Ensure all contracts clearly outline expectations through work plan, deliverables and goals

Existing vendor contracts should be revised to more clearly define the vendors' responsibilities with regards to data collection, database entries, outreach, coordination with ESOs, and reporting.

Although in some regions more formal contracts are not needed, it is recommended that the Atlanta region continue to use a formal, contracted process for vendors receiving vanpool subsidies. Depending on the ultimate program oversight scenario selected, the regional program managing agency should continue to maintain and be responsible for the contracts in the interim. Additionally, side contracts between the vendors and local organizations, such as the CIDs or TMAs should be allowed. However, there should be complete transparency about the side contracts so as to avoid unfair pricing and unequal service provision.

Recommendation #5a (*Short Term*): ESOs and vendors should clearly document their current roles and responsibilities

As part of the new vanpool committee structure, the ESOs and vendors should clearly document their roles related to vanpool operations, recruitment and support and incorporate them into the standard operating procedures. The ESOs and vendors are not always aware of the others' roles within vanpool formation, recruitment and support.

Additionally, the MPO, GRTA and GDOT should help the Vanpool Subcommittee to refine the long-term vendor and ESO expected roles and responsibilities. Examples would include how outreach is conducted, how leads are maintained, and who is involved in vanpool formation meetings

Recommendation #5b (*Long Term*): Clarify expectations for roles and responsibilities moving forward for vendors and ESOs

The vendors should be responsible for handling all maintenance, billing, and invoicing issues, and addressing continuing ridership issues.

Under the current scenario, ESOs and vendors operate on their own with little coordination or communication. However, many stakeholders, including the ESOs and the vendors, have expressed a desire for more cooperation and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for both organizations.

In keeping with the organizational recommendation earlier in this section of the report, the agency that manages the vanpool program should enforce the vendor contracts and ensure that vendors are reporting all relevant metrics to the managing agency. While the information collected by the managing agency will be

most useful and relevant for the ESOs and the MPO, reporting should be direct from vendors to the managing agency to eliminate complexity from the reporting process. The managing agency will serve as a clearinghouse for all data, and should alert the ESOs and MPO of any and all relevant information that can help ensure that the maximum number of vans possible is full. The ESOs can still develop their own relationship with the vendors to get the ridership information directly if desired.

In the long-term, there needs to be a more reciprocal relationship between the managing agency, vendors, ESOs, and MPO. If there is reduced interest in vanpooling, or if vans are not full, greater communication will be necessary to determine what the problems are and what steps to take to amend them. If ESOs are more involved in vanpool formation, they can leverage those that may be interested in other modes when the vanpool vendors are not able to place them in vans. Similarly, if a vanpool vendor is having success at a particular employer site and begins to establish vanpools there, the vendor should engage the appropriate ESO to further provide additional TDM services to that employer. Primarily however, the vendor will take the lead on all vanpool related operations responsibilities (maintenance, billing, and invoicing issues, and addressing continuing ridership issues),

8.3   Branding and Marketing, Outreach and Placement, and Customer Service

Recommendation #6a (*Short Term*): Implement interim branding SOPs

A basic minimum level of information should be required for the vanpool vendors to provide on their marketing material and on vans.

While long-term branding efforts for the vanpool program and overall TDM program are being formalized, short-term branding requirements should be implemented and required of the vanpool vendors in the next contract cycle. Significant work should not be completed for branding in order to maximize existing resources, however, at a minimum; each van should be marked with a phone number and/or website that directs potential riders to a centralized location for vanpool information. Additionally, there should be regional coordination on the outreach, marketing and messaging, as determined by the managing agency.

Recommendation #6b (*Long Term*): Implement one brand, a simplified message, and one web interface for the overall TDM program

Based on the new statewide TDM re-branding campaign led by GDOT, the vanpool program should leverage the new branding efforts and coordinate its messaging and branding with that of the overall TDM program.

The existence of many public and private brands in addition to the lack of one strong regional TDM brand causes great confusion for potential customers. Such a system makes it difficult for existing riders to know who they should call for particular questions or concerns, and makes it challenging for new riders to know who they should contact when forming a new vanpool.

GDOT has recently released a new TDM program brand name – Georgia Commute Options. The regional vanpool program managing agency working with regional TDM partners should identify a regional vanpool

brand that will coordinate with the regional TDM brand name. Additionally, a simplified message about what the program is as well as one phone number and/or website that customers can call with any questions should be established (for the entire TDM program). How these calls are handled will be discussed later in this section. Once the vanpool brand has been developed, the managing agency of the vanpool program should require that all vanpools operating in the Atlanta region look the same and carry the Atlanta regional brand as well as the catch-all phone number and/or website.

Requiring that all vans are wrapped in the same brand serves two key purposes. First, it allows existing riders to know who is providing them with service and who they can call with questions, while also providing a clear signal to potential new riders about who runs the regional vanpool program and who they can call to sign up. Second, each van serves as a moving billboard, spreading the word across the region about the vanpool program at no additional cost.

Some of the more localized programs will likely want to maintain their own brands due to the additional funding they provide. An approval process and guidelines should be created by the managing agency to assist these organizations in receiving additional recognition in their marketing. A local brand cannot compete with the approved statewide brand.

Recommendation #7a (*Short Term*): Evaluate placement of new customer service center

Although a new customer service center would not be established in the short-term, as part of the interim solutions, conversations should begin on where a customer service will be housed. Customer service standard operating procedures, once developed, should be included in the vendor contracts so that all parties have full understanding of the procedures, roles and responsibilities in place. Along with the new database and customer service standard operating procedures, the regional vanpool program managing agency, MPO, and ESOs should begin determination of where the customer service center will be housed. A final recommendation on agency responsibilities for customer service will be incorporated in the overall TDM Plan. The customer service center should support the entire TDM program, not only vanpools.

Recommendation #7b (*Long Term*): Create one customer service center to respond to commuter needs (including vanpools)

The newly re-branded vanpool program should be linked to a customer service center (for the entire TDM program) that all existing or interested new riders can contact to learn more about vanpool maintenance, insurance, routes, empty seats, employer vans, and vanpool formation.

It is important for the customer to have a seamless experience with the vanpool program. As it stands, the customer may face confusion when determining who to contact for services and support, and may also be uncertain about how the pricing works depending on where he or she lives. Currently, it is unclear to the customer who they should contact for maintenance and insurance, whether that organization is the same to contact for questions about empty seats, and who handles each component of the program. One customer service center with clear standard operating procedure for the entire TDM program, including vanpools, will help eliminate this confusion.

The managing agency should establish one website and phone number for the entire TDM program that is staffed either by the managing agency or at another organization that is given this responsibility. Depending

on the nature of the customer's inquiry, a customer service representative will be able to easily forward the call or email request on to the appropriate agency or vendor. Primarily, the customer service center will direct questions about maintenance, insurance, and operations to the vendor. Ridership questions and inquiries should also be directed to the vendors, but the vendors should reach out to the ESOs for support with filling empty seats as needed. The customer service center could also serve as a dispatch to key assistance sources.

The success of such a system will rely on one, centralized database that contains all information about each rider and each van. Customer service representatives will have access to this database and will be able to look up the potential rider in the database when they first receive the inquiry. Then, before transferring the customer to the appropriate agency, the customer service representative will briefly explain to the agency who the customer is, what his or her van route is, and the nature of the customer's call so that the caller does not have to repeat him or herself when being transferred to another representative. Correspondence will either occur through email or phone, depending on the inquiry type and preference of the rider.

8.5   Fare, Pricing Structure and Rider Requirements

No short term recommendations are included since any pricing changes would require a longer term approach.

Recommendation #8b (*Long Term*): Streamline pricing structure and make mileage-based rates the standard

All vanpools across the region should have the same pricing structure to limit confusion and simplify marketing. The managing agency (or designees such as the ESOs) should be negotiating pricing rather than the riders so as to avoid unequal fares for similar vans, and to simplify driver enlistment.

Vendors currently offer a variety of approaches, ranging from price per van to price per person. Even two vans that are driving the same route may pay different prices as a result of the competitive nature of negotiation (which can include prospective drivers having to negotiate on their own with multiple vendors). A fare structure should be developed and included in the contract between the vendors and the managing agency for flat rate pricing, based on the type of van and route mileage.

Some riders receive additional subsidies from CIDs and pay a reduced or smaller flat rate. It is recommended that local CIDs continue to offer additional subsidies due to specific market forces in their local areas (parking pricing, etc.). Additionally, the contract between the vanpool vendor and the program manager should require that the subsidy riders receive from the vanpool program manager should be more transparent and communicated on each invoice as a separate line-item.

Recommendation #9b (*Long Term*): Move fare collection from primary driver to vendor

All vanpool riders should pay the fare directly to the vendors rather than their van's driver in order to reduce the responsibility and expectations of the driver.

Fare collection for a sizeable van can be a significant responsibility each month. In many cases, this job is the responsibility of the van's driver. However, such an obligation has proven to be a major deterrent for riders

who might otherwise want to serve as the van's primary driver. Beyond the burden fare collection places on the driver, it there are also potential fraud issues associated with payment and collection.

To avoid the issues that arise when drivers are required to collect the fares, the vendor should be the primary party responsible for fare collection. Each rider should give the vendor a monthly payment to cover their portion of the cost. The vendors have dedicated staff to process payments, so these staff members should be responsible for organizing and collecting payments as well. Additional technology developments by the vendors may streamline the collection of payment from riders.

Recommendation #10b (*Long Term*): Streamline rider requirements to extend life of van subsidies

The regional vanpool managing agency and the MPO should further review FTA guidelines regarding vanpool ridership requirements, and also consider transitioning to smaller vans.

To avoid empty seat issues, the vendors may consider promoting 8 or 10 passenger vans instead of 15 passenger vans. This would allow the vanpool to maintain its ridership numbers without losing the incentive. Additionally, the other recommendations such as the shared, integrated database would over the long run likely assist with addressing empty seat issues so that a vanpool does not disband. The specific requirement may not matter if the coordination and structure is in place to support the maximum participation in the program. The vendor contracts must specify clear lines of responsibility on which organization should have the role of ensuring capacity is maximized.

8.5   Database Management and Reporting

Recommendation #11a (*Short Term*): Establish an interim process to ensure potential and existing customers are entered into a shared database

The MPO should work with the regional vanpool program managing agency to establish an interim process to ensure potential and existing customers are entered into a shared database.

The MPO may consider providing secondary licenses to other partners to usethe rideshare software databases. The Vanpool Subcommittee should work together to best determine the appropriate interim process. For instance, it may include:

> *"When vanpool applications are received, vRide puts information into its own database and then the data goes into the ridematching database. _____ is in charge of managing the shared database. The handoff between vRide and the MPO or ESO must happen within x amount of time", etc.*

Recommendation #11b (*Long Term*): Create a single centralized database

The regional vanpool program managing agency should work with the MPO and GDOT to determine which organization is responsible for hosting and maintaining the centralized database with all ridership and vanpool information, and should require that all riders are included in that database.

Currently, there are multiple databases in use which makes it difficult to measure and track vanpool program performance, as well as keep existing vanpools filled when riders leave. There needs to be one ridematching database that is kept up-to-date with all ridership and vanpool information that can be used by customer service representatives, vanpool riders, vendors, ESOs, and partner agencies. The MPO and GDOT are already currently coordinating on the consolidation of one ridematching database system for the region.

Although vendors may keep their own databases, all existing and potential customers need to be in a shared ridematching database accessible to the regional vanpool program manager, MPO, and ESOs. By making this data accessible to all partners, it is more likely that empty seats can be filled more quickly, ensuring the longevity of the existing vans.

Recommendation #12a (*Short Term*): Refine and establish interim, 6-month goals for vanpool program

The regional vanpool program managing agency, GDOT and the MPO should work with ESOs and vendors to refine and establish interim, 6-month goals for the vanpool program. These goals should address adding new vanpools, riders and maintaining existing services.

The MPO may address these goals by reviewing the mid-year review results recently completed with each ESO. The regional vanpool program managing agency should also coordinate with the MPO to determine realistic goals for each vendor and the overall regional vanpool program. The goals should be based on forecasted results for January 1 through June 31, 2013. The interim goals will not be included as part of the current contracts, but goals for July 1 through December 31, 2013 should be incorporated into the new contracts.

As part of this recommendation, the interim goals should be linked to the existing reporting and evaluation processes. However, some reports may need to be revised slightly to accommodate the tracking of the interim goals. For instance, on the vanpool tab of the ESO report, there should be a place added to record the progress towards the interim goals. Additionally, the new vanpool committee should report progress on goals as a regular agenda item at meetings. The regional vanpool program managing agency should work with GDOT, MPO and the ESOs to produce a mid-year report on vanpool program successes, challenges and results. While vanpool performance is addressed in GRTA's Transportation MAP report, the information provided is not detailed enough to provide valuable feedback for programming and funding of the program.

Finally, one agency should handle all NTD reporting to reduce data integrity issues and ensure accurate reporting across all partners. Currently, a combination of the vendors and the regional vanpool program managing agency conduct the reporting for NTD, causing some confusion in getting accurate data on total ridership. One agency reporting would streamline the reporting to ensure better information and clear management of the data.

Recommendation #12b (*Long Term*): Set measurable, realistic goals for each ESO and vendor

The regional vanpool program managing agency should work with GDOT, the MPO, ESOs, and vendors to determine realistic and measurable goals for adding new vanpools, riders and maintaining existing service as a part of each vendor contract.

Currently all vendors and ESOs are required to report and complete performance measures according to the contracts. However, the specific, measurable goals are not clear. Since the nature of each ESO varies, the program manager, GDOT, and MPO should work together to develop specific goals and targets in which to measure success on a regular basis.

Some sample goals may include:

- Add X percent of new vans
- Add X percent of new vanpool riders
- Maintain X vans
  Ensure that all new vanpool riders are entered into a single ridematching database.

The managing agency should work with the vendors and CTE to develop a dashboard that summarizes key measurement information, including ridership, relevant NTD data, costs, etc. that can be made available for managing the services efficiently and cost-effectively.

9. Next Steps

GRTA, the MPO, and GDOT will determine which short-term recommendations to implement as part of the 2013 vendor solicitation for the vanpool program. The long-term considerations will be further vetted during subsequent tasks of the Regional TDM Plan and formalized as long-term recommendations at the conclusion of the overall project.

Appendix A. Glossary

ARC – Atlanta Regional Commission

ASAP+ - Atlantic Station Access and Mobility Program

BATMA – Buckhead Area Transportation Management Association**CAC** – The Clean Air Campaign

CAP – Central Atlanta Progress

CCTMA – Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CID – Community Improvement District

CMAQ – Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

CTE – Center for Transportation and the Environment

DOT – Department of Transportation

GBA – Georgia Building Authority

GDOT – Georgia Department of Transportation

GEPD – Georgia Environmental Protection Division

GHG – Greenhouse gases

GRH – Guaranteed Ride Home Program

GRTA – Georgia Regional Transportation Authority

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

ESC – Employer Services Committee

ESO – Employer Service Organization

FTA – Federal Transit Administration

HOV – High Occupancy Vehicle

HOT – High Occupancy Toll

LCI – Livable Communities Initiative

MAP-21 – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

MTS – Midtown Transportation Solutions

NCHRP – National Cooperative Highway Research Program

NTD – National Transit Database

PLAN 2040 – PLAN 2040 Regional Transportation Plan for Atlanta

PTSC – Perimeter Transportation and Sustainability Coalition

RTP – Regional Transportation Plan

SAFETEA-LU – Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users

SOP – Standard Operating Procedures

SOV – Single Occupancy Vehicle

TAC – Technical Advisory Committee

TCRP – Transportation Cooperative Research Program

TDM – Transportation Demand Management

TDM+ – A broader definition of TDM that expands the view of traditional TDM strategies by making the connection between TDM and livability, sustainability, transit, walking and biking, systems operations, transportation planning, economic development, climate change, healthy communities, and active aging.
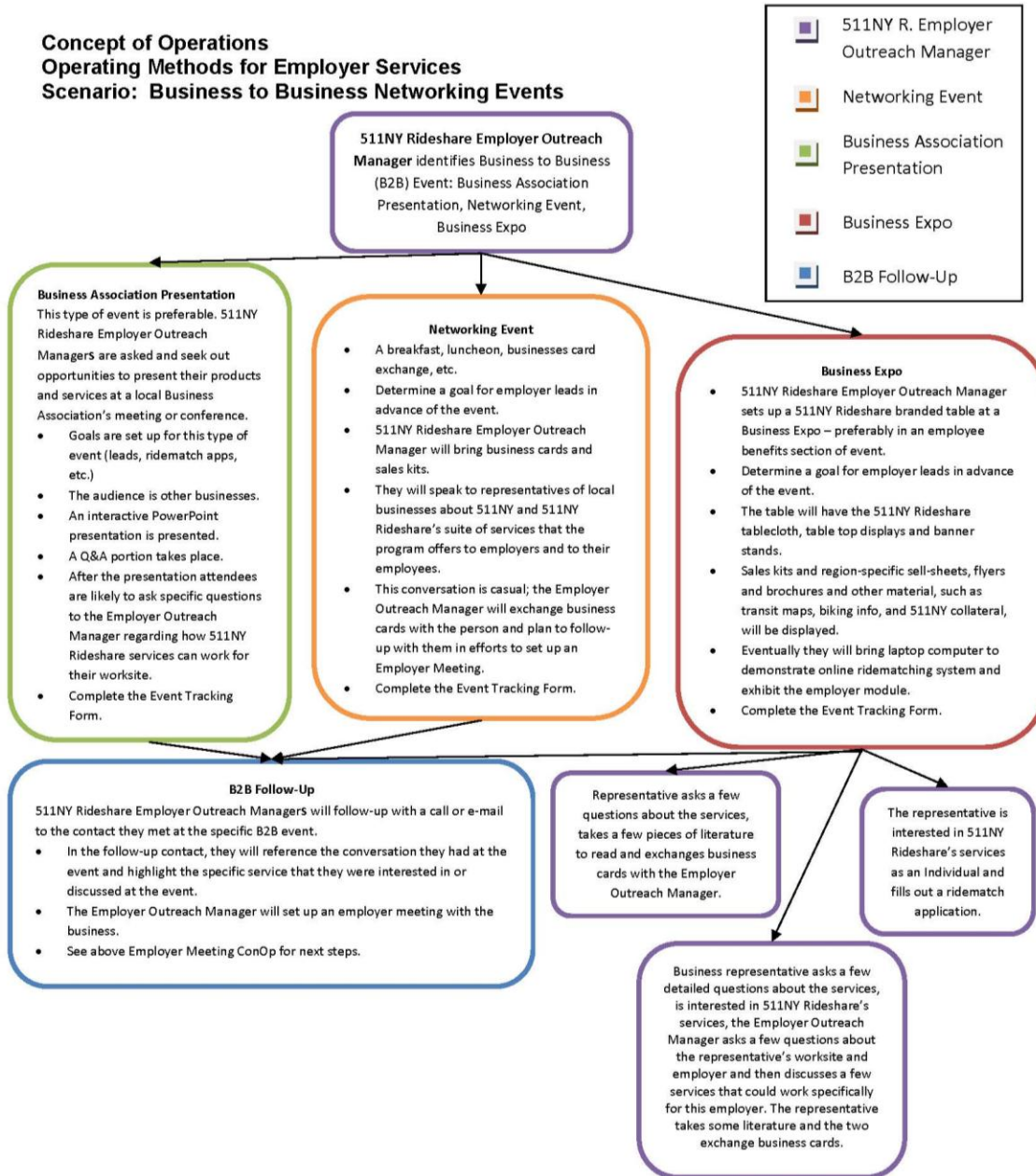
TIP – Transportation Improvement Program

TMA – Transportation Management Association

TOD – Transit Oriented Development

VMT – Vehicle Miles Traveled

Appendix B. Additional Visuals

Sample Concept of Operations - Operating Methods for Employer Services - Business to Business Events[25]