



# Rural Transit Consolidation Study for Cochise County



**2020-2021**

**SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA GOVERNMENTS ORGANIZATION**

*[www.seago.org](http://www.seago.org)*

# SEAGO Rural Transit Consolidation Study for Cochise County 2020-2021

- I INTRODUCTION ..... 2**
  - Purpose of Study – Goal..... 2
  - Preliminary Findings..... 2
  - COVID-19 Considerations..... 3
  - Area of Study ..... 3
  - Sources of data ..... 4
- II REGIONAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS ..... 4**
  - Transit Providers in study area by type..... 4
  - Service Providers in area by Provider..... 5
- III OUTREACH..... 12**
  - Public Engagement Plan..... 12
  - TAC Engagement..... 13
  - Public Engagement ..... 19
- IV CONSOLIDATION/COORDINATION BENEFITS AS DEFINED BY TAC MEMBERS ..... 22**
  - Matrix tool ..... 22
  - Questionnaire ..... 33
- V ANALYSIS..... 36**
  - Regional vs. State Averages ..... 36
  - Summary of regional geography and demographics..... 36
  - Impact of COVID-19 and the Corona Virus on Transit Providers in the Region ..... 37
  - Performance Challenges ..... 37
- VI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS ..... 38**
  - Networking ..... 38
  - Potential Roles in a Coordination/Consolidation Effort ..... 40
- VII OTHER POTENTIAL SERVICE CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS ..... 41**
  - Traditional Consolidation Methods..... 41
  - Other localized potential consolidation efforts ..... 45
- VIII SUMMARY..... 45**
- IX Next Steps ..... 46**

## I INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of Study – Goal

Create a framework on which ADOT funded rural and small urban transit providers in Cochise County may improve upon the provision of transit services in the area.

- Objective 1. Improve cost efficiency
- Objective 2. Enhance rider experience
- Objective 3. Expand service where needed and where feasible
- Objective 4. Develop more effective networks through consolidation of services, assets, and processes, when feasible

### Preliminary Findings

Of the four 5311 providers operating in Cochise County (Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox), three have transit service experience of 10 years or more. (Willcox will begin operations in 2021). Bisbee has contracted out operations since its inception (presently operated by the City of Douglas) while Benson and Douglas continue to operate their systems in-house. Each system applies to ADOT for 5311 award every two years. Because each of these City entities operates on minimal staffing and overhead, many of the obligations requiring staff time are carried out by existing general-fund staff who absorb the transit duties into their own and otherwise, full-time jobs. We see this most often with administrative duties. A transit manager may also be the finance director or a public works director or administrator, and even a dispatcher might also be a clerk or parks and rec employee. Each of these staff members allocates time and associated expenses to the 5311 award. This, in turn, allows the City to collect up to 80% of those eligible administrative costs and around 50% (in 2020-21 the AZDOT reimbursement rate was 58%) of operational costs in reimbursement claims, bringing a non-general fund source of revenues to the City's annual budget. In other words, if a City charges approximately 20% of its Finance Director's time (a position it will have whether or not it has a transit system) to manage the transit system and is reimbursed 80% of that charge in a reimbursement, it can save ordinary general funds that would have been used for that portion of the salary for other purposes. This offset reduces the actual new-cash requirement needed when budgeting for a transit system. While this reduces the actual new-cash requirement for a city to operate a transit system, it does not erase the total match requirement.

In addition to the value of offsets, Cities also consider their autonomy in meeting local transit needs, as well as the political value in providing transit services to their constituents. When operating a system in-house, locally sourced drivers are, very often, known members of the community and are familiar to riders (nearly all are hired from the local job/worker pool) building trust where the "local-first" mindset is supportive of a locally operated system. These drivers and administrators are not seen as strangers who do not know the community but as a member of the community serving the residents. When the City of Douglas took over the City of Bisbee's Bisbee Bus system, it worked hard to identify drivers who lived in Bisbee and who might know a number of the riders in order to maintain that locally-operated feel that the system provided its riders. When a system is locally operated its riders have more of a sense of

ownership, trust, and investment in the system, thereby taking greater care to support and sustain the system.

In reviewing the potential for a Joint Powers Agreement or Rural Transit Authority 5311 systems reported that four concerns that were not favorable to such a consolidation effort:

- Loss of local autonomy
- Inability to produce cash-match requirements without offsets
- Geographic islands of service are not likely to afford cost savings in operations
- Lack of political will and/or taxpayer support

Finally, in reviewing the performance measures common among 5311 providers it was found that all the 5311 operations in Cochise County are at or below the state average for cost per ride, cost per hour, and cost per mile, leaving little room for gains in cost efficiencies one would expect with consolidation of services (See Section V – Analysis). This could make traditional consolidation efforts (JPA – RTA) expensive without a return in cost savings. Additionally, with no overlaps in service area, improvements in service or addition of service areas through consolidation are not likely without being cost prohibitive.

Instead, what was found, was that each system either could provide or needed support or assistance in operational functions and that many of the administrative functions could be undertaken by one entity on behalf of one or more of the others (those who wanted to take part on a voluntary or contractual bases but not mandated for every system). The service matrix found in a later section outlines what each transit system needed or could offer and also identified areas where a single source might be appropriate and more cost effective.

### COVID-19 Considerations

The Consolidation Plan was initiated before COVID-19 conditions. Data collection for periods when COVID-19 conditions adversely impacted ridership, costs, and resources disproportionately skewed performance measures and clouded the true and sustainable outcomes that may or may not have been expected for future operations not impacted by COVID. This study/plan is focused on where the transit systems were pre-COVID and, with a return to more normalized operations, might go moving forward.

CARES Act funding was delivered to transit providers in 2020 and again in 2021, making budget analysis for RTA and JPA models un-useful, as implementation of consolidation under either model would not be complete for at least 3-5 years when CARES Act funding would no longer be available, and costs would be significantly different than 2019 figures. For this reason, recommendations do not include cost estimates that would require performance data impacted by COVID-19.

### Area of Study

Cochise County, Arizona, located in the southeastern corner of the state, bordering New Mexico and Mexico along the state of Sonora, is largely rural with a population of 125,922 (*2019 Census Data*). The County has a land mass of more than 4 million acres, or 6,210 square miles; an area that would contain all of Delaware, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined and larger than each of 47 countries around the globe, in terms of land mass.

The national average for persons per square mile is 92. Persons per square mile in Cochise County is 21.3. The population, outside of urban centers, is largely poor with poverty levels reaching above 27% with an

average of 16.3%. Poverty in the area is 20% higher than the rate in Arizona and 1.3 times the rate in the United States. Commuter times average 20 minutes with most driving alone.

Of the seven incorporated Cities/Towns, four have established public transit systems with two under development. Additionally, a non-profit organization, ViCAP operates a public transit dial-a-ride service with volunteer drivers. This program operates primarily in the Sierra Vista area with limited service in the Willcox, Bisbee, Huachuca City, and Tombstone areas and portions of unincorporated Cochise County.

FTA/ADOT funded transit providers in the County include

- City of Sierra Vista – 5307
- City of Benson – 5311
- City of Bisbee – 5311
- City of Douglas – 5311
- ViCAP – Sierra Vista - 5310
- City of Willcox – 5311 – under development

### Sources of Data

Data sources for this study come primarily from the transit providers for the fiscal year 2019-2020 being the most recent completed fiscal period. Additional sources of data come from:

- National Transit Database (NTD)
- Arizona Department of Transportation
- Other transit providers in Cochise County
- SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization

## II REGIONAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS

### Transit Providers in Study Area By Type

Federal and/or state subsidized providers

5307 – Small urban transit

- City of Sierra Vista – public transit with paratransit service

5310 – Senior and disabled transportation

- Douglas ARC – client-based services and meal delivery
- Easter Seals Blake Foundation – client-based services
- Volunteer Interfaith Caregiver Program (ViCaP) – volunteer driver public transit dial-a-ride
- Southeastern Arizona Consumer-Run Services – client-based services

5311 – Rural transit

- City of Benson – BART deviated fixed route public transit
- City of Bisbee – Bisbee Bus deviated fixed route public transit
- City of Douglas – Douglas Rides deviated fixed route public transit
- City of Willcox – dial-a-ride public transit – Operational in October 2021

NEMT – Non-emergency medical transportation

- Arizona Ambulance Transport – Sierra Vista and parts of Cochise County
- JR Handicap Transport LLC – Sierra Vista

- Benson Ambulance Services - Benson
- Cochise County Transport – northern Cochise County
- Healthcare Innovations Inc. – I-10 corridor through Cochise County
- Gerardo Grijalva – Douglas
- Women’s Transition Project – client based

#### Private

- See You There Shuttle – public access in and around Sierra Vista with shuttle service to Tucson
- BSB Limo and Transportation – public access in and around Bisbee and parts of Cochise County
- Slick’s Shuttle Service – taxi service in and around Sierra Vista
- Huachuca Shuttle – taxi service in and around Sierra Vista and Fort Huachuca with shuttle service to outlying areas
- Vibe Ryde Shuttle – taxi and shuttle service in and around Sierra Vista and Huachuca City
- 3 Canyons Airport Shuttle – based in Sierra Vista
- Sergio Super Shuttle – Douglas - taxi and shuttle services in and around Douglas and to Tucson and Phoenix
- Transporte Directo – taxi service in and around Douglas
- No Uber or Lyft drivers were available at the time of report
- Town of Huachuca City – senior and disabled transit funded by regional foundation

### Service Providers in Area by Provider

Data for these tables were based on pre-COVID figures provided by the transit providers and/or the National Transit Database for the fiscal year 2019-20. The significant increases in budget for 2020-21 along with decreased ridership would show very high performance measure costs but would not be sustained beyond a post-COVID environment; therefore, budget information for 20-21 has not been used in trending performance measures.

**Volunteer Interfaith Caregiver Program**

Kim Burks, Director

2600 E. Willcox Dr.

Suite H107

Sierra Vista AZ 85635 Tel. 520-459-8146

vicapdirector@gmail.com



General Services	Public Transit Dial-A-Ride Services For Elderly And Disabled
Ownership Status	Non-Profit 501(c)3
Primary Service Area	Cochise County
Service Days/Hours	Mon-Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Service Type	Dial-a-ride
Funding: Sources	ADOT, AAA, Legacy Foundation, Community Foundation, donations
Number of Vehicles	Volunteer driver owned vehicles plus 5 organization vehicles
Vehicles Under Lien	3
Vehicle Revenue Miles	185,051
Vehicle Revenue Hours	10,556 (2,088 paid-driver and 8,465 volunteer driver)
Number Of Service Sites	1
Annual Ridership	16,714
Providing Transportation Services Since	1994
Fare Recovery Rate	Donations only – no fares
Fares Collected	NA
Cost Per Passenger	16.88
Cost Per Hour	26.73
Cost Per Mile	1.52
Fueling	Gas – purchased at local gas stations
Maintenance & Facilities	Uses local, commercial auto repair and maintenance
Vehicle Technologies	Web-based Scheduling software
Budget 2019	\$282,184*
Budget 2020	\$224,092 Does not include \$20,000 in CARES Act funding
Unmet Needs	Additional volunteers, increased funding for intercity trips,

***\*VICaP utilizes volunteer drivers with personal vehicles which are not included in their total budget.***

**City of Benson**

Kathe Williams, Director  
 120 West 6th Street  
 Benson, AZ 85602 Tel: 520.720.6315  
 kwilliams@bensonaz.gov



General Services	Rural Public Transit
Ownership status	Local Government
Primary service area	Benson, J Six/Mescal, Pomerene, St. David
Service days/hours	Mon-Fri 8:00 am until 4:00 pm
Service Type	Flex route, Dial-a-ride
Funding: Sources	5311, SEAGO AAA
No. of vehicles	6
No. of vehicles under lien	6
Vehicle Revenue Miles	Total: 53,511 Public Transit: 23,721 Paratransit: 29,790
Vehicle Revenue Hours	Total: 4,431 Public Transit: 2,451 Paratransit: 1,980
Number of Service Sites	1
Annual Ridership	Total: 11,791 Public Transit: 5,522 Paratransit: 6,269
Providing transportation services since	2010
Fare recovery rate	3%
Fares collected	Total: \$5,716 Public Transit: \$3,057 Paratransit: \$2,659
Cost per passenger	Public Transit \$20.51 Paratransit: \$14.82
Cost per hour	Public Transit \$46.21 Paratransit \$46.91
Cost per mile	Public Transit \$4.77 Paratransit \$3.11
Fueling	Gas – In house, City purchased fuel
Maintenance and facilities	In house – City of Benson
Vehicle Technologies	none
Budget 2019	Operating Expenses: Total \$206,142 Public Transit \$113,251 Paratransit \$92,891
Budget 2020	363,265 with CARES Act funding
Unmet needs:	administrative funding, fleet vehicles, training, technology



**City of Bisbee**

Jesus Haro  
 76 Erie Street  
 Bisbee, AZ 85603 Tel: 520.432.6016 Fax: 520.432.6272  
 Jharo@bisbeeaz.gov



General Services	Rural Public Transit – operations and administration contracted to City of Douglas
Ownership status	Local Government
Primary service area	Old Bisbee, Warren, San Jose and Naco area neighborhoods.
Service days/hours	Mon-Fri 5:54 am – 6:40 pm Sat 9:30 am – 4:00 pm
Service Type	Flex route with deviations
Funding: Sources	5311, SEAGO AAA
No. of vehicles	5
No. of vehicles under lien	3
Vehicle Revenue Miles	71,681
Vehicle Revenue Hours	3,893
Number of Service Sites	1
Annual Ridership	32,059
Providing transportation services since	1998
Fare recovery rate	4%
Fares collected	\$13,073
Cost per passenger	\$9.33
Cost per hour	\$76.84
Cost per mile	\$4.17
Fueling	Gas – in-house City of Bisbee
Maintenance and facilities	City of Bisbee, in-house mechanic, and shop with some outsourcing
Vehicle Technologies	Cameras, GPS, Software scheduling (Douglas)
Budget 2019	\$299,148
Budget 2020	\$464,956 with CARES Act Funding
Unmet needs:	

<p><b>City of Douglas</b>                  Luis Perdoza, Finance                  Alt. Contact: Humberto Rivera                  345 E. 16th St.                  Douglas, AZ 85607 Tel: 520.417.7400                  humberto.rivera@douglasaz.gov</p>	  
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General Services	Rural Public Transit
Ownership status	Local Government
Primary service area	Within the City limits, Bay Acres, Pirtleville, Elfrida, Cochise College, Bisbee, and Sierra Vista
Service days/hours	Mon-Sat 8:00 am – 5:00 pm Cochise College/Bisbee Mon-Thur 6:30 am – 5:30 pm Cochise Connection Mon-Fri 6:08 am – 5:44 pm Sat 8:00 am – 4:04 pm
Service Type	Fixed Route with complementary paratransit
Funding: Sources	5311, SEAGO AAA, Cochise College, ACT, Freeport, Cochise County, Legacy Foundation
No. of vehicles	7
No. of vehicles under lien	4
Vehicle Revenue Miles	Total 229,794 Public Transit: 210,321 Paratransit: 19,473
Vehicle Revenue Hours	Total 12,848 Public Transit: 11,171 Paratransit: 1,677
Number of Service Sites	1
Annual Ridership	Total 58,603 Public Transit: 48,498 Paratransit: 10,105
Providing transportation services since	2007
Fare recovery rate	5%
Fares collected	Total: \$32,702 Public Transit: \$32,702 Paratransit: 0
Cost per passenger	Public Transit: \$12.84 Paratransit: \$6.68
Cost per hour	Public Transit: \$55.76 Paratransit: \$40.22
Cost per mile	Public Transit: \$ 2.96 Paratransit: \$3.46
Fueling	Gas Diesel – Outside commercial fuel stations
Maintenance and facilities	1
Vehicle Technologies	Cameras, GPS, tablets for drivers for data collection, scheduling software
Budget 2019	Total Operating Expenses: \$690,394 Public Transit: \$622,938 Paratransit: \$67,456
Budget 2020	1,171,426 with CARES Act funding
Unmet needs:	

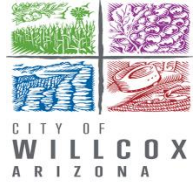
**City of Willcox**

Angel Lauve, Transit Manager

101 S. Railroad Ave., Ste B

Willcox, AZ 85643 Tel: 520.368.4271

Email: [alauve@willcox.az.gov](mailto:alauve@willcox.az.gov)



***Service to begin on October 1, 2021, no cost/operational data is available at this time.***

**Town of Huachuca City**

This service is presently funded by a private, regional foundation. It is possible that Huachuca City could be a 5310 applicant in 2023 and a 5311 applicant in 2024, the earliest possible time as the funds are offered through ADOT every two years.

5307

<p><b>City of Sierra Vista</b>  <b>Linda Jones</b>  <b>Transportation Administrator</b>  <b>401 Guilio Cesare Ave.</b>  <b>Sierra Vista, AZ 85635 Tel: 520-439-2211 Cell: 520-678-2223</b>  <b>Linda.Jones@SierraVistaAZ.gov</b></p>	
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General Services	Small Urban Public Transit
Ownership status	Local Government
Primary service area	City of Sierra Vista / Ft. Huachuca
Service days/hours	Mon-Fri 7:00 am – 6:00 pm Sat 9:30 am – 6:00 pm
Service Type	Fixed Route with complementary paratransit
Funding: Sources	FTA 5307, City General Fund
No. of vehicles	13
No. of vehicles under lien	6
Vehicle Revenue Miles	Total: 152,109 Public Transit: 133,492 Paratransit: 18,617
Vehicle Revenue Hours	Total 12,022 Public Transit: 11,052 Paratransit: 970
Number of Service Sites	1
Annual Ridership	Total: 146,271 Public Transit: 140,746 Paratransit 5,525
Providing transportation services since	1994
Fare recovery rate	9%
Fares collected	Total: \$97,456 Public Transit: \$85,761 Paratransit 11,695
Cost per passenger	Public Transit: \$5.52 Paratransit: \$31.83
Cost per hour	Public Transit: \$70.25 Paratransit: \$181.21
Cost per mile	Public Transit: \$5.81 Paratransit: \$.96
Fueling	Gas and Diesel with in-house fuel station
Maintenance & Facilities	City of Sierra Vista, in-house, 1 transfer facility
Vehicle Technologies	Scheduling software, driver notebooks, GPS, Cameras, AVAs, radios, security system for facility
Budget 2019	Total \$952,243 Public Transit: \$776,358 Paratransit: \$175,885
Budget 2020	Total \$973,256 Transit 486,628 Paratransit 486,628
Unmet needs:	

## III OUTREACH

### Public Engagement Plan

#### Introduction

The SouthEastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) is an association of county and incorporated cities in Santa Cruz, Cochise, Graham and Greenlee Counties in Arizona. As the designated Council of Governments (COG) for the south east region of Arizona, SEAGO works with member and public entities to solve common problems and address public policy issues within the region. One of SEAGO's primary functions is to conduct comprehensive regional planning on behalf of its member entities for traffic, transit, housing, environmental issues including water quality, community and economic development, and health and social services.

In 2019, SEAGO received a planning grant through the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to conduct a Feasibility Study (Study) to determine the value of consolidating transit services across Cochise County. Presently, there are four rural, fixed route and one small urban public service operations with an additional service under development. There are seven human services organizations providing transportation services to their clients; four receiving ADOT 5310 funding. Each of these entities operates autonomously and receives federal funding either directly from FTA or through ADOT's federal pass-through programs (5311 and 5310).

As required by federal regulation, SEAGO wishes to ensure broad and diverse input throughout the development of this Study including those of transit/transportation providers, municipal and county governments, transit riders, the elderly and disabled, health services organizations, economic development entities, community advocates, and other stakeholders. Additionally, SEAGO is interested in understanding the fiscal and environmental impacts of consolidation and the impact on rural residents, minority groups, and those who may be marginalized by income status.

#### Overall Study Objectives:

Produce a county-wide Consolidation Study for the purposes of integrating the efforts, projects, and future operations of fixed-route and human services providers serving Cochise County;

Identify alternative transportation delivery methods that consider and improve sustainability, preservation, mobility, safety, innovation, economy, health, and equity for transit systems and their current and future ridership;

Identify a preferred vision for public transit system consolidation, shared by the present providers, elected officials, key stakeholders and the public; and

Provide guidance for effective and efficient, future investments in the public and human services transportation systems.

The Public Engagement Plan (Appendix A) outlines the structure for the study team, the TAC, stakeholders, and public events and activities that are used in this study.

## TAC Engagement

### Initial meeting summary

Cochise County transit providers met for an introductory meeting to discuss the Consolidation Plan efforts organized by SEAGO.

Participants were given an overview of the study's goals and objectives and each participant presented a review of their current activities and plans for the near and mid-terms.

Gaps in regional access to transit were identified in Tombstone, and significant areas of unincorporated Cochise County include areas east of the Chiricahua Mountains and in northern Cochise County at Willcox and the I-10 corridor. Also discussed was a lack of connecting services between Benson and Sierra Vista, and Benson/Sierra Vista/Willcox to Tucson. Greyhound reported intercity service between Sierra Vista and Tucson. (That service was cancelled in December 2020 due to reduced demand.)

When discussing potential consolidation methods (RTA, JPA, and other single provider options), many participants were not in favor of a truly consolidated transportation system, but rather discussed the need to better network in efforts to create efficiencies in administrative efforts including grant writing, grant management and to reduce costs through common procurement of insurance, fuel, maintenance, and technologies.

Participants were encouraged to become TAC members for the Consolidation Study and indicated their interest before the meeting was adjourned.

### AGENDA

March 4, 2020

Cochise College – Benson campus

9:30 to 12:30

1. Introductions and Purpose of Meeting – Melanie/Chris
2. Review of existing FTA supported transit programming in Cochise County
3. Funding availability
4. Existing Systems and connections and gaps in service
5. Current hardships for existing services
6. Goals and objectives in considering consolidation ideas
7. Barriers in considering consolidation ideas
8. Types of consolidation methods
9. Group exercise to formulate positions for or against consolidation efforts
10. Next steps
11. TAC development

## 12. Stakeholder identification

## 13. Summary and adjourn

The first TAC meeting for the Consolidation Study was held on March 4, 2020 in a Zoom meeting (response to early COVID concerns). Based on the earlier public meeting where key stakeholders stated that a single provider system was not feasible nor politically supported, efforts to realize a more suitable consolidation effort were discussed. These discussions focused on expanded networking, sharing of technologies (scheduling and reporting), driver pool, and more (see minutes below). Discussions of barriers, service area gaps, and other topics of interest to the participants followed. Overall, the meeting yielded interest in finding ways to utilize networking to reduce costs, mitigate service area gaps, and improve customer service.

## TAC MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES

April 15, 2020 11:30 AM: Zoom Meeting: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72665329901>

Meeting ID: 726 6532 9901

Topic: SEAGO Consolidated Transit Study - TAC Meeting #1

### TAC members:

- Aubree Perry – ADOT
- Caleb Blaschke, City Manager, Willcox
- Candace Weingart, UA Extension Office
- Chris Vertrees, Transportation Manager, SEAGO
- Connie Gastelum, Mobility Manager, SEAGO
- Humberto Rivera, Transit Manager, City of Douglas
- John Cropper, Volunteer Driver, ViCap Willcox
- Jesus Hera, City of Bisbee Public Works Director
- Karen Lambertson, MPO Director, City of Sierra Vista
- Kathe Williams, Transit Manager, City of Benson
- Liza Quinones, UA Extension Office
- Luis Pedroza, Finance Director, City of Douglas
- Melanie Greene, SEAGO
- Mike Normand, Transit Manager, Sierra Vista Transit
- Susan Velcheck, BAT rider

### Agenda

#### 1. Review of Kick-off meeting outcomes for Consolidation study and prioritization of strategies

##### Goals:

- Improved efficiency, expanded service, reduced costs

##### Strategies:

***Prioritize your top five strategies that would be most helpful to your organization. Write the numerals 1-5 on the left margin.***

- Technology sharing
- Centralized dispatching for cross-community rides
- Driver pool
- Centralized administrative services
- Coordinated training
- Ridership Education
- App or website for state-wide services (Tod, NACOG)
- Consolidation of functions where appropriate
- Partnership(s) with medical services providers
- Standardized financial software and financial reports
- Fleet maintenance and emergency repair
- Consolidated procurement
- Area wide transit guide
- Reduce overlapping services

**Barriers:**

***Prioritize the top five barriers that you experience or that would make consolidation efforts difficult for your service. Write the numerals 1-5 on the left margin.***

- Local match and loss of offsets
- Staffing
- Marketing
- Increasing costs
- Driver retention
- Driver recruitment
- Rider Training
- Mileage caps from funding sources
- Lack of coordination with NEM providers
- 5310 provider coordination
- Legislative authority for an RTA (RTA has taxing authority, IPTA has no authority to tax)
- Burden of FTA funding should not outweigh benefit
- Community buy-in
- Lack of funding/interest from County

**Service area Gaps:**

***Prioritize the top five service area gaps that a consolidation effort should focus on. Write the numerals 1-5 on the left margin.***

- To Tucson
- Whetstone to Sierra Vista and/or Benson
- San Simone & Bowie to Willcox
- Sulphur Springs Valley to Douglas or Willcox
- Hereford/Palominas – near Sierra Vista



- Winchester Heights – near Willcox
- Benson to Sierra Vista
- Tombstone to Sierra Vista and/or Benson

**2. Information/data collection from 5311 providers – Due May 1, 2020  
email to melanie@mgreenprd.com**

The Study must collect baseline data from each of the funded 5307-5311 programs including:

- Most recent NTD report
- Current fiscal year transit service budget
- List of transportation providers in your service area (this should have been submitted with your FTA/ADOT application)
- Identified service gaps for your service area
- Match requirement from current fiscal year. Total match requirement: Match portion coming from outside agency: Match portion coming from within agency. (you can provide the match source portion of your most recent FTA/ADOT application. Please indicate what portion is in-kind and what is cash.
- Unfunded capital needs from this fiscal year and expectations over next three years.

**3. TAC Meeting schedule, agenda items, and invitation list**

- Should we schedule a regular meeting? Every other month? Quarterly?
- Should future agendas reflect implementation discussions for prioritized strategies?
- Who else should be on the TAC?

With the inability of the Zoom meeting to collect poll information, the group carried out a discussion of how the TAC should and could move forward. The presented agenda was abandoned though discussion followed agenda topics.

General discussions:

Luis Pedroza – suggested that consolidated services that included services such as reporting, technology, and dispatching would be something that Douglas could be engaged in. Tucson destinations are presently using existing shuttle services but seek safer, more comfortable rides. Connections to areas outside of Cochise County is a common response to recent surveys.

Mike Normand – We need a matrix that shows what services are available and what is needed. Also, barriers to consolidation

Jesus Hera – Interested in an RTA type service to allow some programs to turn over all transit operations and administration

Caleb Blaschke – Would defer to John Cropper (volunteer driver and rider from Willcox) on what Willcox may need when its system starts in the future. The Willcox area is a high poverty area with many rides needed to health-care services.

Karen Lamberton – Agreed that a matrix style inventory of services and needs would be helpful. Also, the inclusion of maps would be helpful with demographic data like no-car, poverty, and capital improvement needs for transit providers. Priorities should be based on demographics and needs like poverty, no-car, and capital infrastructure needs.

Kathe Williams - Interested in how Greyhound can help provide intercity services and how they may be addressing Tombstone, and points between Huachuca City, Tombstone, and Benson. Connie reported that ADOT has not made a funding decision yet. (NOTE: As of 6-10-2020, it is reported that Greyhound rescinded their application and will not be providing services in Cochise County).

Melanie reiterated that the TAC would define how the plan moves forward and is primarily focused on 5311s and 5310s who provide public transit services.

She will put together a matrix for each of the TAC members to identify what they provide, what they could possibly provide for others, what they need, any service gap areas. Participants are asked to provide responses to the matrix. A summary will be developed with analysis and include maps.

Melanie asked that each 5311 and 5307 operation provide a copy of their most recent annual NTD report and current proposed service budget from most recent application. She also will need a list of the transportation providers in transit service areas. These lists should have been included in applications. Also, any gaps and the current match requirement with the amounts coming from outside the agency and within. From the match that is within, please indicated what is cash and what is in-kind. Also need unfunded capital needs for the next three years.

TAC members will provide Melanie with this information on or before May 1 by email. Include the fiscal or calendar year reflected for each of the data sets submitted.

The TAC agreed to meet on an every-other-month basis. The next meeting will be in June unless otherwise determined.

No other TAC members were identified for future members.

Thanks to John and Susan (riders, advocates, and volunteers) for joining the TAC as well as the providers present.

Meeting was adjourned.

Meeting duration 45 minutes. No action items presented. Audio of meeting available.

**January 27th, 2021 10:00 AM Zoom Meeting: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72665329901>**

Meeting ID: 726 6532 9901

**Topic: SEAGO Consolidated Transit Study - TAC Meeting #2 Review of Draft Plan**

**Due to COVID considerations and the additional strain on TAC members, the TAC did not meet again until January 2021.**

**TAC members:**

- ✓ **Aubree Perry – ADOT**
- Caleb Blaschke, City Manager, Willcox**
- Candace Weingart, UA Extension Office**
- ✓ **Chris Vertrees, Transportation Manager, SEAGO**
- Connie Gastelum, Mobility Manager, SEAGO**
- ✓ **Humberto Rivera, Transit Manager, City of Douglas**
- John Cropper, Volunteer Driver, ViCap Willcox**
- ✓ **Jesus Hera, City of Bisbee Public Works Director**
- Karen Lamberton, MPO Director, City of Sierra Vista**
- ✓ **Kathe Williams, Transit Manager, City of Benson**
- Liza Quinones, UA Extension Office**
- ✓ **Luis Pedroza, Finance Director, City of Douglas**
  
- ✓ **Melanie Greene, SEAGO**
- Linda Jones, Transit Manager, Sierra Vista Transit**
- Susan Velcheck, BAT rider**

**Agenda**

Review the draft Cochise County Transit Consolidation Plan

Each TAC member received an individual copy of the draft Plan via email, prior to the meeting.

Melanie went over the draft using a power point presentation highlighting the plan's sections and pertinent data and asked for feedback. Jesus talked about the need, ultimately, for an RTA. Kathe agreed but also indicated interest in a shared services strategy. It was agreed that the members would go back to their decision makers to determine interest in one or more short-term and/or long-term strategies including:

A Shared Services agreement whereby one entity (SEAGO or a transit provider) would provide agreed upon services to all transit providers in the region. These could include administrative responsibilities and possibly some operating services that are supportive in nature.

A Cafeteria style service where transit providers in need of particular services could contract or form an agreement with providers who have expertise in that same service.

A traditional RTA

A traditional JPA

Or

No interest in further action.

A questionnaire will be made available to TAC members with a return needed by March 1.

Meeting was adjourned.

## Public Engagement

As outlined in the Public Engagement Plan (Appendix A), SEAGO provided information to and asked for comments from stakeholders, the general public, and transit/transportation providers. The draft plan was made available on the SEAGO website in March 2021 along with an online or printable comment form. The public could also request a printed version of the document and comment form. Comments were solicited until July 7, 2021, through press releases, social media, and website updates as well as direct email appeals to stakeholders and transit/transportation providers.

**As of July 10, 2021, no comments on the draft Consolidation Plan were received.**

The following Press Release was published last on June 21, 2021.

### *PRESS RELEASE*

*For immediate release June 21, 2021*

*Contact: Chris Vertrees, Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization, cdvertrees@seago.org, 520-432-5301 ext. 209*

### *COMMENTS NEEDED TO COMPLETE COCHISE COUNTY TRANSIT CONSOLIDATION STUDY FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT IN COCHISE COUNTY.*

*Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) is working with Cochise County residents, governments, employers, and service providers to study opportunities for consolidation of public transit services in the region. To ensure potential consolidation efforts meet the needs of the communities in the county, SEAGO has posted a draft study and planning document on its website and is seeking comments that will guide the development of a future efforts. These recommendations will be forwarded to Arizona Department of Transportation for future funding and implementation.*

*The consolidation study was initially advertised and made available for public review and comment in March and will remain posted until July 7th at [www.seago.org](http://www.seago.org). As the comment period comes to a close, SEAGO is encouraging those interested to review the documents and provide comments, suggestions, and concerns about the study. All comments will be given careful consideration in crafting a final document and all comments will included in the final documents submitted to ADOT.*

*Questions regarding the Cochise County Transit Consolidation Study may be directed to Chris Vertrees, Transportation and Transit Director for SEAGO. He may be reached by email at [cdvertrees@seago.org](mailto:cdvertrees@seago.org) or by phone at 520-432-5301 extension 209.*

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The Comment form made available to reviewers in assessing the Plan was provided in a format that could be filled in online or printed and submitted electronically or in person

**SEAGO official comment form**

- **Document: SEAGO Rural Transit Consolidation Study for Cochise County 2020-2021**
- **Document Release Date: March 5, 2021 Comment Due Date: July 07, 2021 by 5:00 p.m. AZ time**
- **Comments may be made on this form or in writing via email or mail to Chris Vertrees, Transportation Director, SEAGO, at 1403 AZ Hwy 92, Bisbee AZ 85603 [cdvertrees@seago.org](mailto:cdvertrees@seago.org)**
- **For document or comment forms in Spanish, contact Jessica Urrea at SEAGO 520-432-5301**

**SEAGO welcomes and values review and comment from the general public on its draft report “Rural Transit Consolidation Study for Cochise County”. This study reviewed various ways in which transit providers in Cochise County might gain efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability and worked with transit providers and stakeholders to determine how transit in Cochise County might advance in the short and long-terms. After reviewing the Study, please make your comments using the following electronic form which will be submitted automatically when complete. You also may print and submit the form in writing.**

**Section I – Introduction**

**Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.**

**Click or tap here to enter text.**

**Section II – Regional Transit Providers**

**Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.**

**Click or tap here to enter text.**

**Section III – Outreach**

**Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.**

**Click or tap here to enter text.**

**Section IV - Consolidation/Coordination Benefits as Defined by TAC Members**

**Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.**

**Click or tap here to enter text.**

**Section V – Analysis**

**Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.**

***Click or tap here to enter text.***

***Section VI – Recommendations for Consolidation Efforts***

***Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.***

***Click or tap here to enter text.***

***Section VII – Other Potential Service Consolidation Efforts***

***Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.***

***Click or tap here to enter text.***

***Section VIII – Summary***

***Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.***

***Click or tap here to enter text.***

***Section IX – Next Steps***

***Comments: None If you have comments on this section, include page number(s) and text below.***

***Click or tap here to enter text.***

## IV CONSOLIDATION/COORDINATION BENEFITS AS DEFINED BY TAC MEMBERS

### Matrix tool

Based on findings from the public meeting and the first TAC meeting, SEAGO developed a service matrix that would allow each transit provider to identify administrative and operating services they would like to see consolidated. They were also asked to identify services they could provide in either a volunteer or contracted basis. The following tables from each of the providers indicates a desire to consolidate administrative and training services with additional areas within operations and capital procurement.

Because Bisbee is administered and operated by the City of Douglas, Bisbee did not submit a matrix report. The City of Douglas included Bisbee in its submission in terms of needs and availability to provide assistance. The City of Sierra Vista did not participate in the Matrix form as there was a protracted change in transit management leaving staff unable to participate.

### City of Douglas

Transit Provider		City of Douglas				
Contact Name	Luis Pedroza					
Contact Email	<a href="mailto:luis.pedroza@douglasaz.gov">luis.pedroza@douglasaz.gov</a>					
FTA Funding (5307, 5310, 5311)	5311					
	Can provide volunteer or contracted assistance (Mark with V or C)	Could use assistance or would consider contracting for this service	Believe this could be consolidated successfully through a single, county-wide provider	None of these three options to the left	Notes/Comments	
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>	<i>Mark the appropriate box(s) for each row</i>					
Asset Management						
Asset Management Plan			X			
Asset Management Compliance strategies			X			
Equipment/Technology management	C				Willing to seek contract for this or assist with development of a technology	
Facilities management				X		
Rolling stock management				X		
Inspection training	C		X		PASS Training issued from one location and consider allowing our agency to issue training on a contracted basis	
Disposition				X		
Replacement Plan				X		
Maintenance plan				X		
Shared maintenance/repair services	C				Consider contracting our mechanic services to close by agencies	
Other:						
Compliance						
Title VI	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies	
ADA	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies	

Drug & Alcohol	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies
Triennial review	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies
Other FTA Assurances	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies
Policy development	V				Would be willing to share with other agencies
Other:					
Data Collection					
Ridership (rides, rider type)	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app
Rider satisfaction (surveys, etc.)	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app or develop it within the app
Service hours, miles	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app
Fare revenue	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app
Incidents/Accidents	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app
Complaints (Title VI, ADA, and others)				X	
Costs	C				Believe we can assist with our ridership app
Retention storage				X	
Performance Measures/Reports/Analysis	C				
Other:					
Financial Management					
Monthly accounting	C				Believe we could assist with financial management
Budget development	C				Believe we could assist with financial management
Financial reporting	C				Believe we could assist with financial management
True cost analysis	C				Believe we could assist with financial management
Match sources				X	
Financial management systems	C				Believe we could assist with financial management
Approved Indirect cost rate		X			
In-kind resource management				X	
Other:					
Grants					
Single Application with subcontract				X	
Assistance in completing application			X		
Grant writing (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)			X		
Grant Management (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)			X		
Grant Research (non-FTA)			X		
Other:					
Insurance					
Consolidated Insurance Pool				X	



Collaborative procurement (negotiating better rates with multiple plans under one carrier)			X		
Other:					
Marketing					
Rider Guide		x	X		Willing to look at contracting for asst and consolidating
Mapping		x	X		
Social Media				X	
Advertising		x	X		
Website		x	X		
Centralized, regional transit guide and maps		x	X		
Other:					
Personnel					
Shared or centralized hiring support	C	x			Willing to offer contracted assistance as well as receive contract assistance help
Background checks	V				Can assist with policies and procedures
Drug Testing	V				Can assist with policies and procedures
Training and training schedules	C		X		Could assist in training but also open to consolidating
Personnel policies	V				
Handbooks	V				
Other:					
Planning					
Service modeling			X		
Short-term and/or long-term transit planning			X		
Schedule/Route review/revisions	C		X		May offer service through our app and also consolidating
Disaster recovery				X	
Emergency response (local, regional, county-wide)				X	
Public Engagement				X	
Marketing		x	X		
Safety				X	
Asset Management			X		
Vehicle Maintenance				X	
Other:					
Procurement					
Capital vehicles			X		
Other equipment/capital assets			X		
Technology	C				Offer our ridership app for contracting out to other agencies
Contracted services			X		
RFP/RFQ development			X		
Procurement policy review/development			X		
DBE/SBE compliance	V		X		Volunteer assistance in compliance as well as centralizing
Other:					
Public Engagement					
Rider and public surveys	V				Volunteer to share resources
Centralized website material			x		

Limited English four-point analysis			x		
Coordination strategies			x		
Coordination plan updates			x		
Other:					
Reporting					
Monthly ADOT reporting	C				Could offer contracted assistance via technology app. Could provide technology to facilitate process for agencies
Annual NTD reporting	C				
AAA reporting	C				
Other:					
Training					
Driver			X		
Rider			X		
Dispatcher			X		
Administration			X		
Training records			X		
Other:					
<b>OPERATIONS</b>					
Dispatching					
Central dispatching	C		X		Open to assisting with contracted service as well as consolidating
Shared dispatching	C		X		
Dispatcher training	C		X		
Other:					
Drivers					
Driver Training			X		
Shared Driver	C	x	X		Willing to contract out our drivers as well as seek assistance to contract when we need assistance
Central Driver Pool			X		
Driver Handbooks (developments and updates)			X		
Other:					
Rider Training					
Rider Training sessions			X		
Rider Training materials			X		
Other:					
Scheduling					
Software	C		X		Willing to seek contract for this or assist with development of a technology
Redesign	C		X		
Other:					
Safety (rider, driver, vehicle)					
Policy development			x		
Safety training - drivers			x		
Safety inspections	C				Willing to contract out our services via our app
Rider safety training/guide			x		
Drug Free Workplace policy and testing	V		X		Can share our policies and would be open to consolidation
Accident/Incident policy and reporting	V		X		Can share our policies and would be open to consolidation

Other:					
Technology					
On-board (cameras, ride counts, Wi-Fi, etc.)	C				Can contract our services via our app to other agencies for ridership tracking
Scheduling software	C		X		Willing to seek contract for this or assist with development of a technology
real-time schedule (at bus stops)	C				Willing to seek contract for this or assist with development of a technology
Other:					

<b>Transit Provider:</b>	<b>City of Benson</b>				
<b>Contact Name:</b>	Kathe Williams				
<b>Contact Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:kwilliams@bensoaz.gov">kwilliams@bensoaz.gov</a>				
<b>FTA Funding (5307, 5310, 5311):</b>	5311				
	Can provide volunteer or contracted assistance. (Mark with V or C)	Could use assistance or would consider contracting for this service	Believe this could be consolidated successfully through a single, county-wide provider	None of these three options to the left	Notes/Comments
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>	<i>Mark the appropriate box(s) for each row</i>				
Asset Management					
Asset Management Plan			X		
Asset Management Compliance strategies			X		
Equipment/Technology management			X		
Facilities management			X		
Rolling stock management			X		
Inspection training		X	X		
Disposition			X		
Replacement Plan			X		
Maintenance plan			X		
Shared maintenance/repair services			X		
Other:					
<b>Compliance</b>					
Title VI			X		
ADA			X		
Drug & Alcohol			X		
Triennial review			X		
Other FTA Assurances			X		
Policy development			X		
Other:					
<b>Data Collection</b>					
Ridership (rides, rider type)			X		
Rider satisfaction (surveys, etc.)			X		
Service hours, miles			X		
Fare revenue			X		
Incidents/Accidents			X		
Complaints (Title VI, ADA, and others)			X		

Costs				X	
Retention storage				X	
Performance Measures/Reports/Analysis				X	
Other:					
Financial Management					
Monthly accounting				X	
Budget development				X	
Financial reporting				X	
True cost analysis				X	
Match sources				X	
Financial management systems				X	
Approved Indirect cost rate				X	
In-kind resource management				X	
Other:					
Grants					
Single Application with subcontract				X	
Assistance in completing application				X	
Grant writing (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)				X	
Grant Management (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)				X	
Grant Research (non-FTA)				X	
Other:					
Insurance					
Consolidated Insurance Pool				X	
Collaborative procurement (negotiating better rates with multiple plans under one carrier)				X	
Other:					
Marketing					
Rider Guide			X	X	
Mapping			X	X	
Social Media			X	X	
Advertising			X	X	
Website			X	X	
Centralized, regional transit guide and maps			X	X	
Other:					
Personnel					
Shared or centralized hiring support				X	
Background checks				X	
Drug Testing				X	
Training and training schedules				X	
Personnel policies				X	
Handbooks				X	
Other:					
Planning					
Service modeling			X	X	
Short-term and/or long-term transit planning			X	X	

Schedule/Route review/revisions		X	X		
Disaster recovery		X	X		
Emergency response (local, regional, county-wide)		X	X		
Public Engagement		X	X		
Marketing		X	X		
Safety		X	X		
Asset Management		X	X		
Vehicle Maintenance		X	X		
Other:					
Procurement					
Capital vehicles			X		
Other equipment/capital assets			X		
Technology			X		
Contracted services			X		
RFP/RFQ development			X		
Procurement policy review/development			X		
DBE/SBE compliance			X		
Other:					
Public Engagement					
Rider and public surveys			X		
Centralized website material			X		
Limited English four-point analysis			X		
Coordination strategies			X		
Coordination plan updates			X		
Other:					
Reporting					
Monthly ADOT reporting			X		
Annual NTD reporting			X		
AAA reporting			X		
Other:					
Training					
Driver			X		
Rider			X		
Dispatcher			X		
Administration			X		
Training records			X		
Other:					
<b>OPERATIONS</b>					
Dispatching					
Central dispatching			X		
Shared dispatching			X		
Dispatcher training			X		
Other:					
Drivers					
Driver Training			X		
Shared Driver			X		
Central Driver Pool			X		
Driver Handbooks (developments and updates)			X		
Other:					
Rider Training					

Rider Training sessions			X		
Rider Training materials			X		
Other:					
Scheduling					
Software			X		
Redesign			X		
Other:					
Safety (rider, driver, vehicle)					
Policy development			X		
Safety training - drivers			X		
Safety inspections			X		
Rider safety training/guide			X		
Drug Free Workplace policy and testing			X		
Accident/Incident policy and reporting			X		
Other:					
Technology					
On-board (cameras, ride counts, Wi-Fi, etc.)			X		
Scheduling software			X		
real-time schedule (at bus stops)			X		
Other:					

Transit Provider:		SEAGO			
Contact Name:	Chris Vertrees				
Contact Email:	<a href="mailto:cdvertrees@seago.org">cdvertrees@seago.org</a>				
FTA Funding (5307, 5310, 5311):	5310, ADOT STP				
	Can provide volunteer or contracted assistance (Mark with V or C)	Could use assistance or would consider contracting for this service	Believe this could be consolidated successfully through a single, county-wide provider	None of these three options to the left	
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>	<i>Mark the appropriate box(s) for each row</i>				
<b>Asset Management</b>					
Asset Management Plan	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Asset Management Compliance strategies	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Equipment/Technology management			X		
Facilities management			X		
Rolling stock management			X		
Inspection training	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Disposition	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Replacement Plan	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Maintenance plan	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Shared maintenance/repair services			X		
Other:					
<b>Compliance</b>					
Title VI	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
ADA	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Drug & Alcohol	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Triennial review	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other FTA Assurances	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Policy development	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
<b>Data Collection</b>					
Ridership (rides, rider type)	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Rider satisfaction (surveys, etc.)	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Service hours, miles	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Fare revenue			X		
Incidents/Accidents			X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Complaints (Title VI, ADA, and others)	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Costs	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Retention storage			X		
Performance Measures/Reports/Analysis	X		X		SEAGO could provide TA thru RMM Program
Other:					
<b>Financial Management</b>					
Monthly accounting			X		
Budget development	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Financial reporting	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU

True cost analysis	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Match sources	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Financial management systems	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Approved Indirect cost rate	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
In-kind resource management	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
Grants					
Single Application with subcontract	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Assistance in completing application	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Grant writing (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Grant Management (FTA/ADOT and non-FTA)	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Grant Research (non-FTA)	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
Insurance					
Consolidated Insurance Pool			X		
Collaborative procurement (negotiating better rates with multiple plans under one carrier)			X		
Other:					
Marketing					
Rider Guide			X		
Mapping			X		
Social Media			X		
Advertising			X		
Website			X		
Centralized, regional transit guide and maps	X		X		SEAGO could secure planning funds for this project
Other:					
Personnel					
Shared or centralized hiring support			X		
Background checks			X		
Drug Testing			X		
Training and training schedules			X		
Personnel policies			X		
Handbooks	X		X		SEAGO could secure planning funds for this project
Other:					
Planning					
Service modeling	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Short-term and/or long-term transit planning	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Schedule/Route review/revisions	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Disaster recovery	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Emergency response (local, regional, county-wide)	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Public Engagement	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Marketing			X		
Safety	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Asset Management	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU



Vehicle Maintenance	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
Procurement					
Capital vehicles			X		
Other equipment/capital assets			X		
Technology			X		
Contracted services			X		
RFP/RFQ development			X		
Procurement policy review/development			X		
DBE/SBE compliance			X		
Other:					
Public Engagement					
Rider and public surveys	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Centralized website material	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Limited English four-point analysis	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Coordination strategies	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Coordination plan updates	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
Reporting					
Monthly ADOT reporting		X			
Annual NTD reporting		X			
AAA reporting		X			
Other:					
Training					
Driver	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Rider	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Dispatcher	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Administration	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Training records	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
<b>OPERATIONS</b>					
Dispatching					
Central dispatching			X		
Shared dispatching			X		
Dispatcher training			X		
Other:					
Drivers					
Driver Training			X		
Shared Driver			X		
Central Driver Pool			X		
Driver Handbooks (developments and updates)			X		
Other:					
Rider Training					
Rider Training sessions			X		
Rider Training materials			X		
Other:					
Scheduling					
Software		X			
Redesign		X			
Other:					
Safety (rider, driver, vehicle)					
Policy development	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU

Safety training - drivers	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Safety inspections	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Rider safety training/guide	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Drug Free Workplace policy and testing	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Accident/Incident policy and reporting	X		X		SEAGO could assist via MOU
Other:					
Technology					
On-board (cameras, ride counts, Wi-Fi, etc.)			X		
Scheduling software			X		
real-time schedule (at bus stops)			X		
Other:					

### Questionnaire

In January and February 2021, TAC members were asked to reevaluate their responses to desired outcomes through a second questionnaire that asked about local (elected) support for consolidation options and their willingness to continue to serve on the TAC to further recommended options.

The following responses were filed by four 5311 providers and one 5310 provider.

TAC Questionnaire - March 2021	City of Benson, Kathe Williams, kwilliams@bensonaz.gov, 520-720-6323	City of Douglas, Humberto Rivera, Humberto.rivera@douglasaz.gov 520-417-7402	City of Bisbee, Jesus Haro, jharo@bisbeeaz.gov 520-432-6002	City of Willcox Jennifer Colby, jcolby@willcoxaz.gov 520-507-6994
<b>SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT</b>				
<b>Long Range</b>				
<b>Short Range</b>				
<b>Not Interested</b>				
<b>Training Curriculum and Training Schedules</b>				
<b>Inspection Training</b>				
<b>Rider Training</b>				
<b>Driver Training including PASS and Vehicle Inspection</b>				
<b>Funding resources development and application development</b>				
<b>Capital procurement</b>				
<b>Rider guide development both centralized and independent transit providers</b>				
<b>Mapping</b>				
<b>Marketing and social media</b>				
<b>Advertising</b>				
<b>Website development and maintenance</b>				
<b>Rider surveys and public engagement</b>				
<b>Service modeling</b>				
<b>Schedule and route review and revisions</b>				
<b>Short and long-term transit planning</b>				
<b>Emergency planning</b>				
<b>Asset management</b>				
<b>Insurance pool</b>				
<b>Vehicle maintenance</b>				
<b>Technology sharing and procurement</b>				
<b>Software development and procurement</b>				
<b>Policy development</b>				
<b>DBE compliance ADA and LEP compliance</b>				
<b>Drug-Free workplace policy and testing</b>				
<b>Central or multijurisdictional dispatching</b>				
<b>Driver pool development and driver hiring pool</b>				
<b>Driver handbooks</b>				
<b>Data collection</b>				
<b>Reporting</b>				

TAC Questionnaire - March 2021	City of Benson, Kathe Williams, kwilliams@bensonaz.gov, 520-720-6323	City of Douglas, Humberto Rivera, Humberto.rivera@douglasaz.gov 520-417-7402	City of Bisbee, Jesus Haro, jharo@bisbeeaz.gov 520-432-6002	City of Willcox Jennifer Colby, jcolby@willcoxaz.gov 520-507-6994
Check this box if your agency would provide any of these services				
Comments:				
<b>CAFETERIA PLAN FOR TRANSIT SERVICES</b>				
Long Range				
Short Range				
Not interested				
Willing to provide services to another individual organization in a negotiated agreement				
Comments:				
<b>TRADITIONAL RTA CONSOLIDATION WITH TAXING AUTHORITY</b>				
Long Range				
Short Range				
Not interested				
Comments:				
<b>TRADITIONAL JPA WITH NO TAXING AUTHORITY</b>				
Long Range				
Short Range				
Not interested				
Comments:				
<b>NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED</b>				
<b>TAC MEMBER INTEREST</b>				

## V ANALYSIS

### Summary Analysis of NTD and provider data

#### Regional vs. State Averages

Cost performance measures as they compare with state averages for rural transit systems – Highlighted cells in **red** indicate higher than average costs. Highlighted cells in **green** indicate lower than average costs. PU=Public Transit PA= PARatransit

Provider	Cost per ride Pu/Pa	State average	Cost per hour Pu/Pa	State average	Cost per mile Pu/Pa	State average
Sierra Vista	5.52/31.83	21.99	70.25/181.21	75.08	5.81/.96	6.76
Benson	20.51/14.82	21.99	46.21/46.91	75.08	4.77/3.11	6.76
Bisbee	9.33	21.99	76.84	75.08	4.17	6.76
Douglas	12.84/6.68	21.99	55.76/40.22	75.08	2.96/3.46	6.76
ViCAP*	16.88	21.99	26.73	75.08	1.52	6.76

Provider	Vehicles owned	Vehicles under lien	Annual miles driven
Sierra Vista	13	6	133,492 Pu 18,617 Pa
Benson	6	6	23,721 Pu 29,790 Pa
Bisbee	5	3	71,681 Pu
Douglas	7	4	210,321 Pu 19,473 Pa
ViCAP*	5	3	185,051

\*Volunteer drivers using personal vehicles are not reflected in cost performance measures.

#### Summary of regional geography and demographics

- As rural transit providers, each of the 5311 transit systems serves the public at large with emphasis, either through a paratransit or deviated fixed route operation, on the elderly and disabled.
- Existing transit systems have service areas that do not overlap with any other system with most more than 25 miles from the next transit provider. The closest system to Willcox is Benson at 35 miles.
- Each transit provider has independent relationships with local businesses and major employers. As an example, Douglas works closely with Cochise College and local employers (call-center, Wal-Mart) to create routes that work for employees, students, and customers. It also operates a scheduled system connecting Douglas to Bisbee and on to Sierra Vista, stopping at two of the Cochise College campuses (Douglas and Sierra Vista) along with the Vista Transit Center and the regional hospital. Each are major hubs or rider destinations.
- Existing municipally owned transit services do reach beyond their city limits to serve adjacent or nearby communities. Bisbee serves Naco. Benson serves JSix and St. David, Willcox will serve San Simone, Bowie, Pearce, and Sunsites, along with neighborhoods outside its city

limits north of I-10. Douglas serves Pirtleville and Bay Acres as well as points in Palominas and Hereford on their Connection routes.

- The largest geographic gaps in service include:
  - areas along the HWY 90 corridor between Sierra Vista and Benson,
  - areas north of I-10 at Benson
  - areas throughout the Sulphur Springs Valley north of Douglas and East of Bisbee including Elfrida and McNeal
  - areas east of the Chiricahua's including Portal (this area does not have a year-round population that has a quantifiable transit need) not including the I-10 corridor communities of San Simon and Bowie
  - Tombstone (the only incorporated community without transit) with connections to either Benson or Sierra Vista

### Impact of COVID-19 and the Corona Virus on Transit Providers in the Region

- Ridership dropped significantly in the spring of 2020 as COVID-19 infections were first emerging and CDC officials warned against using public transportation. Since March 2020, transit systems have adapted and put into practice, COVID cautious policies for drivers and riders.
- Cares Act funding was made available to all 5311 systems increasing their budgets significantly in order to assist systems in pivoting their service to meet greater health and safety requirements. Increased resources were made available in the last half of the 2019-20 fiscal year and also for the 20-21 fiscal year.
- Expectations for post-vaccine transit systems are uncertain. Some ridership gains have been seen but fluctuate widely as local infection rates also fluctuate. Most transit services are operating in a day-to-day environment that has them dealing with loss of drivers (illness or fear of contracting virus), loss of ridership (fear of contracting virus, lost jobs, school closures, social distancing), and loss of staffing (illness or transfers to positions or departments within a City with more urgent needs). It is expected that as vaccines become more available in 2021, ridership will slowly grow. However, a return to 2019-20 pre-COVID ridership levels may not occur until 2022 or 2023.

### Performance Challenges

#### Performance Measures

- As shown in Section II, Transit Service Providers by Provider, performance measures that include costs are at or below state averages. It is unclear if these figures reflect the true cost of transit provision when compared with other state funded providers or if these high cost-efficiency indicators represent systems that are already running lean operations with minimal administrative and overhead costs. Because most consolidation efforts are designed to reduce costs and overlapping services, performance measures alone, do not support consolidation efforts.

#### Administrative and Operational challenges

- Each transit system experiences different levels of similar challenges. Most often, because a City is using existing staff to conduct transit operations as part of their otherwise, non-transit jobs, administrative staff are stretched. Additionally, City staff primarily assigned to non-

- transit responsibilities (finance, public works, community development, etc.) do not often receive the training and support needed to fully grasp transit policies, regulations, and compliance requirements. Transit Managers often must juggle multiple job descriptions and also respond to other “top-priorities” simultaneously. As an example. A Finance Director who is also the Transit Manager must work with City Council on a City Budget or an annual Audit while also trying to develop a new two-year 5311 application, both falling while staff evaluations are due, and a new bus is being delivered. These staff pressures are abundant in 5311 systems in Cochise County. Added to these pressures are changing federal regulation and compliance requirements, reporting formats, and policy requirements, each demanding the full attention of administrative staff across departments. And finally, with limits on administrative ratios, systems cannot increase administrative support without jeopardizing their 5311 award or expending funds that cannot be reimbursed.
- Operationally, transit systems are running smoothly and efficiently, especially in light of COVID restrictions. Transit system providers look for improved efficiencies in employing qualified drivers, driver training, and driver pools. To maintain a lean operation, systems hire only the drivers required with little if any back-up potential. If two or more drivers are out (COVID is an example but also pre-COVID conferences or training for drivers) and no drivers are available to keep the system running, training becomes a lower priority and is often neglected.
  - Common procurement items present a possible means for relieving staff and improving cost potentials. Insurance, fuel, technologies, maintenance and repair services, and other purchases not only take time to research, bid, and contract, but also require ongoing oversight and annual reviews. Several transit officials agreed that common or shared procurement efforts might streamline efforts and reduce costs.
  - Funding applications can present challenges as well. Though ADOT now allows applications to be pre-populated from previous submissions, some transit providers seek assistance in finding and applying for non-FTA sources. Efforts to diversify funding is an arduous and time-consuming task that does not always provide a return on investment.
  - Marketing is often neglected as staff are stretched or there is a lack of capacity for effectively marketing the transit systems. While some providers have marketing plans, their ability to keep up with regular social, print, website and radio media is limited. Updating rider guides, designing, and installing new bus stop signage, and general upkeep of media opportunities is essential to maintaining ridership.
  - Emergency planning is scarce among providers. The COVID response, while effective, was slow to emerge. Driver and passenger safety protocols were implemented without the benefit of advanced planning for this type of urgent requirement. Additionally, emergency planning for natural disasters, fires, and other types of system altering events is needed.

## VI RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS

### Networking

There is substantial potential for positive “net affect” in building alliances and sharing services based on capacity. The service matrix provides insights into strengths and weaknesses of transit organizations and where one can be of assistance to another. MOUs and IGAs among high-capacity and

low-capacity providers for specialized services can provide a positive net-affect that is focused on strategic needs identified by each organization and builds an efficiency benefit not available in traditional consolidation methods (RTAs and JPAs).

There are many potential benefits in combining or coordinating some administrative functions and sufficient capacity among some providers to take on these functions in either a voluntary or contractual basis.

Based on feedback from providers, the following service functions may benefit from a coordinated response that has one entity taking responsibility for the function or providing assistance to one or more of the other providers. Whether or not an entity decides to provide or accept services is up to each entity and NOT mandatory as would be seen in a traditional consolidation effort.

- Training curriculum and training schedules
- Inspection training
- Rider training
- Driver training
- Funding resources development and application development
- Capital procurement
- Rider guide development – both centralized and independent transit providers
- Mapping
- Marketing and social media
- Advertising
- Website development and maintenance
- Rider surveys and public engagement
- Service modeling
- Schedule and route review and revisions
- Short and long-term transit planning
- Emergency planning
- Asset management
- Insurance Pool
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Improve fuel economy for rolling stock
- Technology sharing, and procurement
- Software development and procurement
- Policy development
- DBE compliance
- ADA and LEP compliance
- Drug Free Workplace policy and testing
- Central or multi-jurisdictional dispatching
- Driver pool development and Driver hiring pool
- Driver handbooks
- Data collection
- Reporting

With a more highly coordinated effort among transit providers, it is reasonable to expect improvements or efficiencies gained in all aspects of transit service provision. It is more likely that services offered and accepted on a “per-agency” basis, that are strategic to the needs of each agency, and acquired on a voluntary basis, will be more effective than an overall attempt to consolidate services more traditionally. In looking at each organization’s capacity, strengths, and weaknesses, these entities can strategically choose what services they may offer others, what services they may acquire from others, and whether those services can be provided or received on a volunteer or contractual basis. This “cafeteria” type of coordinated effort will create a more highly efficient means to reducing costs, building capacity, and improving service.



## Potential Roles in a Coordination/Consolidation Effort

### Potential Roles for transit providers

Technical assistance or service provision for:

- Scheduling software
- Dispatching
- Maintenance and Repair
- Driver hiring and training
- Driver backup

Service modeling

Established service providers mentoring smaller and/or newer services

Voluntarily determined service consolidation/coordination

Smaller, less-capacity organizations may contract or consolidate with greater-capacity service providers.

Entities can choose to coordinate or consolidate administrative duties with another entity.

A newly formed entity could be utilized to develop inter-city, and out-of-county trips or, these trips could be scheduled through a partnership with current NEMT providers.

### Potential Role for SEAGO

Technical Assistance provision in all aspects of transit service operations and administration

Consolidated procurement for parts, products, and services not provided by ADOT/FTA.

- Technology
- Rolling stock replacement parts including consumables such as tires,
- Contracted services
- RFQ and RFP development

Consolidate administrative duties for providers with less capacity.

- Public information & marketing
- Public engagement (surveys, public meetings, etc.)
- Training
- Data collection
- Reporting (ADOT, NTD, AAA, Other funders)
- Policy development
- Compliance monitoring
- Asset Management
- Single ADOT/FTA application for multiple entities on a voluntary basis

## Potential Role of AZDOT

Technical Assistance

Financial Incentives for coordinated/consolidated efforts

ADOT fleet maintenance and repair for smaller agencies presently using outside-sourced maintenance and repair

Streamlined application process for regional applications that include multiple transit applicants

Statewide procurement for capital other than rolling stock (insurance, technology, training, etc.)

Statewide Transit Plan

## VII OTHER POTENTIAL SERVICE CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS

### Traditional Consolidation Methods

#### **Regional (Rural) Transit Authority**

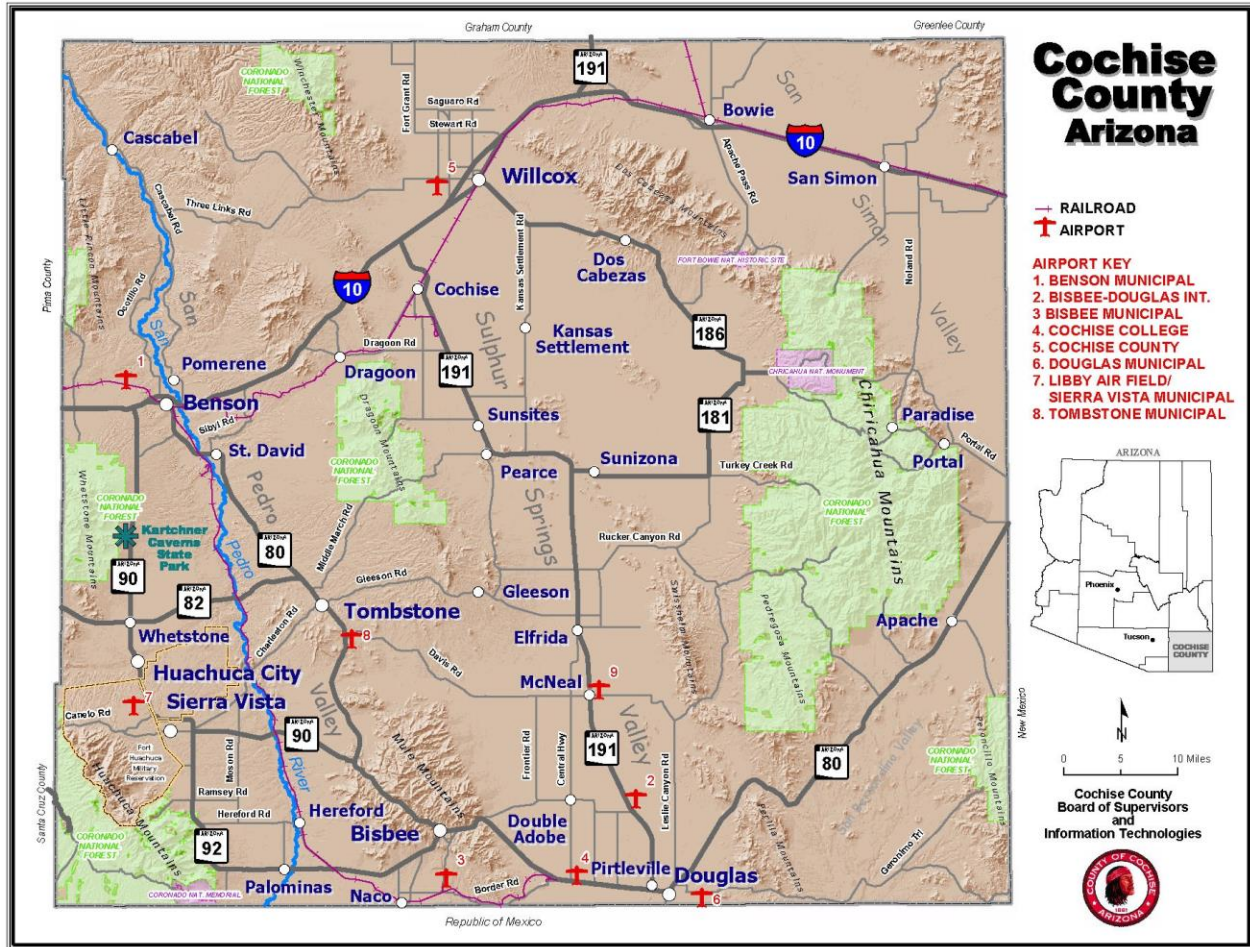
A transit district or transit authority is a government agency, or a public-benefit corporation, created for the purpose of providing public transportation within a specific region. Typically, they are funded through a taxing authority that must be approved by voters in the affected region. The RTA is governed by a Board of Directors that represents stakeholders including riders, business/industry, human/health services, and government sectors, as well as members of the general public; each whom have an interest in public transit provision in the region.

Funding for a taxing RTA is provided through a tax base that is authorized at a County and State level and agreed upon by the voting public. Tax-based funding is calculated to assure a sustainable RTA that can meet the goals and objectives of the Authority, providing transit access across the region in the most efficient manner possible.

The proposed region for an RTA would include Cochise County and its rural communities (not including Sierra Vista which is a small-urban area with transit planning provided by the Sierra Vista Metropolitan Planning Organization. Cochise County occupies 6,210 square miles of southeastern Arizona (roughly the size of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware combined). The population is 125,992 (2019), with a geographic population of 20.3 persons per square mile. When removing Sierra Vista from the numbers, we have a square mile region of 6,057 and a population of 81,572, or 13.5 persons per square mile.

Communities in the region include I-10 corridor communities of Benson, St. David, Bowie, San Simone, Willcox, Cochise and Dragoon; North of I-10 are Cascabel and Pomerene; Central valley communities of Pearce/Sunsites, Elfrida, McNeal, Gleeson, Sunizona, Kansas Settlement, Dos Cabezas and Tombstone; Eastern communities (far side of Chiricahua mountain range) of Portal, Paradise, and Apache; Western communities of Whetstone and Huachuca City, and Southern border (MX-US) communities of Palominas, Hereford, Bisbee, Naco, Double Adobe, Pirtleville, and Douglas.

Of these, Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, and Willcox (operational fall 2021) have 5311 public transit services. There are limited services in Pirtleville (provided by Douglas), Naco (Bisbee), Hereford (Douglas), St. David (Benson), Bowie, San Simone, and Pearce/Sunsites (Willcox). Huachuca City provides limited transit services that are, at present, privately funded. The other listed communities in the region have no regular access to public transit.



The presence of a tax-funded RTA could eliminate the need for individual community operated transit services while expanding transit access to communities and villages without such services. Ideally, intercity service would be developed or solidified, connecting existing services in the region to other transit services that could connect riders to destinations outside the region.

A hub and spoke system of transportation in a rural area is not always efficient, even in an RTA environment. With considerable distances between communities, a truly centralized (operations centered from a single location or hub) system where vehicles are dispatched to outlying communities requires substantial use of time, considerable mileage, and inefficient wear and tear on vehicles.

Rather than a hub and spoke system, an RTA may find greater efficiency in maintaining community-based fixed and flexible route systems where ridership is high and destination choices typically remain within the community; while also developing connecting services on a more limited basis that allow riders to reach destinations outside their communities or connects riders from very rural areas an opportunity to

reach the nearest community for shopping and services. This is an essential consideration when healthcare and human services, as well as access to food and other retail options are very limited in some communities.

In Cochise County, three communities (Sierra Vista, Benson, and Douglas) have access to a Wal-Mart and only Sierra Vista is home to other discount (box store) retailers. Other local retailers in more rural communities are often limited to gas/fast stop shops. There are hospitals in Sierra Vista, Benson, Bisbee, and Willcox, though some smaller communities have access to rural clinics. Benson, Bisbee, and Willcox hospitals are not full-service and must transport patients to larger (typically Tucson) hospitals for emergency and surgical services. This means that follow up care and access to specialists requires residents to seek transportation to the Tucson area to maintain their health services. Most of the incorporated communities have at least one chain grocery store (Tombstone and Huachuca City do not), while all the un-incorporated communities do not.

A successful RTA will need to consider the transit needs of all the communities, especially those without medical and food access in determining how it can best (reasonable, affordable, efficient) meet the needs of the region including inter-city services from throughout the region to Tucson and even Phoenix, to adequately meet the needs of regional riders who do not qualify for state-supported, non-emergency medical transportation.

Pros –

- If tax supported, reduction in cash match requirements for consolidated entities
- Centralized decision making
- Greater capacity for
  - Administration
  - Route expansion
  - Asset management
- Expanded service areas

Cons –

- New taxing authorities not politically popular, would take considerable, lengthy, and costly efforts to market to the voting public.
- If not tax supported, increase in cash match requirement for consolidated entities.
- Significant areas of County where ridership would not be cost effective.
- Loss of autonomy for entities in decision making and serving their constituents.
- Loss of asset ownership
- Loss of offsets for municipal budgets

### **Joint Powers Authority**

A joint powers authority (JPA) is an entity permitted under the laws of Arizona whereby two or more public authorities (e.g., local governments, utility, or transport districts), may jointly exercise any power common to all of them. In the case of a JPA Transit Authority, like-minded local governments may come together to form an agency or entity that would provide transit services. These services would be funded

through an agreement among the partners, each providing a negotiated share of the cost of transit services. This entity could choose to provide services to non-local government areas of the agreed upon region.

No taxing authority would be provided making a cash contribution to the JPA a requirement of each of the member entities in the agreement. A single 5311 application could be submitted to the state with members contributing the match requirement in a negotiated amount. This could be based on ridership and/or population. There may also be an administrative fee and other means to accumulate the required match for capital and operating. Existing assets, including rolling stock, technology, etc., with approval from ADOT, could either be leased or turned over to the JPA by the current ownership entities. It would be expected that each member entity that currently has a 5311 contract with ADOT could be expected to pay at least the amount typically required for matching funds. As the 2020 and 2021 5311 budgets were funded with CARES Act money, no matching funds were required, leaving no information on current day match obligations under normal operating circumstances. Given these unusual budgeting circumstances, a newly formed JPA would need to undergo a comprehensive budgeting process that identified anticipated costs, annual increases, and matching fund requirements as well as a formula to determine each member entities' proportionate share of match.

A single member of the JPA could take responsibility for the day-to-day operations of a transit service or the JPA could agree to hire a third-party operator. Like an RTA, the JPA would provide transit services, but rather than region-wide, may be limited to its member entities and their jurisdictions. In the case of the County, the JPA may identify communities for which transit services are most needed and the County provide the matching funds for the proportionate share of the transit budget.

A Board of Directors representing each of the local governments engaged in the agreement would provide direction.

Possible JPA members include Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Huachuca City, Tombstone, Willcox, and Cochise County. Representation and funding by the County would allow the JPA to include services to unincorporated areas.

Pros –

- Shared responsibility
- Centralized decision making
- Single administrative and operational authority
- Potential short-term income and/or match contribution for member entities who lease or contribute assets (vehicles, technology, etc.)

Cons –

- Board is generally made up of elected officials which can change during most election cycles.
- Determining pro-rata share of shared expenses can be difficult and changes often, making budget planning for each member entity difficult.
- Loss of budget offsets and asset ownership.
- Increased cash requirements .

- Joint Power agreement must be renewed and budgeted for by each partner as often as annually.

### Barriers to Traditional Service Consolidation

- Lack of will among population for tax funding
- Lack of budgetary funding for matching fund requirements
- Financial implications for assets, overhead, and offset allocations
- Additional staffing costs
- No geographic service overlaps to consolidate
- Loss of local control
- Rider resistance
- Political will
- Cultural differences among organizations
- Unequal partnership concerns
- Employee resistance and concerns for job security
- Technology compatibility

### Other localized potential consolidation efforts

- One existing or new entity provides paratransit services for all 5310 and 5311 providers serving the county.
- One existing or new entity provides inter-city and/or out of county service to transit hubs throughout the county. This could include NEMTs already serving these inter-city and out-of-county destinations.
- Centralized, SEAGO-based administrative services for self-selected transit providers.

## VIII SUMMARY

At the first TAC meeting, members, primarily made up of transit providers, did not feel traditional consolidation would address the stated goals and objectives. On the contrary, traditional consolidation would likely result in a more expensive, less responsive transit system with only the benefit of tax-generated dollars to relieve each community of their current matching-fund obligations. Instead, TAC members sought ways in which further and more significant coordination among providers might ease financial and administrative burdens and also strategically address the needs of those providers with less capacity with the help of those with more capacity. In this way, benefits for some entities did not come at the expense of all the entities, rather each transit provider benefited based on its need and the ability of another transit system to provide assistance in either a contractual or voluntary way.

At the second TAC meeting, when reviewing the draft Consolidation Plan, two transit providers (Bisbee & Benson) spoke to the value of an RTA as a long-term strategy but agreed that short-term strategies would be useful in the form of shared or coordinated services.

Members who completed the second questionnaire regarding preferences for long and short-term strategies indicated little or no interest in traditional consolidation efforts in the short run and mild to strong interest in shared services. See Section IV.

While a traditional RTA or JPA may be beneficial, the current circumstances under which transit programs are funded (CARES Act) do not allow for a true analysis of costs in starting and operating a consolidated transit system, or to determine the true cost to agencies in both loss of allocable costs from their general fund budget or added costs for participation in a JPA structure that would require a cash outlay for each participating agency.

Based on TAC member input, a non-traditional alternative to consolidation is best suited to the region as there are, presently, no typical scenarios that usually drive consolidation efforts (overlapping service areas, above average operational costs, shared ridership, political will, motivation among providers, etc.) Without these driving forces, consolidation in the traditional sense will not be successful.

In considering the value of moving forward toward more intentional and strategic coordination, TAC members have:

- Identified their own strengths and weaknesses as transit providers in thirteen administrative and six operational service categories (see service matrix in Section IV)
- Based on their strengths, identified which of the system categories they could provide contractual or voluntary services to other transit providers in the County,
- Identified which of the service categories could be provided through a consolidated or single, county-wide provider.

## IX Next Steps

Having met in January 2021, the TAC members reiterated their desired outcomes via a questionnaire (See Section IV). Members recommended that the consolidation study outline the strategies they collectively agreed on and will remain as a TAC committee to further recommendations into implementation of the short and long term.

As an implementation strategy, it is recommended that SEAGO develop three program models; an Administrative Services model that provides selected services to transit providers who wish to contract with SEAGO for assistance; a Transit Services MOU model that would create boilerplate agreements whereby one transit agency with a high level of experience, skill, or operations/administrative systems would volunteer or contract with a transit agency of lesser capacity to provide a specific service or services as determined by the agencies; and, develop a JPA model for long-range development, again, for agencies interested in joining such a program. A JPA model would include a long-term strategy for a tax-funded RTA to sustain rural transit in the region.

In the short-term, transit providers would need to amend their budgets with ADOT (or include these costs with each new 5311 contract) to incorporate the costs for shared services agreements, whether with SEAGO or another transit provider. Additionally, 5310 providers receiving public transit operations funding may also wish to engage SEAGO or specific transit agencies in helping to fill gaps in capacity or streamline functions. They too would need to amend their budgets to accommodate such expenditures.

The following is a proposed schedule for SEAGO modeling and implementation.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Qtr. 3 21</b>	<b>Qtr. 4 21</b>	<b>Qtr. 1 22</b>	<b>Qtr. 2 22</b>	<b>Qtr. 3 22</b>	<b>Qtr. 4 22</b>	<b>Qtr. 1 23</b>	<b>Qtr. 2 23</b>
Determine level of effort for shared services agreement								
Negotiate shared services pricing with potential users								
Develop MOU for transit providers offering services to other transit providers								
Present draft MOU to TAC and finalize								
Develop Shared Services agreement								
Utilize Mobility Management and Coordination Council to introduce and market Shared Services program and availability of MOU model								
Launch Shared Services agreements with participating transit providers								
Track MOU partnerships								
Discuss JPA potential with Coordination Council								
Discuss JPA potential with SEAGO Advisory and Executive Councils (management and elected officials from each community)								
Determine JPA potential and develop implementation plan if approved								

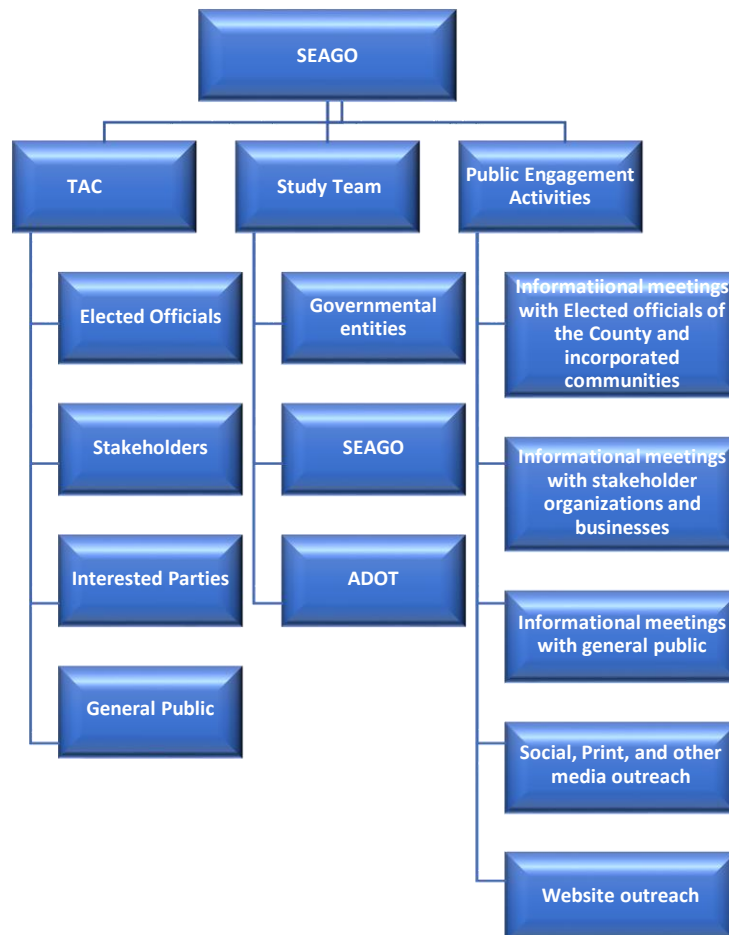


**APPENDIX A**

**Public Engagement Plan**

Public engagement is a problem-solving approach, which brings together community members and planners to discuss complex issues facing the communities and their residents. The goal of this PEP is to allow the public and other community members opportunities throughout the Study process to influence its outcome. The PEP reflects ways to identify and contact the community, inform them of the Study goals and objectives, and involve them in the Study’s recommendations. The PEP includes tasks that will identify the affected public, creating a database of communities, businesses, health care entities, school organizations, church groups, environmental and cultural organizations, special interest groups, ethnic organizations, low-income serving entities, advocacy groups, and transit/transportation providers and provide opportunities for these representatives to gather information and provide feedback and guidance throughout the Study process. By actively seeking participation of communities and their stakeholders, agencies, individual interest groups, and the general public throughout the Study development process, SEAGO expects to determine the potential for a consolidated transit/transportation program and, if positive, identify the preferred ways in which consolidation might take place in a manner that is mutually beneficial for providers, stakeholders, and the public.

Organizational Structure for PEP Plan



**Consolidation Study Team (Team)**

The Team consists of key SEAGO staff:

Chris Vertrees, Transportation Manager – Mr. Vertrees acts as the project leader and is responsible for all aspects of the Study.

Melanie Greene, Transit Planner – Ms. Greene is responsible for the development of the Study and will carry out all public engagement activities, collect public input, and draft the study report.

Connie Gastelum, Mobility Manager – Ms. Gastelum will serve as liaison between human services and transit providers in the County and assist with public engagement activities as a Spanish/English translator.

John Merideth, Planning Assistant – Mr. Merideth will provide data collection and GIS services, creating maps and graphics for the public engagement events.

To ensure public engagement goals and objectives are addressed in a timely manner, the Team will meet on a bi-weekly basis to monitor Study progress, coordinate activities, identify strategic issues with development and next steps. The Team is tasked with producing materials to be presented to specific audiences and the engagement activities to ensure that feedback is summarized and addressed as appropriate in the Study.

**Consolidation Study Transit Advisory Council (TAC)**

The TAC is made up of individuals representing a cross section of elected officials, stakeholders, interested parties, and the general public.

TAC representatives are drawn from each of the communities in the Study area as well as representation from the unincorporated regions of the County. Including members from underrepresented populations including low-income, seniors, transit riders, and ethnic groups is a priority for the TAC.

The initial TAC meeting will kick-off the Study activities and will include an informational session that defines the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of the TAC.

TAC purpose: Recommend how transit and transportation investments are made and the potential for greater efficiency and effectiveness through possible consolidation efforts. The TAC will be a key vehicle for continuous public engagement. As such, it will bring the interests and concerns of a broader public to the planning process. It will advise the Team by identifying issues and transportation solutions critical to various constituencies.

TAC structure: Facilitated by key TEAM members, the TAC will determine how often it will meet (at least quarterly). Meeting sites will be available to members electronically and vary across the County to promote understanding of local conditions and assure greater participation among members living and working in more remote locations. Agendas and information will be provided to each member prior to the meeting. Member attendance will be recorded.

**TAC responsibilities:**

Assist in developing the Study Vision Statement

Identify existing conditions and future scenarios

Identify special interest groups and individuals who represent under-represented individuals/groups for purposes of public engagement outreach

Promote partnerships with constituents, stakeholders, and the public

Work to develop a general understanding or agreement on future goals

Review and comment on draft Study materials

Advise on final recommendations to the SEAGO Board of Directors and ADOT

TAC membership will include representatives from:

Each community in the Study area

Transit providers

Human Services transportation providers

Health Care

Business

Low-income population

Senior population

Disabilities population

Schools/College

Transit riders

Chambers of Commerce

Federal and State departments

Municipal and County Government

Cultural, environmental, and social service representatives

**Public Engagement Events & Activities**

In an effort to include diverse audiences, SEAGO will hold public engagement events and activities targeted to specific audiences including elected officials and government staffs; stakeholder organizations and businesses; the general public (interested individuals and leaders representing a sector of the public); and transit/transportation providers.

These events will be structured to garner information on current and expected future conditions, elicit responses to effectiveness or efficiency of potential consolidation efforts, and gather recommendations for inclusion in the Study.

Events and activities will be held at times and places that are most conducive to attendance of the targeted audience. As an example, general public events may be held in various places across the county that are easily reached, are on public transit lines (where they exist) and are commonly recognized as safe, neutral spaces that encourage broad participation. Event and activity times also will be targeted to audiences. General Public events will be held after typical work hours, on weekends, and/or part of other scheduled public events such as festivals, fairs, and other public gathering events.

Events may be structured as meetings where information regarding the Study is shared and feedback and recommendations are encouraged. Other events may include informational brochures and surveys, while others may include a more formal focus group activity. Where appropriate, printed materials and surveys will be provided in both English and Spanish (Spanish is the primary second language in the region as determined by the four-point analysis conducted in the Title VI Plan for SEAGO).

Events and activities will be marketed broadly through electronic notifications, print media, social media, websites, and networking through TAC membership.

A stakeholder database will be generated and updated to assure broad, diverse audiences to which events and activities can be marketed.

Information gathered through public engagement events and activities will be collected and analyzed by the TEAM, reviewed by the TAC to inform recommendations, and appropriately archived in support of the Study.

### **Public Engagement Audiences**

Elected officials and government staffs:

SEAGO will invite elected officials from the Study area's municipalities, towns, and the County as well as State and Federal officials whose departments have a stake in transit planning. Also invited are key staff members from these governmental entities who may have information, insights, and recommendations for the Study. Because a transit consolidation study impacts both communities with and without current transit services, the willingness to partner among government leaders and officials is essential in determining the feasibility of such an effort and in crafting a preferred method and phasing of a consolidation. This is particularly important as elected officials in favor of consolidation will be relied upon to share their support among constituents as well as support for any long-term financial resources often required should a Rural-Transit Authority be proposed. Staff members, whose support will be relied upon for policy development, partner agreements, and implementation of any resulting consolidation, will be essential to the Study's development and outcomes.

**Stakeholders:**

SEAGO is keenly aware of the diversity of stakeholders, their independent needs, and their essential engagement and input in developing the Study and subsequent implementation of any consolidation efforts. Stakeholders include human and health services organizations and advocates, businesses, cultural and ethnic groups, religious organizations, schools and colleges, environmental groups, economic development entities, transit riders, and others who may be recommended by identified representatives. These audiences may be engaged separately or as a group with significant efforts to identify unmet needs, impact potential, resource and partnership opportunities, and barriers toward success of outcomes identified by the Study. SEAGO will utilize existing association and collaborative group meetings to share information including the University of Arizona Extension Office's Healthy Communities forums which bring together similar stakeholder constituents to discuss issues relating to healthy communities. These forums are held throughout Cochise County and will welcome presentations and information gathering for the Study.

**General Public:**

SEAGO will provide public engagement opportunities for the general public in locations throughout the Study service area. Utilizing electronic, print, and radio media, the public will be encouraged to learn about the planning process and offer personal feedback that will inform the Study's recommendations. SEAGO will seek unique opportunities to reach the public where they gather including public events such as fairs, festivals, and cultural events and at local establishments such as libraries, health clinics, restaurants, and schools. The public will be invited to follow and provide input via a SEAGO web-based portal and, if resources are available, a direct mail campaign may be implemented in select communities. As is typical for transit public input, members of the public often are unfamiliar with transit needs unless their families are directly impacted. Meeting with the public will allow SEAGO to gauge early public interest in long-term service consolidation and their willingness to fund a proposed county-wide system.

**Transit/Transportation Providers:**

SEAGO has a long-established relationship with existing, federally assisted transit and human services transportation organizations. These include FTA supported 5307, 5311, and 5310 providers. SEAGO also will seek out private transportation providers including non-emergency medical, long-term care and assisted living providers, Uber/Lyft and other web-based providers, taxi services, shuttle services, and business-related commuter services. Combined, these entities represent most transit/transportation services available in the County. These agencies also are essential to identifying gaps in service both geographically and in ridership (type of riders that may be underserved such as veteran's groups, seniors, persons with disabilities, etc.)

Utilizing existing service delivery data including rides, service areas, service hours, cost per ride, cost per mile, ride duration, capital inventory, and current and projected budgets and resources, will inform the Study and clarify whether consolidation efforts will result in improved efficiency and effectiveness. Providers also will provide insights into potential barriers to consolidation and the political will of their organizational leadership to consider consolidation efforts.

### **Expected Outcomes of Public Engagement**

The following expected outcomes are presented to highlight the resulting impact of the PEP once implemented.

Outreach and educational programs will be developed and implemented to increase awareness and understanding of the Study;

Underrepresented communities and individuals will be educated about the Study, its purpose, need, and how it benefits them and their communities;

Underrepresented communities and individuals will have an increased opportunity to participate in the Study development process;

Partnerships will be developed with key community members and organizations to disseminate Study education materials and information;

Coordinated efforts will be forged with cities, towns, the County, and other local, state, or regional partners to enhance awareness of the Study among constituents and in underrepresented communities;

Partner agency feedback on the Study and its options;

More local support for preferred alternatives recommended in the Study;

Documentation of public concerns and opportunity for input; and

Better use of agency resources as evidenced by effective, results-oriented meetings.

### **Monitoring Public Participation**

To ensure that a high degree of public involvement is sustained over the course of the Study process, metrics for each of the public outreach mechanisms will be monitored on a regular basis and mid-course corrections made to enhance levels of engagement should declining participation be noted. Ultimately, the goal is to give members of the public the opportunity to influence the direction and shape of the Consolidation Study. All comments will be categorized and summarized to preserve a public record of all feedback. These summaries will be shared with the Team, TAC, SEAGO Board and other interested parties, posted to the website, and used on social media to generate more discussion.

### **Government contacts**

- City of Benson
- City of Bisbee
- City of Douglas
- City of Sierra Vista
- City of Willcox
- Cochise County
- Town of Tombstone
- Town of Huachuca City

**Stakeholder Groups**

- ADOT
- Airports – Sierra Vista, Douglas, Bisbee
- Benson Hospital - Benson
- Canyon Vista Medical Center – Sierra Vista
- Chambers of Commerce – Sierra Vista, Benson, Willcox, Douglas
- Chiricahua Clinic – Bisbee, Benson, Sierra Vista, Willcox
- Cochise College – Douglas, Benson, Willcox
- Cochise County
- Copper Queen Community Hospital - Bisbee
- Departments of Employment Security – Sierra Vista, Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox
- Freeport McMoRan - Bisbee
- FTA
- Human services organizations – Sierra Vista, Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox
- Legacy Foundation – Sierra Vista
- Low-income housing agencies
- Northern Cochise County Hospital – Willcox
- Transit Riders – Sierra Vista, Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox
- Senior Centers – Sierra Vista, Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Willcox
- SVMPO – Sierra Vista
- Town of Huachuca City
- University of Arizona – Extension Office
- Veterans’ Services – Sierra Vista

**Transit Providers**

- Sierra Vista – Vista Transit – 5307
- Bisbee – Bisbee Bus – 5311 & AAA
- Benson – Benson Area Transit – 5311 & AAA
- Douglas – Douglas Rides and Cochise Connection – 5311 & AAA
- Willcox – Willcox Transit – 5311 & AAA (under development)
- ViCap - 5310 & AAA
- Non-emergency medical transportation providers – state HHS funded

### **TAC Members**

- Aubrey Perry – ADOT
- Caleb Blaschke, City Manager, Willcox
- Candace Weingart, UA Extension Office
- Chris Vertrees, Transportation Manager, SEAGO
- Connie Gastelum, Mobility Manager, SEAGO
- Humberto Rivera, Transit Manager, City of Douglas
- John Cropper, Volunteer Driver, ViCap Willcox
- Karen Lamberton, MPO Director, City of Sierra Vista
- Kathe Williams, Transit Manager, City of Benson
- Liza Quinones, UA Extension Office
- Luis Pedroza, Finance Director, City of Douglas
- Melanie Greene, SEAGO
- Linda Jones, Transit Manager, Sierra Vista Transit