2 REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

A goal of the RGVMPO Transit Development Plan is to establish guidelines that help the six independent transit providers in the region collaborate effectively and promote a connected regional transit system. The RGV Regional Service Standards provide baseline recommendations and evaluation metrics that focus on aligning and improving existing and future service to better serve the community in the RGVMAB.

INTRODUCTION

As the RGVMAB grows, it is crucial that transit service is continually evaluated to ensure it is meeting the needs of the community. A successful transit system will help mitigate traffic congestion and connect people to destinations and resources throughout the region. While each of the transit providers in the RGVMAB has independent leadership, policies, and procedures, when a passenger is traveling from point A to point B, they are often less concerned with who is providing the trip then they are with making it to their destination in a safe and timely manner. The interconnected socioeconomic and cultural landscape of the RGVMAB and cities therein make it important to approach system evaluation and planning from the perspective of the region as a whole.

Service standards are areas of focus for transit providers to consider when evaluating service performance and setting goals for future improvements. While not exhaustive, these standards provide guiding recommendations that outline goals for the regional transit service. A core set of standards will allow providers to ensure consistent, high-quality service throughout the regional transportation network.

Progress towards meeting and exceeding service standards may be assessed in different ways. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** are metrics that may be applicable in measuring a provider's adherence to a service standard. These targets are quantifiable and may be set based on service type. **Recommendations** are actionable steps that, when implemented, help the transit provider meet one or multiple standards.

Purpose

The regional service standards below have been developed for the RGVMAB as part of the 2030 Transit Development Plan. Currently, there are six transit providers operating in the region, each with distinct service types, administrative procedures, and planning goals. The list of standards and accompanying evaluation metrics are intended to create a unified approach and shared best practices that will bring consistency to the regional transit system. They are rooted in nationwide best practices for transit service planning and adapted to meet the needs of the local context in the RGVMAB, offering a unique set of service provision types, technology standards, and system designs that can be implemented throughout the region. Existing transit service by all providers in the region should be measured on an annual basis to track progress towards a system that complies with these standards.

The following sections detail the Rio Grande Valley regional service standards and provide specific measures and recommendations for each. It should be noted that these represent minimum standards that providers should aim to achieve, and that it is possible that parts of existing service meet or exceed these targets. The service standards offer a guide to make high-quality transit present throughout the RGVMAB. It is also important to understand that all targets represent goals for peak hour service. Standards and their metrics were created to be realistic for a regional transit system and represent targets that all providers in the region can work towards achieving in tandem.

Title VI Disclaimer

It should be recognized that any system alteration that results in a change in service of 25% or greater will be considered a major service change and require a Title VI analysis. For example, if there are 20 existing trips and 5 trips are altered, it would constitute a 25% change in service and require further analysis in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964.

Complementary Paratransit

In accordance with Part 37 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Transportation Services for Individuals with Disabilities, all public entities who operate a fixed route system will provide paratransit service that is both comparable and complementary to the fixed route service to all eligible patrons. Complementary paratransit must provide service to any origin or destination within 3/4 mile on all sides of any route corridor in the system.

Route Classifications

Service standards in the RGVMAB are not intended to be 'one size fits all.' For service standards to be implemented and evaluated effectively, they should account for the variety of transit services currently being operated across the region and proposed in the future. Implementation of service enhancements may be tailored to the level appropriate for different service types; for example, regional routes may require stops to be spaced farther apart than local routes due to the nature of the service. Many of the recommendations provided in this document are accompanied by measures that can be applied differently to the different types of route classifications shown below. Existing routes in the RGVMAB have been classified based on their contexts and can be found in Appendix D.

Figure 1: Route Classifications

LOCAL - URBAN

Fixed route service that operates in more urban areas where demand and destinations are concentrated.

LOCAL - RURAL

Fixed route service that operates in mostly rural areas.

REGIONAL - EXPRESS

Service that travels city to city with limited stops, offering coverage of multiple urban areas.

REGIONAL - URBAN

Service with stops at key destinations in multiple urban areas throughout the region.

CAMPUS

Service that is limited to a particular university campus. Service is open to students and the general public.

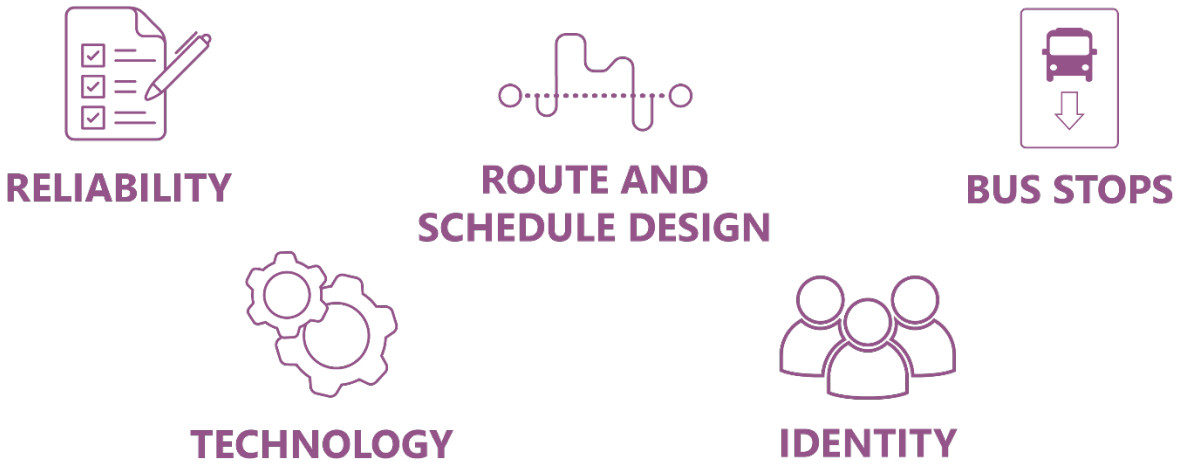
MOBILITY ZONES

Designated areas with demand response service available, set in the place of unproductive fixed routes & deviations.

Regional Service Standards

Service standards for the RGVMAB regional transit system have been identified as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: RGV Regional Service Standards



These standards have been determined as areas of focus for the regional transit system and are presented with Key Performance Indicators and Recommendations that will guide the changes needed to meet them. This information is intended to document a shared vision for transit in the RGVMAB and to inform all relevant transit agencies of the recommended goals and how they may be measured. The standards are presented in a way that is meant to be intuitive and easy to refer to as the regional system evolves over time.

The standards are one component of the Regional TDP and need to be implemented in coordination with the recommendations, implementation plan and transit investment strategy. Expanded operational and capital funding will be needed to meet many of the thresholds of the Regional Service Standards.

RELIABILITY

RGV REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

KPIs

On-Time Performance

Bus Stops	75% On Time
Time Points	85% On Time
Transit Centers	90% On Time

Trips are 'on time' when they depart less than 5 minutes late & do not depart early. Flexible Route OTP may be measured at timepoints determined by provider.

Frequency

Route frequencies should fall within these ranges during peak demand periods based on service type and demand.

Local – Urban	Every 15-30 minutes
Local – Rural	Every 30-60 minutes
Regional – Express	Every 15-30 minutes
Regional – Urban	Every 15-60 minutes
Campus	Every 15-30 minutes

Clock-Face Scheduling

Service should be scheduled to run at regular intervals that fall at memorable times.

A bus should always depart from the terminus at :00, :15, :30, or :45 after the hour. This ensures service is consistent and easy for riders to remember while making it easier to transfer between routes and providers. It also provides opportunities for interlining.

Recommendations

Span

The span of service should adhere to one of the levels below based on demand.

- ***Standard*** *7:00am – 8:00pm*
- ***Shortened*** *7:00am – 6:00pm*
- ***Extended*** *6:00am – 10:00pm*
- ***Campus*** *As appropriate based on demand*

Days of Service

Minimum Recommended Days of Service: Monday-Friday

Weekend service should be considered and implemented where appropriate.

Time Points

All routes should be assigned time points.

Time points are identified at major stops along a route that the bus uses to maintain schedule. These locations are designated along a route to control the spacing of buses (bus headway), creating the route schedule for passengers. Time points should be placed at strategic points such as major intersections, major trip generators, and at destinations where the highest boarding activity is recorded. Timepoints should be an average of 10 minutes apart.

ROUTE AND SCHEDULE DESIGN

RGV REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Recommendations

Connectivity

Where appropriate, fixed routes should make connections to other routes within the same system or to routes in other systems.
Connection stops should be clearly marked, especially where multiple providers' services connect.

Route Patterns

Minimize the number of patterns or variations a route has.
Route patterns or variations describe when a fixed route stops in alternate places than its typical design on certain days or times. This can become confusing for riders and should be avoided. When considering adding an alternate pattern to a route, there should be a clear purpose for doing so and clear communication to riders.

Flexible Service

Minimize routes with flexible service. Implement only in areas with lower demand.

Service Duplication

Minimize service duplication between providers.
Coordinate and align service to contribute to the overall network connectivity. Avoid running service on the same alignment and schedules.

Transfer Time

Transfers should occur within a 15-minute window.

Propensity & Need

Consider data on the transit market to inform route expansion and alterations.
When evaluating existing and potential service, ensure that there are high enough densities of population (passengers) and employment (destinations) to justify service. Identify Census block groups that have large portions of population and employment to make sure these areas are served by existing routes and stops.
Additionally, consider where service is provided in areas with substantial populations of Targeted Transit Riders, or citizens who generally have higher need to use transit due to various limitations to personal mobility such as age, income level, disability, race, ethnicity, and access to a personal vehicle.

Productivity

Measure and evaluate service based on route productivity.
Productivity (boardings per mile per hour) provides insight into ridership trends and relative route performance. Set benchmarks and evaluate over time.

Route and Schedule Design Standards – Continued

Recommendations

Travel Time

Evaluate service using a travel time measurement tool.
Travel time is a necessary component of service to track. Transit providers should strive to improve how far passengers can travel within a given amount of time by adjusting the frequency of service and placement of bus stops.
Travel time benchmarks in the RGVMAB will vary by transit provider.

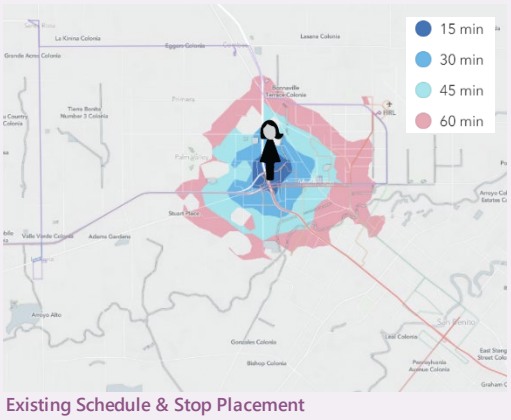
Meet Jane
Measuring Travel Time

Increasing efficiency and convenience of travel by transit is important to improving quality of life for existing passengers as well as attracting new ones. Improved travel times may be the result of increasing route frequencies, adjusting the distance between bus stops, and expanding the operating hours of a service, as well as overall decreases in congestion in the region. Transit providers in the RGVMAB should monitor these qualities and make changes with the goal of improving travel times and coverage for passengers.

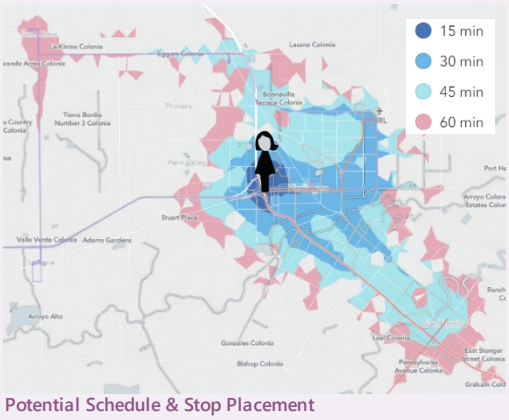
When accurate schedules, route alignments, and stop locations are recorded in Remix, placing 'Jane' at a transit station will show how far passengers can travel in different increments of time.
Coverage can also be measured using demographic metrics. Providers should utilize these filters to evaluate how service is interacting with the transit market:

- Population
- Jobs (CTPP)
- Minority Population
- Living With A Disability
- Age 65+ and 17-
- Car-Free Households

Example: Harlingen Terminal



Existing Schedule & Stop Placement



Potential Schedule & Stop Placement

Time	Population Coverage *Current Schedule & Stops*	Population Coverage *Potential Schedule & Stops*
15 min	2,263	3,389
30 min	8,222	27,765
45 min	20,751	65,809
60 min	47,747	81,006

BUS STOPS

RGV REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

KPIs

Stop Spacing

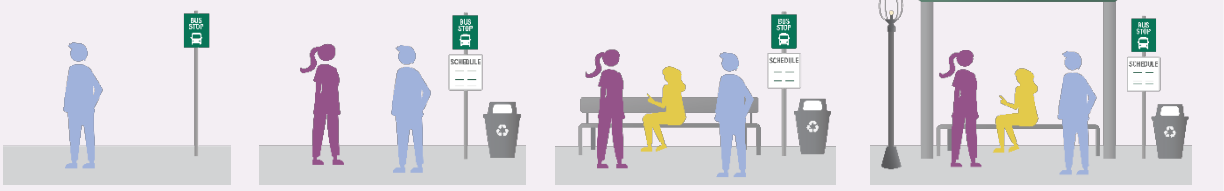
Stop spacing is important to maintaining efficiency and convenience of service. Well-spaced stops help buses adhere to schedules and reduce dwell time.

Route Classification	Average Spacing
Local – Urban	¼ Mile
Local – Rural	½ Mile
Regional – Express	Key destinations
Regional – Urban	1 Mile

Campus route stops may be spaced as appropriate depending on environment.

Stop Design

Amenities should be considered based on stop-level ridership. All stops should be safe, visible, and accessible. Using stop-level ridership can ensure that stop amenities are distributed equitably depending on available funding. As each provider in the region has different total ridership, stop-level ridership should be ranked relative to other stops in that provider's system. For example, if a system had 100 stops and used the percentiles below to distribute amenities, it would mean that the top 10 most-frequented stops based on daily ridership would be given Level 4 amenities.



Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Below 50th Percentile	50th-74th Percentile	75th-89th Percentile	90th Percentile

Recommendations

Stop Environment

Bus stop facilities should be integrated within existing pedestrian and bike networks.
Space to wait for the bus should be well connected to the sidewalk network, making it easy for riders to continue their trip beyond the bus stop. Stops should be clearly discernable, with bilingual signage that reinforces the identity of the transit service.

TECHNOLOGY

RGV REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Recommendations

Vehicle Technology

Automatic Vehicle Locator: Tracks geographic location and speed of vehicles to measure on-time performance (OTP).
Automatic Passenger Count: Collects boarding and alighting numbers to gather accurate stop-level ridership data.
Installing these capabilities on all vehicles helps improve service performance and allows for more in-depth analysis of route ridership and bus stop use.

Planning Software

Agencies should use software that allows for route and schedule planning.
The software's capabilities should include storage of route alignments and stop locations, scheduling functions that allow for the input of frequencies, recovery times, and span of operation by route, and a mapping function that integrates Census data to overlay population, employment, and socioeconomic data.
As much as possible, providers in the region should use the same platform for consistency and ease of collaboration. Most systems currently use **Remix**.

Real-Time Location

Agencies should utilize a platform that allows passengers to view real-time vehicle locations.
This capability enhances service for riders and makes vehicle dispatch and OTP tracking easier for transit providers.
As much as possible, providers in the region should use the same platform for consistency and ease of collaboration. Most providers currently use **Ride Systems**.

Needs Assessment

Review existing transit software annually to determine whether it is meeting the agency's needs.
Recommended software capabilities:

- Fixed route and bus stop mapping
- Scheduling function
- Cost of service
- Real-time location tracking
- Mapping that integrates Census data for analysis
- Ridership by stop, time of day, and trip

IDENTITY

RGV REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

Recommendations

Regional Transit System

Communicate service information using a design philosophy that characterizes transit service in the RGV as a regional system and that emphasizes clarity, ease of use, and consistency. Apply this philosophy to all service in the region to promote continuity in the regional system. Develop and maintain a visual identity for the regional transit system that complements those of individual providers. Create a branding scheme including a consistent color palette and font, logo, design aesthetic, and document templates. While individual transit providers may maintain their autonomous branding on agency-specific websites and facilities, the regional brand identity should be applied wherever possible in public-facing materials. This will provide the region-wide system with a consistent identity that the public easily associates with the RGV transit system and its services.

To ensure that the regional transit system is legible and easy to use, consistent design motifs should be used in all wayfinding and informational materials. Use a uniform color for each provider on materials including bus stop signage, route/service area maps, service schedules, and lists of transfers, throughout the region.

Standardized Provider & Route Identity

Transit Provider	Color Identity	Route Naming Convention
Valley Metro	**RED**	Routes 100-199
B Metro	**BLUE**	Routes 200-299
Island Metro	**YELLOW**	Routes 300-399
Metro McAllen	**GREEN**	Routes 400-499
STC JagExpress	**PURPLE**	Routes 500-599
UTRGV Vaquero Express	**ORANGE**	Routes 600-699

Website

Update the Valley Metro website.

Valley Metro information should be hosted on a clearly branded website independent from the LRGVDC. The website should include an interactive, system-wide map where riders can zoom in and view routes and stop information. PDF schedule documents may be updated and migrated to this site as well.

A map showing all regional service and links to the webpages of the other RGV transit providers is also recommended.

Regional System Identity Standards – Continued

Sample System Map – Valley Metro System

Sample Route Schedule

ROUTE 10

06:30 - 17:30 · Every 132 min · 12 trips (6 Outbound, 6 Inbound)

	0	+5.0	+15.0	+10.0	+25.0
A	06:30	06:35	06:50	07:00	07:25
A	08:30	08:35	08:50	09:00	09:25
A	10:30	10:35	10:50	11:00	11:25
A	13:30	13:35	13:50	14:00	14:25
A	15:30	15:35	15:50	16:00	16:25
A	17:30	17:35	17:50	18:00	18:25

	0	+25.0	+10.0	+15.0	+5.0
A	07:30	07:55	08:05	08:20	08:25
A	09:30	09:55	10:05	10:20	10:25
A	11:30	11:55	12:05	12:20	12:25
A	14:30	14:55	15:05	15:20	15:25
A	16:30	16:55	17:05	17:20	17:25
A	18:30	18:55	19:05	19:20	19:25

OUTCOMES

Implementing strategies to meet and exceed the regional service standards will help improve service as well as create and reinforce the presence of transit in the RGVMAB. Maintaining cohesivity within the regional system will lead to a more convenient, positive user experience, as well as a more streamlined, collaborative relationship among the region's transit providers.

Intended Outcomes of Regional Service Standards

Reliability

- Transit in the RGV is a more dependable mode of transportation and people use it regularly.
- Ridership increases across all providers.
- More riders feel comfortable using transit as their primary mode of transportation.

Route and Schedule Design

- Service is more efficient and tailored to the needs of riders and markets being served.
- Transit trips are faster, decreasing the amount of time passengers spend commuting.
- Transit takes people where they want to go, when they want to go there.

Bus Stops

- Transit users are easily able to locate bus stops and information about their trip.
- Riders feel safe and comfortable at transit stops and throughout trips.
- Transit providers deliver faster and more reliable service associated with fixed route service as opposed to the variability of deviated fixed route or on-demand service.

Technology

- Transit providers can more easily assess route performance, rider satisfaction, and service issues.
- Providers have a centralized way to store service details and view data about the community.
- Collaborating with other providers is more convenient.
- Transit users can easily access information on their bus, making trip planning more intuitive.
- Transit providers understand the dynamic travel patterns of the region and can adapt their service to meet the everchanging needs of the transit markets they serve.

Identity

- Transit riders have more confidence when transferring between different providers' service.
- New riders are more willing to try transit.
- User perception of transit is improved, and the system is seen as more cohesive and recognizable.
- Travel between cities in the region is more comfortable.