

## **Chapter 7: Transit**

### **Introduction**

The Jonesboro Economical Transportation System (JETS) plans to provide public transportation services in Jonesboro city area. These services will include fixed route transit and demand response services. JETS plans to play a very important role in economic growth and cultural life of the city by providing an alternate mode of transportation for the city.

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Arkansas State University is a major educational institution in the area attracting students for all over the world. In the Spring of 2005, 9,791 students enrolled at the Jonesboro Campus. JETS would provide these students with an alternate mode of transportation for going places within the campus and the City of Jonesboro. A proposed route through the campus would have five stops within the campus to let the students go from one department to another. Out side the campus, the students would have the opportunity to transfer to another route which could take them to shopping, recreational and cultural activities throughout the City of Jonesboro.

### **Goals and Objectives**

To meet the public transportation service needs of the citizens of Jonesboro, JETS and the MPO have identified the following objectives:

1. Provide efficient, reliable and safe transportation services to all residents and visitors of Jonesboro, including ASU students and those who are elderly and disabled.
2. Ensure that adequate financial resources are available to provide services and facilities to support the mobility needs.
3. Encourage transit ridership and minimize the impact of vehicles on the metropolitan area's environment so that minimum acceptable air quality levels established by the National Ambient Quality Standards are maintained.
4. Coordinate with other agencies in providing accessibility to all jobs especially to economically disadvantaged residents in the MPO area.
5. Encourage private nonprofit agencies to meet mobility needs of the elderly and disabled citizens.

### **Policy 1**

#### Make Public Transportation Accessible to All.

The MPO, JETS, and human service agencies, are strongly committed to safe, reliable, economic and accessible service to all the citizens in the area.

### **Policy 2**

#### Maintain, develop, and expand existing service.

The MPO and JETS will encourage ridership increases by providing efficient, low cost, safe, accessible, and more reliable service. The MPO and JETS recognize that extending the public transportation service will enhance ridership and reduce automobile usage, resulting in reductions in congestion and air pollution.

**Policy 3**

Maximize financial resources by securing federal, state, and local funding.

JETS will continue its policy of obtaining funds from federal, state and local authorities for capital improvements and operation of the transit system, and leveraging discretionary funds for transfer stations, buildings and improvements.

**Policy 4**

Develop and expand ridesharing services.

The MPO will promote transportation alternatives through the ridership program. The MPO will encourage employees and employers to participate in the ridesharing and vanpooling programs because ridesharing contributes to a more efficient transportation system, and reduces mobile source emissions.

**Policy 5**

Identify and develop innovative service opportunities.

The MPO and JETS will explore innovative service opportunities including nontraditional services: Bicycle facilities and other forms of demand response transportation (taxies etc.). JETS will also investigate the use of alternative types of vehicles that may improve service or productivity and effectiveness.

**Policy 6**

Recognize the impact of transit bus stop facilities on land use.

The MPO and JETS will consider the impacts of bus stop shelters and transfer stations on land use when making decisions on their locations and designs. The increased ridership and additional vehicle traffic resulting from these facilities will influence land development and will impact its neighbors. These facilities must also be accessible to residents and visitors to these areas. JETS will utilize "Livable Communities Initiatives" programs and funds to improve the access from neighborhoods to these facilities.

**Policy 7**

Provide a safe and comfortable environment for transit users and public in general.

JETS is committed to providing a safer and more comfortable environment for its passengers, through effective design, location and programs, and will cooperate with the local communities to ensure that these facilities and amenities are provided, and that residents will have access to these facilities.

**Policy 8**

When reasonable, continue to purchase alternative fuel vehicles.

JETS will purchase alternative fuel vehicles, as it deems appropriate. The MPO and JETS recognize that alternative fuel vehicles reduce air pollution; therefore, JETS will play a leadership role in demonstrating the use and values of alternative fuels for local communities, industries and other private entities.

**Policy 9**

Provide information and coordination for the purchase of vans for mobility of the elderly and the disabled.

The MPO will coordinate with and encourage local private nonprofit organizations to participate in the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Program. This program offers capital assistance to enhance transportation opportunities for the elderly and persons with disabilities. This program has been in operation in Arkansas since 1974. Many paratransit vehicles have been purchased and utilized across the state with 80 percent Federal funding.

The MPO is made aware of those private nonprofit organizations in the metropolitan planning study area that apply for capital assistance. The AHTD Public Transportation Program Section requires each Section 5310 applicant to provide a copy of their application to the MPO for information purposes.

**Jonesboro Economical Transportation Service: Background Information**

The Jonesboro Economical Transportation Service (JETS) was established by the City of Jonesboro Ordinance. JETS is governed by a seven-member Transportation Advisory Board appointed by the mayor and confirmed by City Council.

**TABLE 7-1: Planned Service Delivery Characteristics**

Number of Buses - Active Fleet	3
Number of Buses – Demand Response Fleet	2
Support Vehicles	1
Number of Bus Stops	30
Number of Routes	3
Number of JETS Employees	11 full time 5 part time

JETS will provide a demand response service for persons with disabilities. Riders must be certified in advance that they are eligible to use the service. These riders must then call for a reservation at least twenty-four hours in advance.

JETS, having all accessible buses, may offer the "route deviation" service within 1/4 miles of the JETS fixed routes. The residents may request curbside pickups at their locations, or can catch the bus at designated stops. The Jonesboro Economical Transportation System Routes map (page 7-5) shows the proposed transit routes.

**TABLE 7-2: Fares**

Adults (18 -64)	\$1.00
Youth (6 -17)	\$0.75
Senior (65 and over)	\$0.50
Child (5 and Under)	Free with paying adult
Disabled (with valid I.D.)	\$0.50
Student (with valid I.D.)	\$0.75
On-Demand and Paratransit	\$2.50

JETS, the Arkansas Work Force, and the Area Agencies on Aging will coordinate transportation services for public assistance recipients in the urbanized areas and surrounding communities. Every public assistance recipient will have access to training centers, work interviews, and daycare centers.

One of the major obstacles to public transportation improvements is urban sprawl and neighborhood design. Urban development is expanding and densities are not high enough to generate the necessary demand to add new routes to the system. Neighborhood design and low density residential areas neither allow nor have the infrastructure to support a transit service to go through the neighborhood.

This community, like any other community, is in constant transformation, attracting new businesses, and embracing new technology. JETS will be reaching out for applying for federal funds, and other types of assistance to make the necessary improvements to the planned service and additions to the service according to the ridership increase. Transit needs will emerge, as existing businesses expand and new ones come to the area. Changes in the demand and lifestyle of the community will significantly affect the needs and use of transit. Changes in legislation, technology and community needs are a continuous challenge to transportation providers and policy makers. It is a challenge and an obligation for transportation providers and public officials to coordinate the development of the community to make it a more “livable community” especially for those who have to rely on public transportation. A reliable transportation system will improve the quality of life of the community and revitalize the economy of the area in general.