

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

I have written in this column numerous times about the Cowboy Connect transportation program. There have been some questions about the program's cost, and even though I have published the information here before, I want to do that again.

I want first to inform you of the success of the program. We—Atascosa County, Pleasanton, Poteet and Jourdanton—have taken a giant step toward developing a countywide transportation program that can be utilized by seniors, all adults, the disabled and students. It provides access to shopping throughout the Tri-City area, access to the hospital and professional appointments of all kinds.

Since its start in October 2020, the Cowboy Connect public transportation program has carried 4,900 passengers through September 2021. We have more work to do in each city to set up public shuttle stops with posted times. Now, we can visit the AACOG website and access the shuttle times, but posting times on each stop will be much more productive to encourage use.

Up until now, the cost of riding has been free to the public and that fee has been generously waived. Originally, AACOG set a rider fee of \$0.50 for students and seniors, and \$1 for adults (each shuttle stop entry).

The cost of the Cowboy Connect program is \$224,692 per annum. The cost-sharing by the four entities is divided as follows: County, \$112,346 (one-half); Pleasanton, \$56,173 (one-quarter); Jourdanton, \$28,087; and Poteet, \$28,087. The city councils and County Commissioners Court passed the contracts and amounts unanimously.

I predict that as COVID lifts and the shuttle stop times are less confusing, the ridership will double and triple. I also expect that we will see shuttle links in the future to Lytle and Charlotte, making this a countywide program with even greater ridership numbers.

Of course, the ART (AACOG) Shuttle program still runs three shuttles in the county at no charge to the county or cities. ART provides transportation (at a small fee) from anywhere in the county to towns in Atascosa or destinations in San Antonio.

These programs tell anyone or any business considering relocation to our county that we are a pro-business county that addresses the transportation needs of its citizens.

Thanks for listening. Your county government is getting better all the time.