ACCESS NORTH TEXAS

## REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN
FOR NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

Access North Texas

What is NCTCOG?

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is a voluntary association of cities, counties, school districts, and special districts which was established in January 1966 to assist local governments in **planning** for common needs, **cooperating** for mutual benefit, and **coordinating** for sound regional development.

It serves a 16-county metropolitan region centered around the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently the Council has **236 members**, including 16 counties, 168 cities, 24 independent school districts, and 28 special districts. The area of the region is approximately **12,800 square miles**, which is larger than nine states, and the population of the region is about **7 million** which is larger than 38 states.

NCTCOG's structure is relatively simple; each member government appoints a voting representative from the governing body. These voting representatives make up the **General Assembly** which annually elects a 17-member Executive Board. The **Executive Board** is supported by policy development, technical advisory, and study committees, as well as a professional staff of 350.
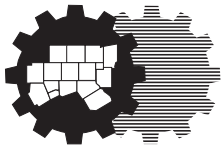
NCTCOG's offices are located in Arlington in the Centerpoint Two Building at 616 Six Flags Drive (approximately one-half mile south of the main entrance to Six Flags Over Texas).

North Central Texas Council of Governments
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Arlington, Texas 76005-5888
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NCTCOG's Department of Transportation

Since 1974 NCTCOG has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation for the Dallas-Fort Worth area. NCTCOG's Department of Transportation is responsible for the regional planning process for all modes of transportation. The department provides technical support and staff assistance to the Regional Transportation Council and its technical committees, which compose the MPO policy-making structure. In addition, the department provides technical assistance to the local governments of North Central Texas in planning, coordinating, and implementing transportation decisions.

Prepared in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation and the U. S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

"The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the opinions, findings, and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, or the Texas Department of Transportation."

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Vice President of Planning and Development, Dallas Area Rapid Transit

RESOLUTION ENDORSING <u>ACCESS NORTH TEXAS</u>, THE COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

WHEREAS, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a Texas political subdivision and non-profit corporation organized and operating under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 391 as the regional planning commission for the 16-county North Central Texas region; and,

WHEREAS, NCTCOG is a voluntary association of, by and for local governments established to assist in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development; and,

WHEREAS, NCTCOG has been designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area by the Governor of the State of Texas in accordance with federal law; and,

WHEREAS, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), comprised primarily of local elected officials, is the regional transportation policy body associated with NCTCOG, and has been and continues to be a forum for cooperative decisions on transportation; and,

WHEREAS, federal law, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, requires the establishment of a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan for agencies seeking funding under the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program; and,

WHEREAS, Chapter 461 of the Texas Transportation Code requires the development of a regional plan to coordinate public transportation services funded with federal, state, or local funds; and,

WHEREAS, the North Central Texas Council of Governments was designated as the lead agency to develop the coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan for the 16-county North Central Texas region; and,

WHEREAS, Subtask 3.05 of the FY2018 and FY2019 Unified Planning Work Program includes public transportation planning and management activities; and,

WHEREAS, <u>Access North Texas</u> was locally developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public; and,

WHEREAS, <u>Access North Texas</u> was approved by the Regional Transportation Council on March 8, 2018.
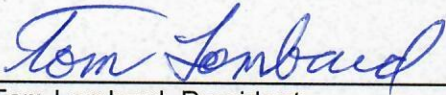
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT:

<u>Section 1.</u>   The North Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Board endorses <u>Access North Texas</u>.

<u>Section 2.</u>   This resolution will be included in the final documentation of <u>Access North Texas</u>.

Section 3.   Access North Texas will be transmitted to the Texas Department of Transportation and other impacted agencies.
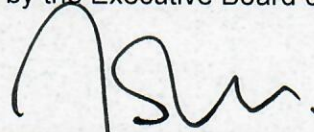
Section 4.   This resolution shall be in effect immediately upon its adoption.

_____
Tom Lombard, President
North Central Texas Council of Governments
Councilmember, City of North Richland Hills

    I hereby certify that this resolution was adopted by the Executive Board of the North Central Texas Council of Governments on March 22, 2018.

_____
J.D. Clark, Secretary-Treasurer
North Central Texas Council of Governments
County Judge, Wise County

ACCESS NORTH TEXAS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Access North Texas is the public transit-human services transportation coordination plan for the 16 counties served by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). Access North Texas identifies the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Based on a combination of research, technical analysis, and public input, the plan identifies strategies to better serve these vulnerable populations with public transportation. While the plan is not a funding document, it is used as a guide for agencies that provide transportation services when federal and State funding becomes available.

Older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes can have difficulty finding public transportation options that connect them to medical appointments, work opportunities and education or job training. This plan identifies where these transportation connections do not exist or could be improved in both the region as a whole as well as county-by-county.

NCTCOG is designated by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to develop the plan, but works to ensure all voices are heard through the entirety of the planning process. NCTCOG is responsible for organizing public meetings, collecting data, performing research, and bringing that knowledge together to create a plan for the region.

CURRENT TRENDS

Recent public transportation trends influence the evolution of traditional transit services across the region. Transit providers are ground-testing ways to provide up-to-the-minute on-demand service, known as mobility on demand. In some areas, transit agencies are partnering with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, to provide last-mile connections to supplement bus and rail service. Increasingly, cities and agencies contact transit providers to discuss how to provide transportation tailored to their community's particular needs and proactively work to improve available transit options. A significant factor in this trend is continuing intense economic growth in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex that has spurred the need for additional transportation services to connect residents to job opportunities. Lastly, technology and new smartphone apps are making it easier for customers to access multiple transit providers from one convenient source.

Future trends will also shape how seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes use public transportation. Autonomous vehicles are currently being tested in the region and may become part of the transit system, changing the way last-mile and on-demand services are offered. Smartphone apps like GoPass (www.gopass.biz) will continue to integrate transit service information and make finding the right services and purchasing a fare convenient for riders. Future upgrades to this region-wide transit ticketing app will include more participating transit agencies and options for unbanked individuals to purchase tickets via local businesses that will accept cash. Lastly, TNCs are working to become more accessible for individuals with disabilities by improving components of their apps and increasing the number of accessible vehicles. These changes to the region's transit system will positively impact people's lives.

PROGRESS CONTINUES

Access North Texas was first adopted in 2013. Significant progress has been made in implementing recommendations from that plan. Examples of outcomes from the 2013 plan are described below. See Appendix B-1, Access North Texas (2013): Summary and Status, for more information about which strategies have been accomplished since the plan was adopted.

New Transit Service in Hutchins

The 2013 plan identified the need for municipalities in south and southeast Dallas County to obtain service for underserved areas and populations. The city of Hutchins didn't have any public transportation options, but residents needed to get around the community and FedEx needed to get their employees and drivers to their facility. STAR Transit was identified as a transit provider that could operate service to meet both FedEx and the city's needs. The city and FedEx both contribute funds to help pay for the operation of the service. STAR Transit now operates two shuttles that connect Hutchins residents to DART's light rail system, enable FedEx employees to get to the facility for early morning shifts, and enable residents to access local destinations such as grocery stores, schools, and medical facilities.

Denton Community Health Council

In Denton County, there was a need for a committee to focus on transportation needs to identify coordination opportunities and propose potential service changes. Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Denton has a Community Health Council that meets quarterly with internal departments, community organizations, and stakeholders in order to improve the wellness of their patients and reduce unnecessary readmissions. Improving wellness includes access to their facility via public transportation, so a transportation subcommittee was created. This committee focuses on how to improve transit connections to care facilities. Two public transportation providers are actively involved, providing information about available transit services and assistance to organizations and patients as they

apply for transit services. Additionally, the two transit agencies correspond on a regular basis to ensure they're coordinating transit services when possible. This model of collaboration within the community and between transit providers makes discussing and developing transit solutions easier.

Connecting Seniors to Medical Services

In Ellis County, public outreach in Access North Texas identified the need to expand or introduce new transportation options that connect residents to Dallas for medical services. For seniors living in Ellis County, it can be difficult and expensive to reach medical appointments in Dallas. Senior Connect's mission is to improve the quality of life for seniors and they partnered with STAR Transit to provide reduced-fare transportation for residents 60 and older (who don't qualify for Medicaid) in Ellis County, Kaufman County, and Rockwall County that have medical appointments in Dallas. This program provides an affordable and essential link to medical care.

Connecting Hunt County to Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

A regional transportation link from Hunt County to the Dallas-Fort Worth area was needed to improve access to medical appointments, job opportunities and other destinations. Senior Center Resources and Public Transit operates The Connection, which provides public transportation in Hunt County. In October 2016, The Connection began operating a new commuter route connecting Greenville to DART's Downtown Rowlett Station, which is the terminus of the Blue Line in DART's light rail system. The new service follows a regular schedule with an affordable fare, replacing an occasional and expensive previous service. Now, there's a more affordable way for individuals to access medical appointments and job opportunities in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Cooperative Vehicle Procurement

Transportation providers within the 16-county region needed to increase the variety of vehicles in their fleet to better match vehicles to the service being provided.

In order to promote economies of scale that could benefit smaller transit providers, NCTCOG led a cooperative vehicle procurement in 2014 to obtain three different types of vehicles (small, medium, and light duty). In total, over 100 vehicles were procured for 9 different transit providers. This approach ensured federal procurement requirements were met, the vehicles were purchased at the best rate, and helped transit providers better match vehicle type to service provided. Pictured below is the Executive Director and Transportation Manager at Span Transit accepting one of their small duty vehicles.

SPAN TRANSIT DELIVERY VEHICLE

CURRENT NEEDS

The current plan update brought together many sources of information to identify current needs and describe strategies to meet those needs. Sources included demographic research, research on local conditions, a transportation poll for the public, outreach meetings, and consultation with regional stakeholders. All of the data (qualitative and quantitative) was used to evaluate the needs for public transportation in the 16-county region as a whole as well as for each county. The regional and county-specific strategies were developed based on all the data collected and described below.

U.S. Census data was collected and incorporated into a Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT). This tool was created to identify where populations that may have a greater need for access to public transportation are located in the 16-county North Central Texas region. The TAIT allows users to locate potential transit-dependent populations based on demographic traits. Transit planners can use the tool as a preliminary indicator of where service should be evaluated and to identify potential gaps in service. Since the geographic scale for the index is at the block group level, both local and regional planners can utilize the TAIT effectively for their area of interest. Populations included in this tool are older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with lower incomes, and

households without cars. The shaded regions indicate when one or more variables is greater than the regional percentage. The TAIT data is explored in detail in each county's chapter following this Executive Summary.

Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool

Legend
TAIT Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities

☐ Block Groups Below or Equal to Regional Percentage: All Variables

☐ Block Groups Above Regional Percentage: One Variable

☐ Block Groups Above Regional Percentage: Two Variables

☐ Block Groups Above Regional Percentage: All Variables

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool to identify areas that may need additional analysis when considering transportation-disadvantaged groups in a plan, project, or program. The TAIT displays Census block groups above the regional percentage for three variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities. The Age 65 and Over variable includes all individuals age 65 or older. The Below Poverty variable includes individuals whose household income in the past 12 months was below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty threshold. The Persons with Disabilities variable includes civilian, non-institutionalized individuals with at least one disability that may limit their ability to care for themselves.

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

0   5   10 Miles

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TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT TOOL POPULATIONS

Variable	Regional Percentage
Older Adults (65+)	9.99
Individuals with Disabilities	9.67
Individuals Below Poverty	14.51
Zero Car Households	5.14

To provide a basic understanding of gaps in service, staff also gathered information about the geography and eligibility requirements for current public transportation services. The data sheds light on where gaps in service exist either geographically or for certain populations. This information helped frame discussions at outreach meetings and conversations with stakeholders, and influenced the final strategies for the region as well as each county.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Members of the public including older adults, people with disabilities, individuals with lower incomes, veterans and representatives of local government, transit agencies, workforce agencies and educational institutions participated in outreach meetings across the region. In total, 14 outreach meetings gathered 611 participants to share their thoughts on public transportation needs. In addition, staff followed up with 71 stakeholders representing populations with the greatest transportation needs to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and to prepare strategies that can address those needs.

Invitations to the outreach meetings were mailed and emailed to interested parties in each county, meeting announcements and information were also posted online, and information was shared with partner organizations to help promote the meetings through existing networks. During the meetings, staff gave a brief welcome and introduction to Access North Texas. Following this, an interactive keypad polling session took place to prompt discussion of transportation issues unique to each county. Based on the discussion, community members prioritized issues in each county to help inform strategies in this plan.

A transportation poll was also available online and in paper, and translated into English and Spanish. The poll collected first-hand data about public transportation in the region from both riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations. Polls completed by individuals reveal personal experiences with transportation challenges. Polls completed

by organizations on behalf of their clients illuminate issues seen by client advocates. Both forms of the poll provide personal views of the transportation environment in the region. A total of 1,081 complete polls were returned. Information collected through the poll informed both regional and county strategies. The distribution of poll responses can be seen in the map below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The regional strategies below identify and prioritize ways to address public transportation needs across the 16-county region.

Regional Strategies for Coordinated Public Transportation

Regional Strategy 1   In areas with no public transit service, assess community needs and implement transit

Regional Strategy 2   Continue and expand projects that have a no-wrong-door approach to accessing transit or information about available transit

Regional Strategy 3   Create partnerships to simplify regional trips and reduce the number of transfers between providers

Regional Strategy 4   Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need

Regional Strategy 5   Work towards uniform, regional fares to simplify and reduce the cost of regional trips for riders

Regional Strategy 6   Advocate to integrate funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase available affordable public transportation

Regional Strategy 7   Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate non-traditional ways to deliver public transportation service, including partnerships among public transit agencies, private transportation providers, and transportation network companies

Regional Strategy 8   Identify, recruit, educate, and support influential champions for public transportation (elected officials, community leaders, or busi-

Distribution of Access North Texas Stakeholder Poll Responses
January - July 2017

Survey Count

○	1 - 4
○	5 - 9
○	10 - 14
○	15 - 20
○	21+

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

Access North Texas
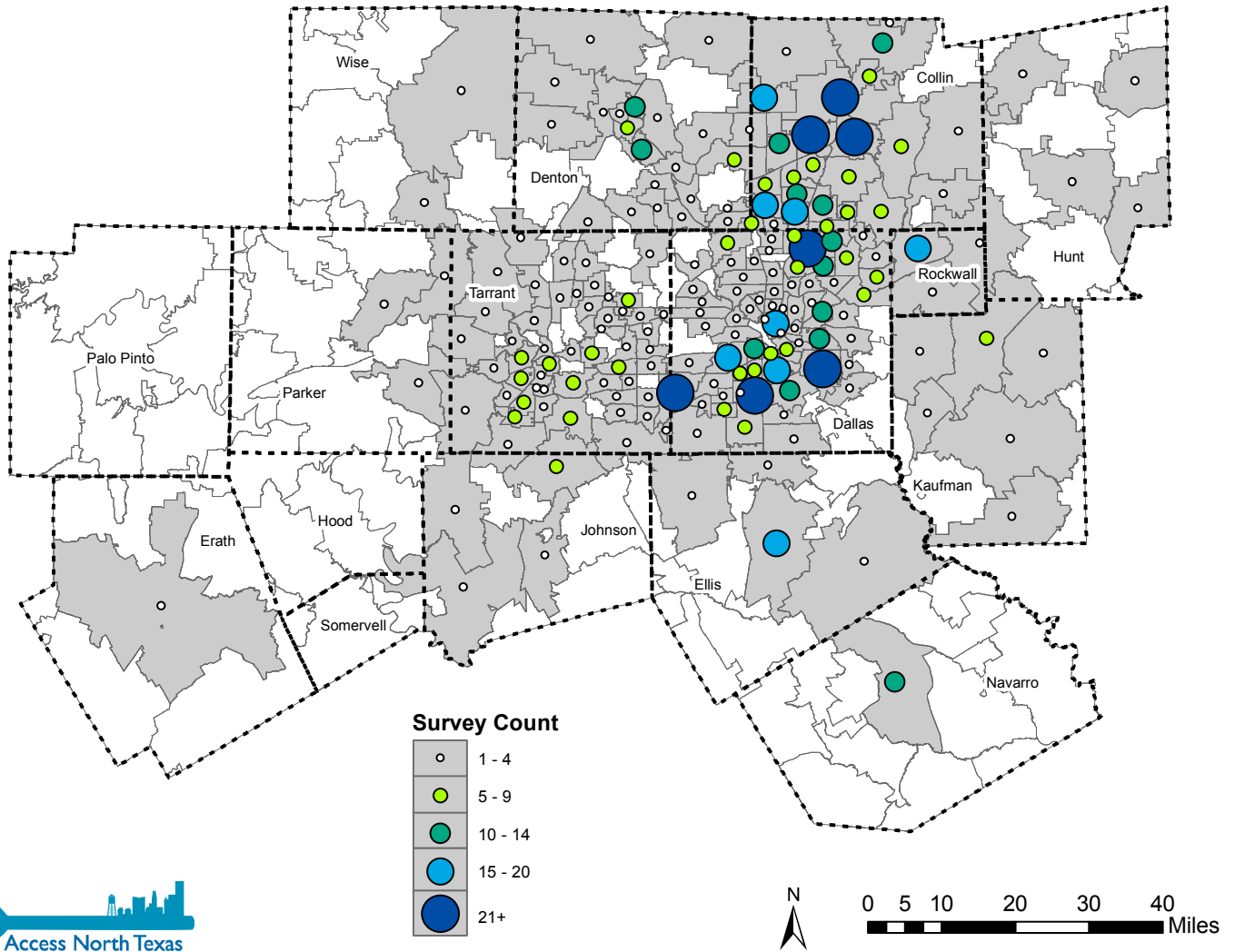
ness leaders) to promote and support public transit through leadership, policy, or funding initiatives

In addition to the regional strategies listed here, specific county strategies are identified within each county chapter.

Implementing the Plan

Transportation providers and local stakeholders will collaborate to determine next steps, form needed partnerships, identify and pursue funding, and ultimately implement selected strategies. Organizations that want to implement a strategy listed in this plan will need to develop strong partnerships with trans-

portation providers, stakeholder agencies, communities, and counties. NCTCOG staff is available to help organizations identify potential partners and coordination opportunities. Organizations should also identify potential funding sources, which can be a mix of private and public funds, including funds from local, state, and federal sources. Local funds from public and private sources are important to demonstrate a community or organizational commitment to implementing specific strategies. Local funds are especially important to leverage state and federal dollars. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and NCTCOG have regular calls for projects to award

federal funds that support projects and strategies listed in this plan.

Characteristics of a highly competitive project:

- Is multi-year. A three year request is recommended for projects providing transit service;

- Identifies an existing public transit provider or existing non-profit transportation provider when proposing to provide transit service;

- Targets individuals with lower incomes for requests of Urbanized Area Formula Program (Job Access/Reverse Commute projects) funds;

- Targets older adults and individuals with disabilities for requests of Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds; and

- Supports one or more strategies outlined in this plan.

If a project is funded through NCTCOG or TxDOT, staff will document the project funding in the Transportation Improvement Program, coordinate necessary approvals, develop contract agreements, and work with implementing agencies to manage the project and all compliance activities associated with federal or state funding.

ERATH COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Access North Texas is to improve public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. These populations can have difficulty finding public transportation options that connect them to doctor's appointments, work opportunities and education or job training. This plan identifies where these transportation connections do not exist or could be improved within Erath County. This chapter will give an overview of the planning process, the research conducted and collected, the public outreach meeting, the transportation poll used to collect personal input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Erath County.

PROCESS

This plan is required by federal guidance to be updated every four years. The plan must be developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation; human services providers and other members of the public. The plan is updated to address current public transportation needs of the residents of Erath County. Through the process and methods described, prioritized strategies were developed so that future public transportation projects can be implemented when federal and state funding becomes available. Two different types of research were conducted during this plan update: data-based and people-based.

Data-based research included obtaining, reviewing, and analyzing Census data; using Census data to develop a mapping tool to identify locations where transit-dependent individuals may live; and identifying existing public transportation providers. The people-based research included reaching out to communities, organizations, and individuals to obtain feedback about the existing public transportation system and how it could be improved. Feedback was obtained through a public outreach meeting and a transportation poll. Through an interactive process stakeholders prioritized concerns about transit access.

RESEARCH
The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

The TAIT was developed to identify locations with certain demographic factors that may indicate a greater need for public transportation. The populations of individuals over age 65, residents below the poverty line, and persons with disabilities were each compared to the regional percentage of the population in that demographic. A map was created based on areas that were above the regional percentage in zero, one, two, or all three of the demographic categories. The more categories that an area is deemed above the regional percentage, the more likely it is that area is to need transit. Zero car households was provided as a supplemental layer to identify households above the regional percentage that do not having a working vehicle available. The tool is useful in identifying groups of people who could benefit from transit services, but is not intended to be the deciding factor in decisions regarding public transportation.

Erath County
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)
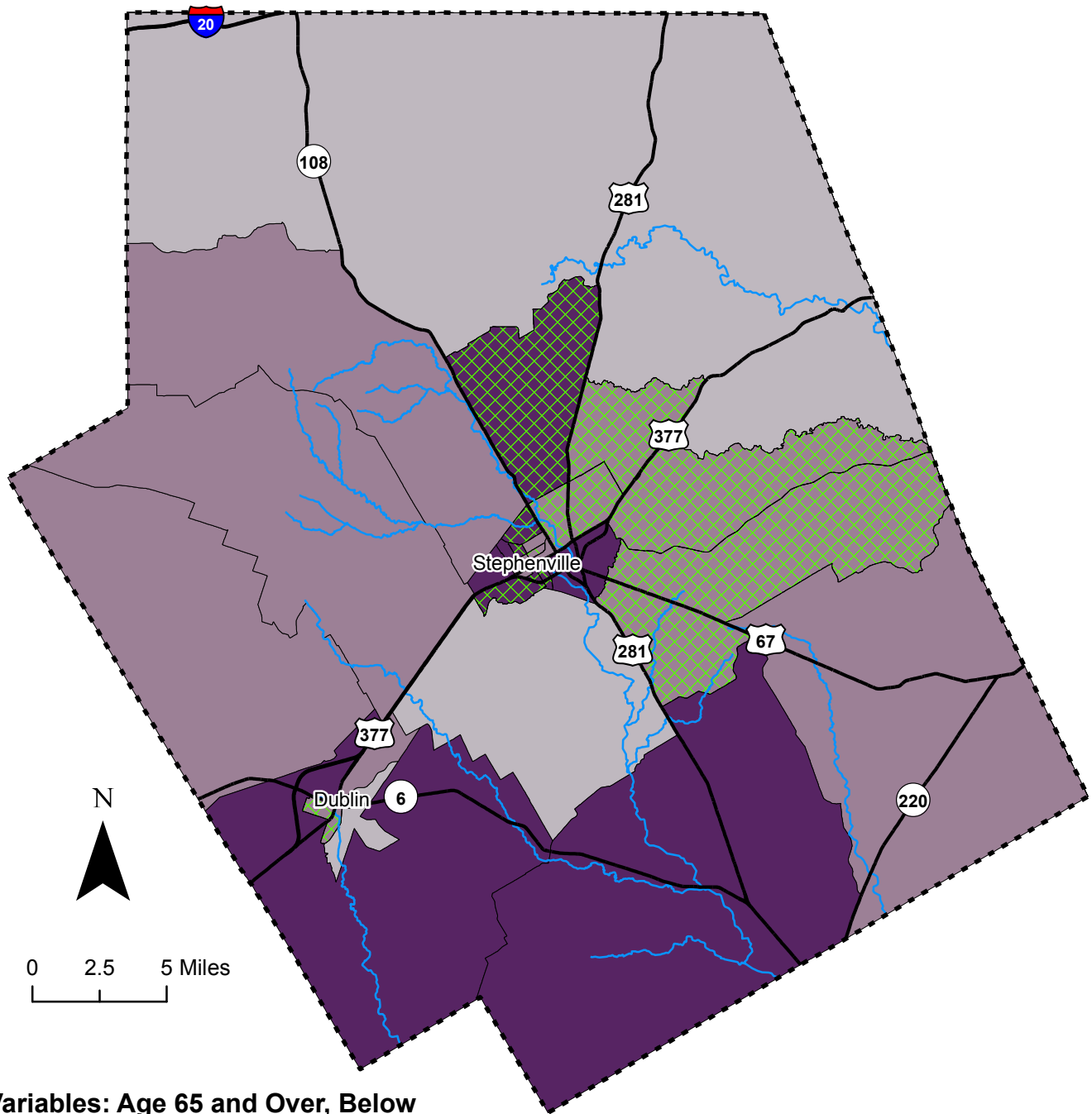
Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities

- [ ] All Variables At or Below Regional Percentage
- One Variable Above Regional Percentage
- Two Variables Above Regional Percentage
- All Variables Above Regional Percentage
- Zero Car Households Above Regional Percentage

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool to identify areas that may need additional analysis when considering transportation-disadvantaged groups in a plan, project, or program. The TAIT displays Census block groups above the regional percentage for three variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities.

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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6.2

In Erath County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. The areas with all three variables above the regional percentage are located along the SH 108 and US 377 corridors in Stephenville and along the SH 6 corridor in the southern part of the county. Within Stephenville and Dublin, the census block groups with two variables above the regional percentage have higher levels of persons below the poverty line and persons with disabilities. The same is true for the census block groups east of Stephenville along US 67, east of SH 108 to the northwest of Stephenville, and the two block groups north of US 377 directly west of Stephenville. The census block groups northwest and northeast of Dublin are higher than regional percentage in persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities, as is the large census block group northeast of Stephenville between US 281 and US 377, and the large census block group bisected by US 67 and SH 220 in southeastern Erath County. The rural census block groups with one variable above the regional percentage are block groups with higher amounts of persons age 65 and over, with the census block group in Dublin along SH 6 being higher in persons with disabilities. There are no census block groups at or below the regional percentage in Erath County. Areas where households without cars are above the regional percentage are predominantly in and around Stephenville, with a similar block group in western Dublin.

Additional Demographic and Commuter Information

Erath County continues to experience a steady amount of growth. According to the American Community Survey's 2015 5-year estimates, since the 2010 Census, Erath County's population has increased by 5.7%. In comparison, the 16-county region has grown 6.3% in that same time period. Public transportation needs will change as the population grows. Within Erath County, 7.1% of residents speak English less than very well. Efforts to promote existing or new transit

services should include strategies to reach this population.

According to U.S. Census employer information as of 2014, Erath County is home to approximately 14,000 jobs, with about half of workers living in the county, and the other half commuting into the county. Around half of those commuting into the county are entering from the northeast. Approximately 8,000 workers live in Erath County and commute out to other counties for work. Only 40% of workers in the county live within 10 miles of work. The economy is somewhat diverse in the county, with 18% of jobs in educational services, and three other sectors each containing approximately 10% of the workforce. The workforce is fairly educated, with around one third of workers having at least some college education or an Associate Degree.

Transportation Resources

The main public transportation provider, City and Rural Rides (also known as CARR), serves the general public and provides shared-ride service in which passengers ride along while others are picked up and dropped off. CARR's vehicles can accommodate mobility devices. CARR started a partnership with Tarleton State University in 2014, providing free shuttle services to assist students and employees traveling between off-campus apartment complexes, remote parking lots and the university's Stephenville campus. The program features a live tracking service to inform users of the shuttle's location and estimated arrival times, which can be accessed through its website or mobile app. Other resources that may play a role in coordinating transportation are Erath County Senior Citizens, Inc. and volunteer veterans' transportation services. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA) offers commuter vanpools and one FWTA vanpool currently originates in Erath County.

See Appendix B4, Private Carriers for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for

personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

OUTREACH MEETING

The public meeting for Erath County was held as a joint public meeting with Hood County and Somervell County on February 15, 2017 at the Hood County Library in Granbury. 148 invitations were mailed and emailed to interested parties throughout the counties. Meeting announcements and information were also posted online, and invitees were encouraged to share the invitation with partner organizations and clients to help promote the meetings. In all, 31 community members from Erath County, Hood County, and Somervell County were present at the meeting to provide feedback on transit priorities for each county.

Following a general welcome and presentation about public transit within the county, staff led an interactive keypad polling session to instigate discussion of transportation issues with attendees. Based on discussion question answers, community members prioritized current issues in the county and re-prioritized strategies from the 2013 Access North Texas Plan.

Comments and discussion during the outreach meeting identified that out-of-county medical trips (to both Tarrant County and Dallas County) and return trips home are difficult to schedule due to distance and availability. Regarding medical trips, attendees also noted that trips to the Veterans Affairs Hospitals are a high need for their clients. Additional capacity and funding is needed to accommodate the existing demand for public transportation. Attendees also noted that even trips within the county can be cost prohibitive for riders with limited incomes.

TRANSPORTATION POLL

A transportation poll was also available to residents and stakeholders, online and in paper, and available in English and Spanish. The poll collected first-hand data about public transportation in the region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations. Individual poll data revealed per-

sonal experiences with transportation. Polls completed by organizations on behalf of their clients explained issues seen by advocates of the people served by each organization. Both forms of the poll provide personal views of the public transportation system.

Erath County residents submitted three responses to the transportation poll. The average age of the respondents was 73, with the youngest 62 and oldest 86. Two of the three respondents said they ride the bus or van of a community organization or other agency. One of the three respondents also said they either drive themselves, get a ride from friends or family members, or walk for their transportation needs. Each respondent noted they missed trips in the previous six months, with two respondents missing religious activities, and one missing social or entertainment events and shopping trips. All three respondents cited not having a car as the reason trips get missed, with one respondent citing interest in local bus service and community to community bus service.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The strategies below identify ways to address the most important public transportation needs stakeholders thought should be implemented over the next few years. These strategies build upon the progress that has taken place since the 2013 Access North Texas plan and should be referenced when state and federal funds for public transportation become available.

Erath County Prioritized Strategies

Erath Strategy 1 Improve access to Veterans Affairs facilities in Dallas and Fort Worth

Erath Strategy 2 Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need

Erath Strategy 3 Add capacity to existing transit service to accommodate:

1. Local and regional medical appointments

2. Local job opportunities and training

3. General purpose trips (groceries, recreation, dining)

4. Weekend trips

5. Emergent transportation needs

Erath Strategy 4 Work with 2-1-1 at least twice a year to ensure public transportation resources are up-to-date

Erath Strategy 5 Conduct targeted marketing to local agencies about available transportation services and resources

Erath Strategy 6 Explore partnerships with local employers, cities, and other agencies to fund additional transit services

Erath Strategy 7 Conduct travel training to teach riders how to use public transportation

Regional Strategies

Much like the county strategies, the regional strategies may also be applicable to Erath County.

Regional Strategy 1 In areas with no public transit service, assess community needs and implement transit

Regional Strategy 2 Continue and expand projects that have a no-wrong-door approach to accessing transit or information about available transit

Regional Strategy 3 Create partnerships to simplify regional trips and reduce the number of transfers between providers

Regional Strategy 4 Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need

Regional Strategy 5 Work towards uniform, regional fares to simplify and reduce the cost of regional trips for riders

Regional Strategy 6 Advocate to integrate funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase available affordable public transportation

Regional Strategy 7 Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate non-traditional ways to deliver public transportation service, including partnerships among public transit agencies, private transportation providers, and transportation network companies

Regional Strategy 8 Identify, recruit, educate, and support influential champions for public transportation (elected officials, community leaders, or business leaders) to promote and support public transit through leadership or policy initiatives and to advocate for increasing investment in public transit

Implementing the Plan

Transportation providers and local stakeholders will collaborate to determine next steps, form needed partnerships, identify and pursue funding, and ultimately implement selected strategies. Organizations that want to implement a strategy listed in this plan will need to develop strong partnerships with transportation providers, stakeholder agencies, communities, and counties. NCTCOG staff is available to help organizations identify potential partners and coordination opportunities. Organizations should also identify potential funding sources, which can be a mix of private and public funds, including funds from local, state, and federal sources. Local funds from public and private sources are important to demonstrate a community or organizational commitment to implementing specific strategies. Local funds are especially important to leverage state and federal dollars. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and NCTCOG have regular calls for projects to award federal funds that support projects and strategies listed in this plan.

Characteristics of a highly competitive project:

- Is multi-year. A three year request is recommended for projects providing transit service;

- Identifies an existing public transit provider or existing non-profit transportation provider when proposing to provide transit service;

- Targets individuals with lower incomes for requests of Urbanized Area Formula Program (Job Access/Reverse Commute projects) funds;

- Targets older adults and individuals with disabilities for requests of Enhanced Mobility of Seniors

and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds; and

- Supports one or more strategies outlined in this plan.

If a project is funded through NCTCOG or Tx-DOT, staff will document the project funding in the Transportation Improvement Program, coordinate necessary approvals, develop contract agreements, and work with implementing agencies to manage the project and all compliance activities associated with federal or state funding.

APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Erath County, please see Appendix C-Erath, available online at www.accessnorthtexas.org. The Public Transportation Toolbox (see Appendix B-3) highlights transit services that can be implemented in the near term to meet specific needs within Erath County.

See Appendix B-4, Private Carriers for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

See Appendix B-5, Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool, for additional information on how the tool was developed.

See Appendix B-6, Transportation Poll, for more information about the transportation poll.