ACCESS NORTH TEXAS

REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN
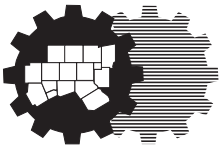## FOR NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

Final March 2018

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
P. O. Box 5888
Arlington, Texas 76005-5888
(817) 640-3300

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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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.
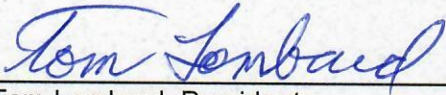
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT:

<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.
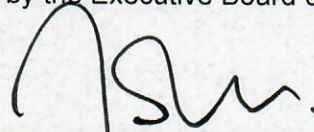
Section 4.   This resolution shall be in effect immediately upon its adoption.

_____
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

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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.
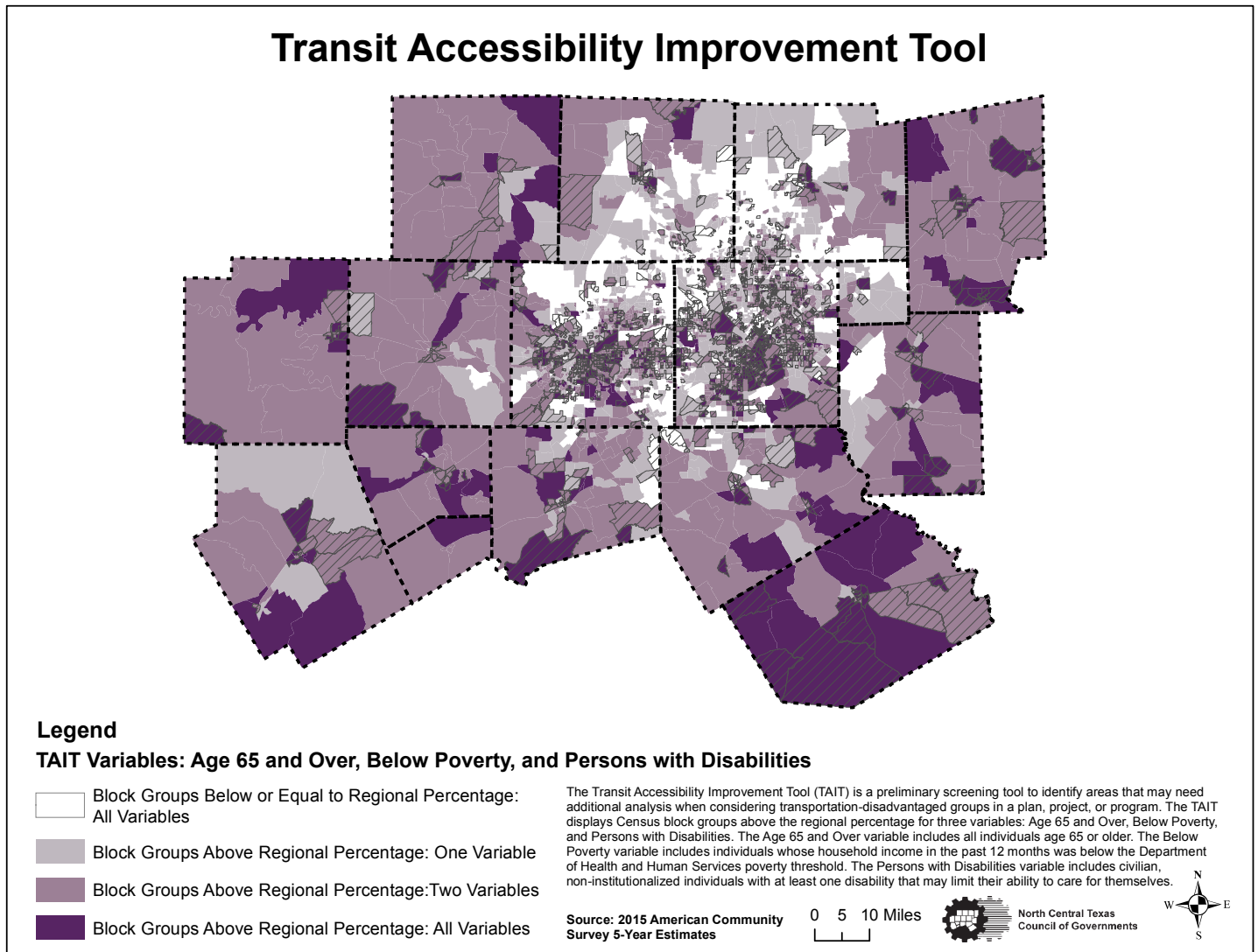
SPAN TRANSIT DELIVERY VEHICLE

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

North Central Texas
Council of Governments

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+

Access North Texas

N

0 5 10   20   30   40
Miles
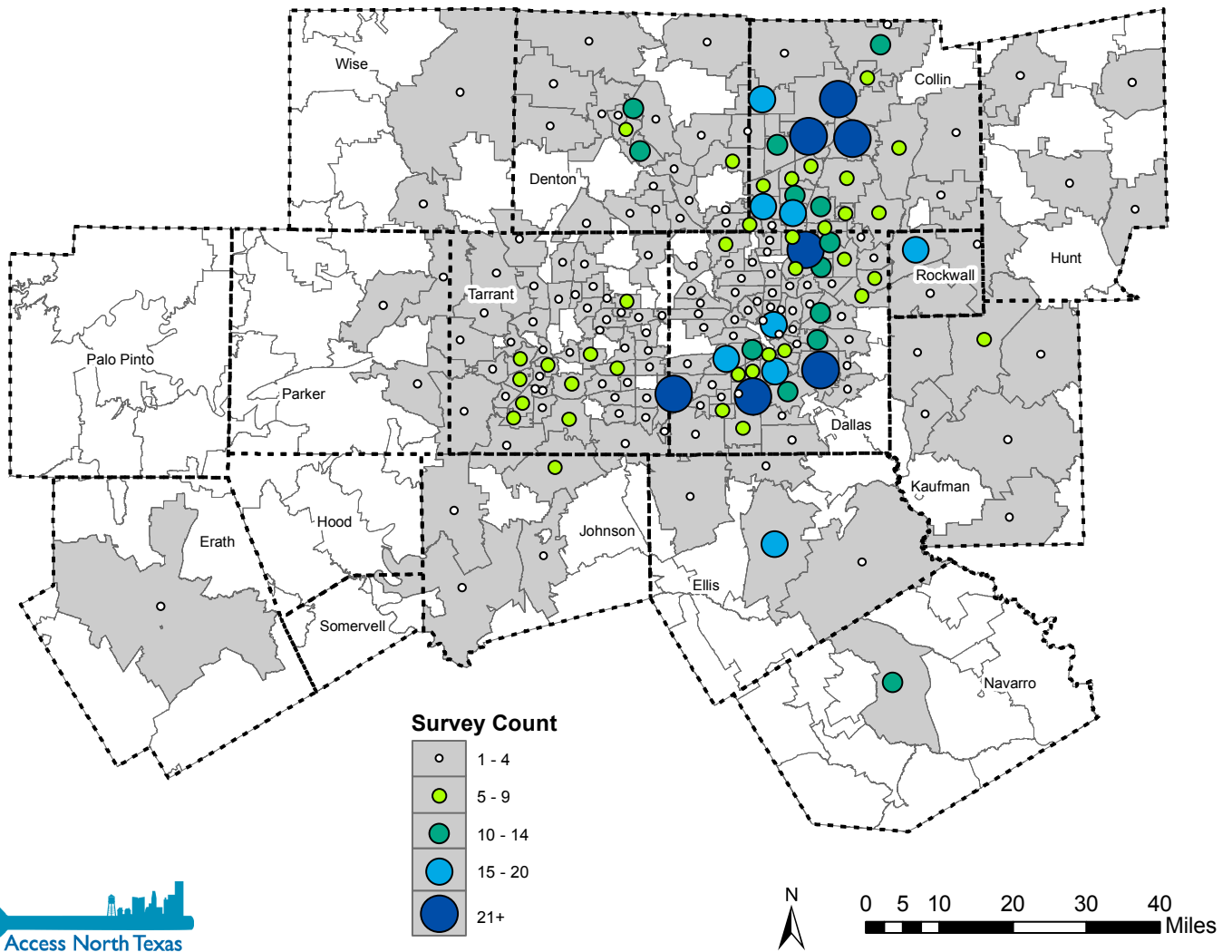
ness leaders) to promote and support public transit through leadership, policy, or funding initiatives

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.

TARRANT 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 Tarrant County. This chapter will give an overview of the planning process, research conducted and collected, public outreach, the transportation poll used to collect personal input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Tarrant 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 Tarrant 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 public outreach meetings and a transportation poll. Through an interactive process, stakeholders prioritized concerns about transit access.
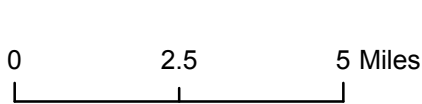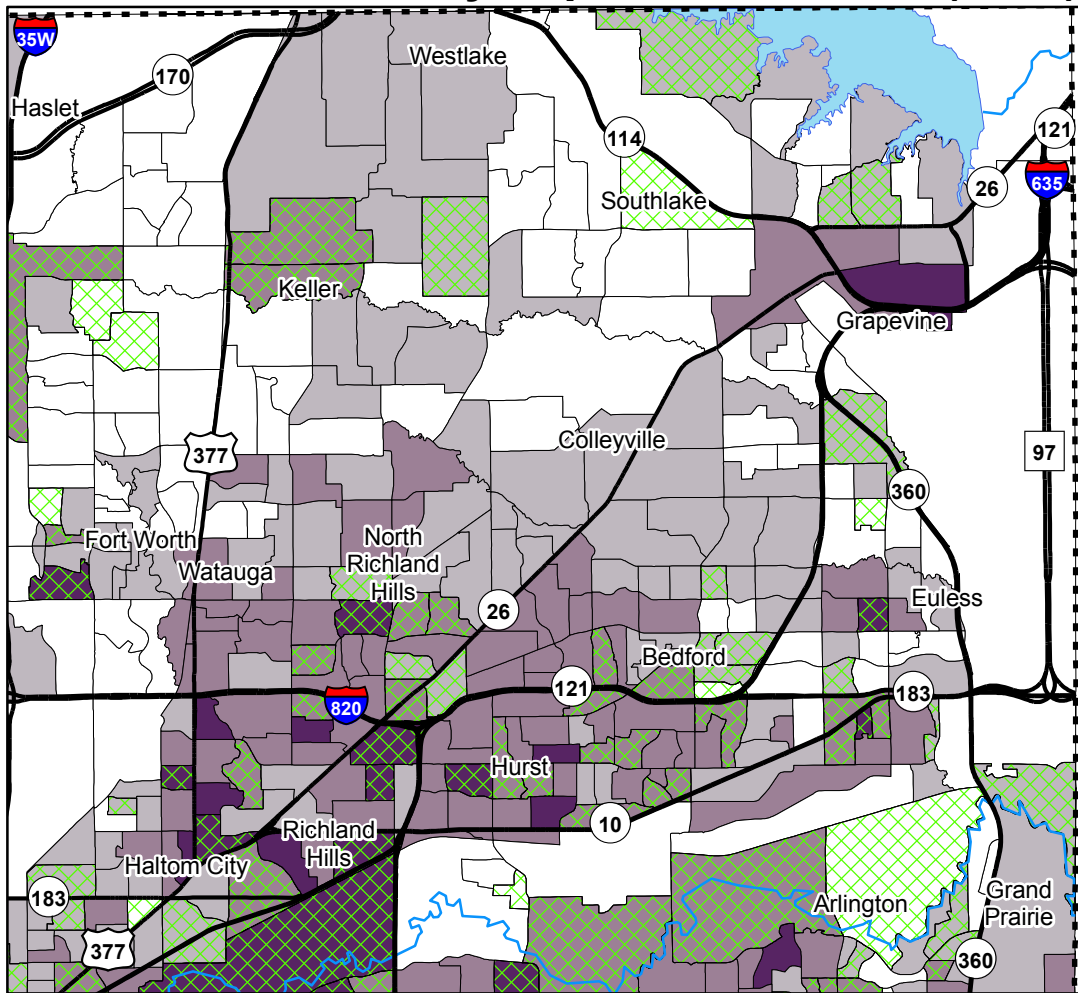
RESEARCH
The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

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.
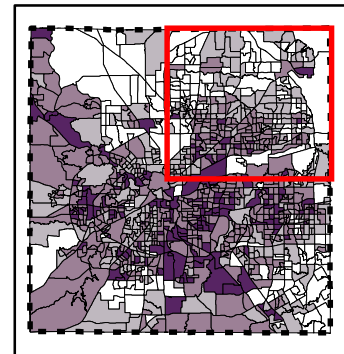
In northeast Tarrant County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. These areas are primarily south of I820, near Richland Hills and

Northeast Tarrant County
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

0   2.5   5 Miles

N

Tarrant County

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

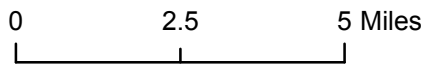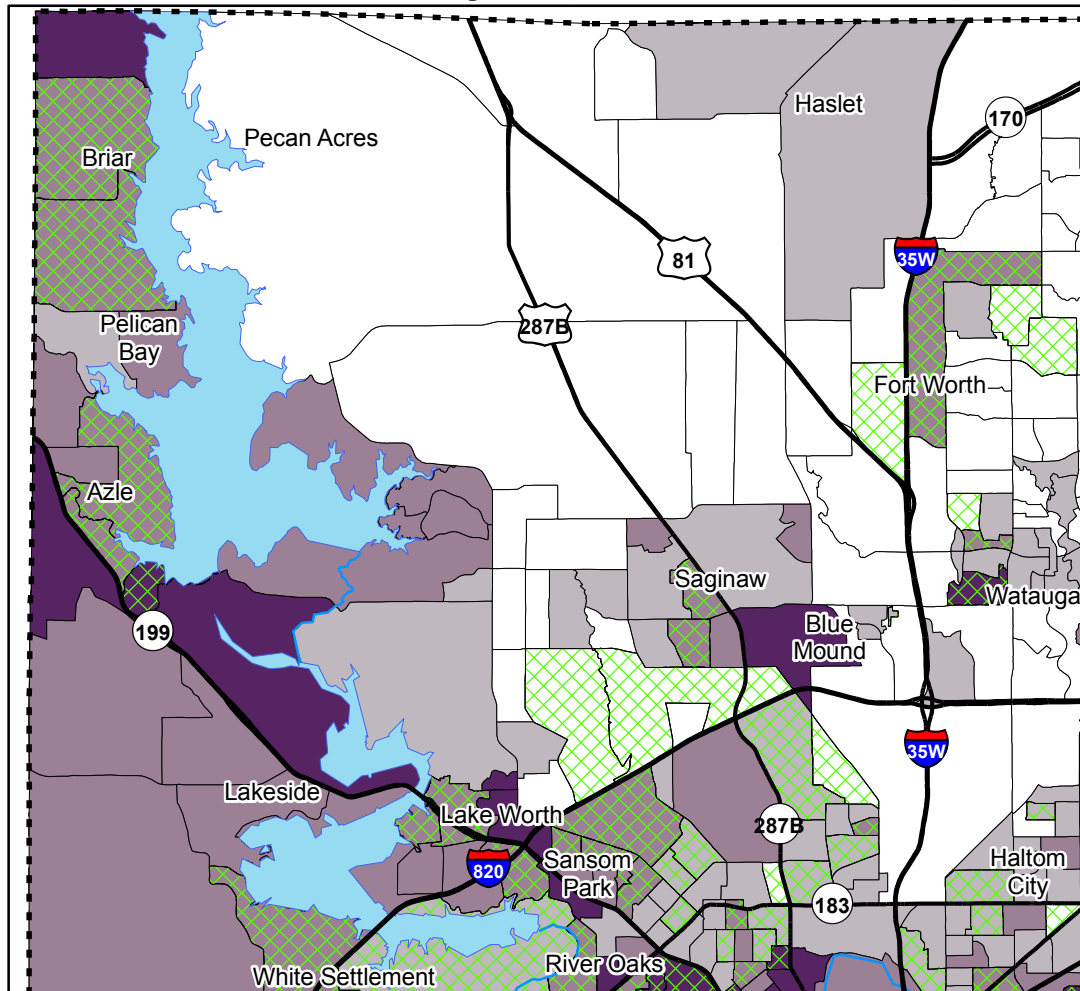**North Central Texas Council of Governments**

14.2

Hurst, with a few block groups in North Richland Hills, west of Watauga, and in Grapevine. Areas with only two variables above the regional percentage are mainly in the central and south central parts of this quadrant of Tarrant County. The vast majority of census block groups with two variables contain higher percentages of persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. Nearly all census block groups in northeast Tarrant County with only one variable above the regional percentage see higher numbers of persons age 65 and over. North of SH 26 in Grapevine, along the US 377 corridor south of Haltom City, and along the SH 360 corridor in Grand Prairie, the only variable above the regional percentage is persons below the poverty line. The SH 170, SH 114, and US 377 corridors in the northern part of northeast Tarrant County are the main areas with all three variables at or below the regional percentage. Some census block groups in Euless, Colleyville, Fort Worth, and Arlington are also at or below the regional percentage for all variables. Zero car households are mainly south of the I820 and SH 121 corridors, though some census blocks containing zero car households above the regional percentages are scattered throughout northeast Tarrant County.

In northwest Tarrant 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. These areas are mainly located along SH 199 in the western part of the northwest quadrant of Tarrant County, as well as in Blue Mound and Watauga. Census block groups with two variables above the regional percentage are mainly in the SH 199 corridor as well. Almost all of these census blocks see a higher level of persons age 65 and older and persons with disabilities. The census block groups with two variables highlighted along I35W as well as the southern areas in this quadrant see higher levels of persons age 65 and older and persons below the poverty line. The census block groups with a single variable above the regional percentage in the southern part of this quadrant are predominantly persons age 65 and older or persons below the poverty line, while
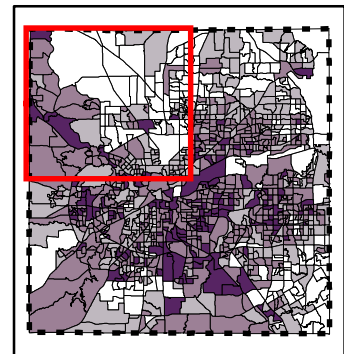
the central and northern census block groups have higher percentages of either persons with disabilities or persons below the poverty line. The north, central, and eastern parts of northwest Tarrant County see areas with all three variables at or below the regional percentage. Zero car households are predominantly in the southern part of this quadrant, with other areas near Briar, Pelican Bay, Azle, and north of Watauga.

In southwest Tarrant 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. These areas include the I35W Corridor, the I30 corridor, SH 121, and US 377 near Benbrook. Several areas in this quadrant of Tarrant County have two variables above the regional percentage. Along the US 377 corridor and in the northern part of the quadrant, the majority of census block groups see persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities above the regional percentage. Along and east of I35W, the majority of block groups above the regional percentage see higher levels of persons below the poverty line and persons with disabilities. The areas in Southwest Tarrant County where only one variable is above the regional percentage are mainly in the central and western parts of the quadrant. The block groups around Crowley in the southern part of the quadrant are evenly distributed between persons with disabilities and persons below the poverty line. The northwest part of southwest Tarrant County sees mostly persons age 65 and over above the regional percentage, while the areas north of I20 are dispersed across all three variables. Between SH 121 and I35W in southern and west of US 377 in the western part of southwest Tarrant County are the main areas where all three variables are below the regional percentage. There are also a few census block groups with all three variables below the regional percentage scattered in Fort Worth. Zero car households in this quadrant are most prevalent north of I20 and east of I820. South of I20, there are also several census block groups above the regional percentage for zero car households, especially along SH 121.

Northwest Tarrant County
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

Haslet

170

Pecan Acres

Briar

81

35W

287B

Fort Worth

Pelican
Bay

Azle

199

Saginaw

Watauga

Blue
Mound

35W

Lakeside

287B

Lake Worth

183

820

Sansom
Park

Haltom
City

White Settlement

River Oaks

0   2.5   5 Miles

N

Tarrant
County

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

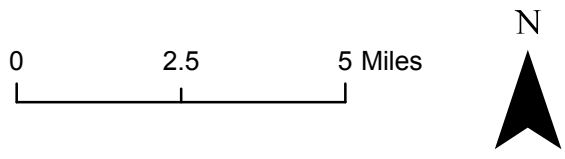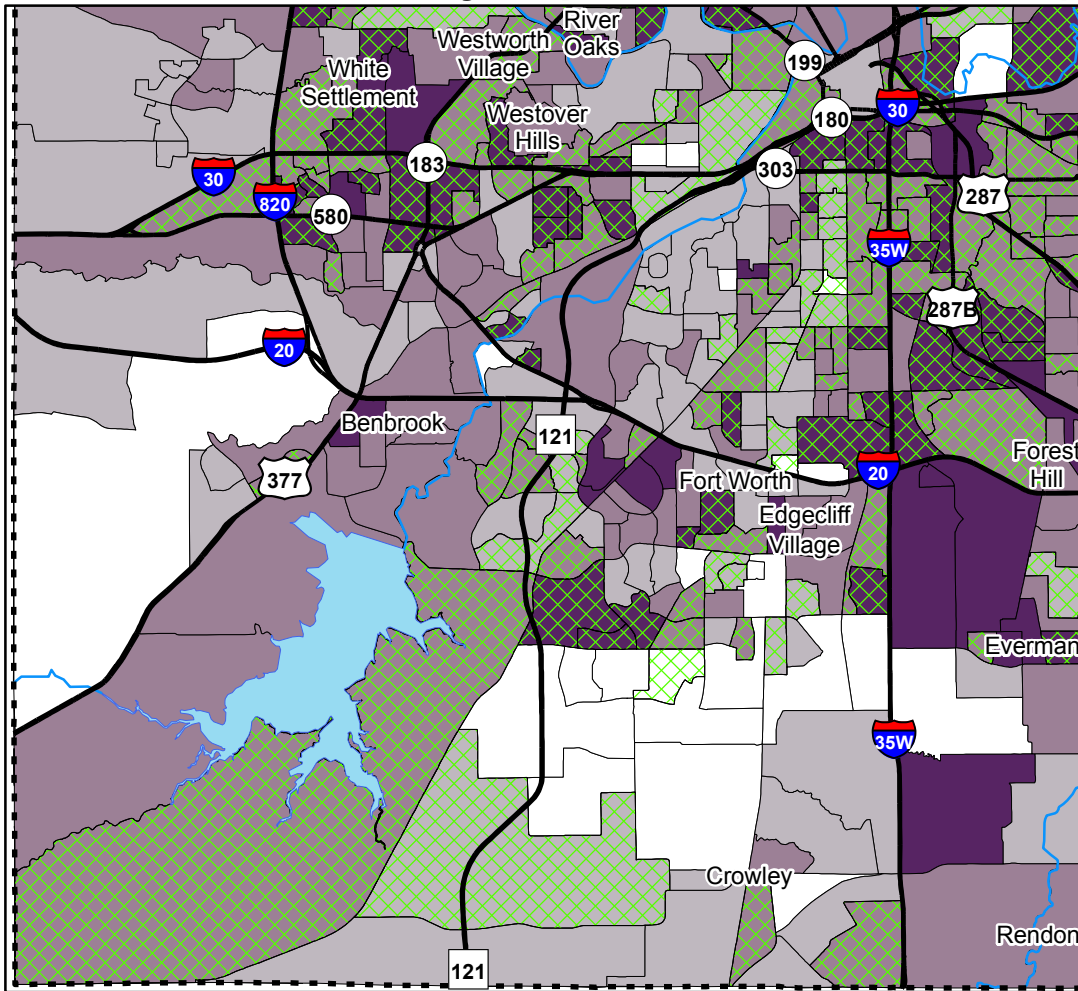|	
☐	All Variables At or Below Regional Percentage
▨	One Variable Above Regional Percentage
▨	Two Variables Above Regional Percentage
■	All Variables Above Regional Percentage
▨	Zero Car Households Above Regional Percentage

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.
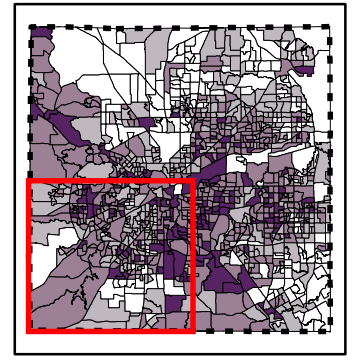
Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

North Central Texas Council of Governments

14.4

Southwest Tarrant County
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

0   2.5   5 Miles

N

Tarrant County

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

North Central Texas Council of Governments

Southeast Tarrant County
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

0   2.5   5 Miles

N

Tarrant County

Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities
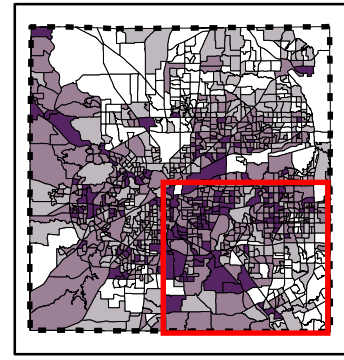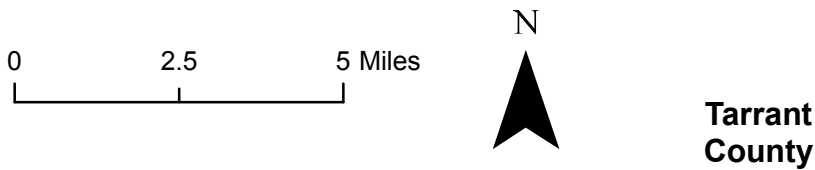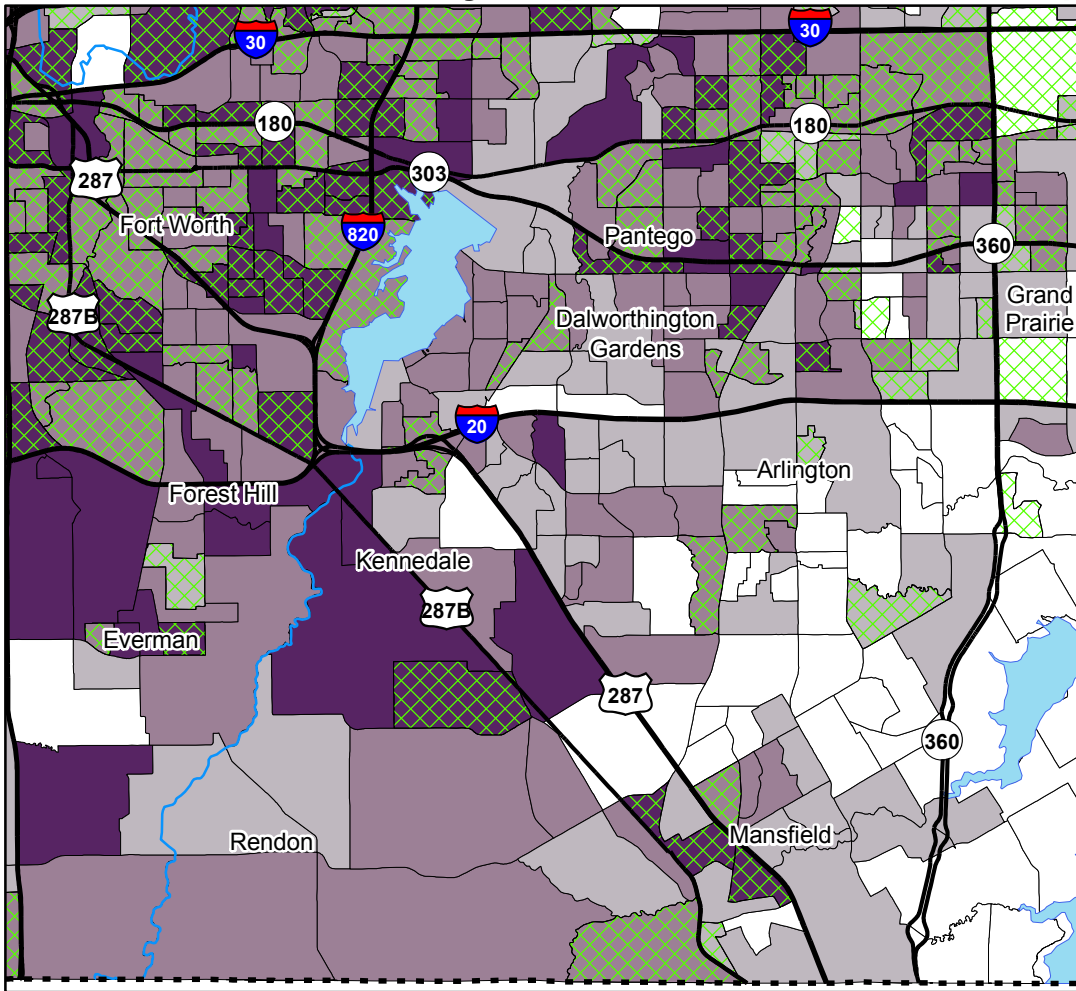
- ☐ All Variables At or Below Regional Percentage
- ▨ One Variable Above Regional Percentage
- ▨ Two Variables Above Regional Percentage
- ■ All Variables Above Regional Percentage
- ▨ Zero Car Households Above Regional Percentage

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

North Central Texas Council of Governments

14.6

In southeast Tarrant 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. These areas are mainly along I820 in Fort Worth, US 287 and US 287 Business in Kennedale and Mansfield, and along SH 180 and SH 303 in the northern part of the southeast quadrant of Tarrant County. Areas with two variables above the regional percentage are mostly located in the north and west parts of the quadrant. North of US 180 and east of I820, as well as east of US 287 in Arlington and Mansfield. Most block groups with two variables above the regional percentage contain higher numbers of persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. Areas with only one variable above the regional percentage are mainly in the southern and eastern parts of the quadrant. South of I20 and east of US 287, most block groups are higher in either persons age 65 and over or persons with disabilities. In the northern part of the quadrant, and near the SH 303 and SH 360 intersection, the single variable above the regional percentage is persons below the poverty line. Areas where all three variables are below the regional percentages are predominantly in the southeastern part of the quadrant, with some block groups interspersed within the northeastern and western parts of the quadrant. Zero car households above the regional percentage are mainly located north of I20 throughout the northern part of the county. Some areas in southern Arlington and Mansfield, as well as in Everman, and south of Kennedale also see zero car households above the regional percentage.

Additional Demographic and Commuter Information

Tarrant County continues to experience a steady amount of growth. According to the American Community Survey's 2015 5-year estimates, since the 2010 Census, Tarrant County's population has increased by 5.8%. In comparison, the 16-county region has grown 6.3% in that same time period. Public transportation needs will change as the population grows. Additionally, within Tarrant County, 12.6% of residents speak English less than very well and information about available transit services may be difficult for these individuals to access if it is provided only in English.

According to U.S. Census employer information as of 2014, Tarrant County is home to around 811,000 jobs, with around 473,000 employees also residing within the county. Around 338,500 workers commute into the county, while 332,000 people commute out of the county to access their jobs. 40% of employees living in Tarrant County reside within 10 miles of their place of employment, while commuters in the county generally enter from the east or south. The economy in Tarrant County is diversified, though around one-third of jobs are provided by the Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Retail Trade industries. Employees in the county are well educated, with around 46% of workers possessing either some college experience or a degree.

Transportation Resources

There are a handful of transportation options within Tarrant County. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA, previously referred to as "The T"), is the main transportation provider with services including local bus service in Fort Worth, Blue Mound and River Oaks. FWTA offers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service in same three cities. FWTA, in partnership with the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), operates bus service that connects downtown Fort Worth with Denton with stops in Alliance. FWTA, DCTA, and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) operate commuter vanpools in Tarrant County. In total, 48 vanpools originate in Tarrant County, while 53 vanpools arrive in the county as their destination. Additionally, the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) is jointly owned and operated by FWTA and DART and connects Fort Worth to Dallas and points in between.

Tarrant County Transportation Providers

Legend:
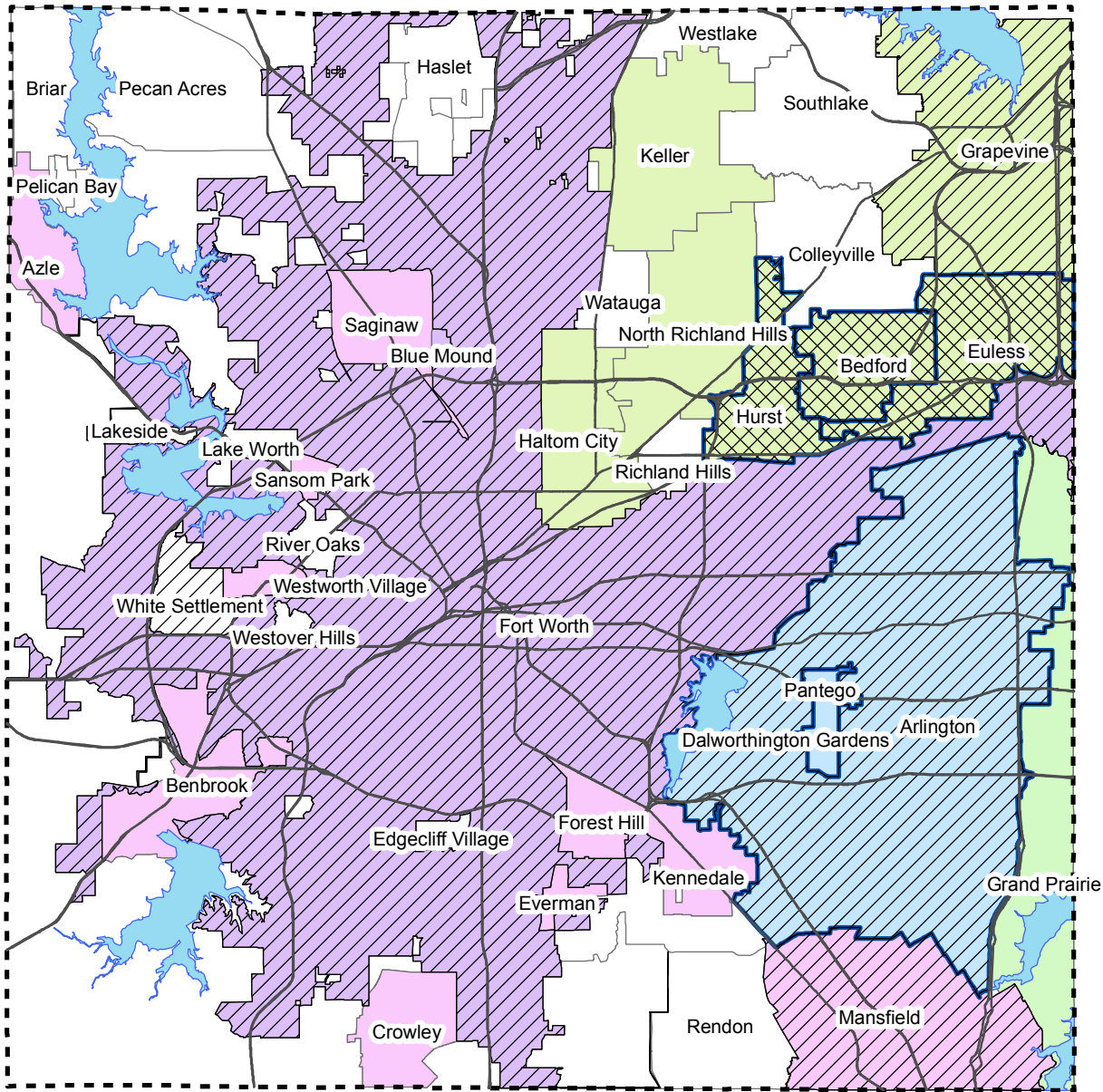
- Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA)
- Handitran
- Grand Connection
- HEB Transit
- Ride2Work
- Northeast Transportation Service (NETS)
- Tarrant County Transportation Services (TCTS)
- Senior Citizens Services of Greater Tarrant County

0   2.5   5   10 Miles

N

I4.8
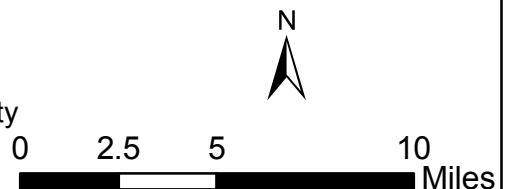
There are also specialized transportation providers in Tarrant County including HandiTran that provides door-to-door, on demand transportation for individuals with disabilities and older adults in the city of Arlington. Northeast Transportation Services (NETS) and Tarrant County Transportation Services (TCTS) provide transportation for people with disabilities in participating cities. Catholic Charities of Fort Worth's transportation programs provide transportation in Tarrant County to older adults and people with disabilities who are unable to access other transit providers.

My Ride Tarrant is a project of MHMR of Tarrant County that focuses on connecting Tarrant County residents to transportation resources and providers. Tarrant Riders Network is a coalition of stakeholders in Tarrant County that have a vested interest in improving public transportation options within the 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 them to provide specific service for clients.

Despite the variety and complexity of services available in Tarrant County, gaps in service still exist due to factors such as eligibility and geographic limitations. Opportunities for improved coordination among transportation providers also exist where providers serve transit-dependent populations in similar geographies. There are some barriers for riders looking to travel between cities with different providers, rural areas and seamless connections into Dallas County.

OUTREACH MEETINGS

NCTCOG partnered with the Tarrant Riders Network (TRN) to conduct outreach meetings in Tarrant County. A total of eight focus groups and 120 interviews with individuals were conducted. 453 invitations were mailed and emailed to interested parties throughout the county. A total of 231 people attended the meetings.

The TRN, over six months, engaged with stakeholders to identify ongoing and future transportation needs, barriers to success, and possible solutions to problems. Their two-stage engagement process started with seeking stakeholder input on the transportation domains of greatest concern on November 7, 2016. Participants included elected officials and their staff; state, regional, local agency representatives; health insurance companies, and publicly funded transportation providers. Consensus was achieved on several areas where significant attention and investment is needed. TRN stakeholders identified four areas as priorities:

1. Access to wellness,

2. Access to employment,

3. Access to community, and

4. Access to existing services.

Access Domains by Priority

19% Services

32% Wellness

20% Community

29% Employment

Having determined the domains of greatest importance, participants identified top priorities for action. These priorities, identified by the largest number of participant votes, were:

1. Developing county-wide public transportation services.

2. Pairing vouchers with an array of public/private transportation options.

3. Using service participants as drivers and coordinating passengers for rideshare programs.

4. Eliminating barriers for individuals re-entering the community from the justice system.

5. Coordinating services with medical providers, pairing available appointments and trips.

As part of the second phase of public involvement, on May 17, 2017, the TRN held a general interest meeting with over 60 participants that included citizens, elected officials, government staff, and policy experts. The group developed a list of priorities and identified key barriers. The key barriers that were identified through the process are as follows:

- Lack of affordable, reliable, and dependable mobility options for all Tarrant County residents.

  o Lack of countywide mobility services.

  o Limited available transportation services infrastructure throughout the county.

  o Limited availability of affordable mobility options at needed days and times, particularly in the early evening and on weekends.

  o Limited on-demand mobility options, outside of those provided by for-profit providers.

  o Limited accessible mobility options provided by for-profit providers.

  o Lack of accessible complimentary infrastructure to mobility options.

- Lack of knowledge among the general public and the business sector of existing mobility options.

- Lack of flexible funding options to provide service when trips require multiple providers.

  o Lack of mobility services for employment, particularly for those who work outside of the traditional Monday- Friday, 8 – 5 p.m. schedule.

- Lack of coordinated infrastructure yields a process that is not user friendly and slows response time.

- Lack of reliable transportation services that can viably link a patient to the multiple locations and timing of wellness services.

  o Medical services, particularly specialty services, are limited. Transportation services that viably connect patients to care may not be available because they are scattered geographically across the county.

  o Critical services such as kidney dialysis and outpatient surgery centers may require patients to arrive before 6 a.m., hours before many transportation providers begin service.

  o To ensure continued stability and improvement; services such as kidney dialysis, wound care and rehabilitation may require a specific schedule of treatment, including weekend care. For those relying on services, other than the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, accessing appointments on weekends has traditionally required more expensive, for-profit providers, such as taxis.

  o Transportation to same-day, non-emergency medical services is highly limited often resulting in system inefficiencies.

See Appendix C-Tarrant County for the Tarrant Riders Network Strategic Outcomes and Priorities for more information on the public involvement process, as well

as additional details from stakeholder interviews.

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 personal 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. Respondents totaled 155 from Tarrant County.

34% of individuals indicated that they get a ride with a friend or family member while 17% use rail or bus service to get where they need to go. The top reasons individuals couldn't get where they needed to go included public transportation takes too long, there is no public transportation available, and no one is available to give them a ride. The transportation services that sounded most appealing to survey takers were community-wide dial-a-ride service, commuter bus service, and local bus service.

A number of individuals noted that transit connections to and from Arlington need to be improved for multiple trip purposes. Important destinations include Fort Worth and Dallas. Respondents from other suburban communities in Tarrant County, such as Azle, Forest Hill, Everman, and the mid-cities identified Fort Worth and the Fort Worth Veterans Administration Outpatient Clinic as destinations that need improved transit options. Additionally, some poll respondents noted that improved county-wide transportation was necessary.

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.

Prioritized Strategies

Tarrant Strategy 1   Increase affordable mobility solutions:

1. Develop public-private and community partnerships, including joint pursuit of funding, to offset passenger and provider costs as a means of expanding access

2. Develop incentivized ride-sharing solutions

Tarrant Strategy 2   Connect communities county-wide and across the region

1. Expand and connect existing and future transportation services

2. Develop mobility solutions that meet community needs

3. Enhance communication and coordination between community partners and service providers

4. Coordinate trip scheduling and service information infrastructure

Tarrant Strategy 3   Expand public awareness, education, skills development, and traveler support services

1. Engage individuals with disabilities, older adults, families with lower incomes, those re-entering the community from the justice system, or others who lack access to reliable transportation

2. Provide ongoing education and skills development to engage employers, employer associations, community partners, medical practitioners, and transportation providers

Tarrant Strategy 4   Implement a holistic approach to wellness transportation

1. Integrate transportation-appointment service options

2. Collaborate with insurance companies, medical service providers and others to respond to barriers to wellness

Regional Strategies for Coordinated Public Transportation

Regional strategies may also be applicable to Tarrant 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 Tarrant County, please see Appendix C-Tarrant, 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 Tarrant 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.