

**Access North Texas  
Wise County Meeting  
January 19, 2017  
Decatur, Texas**

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**1. Meeting Summary**

**a. Welcome**

Kelli Schlicher from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the Wise County meeting. Ms. Schlicher also announced that Mike Hensley with the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging (AAA) would be hosting a public hearing after her presentation. This was an opportunity for residents and advocates to share current and future needs for older adults and individuals with disabilities in addition to transportation.

**b. Introduction to Access North Texas**

Ms. Schlicher provided a [short presentation](#) and covered the following material:

- An overview of NCTCOG
- What Access North Texas is and is not
- The general timeline of the plan update
- A summary of the 2013 plan

**c. Interactive Questions and Discussion**

The attendees answered several interactive polling questions and participated in open conversation about the public transportation needs and challenges in Wise County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

**With the agency you work for, what is the highest day-to-day transportation need?**

67% of respondents indicated that the highest day-to-day transportation need for their agency is medical trips, while 20% specified that work-related trips is their highest transportation need. Regarding medical trips, attendees noted that trips to dialysis personal physicians were the highest needs. Out-of-county medical trips (to both Tarrant County and Denton County) and return trips home from emergency visits are difficult to accommodate. Additionally, as the medical industry continues to grow, the need for transportation for medical purposes will continue to increase.

A shortage of qualified drivers for both public transportation and Independent School Districts remains a challenge. Updated federal Department of Transportation standards for obtaining a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) presents new hurdles for drivers testing for or renewing their CDL. Local workforce centers may be able to help prepare

drivers looking to obtain or renew their license. There is also a need for transportation for social and nutritional/grocery purposes.

**Regarding public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, etc., what is your primary area of concern?**

47% of respondents indicated that their primary area of concern was funding new services, while 40% specified that increasing coordination between agencies was their primary area of concern. Attendees noted that increasing the available funds was necessary to maintain an efficient transit service. Participants indicated that improved information sharing and coordination between the sole transit provider (Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS)) and local social service agencies, medical providers, and local governments could improve the current level of services available. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness of transit services provided by TAPS. A participant mentioned that an educational campaign covering TAPS' services, how to schedule a trip, and cost of service would be beneficial for social service organizations who could help disseminate the information to the community. Lastly, Wise Health System noted that they host a senior focus meeting to network and raise awareness about community resources.

**What funding approach will have the biggest impact on improving access to transit?**

60% of attendees answered that a focus on integrating funding sources (Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc.) would have the biggest impact on improving access to transit, while 33% answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact. The need for integration is important because the transit needs in Wise County aren't going to be solved by one funding source. Multiple funding sources are necessary to match transportation resources to need. Additionally, as there is more public awareness of available service, the demand and cost for transit service will also increase.

**What method could improve the awareness of available services?**

53% of respondent indicated that targeted marketing to local agencies is the best method to improve awareness, while 27% answered that a centralized location to receive information about transit would be the best method. A participant noted that targeted marketing to local agencies would be preferred because they're already tied into the community and can help distribute information. Agencies include social service agencies, local governments and medical providers. 2-1-1, housed in the United Way of Tarrant County, is a resource that could help disseminate information about local resources. Each agency is responsible for keeping their information up-to-date. Another participant mentioned that there is a need to for agencies to contract with an agency that has a language program (such as Catholic Charities) to assist with providing information in other languages such as Vietnamese, over the phone.

**What about coordination between agencies is the biggest barrier for you?**

56% of respondents indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was the biggest barrier to coordination, while 19% indicated that knowing where to start and successfully contacting other agencies was equally important. Participants noted that trying to identify

the appropriate contact, particularly in larger agencies, can be challenging. An attendee mentioned that community members often contact police departments inquiring about available resources. So, disseminating information about local resources to police departments and community organizations could help improve awareness of available services.

**What is the best way to enhance the user’s experience?**

69% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 19% voted for personal instruction on the phone or in person. Not only is better information on how to access and use transit needed, a participant noted that riders need to know how to file a complaint (if necessary). Attendees also mentioned that increased service availability would enhance the user’s experience. There are times when an individual calls to schedule an eligible trip, but TAPS is already booked. Additionally, further education on the impact of no shows and cancellations on TAPS, as well as how to book a trip with an attendant could enhance the user’s experience.

**Which technology advances are most likely to help improve transportation options for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals in the next five years?**

38% of attendees believed that transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft are most likely to help improve transportation options. Conversely, another 38% of attendees indicated that most people wouldn’t access these options because technology is not economically accessible for many of the individuals they work with on a regular basis. A participant pointed out that TNCs in a rural area may be harder for a potential rider to rely on due to driver availability as compared to a public transit provider’s scheduled trip. It is also unknown how comfortable TNC drivers would be providing trips for riders that may require additional assistance. Those in attendance agreed that it could be an option in the future. TNCs could be a solution for healthcare providers to get patients home from appointments. Existing scheduling software at transit agencies has the capability to coordinate trips with on-demand, but current service structures funding and availability does not have the excess capacity to implement such service.

**d. Priorities & Solutions**

In closing, Ms. Schlicher asked participants to rank the priorities (through a dot exercise) that were most important to them or indicate if new priorities have since arisen for Wise County.

Participants ranked priorities in the following order:

1. Improve public awareness and visibility of available service.
2. Establish and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs.
3. Improve medical access.
4. Establish connections to regional transit services in Denton County and Tarrant County.
5. Establish consistent and effective driver recruitment and retention programs for public transportation services to address difficulties in retaining drivers for vehicles in Wise County.

6. Increase evening and weekend service.
7. Provide travel training for older adults or individuals with disabilities to learn how to use public transportation.

**e. Next Steps**

A point-person committee for Wise County will soon be developed. The committee will discuss and further refine transportation needs and solutions. Agencies or individuals interested in participating should contact Ms. Schlicher.

The final plan is slated for fall 2017 and implementation will begin in early 2018. The final plan will include prioritized solutions will improve the coordination and availability of public transportation for the 16-county region.

Contact: Kelli Schlicher, AICP, Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments; (817) 695-9287, [kschlicher@nctcog.org](mailto:kschlicher@nctcog.org)  
Sarah Chadderdon, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments; (817) 695-9180, [schadderdon@nctcog.org](mailto:schadderdon@nctcog.org)

**2. Attendee List**

Bridgeport Economic Development Corporation: Kevin Holzbog  
Bridgeport ISD: Kurt Kronenberger  
Cigna: Terri Palomino  
City of Bridgeport: Tiffany Evans, James Elliott, Erika McComis  
Denton Workforce Center: Perry Singer  
North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging: Mike Hensley  
North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Jamie Patel, Kelli Schlicher, Donato Perez, Chris Reed  
Transdev (operator of Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS)): Karen Kemp, Josh Walker  
United Way of Wise County: Martin Woodruff  
Weatherford College - Wise County: Matt Joiner  
Wise County: Judge J.D. Clark, Commissioner Kevin Burns  
Wise County Committee on Aging, Inc.: Amy Pegues  
Wise County Messenger: Brian Knox  
Wise Health System: Kelly Jones, Shawna Merchant, Sarah Ratliff