

**Access North Texas
 Combined meeting for Erath County, Hood County, and Somervell County
 February 15, 2017
 Granbury, 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 Erath County, Hood County, and Somervell 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. The AAA public meeting 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 Erath, Hood, and Somervell Counties. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

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

The majority of respondents identified medical trips as their highest day-to-day transportation need with work-related trips coming in as the second highest transportation need. Attendees noted 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.

Representatives from Hood County’s workforce office noted that individuals are sometimes unable to get to job training programs. Attendees also noted that even trips within the county can be cost prohibitive for riders with limited incomes. The Transit System (TTS) currently serves Hood County and Somervell County. Their fare ranges

from \$6 to \$10 each way for travel within Hood County and from \$6 to \$8 within Somervell County, but the actual cost to operate that service is higher. Seniors (60+) in both counties are eligible for a 50% discount. Additional funding (such as local contribution from cities) would be required to reduce fares.

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

50% of respondents indicated that their primary area of concern was funding new services, while 29% specified that improving awareness of available services was their primary area of concern. Attendees noted a lack of available services and limited weekend service for residents has forced some riders to use multiple social service providers to reach their destinations. Attendees also noted that some of their clients are unable to get to last-minute medical appointments through public transportation because trips should be scheduled one day in advance. Representatives from both City and Rural Rides (CARR, serving Erath County) and TTS noted that scheduling a trip one day in advance is not required. Each agency will accommodate same day service when possible, if vehicles and drivers are not already scheduled to serve other customers.

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

48% of attendees answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact on improving access to transit, while 26% answered that a focus on getting additional local government investment in transit would have the biggest impact. Attendees were interested in obtaining additional federal or state investment for general purpose trips (groceries, recreation, dining, etc.) to increase the options available to riders and to fit community needs. Attendees indicated a need to increase local government investment to improve transit access within counties. Additional funding could be used to for supplemental services, such as vehicle for-hire programs (taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc.).

What method could improve the awareness of available services?

40% of respondents indicated that public marketing campaigns are the best method to improve awareness, while 32% 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 a viable option 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 in the 2-1-1 network.

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

38% of respondents indicated that knowing where to start was the biggest barrier to coordination, while 29% indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was their biggest barrier. Participants noted that all of the choices would apply to them and expanded by indicating that knowing how to connect with the appropriate contact within an agency is a huge coordination barrier. It was also noted that once you know where to start, most of the information on a resource guide is not up-to-date and establishing a procedure to

update available resources is vital for coordination. An attendee mentioned that understanding the different roles of different agencies would ultimately reduce service duplication since there are a lot of opportunities for funding. Establishing roles on the funding side would also contribute to the reduction of service duplication and free up resources for a variety of projects.

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

65% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 22% voted for additional assistance from the driver or personal assistant. A majority of the attendees voted for better information on how to use transit because of their experience with coming across resources that are not up-to-date. These particular resources (not identified) also provide little information on how to connect with current appropriate contacts and make it difficult to refer a client over to those resources or agencies.

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?

39% of attendees believed that most people won’t access these options. Conversely, another 17% of attendees indicated that web or smartphone apps with information on different providers and driverless cars, buses, or shuttles would be the most likely to improve transportation options. The majority of the attendees indicated that most people wouldn’t access these options because many of their customers don’t have the appropriate knowledge to work the technology in smartphones or apps and the newest technologies can often be challenging. Also, smartphones are not economically accessible for many of the individuals they work with on a regular basis. An attendee noted that because many of the seniors she works with have had their licenses taken away; driverless cars, buses, or shuttles sound like a great way for seniors to get around.

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 Erath, Hood, and Somervell Counties.

Participants ranked priorities for Hood County and Somervell County in the following order:

1. Increase service in Hood County and Somervell County to address access to all activities; identify funding sources.
2. Improve awareness of available public transportation services (Hood County & Somervell County).
3. Meeting of a coordinating committee to discuss ongoing transportation needs (Hood County & Somervell County).
4. Explore ways to make bus passes easier to use (Hood County & Somervell County).
5. Coordinate more efficient transportation routes for senior center access (Hood County & Somervell County).

Participants ranked priorities for Erath County in the following order:

1. Improve availability of connections from Stephenville and Dublin to regional destinations including medical services, job access, and education (Erath County).
2. Expand service operating hours beyond 8:00 am to 5:00 pm to address community and job access needs within Erath County.
3. Decrease waiting times for public transportation from its current two-hour time window (Erath County).
4. Develop a driver recruitment and retention program to address difficulties CARR faces in hiring and retaining drivers (Erath County).
5. Create and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs (Erath County).
6. Improve awareness of existing public transit services and expand opportunities for partnerships to grow transit service (Erath County).

e. Next Steps

A point-person committee for Erath County as well as Hood and Somervell Counties 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.

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 Sarah Chadderdon, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments; (817) 695-9180, schadderdon@nctcog.org

2. Attendee List

Advocates: D. Early, Ann Blay, Jak Dandron, Jeanie Jones, Michael Ross
 Area Agency on Aging: Shannon Byrd
 Choices Clinic & Life Resource Center: Heather Dawes, Ashley Graves
 City and Rural Rides: Rhonda Kelton, Michael Kelly
 Dublin Chamber: Tom Gordon
 Erath County: Tami Barker
 Granbury Housing Authority: Julia K. Richardson, Sheri Simpson, Larry Richardson
 Hood County Committee on Aging: Wanda Nail
 Hood County: Judge Darrell Cockerham
 Hood County Senior Center: Barb Facer, Rebecca Freeman, Loyd Nail
 Lake Granbury Medical Center: Derrick E. Cuenca
 Mission Granbury: Christi Durant, Ken Horton
 North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging: Mike Hensley
 North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Kelli Schlicher, Donato Perez
 Paluxy River Children's Advocacy Center: Kerrie Stannell, Elizabeth Johnson

Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental HealthCare: Alecia Morrison,
Allen Gould
Ride N Safe Medical Transport, LLC: Cliff Montemayor
Somervell County Committee on Aging, Inc.: Pam Baker
Texas Department of Transportation: Tommie Fugate, Johanna Pike
The Transit System: Joan Rohrbaugh, Terry Vannoy
United Way of Hood County: Becky Mauldin