

## Introduction

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The purpose of Access North Texas is to document the public transportation needs for seniors (older adults), individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited financial resources, and other transit-dependent populations. These populations can have difficulty finding public transportation options that connect them to medical appointments, work opportunities, job training, education, food access, and other essential destinations. This plan identifies where these transportation connections could be improved within Denton County. This chapter provides an overview of outreach efforts, demographics, existing transportation services, findings, and prioritized strategies. More information about the plan and regional findings can be found in the Executive Summary.

## Outreach

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Public outreach for Denton County was conducted through a survey and stakeholder outreach meeting. Outreach efforts were advertised through email communication, the Access North Texas website, a Local Motion publication, and social media. Opportunity to share transit-related comments and concerns anonymously by location in a virtual public mapping tool called Map Your Experience was also available through the Access North Texas website.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) conducted 13 meetings across the region which included an in-person stakeholder outreach meeting in Denton County at the Downtown Denton Transit Center in the city of Denton on March 18, 2025. Emails were sent to 260 recipients in the Denton County email subscriber list. The meeting was also promoted on the Access North Texas website. Five individuals and five NCTCOG staff attended.

A transportation survey was available to residents and stakeholders online, on paper, and available in English and Spanish. The online survey could also be translated into other languages by selecting the preferred language option from a drop-down box on the live survey page. The survey for the public collected input on public transportation in the region. A similar survey was also available online for organizations and agencies that work with transit-dependent populations. For the public survey, there were approximately 68 participants for Denton County submitted online. For the agency survey, participants from

five agencies indicated they operate in or serve Denton County. Finally, 2 transit-related comments were received for Denton County through Map Your Experience.

All feedback from outreach efforts were cleaned, compiled, and coded for analysis, in addition to the survey feedback. Using the coding key, qualitative feedback was quantified to create visual representations of feedback for identified barriers, missed trips, desired modes, and enhancements. See Appendix D for the visualizations. Additional feedback was factored into the Denton County analysis as applicable, such as in situations where comments relate to multiple counties or for transit providers operating across county boundaries.

### Demographics Assessment

Denton County continues to experience significant growth. According to 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, the population exceeds 979,500, in comparison to 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates of over 833,800. This represents a more than 17 percent increase in population. Denton County’s population, according to the region’s long-range transportation plan, Mobility 2050, is expected to reach more than 1.8 million by 2050.

When comparing the 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates to the 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the older adult population increased by 37.7 percent, individuals with a disability population increased by 37.5 percent, and low-income individuals have increased by 7.0 percent. Areas with higher concentrations of these populations should be a particular priority in efforts to promote existing or new transit services. Detailed estimates and percentages for these key populations, as well as other demographics, are shown in the table below and in the appendix.

| Metric                 | Denton County Population | Denton County % | Regional % Comparison |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Total Households       | 360,392                  | -               | -                     |
| Zero-Car Households    | 12,640                   | 3.5%            | 4.8%                  |
| 65 and over            | 113,125                  | 11.5%           | 12.3%                 |
| With a Disability      | 90,777                   | 9.3%            | 10.5%                 |
| Low-Income Individuals | 88,819                   | 9.2%            | 14.1%                 |
| Total Veterans         | 43,911                   | 5.9%            | 5.5%                  |
| Youth (under 18)       | 228,961                  | 23.4%           | 25.0%                 |
| Total LEP Individuals  | 75,861                   | 8.2%            | 11.9%                 |

Table 1: Target Population and County Metrics. Data from 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

### Transportation Services Assessment

Denton County is served by a combination of transit authorities, municipal transit programs, and contracted transportation services, with service models and eligibility

varying significantly across the county. The map and descriptions below provide a brief overview of these programs, including the extent of their service areas and the types of transportation options they provide. The most updated service area boundaries, fares, and hours of operation can be found on the providers' websites. Contact information per provider can also be found in the Get-A-Ride Guide in Appendix B.

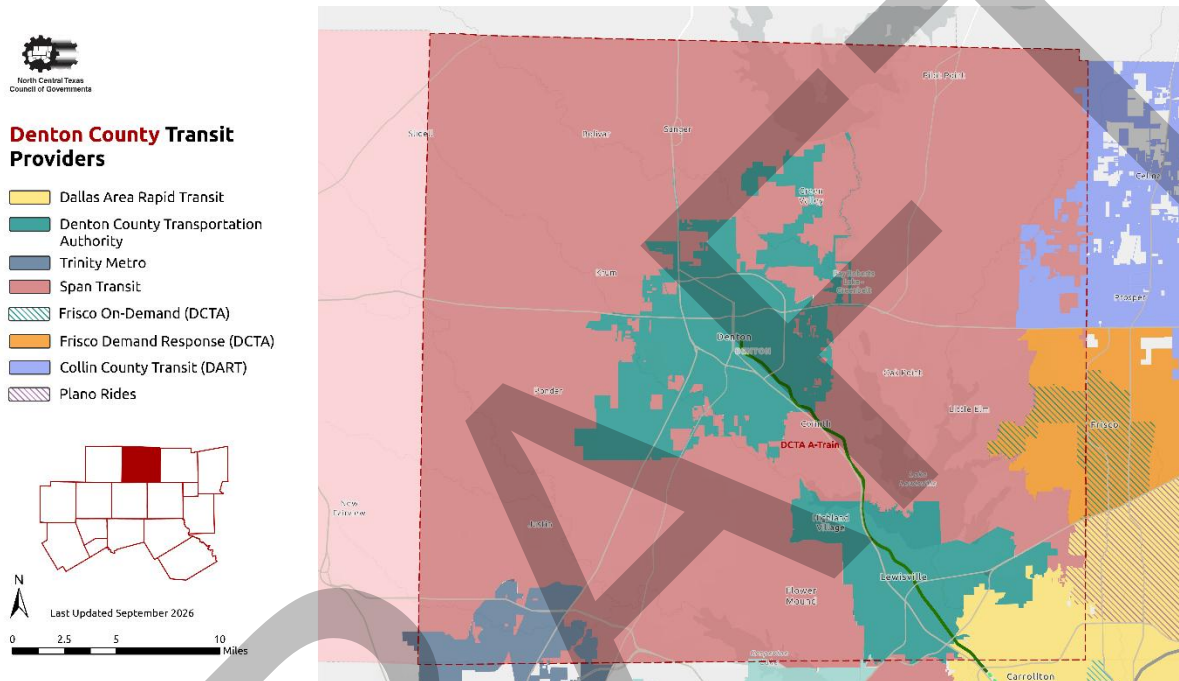


Figure 1: County Transit Service Map

### Denton County Transportation Authority

Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) provides a variety of transportation services, including bus, rail, GoZone microtransit, and paratransit which caters to both Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and non-ADA riders. These services operate in the member cities of Denton, Lewisville, and Highland Village, with a bus connection to the University of North Texas (UNT) campus. The contracted bus service for the UNT services on-campus and off-campus housing. Also, the North Texas Express Commuter route is a partnership with Trinity Metro to connect commuters from Downtown Denton to the Trinity Metro system.

In addition to the services offered in member cities, DCTA also extends its reach with a vanpool program that operates across multiple counties in the region. There is a partnership with the city of Coppell to provide local employees with first-and-last-mile transportation through a Lyft program.

DCTA offers various fare and ticket types for both local and regional travel. Riders can purchase tickets through DCTA's online store, the GoPass app, or at designated ticket outlet locations.

#### *Dallas Area Rapid Transit*

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) operates limited services such as GoLink microtransit and paratransit programs in member cities, including small portions of Carrollton and Plano that extend into Denton County. DART offers multiple transportation services and programs which include different fares and ticket types, including local and regional options. To purchase tickets, riders can use the DART GoPass App, GoPass Tap Card, and Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) located at the platforms.

#### *Trinity Metro*

Trinity Metro operates limited services such as on-demand, a commuter route connecting to DCTA service, and paratransit programs in Fort Worth and partner cities, including a small portion of Fort Worth extending into Denton County. Trinity Metro offers a variety of fares, including single ride tickets, multi-ride tickets, and on-demand paratransit trips for eligible riders. Additionally, fares may fall under local, regional, or reduced categories. Under regional fares, riders may use transportation services offered through DART and DCTA as well. To purchase tickets, riders can use the GoPass App, use the Trinity Metro On-Demand app (for on-demand trips), go through Trinity Metro's website, or use the kiosk at the Fort Worth Central Station.

#### *Span, Inc.*

Span, Inc. (also known as Span or Span Transit) offers transportation services in Denton County not served by DCTA or another transit authority. Span connects much of the rural portion of the county and cities such as Flower Mound and Little Elm. Span operates demand-response and curb-to-curb services. Additionally, Span is the designated rural provider in Denton County, serving primarily seniors, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, though rides are open to the general public. The services are offered by appointment and must be scheduled in advance. To utilize the service, prospective riders must apply and be approved. Upon approval, riders will be issued a ParaPass card where money can be pre-loaded and used to pay trip fares.

#### *Frisco Demand Response and On-Demand*

The city of Frisco contracts with DCTA for transportation services. This program offers curb-to-curb demand response service for eligible Frisco residents who are 65 or older, disabled, or need transportation for medical appointments. The program also provides transit for eligible riders to certain areas in Plano.

To use the service, prospective riders must apply. Once approved, they can use a partner code through the Lyft app or call DCTA customer service to schedule trips. Additionally, in May 2026, the city of Frisco, in partnership with DCTA, launched GoZone, an on-demand microtransit service available to the general public within designated areas of Frisco. The service area has expanded since launch and may continue to evolve based on ridership, community needs, and operational performance. GoZone also provides a regional connection to DART service in Plano. Rides are booked through the GoZone app and reduced fares are available to qualified GoZone riders (older adults and individuals with disabilities).

#### *Frisco Boxcar Service*

In June 2026, the city of Frisco launched the Rail District Boxcar Shuttle, a free fixed-route circulator serving Downtown Frisco, including the Rail District, Frisco Square/City Hall, Toyota Stadium, public parking, and other downtown destinations. The pilot is intended to improve downtown mobility and connections between destinations while reducing the need for short vehicle trips.

#### *Vanpool Program*

In addition to other transportation options and services, DCTA and Trinity Metro operate a Vanpool Program in North Central Texas. As of April 2026, through Trinity Metro, no vanpools originate in Denton County, one vanpool has a destination in Denton County, and no vanpools have both an origin and a destination within the county. Through DCTA, 37 vanpools originate in Denton County, 13 have destinations in Denton County, and 4 have both an origin and a destination within the county. The number of vanpools may change from month to month as the regional program expands shared commuter transportation opportunities.

Overall, gaps in service still exist in Denton County due to a variety of factors. Survey and outreach responses show some insight into what gaps may exist and where further assessment is needed. Through continued collaboration amongst stakeholders, the gaps in service can be identified, reviewed, and discussed.

### **Needs/Gaps Assessment (Data Analysis)**

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In Denton County, survey respondents helped to identify a variety of transportation barriers, potential enhancements, missed trips, and desired modes. The combination of all outreach efforts, including surveys and meetings, revealed that residents are interested in the topic of public transportation and would like to see greater access and availability of service. This section analyzes survey and outreach findings while incorporating inputs through the Map Your Experience tool and the Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool map

to identify priority need areas. A more comprehensive and detailed view of notes, input, feedback, and reports can be found in Appendix D.

### Outreach Meeting

As one of the meetings with the most transit provider staff attendance, the outreach event in Denton County provided an opportunity for users and transit providers to share their experience with current services. At the outreach meeting, staff provided a presentation and afterwards attendees were given the opportunity to share any questions or feedback. Attendees didn't have any questions or comments; however, feedback was provided in activity 3 where participants identified transit enhancement priority preferences. The top priorities are summarized in Table 2.

| Top Desired Enhancements     |                   |                        |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Connections to Rail Stations | Fixed Bus Service | Service Area Expansion |

*Table 2: Services, improvements, and/or activities identified as a priority at the Denton County outreach meeting in Activity 3.*

### Public Survey

Of the total regionwide survey participants who identified a county of residence, approximately 9 percent were from Denton County. While most public survey respondents indicated they are not missing trips, there are others who are. Most oriented towards social/entertainment/event trips, work trips, and medical trips. Of those that identified barriers that prevent them from going where they need to go, the top three included:

- Public transportation services don't meet their needs
- Nobody to drive them
- Safety concerns with public transportation

With 79 percent of the 61 online respondents to the question of "Does public transportation meet your needs?" indicating that public transportation does not meet their needs, the top reason behind this, reflected in the below figure, is that services are not available at locations the participants need to travel.

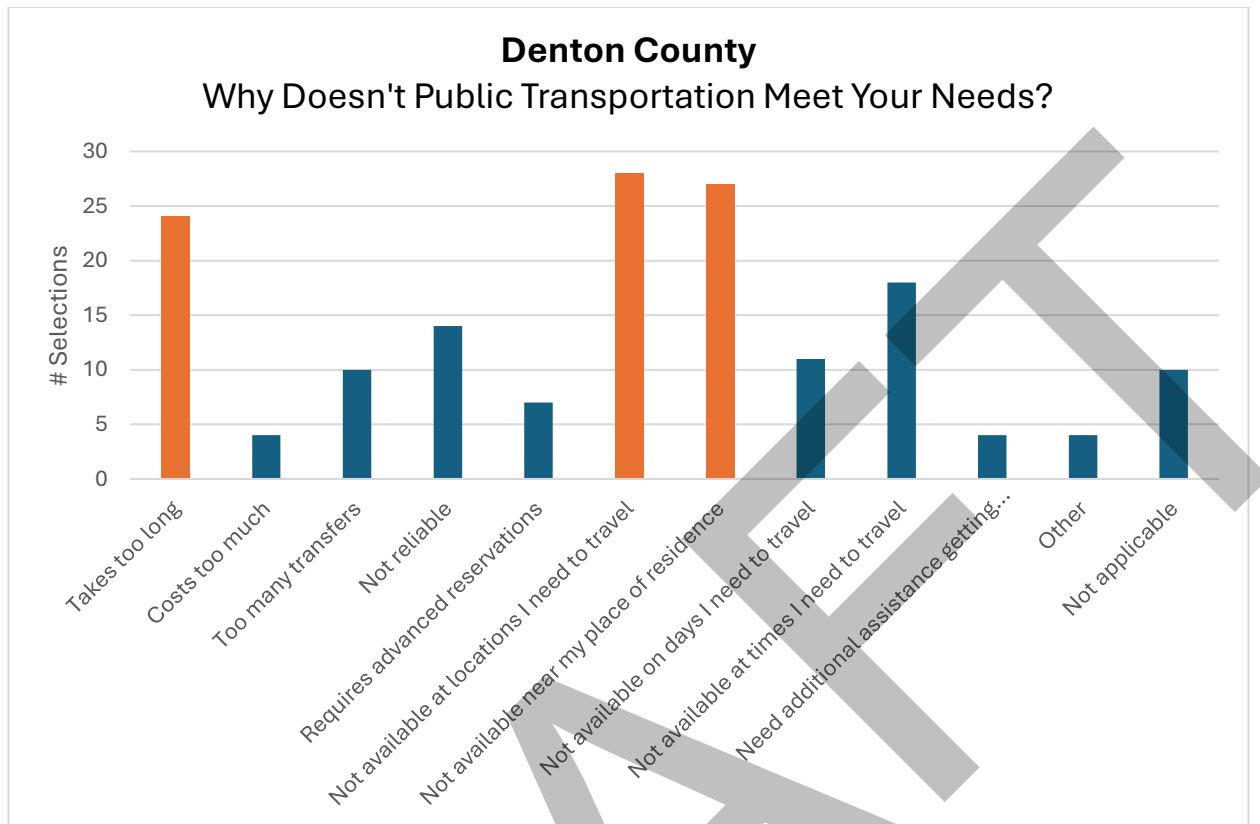


Figure 2: Visual of public survey question responses. Orange highlighted bars indicate most popular selections.

When looking at the best way to enhance the transit experience, the responses below were the preferred enhancement options selected.

- Expanded service area (average ranking of 2.02 by 44 participants)
- More frequent buses or trains (average ranking of 3.16 by 37 participants)
- Expanded service time (average ranking of 3.74 by 31 participants)

Of the 54 respondents for this specific question, about 81 percent selected Expanded Service Area, making this the most preferred option by a sizeable margin as reflected in Figure 3.

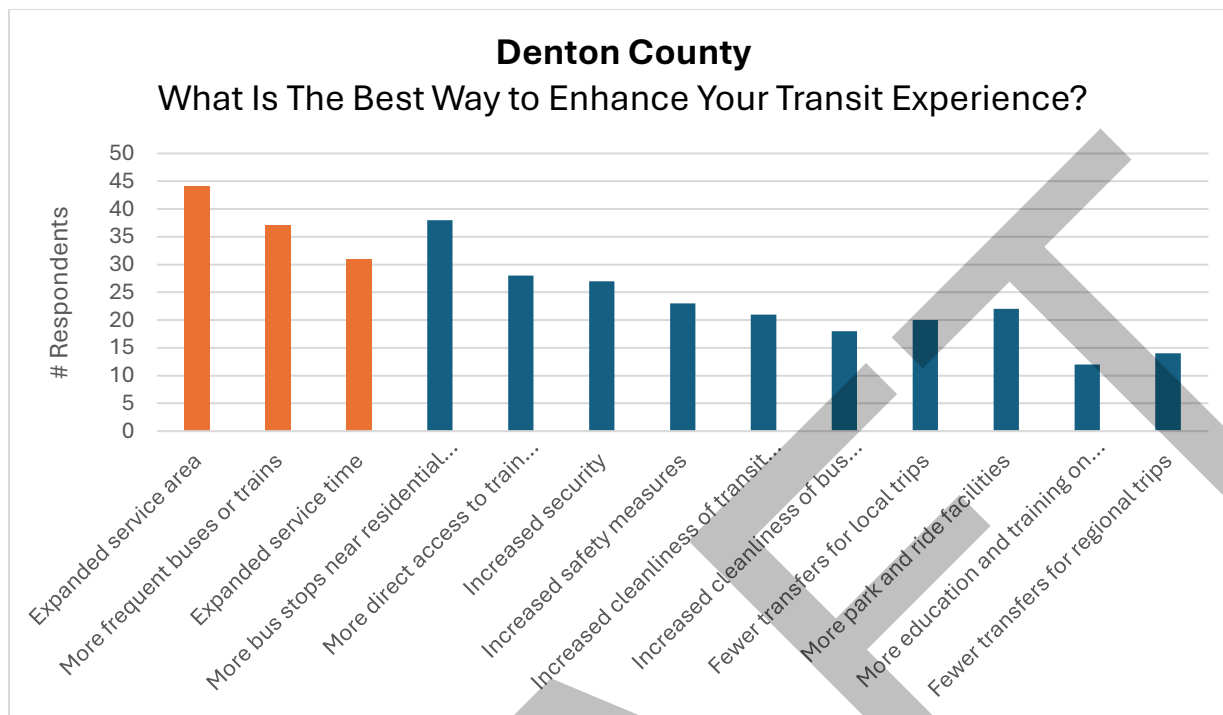


Figure 3: Visual of public survey question asking participants to rank options in order of preference. Orange highlighted bars indicate top three preferred enhancements from online participants.

### Agency Survey

Approximately 31 percent of agencies who participated in the survey indicated they serve or operate in Denton County and that their agency serves multiple populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with lower income and others.

Agencies who provided feedback include DCTA, Span Inc, the town of Westlake, and the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging.

The table below identifies top responses provided by the agency representatives and/or staff who participated in the agency survey. More information on survey responses can be found in appendix D.

|                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are the most requested trips among those you serve?                                                               |
| • Medical, Shopping                                                                                                    |
| What keeps your customers from getting where they need to go?                                                          |
| • Public transportation services don't meet their needs                                                                |
| For public transportation options that don't meet your customers' needs, what is the reason?                           |
| • Not available at locations needed to travel                                                                          |
| What is the best way to enhance your customer's public transportation experience? (top 2 selections from participants) |
| • Expanded service area                                                                                                |

Table 2: Summary of select public agency survey question responses. Not all responses apply to the individual county, however, the overall service area the agencies operate, Denton County is included.

### Categorized Qualitative Feedback

Meeting notes, comments in the survey questions, and feedback from providers offered insight into experienced barriers, missed trips, desired modes, and enhancements in Denton County. The table below summarizes the top qualitative feedback and comments that may be compared to other findings. Participation and feedback varied among the different outreach methods.

| Barriers                                       | Missed Trips | Desired Modes      | Enhancements                       |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Safety concerns                                | Medical      | Bus services       | Access and availability of service |
| Not available at needed location               |              | Rail services      | Service area                       |
| Lack of access and/or availability of services |              | On-demand services | More regional connectivity         |

*Table 3: Summary of categorized qualitative feedback. More detailed information can be found in the Appendix D.*

### Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool

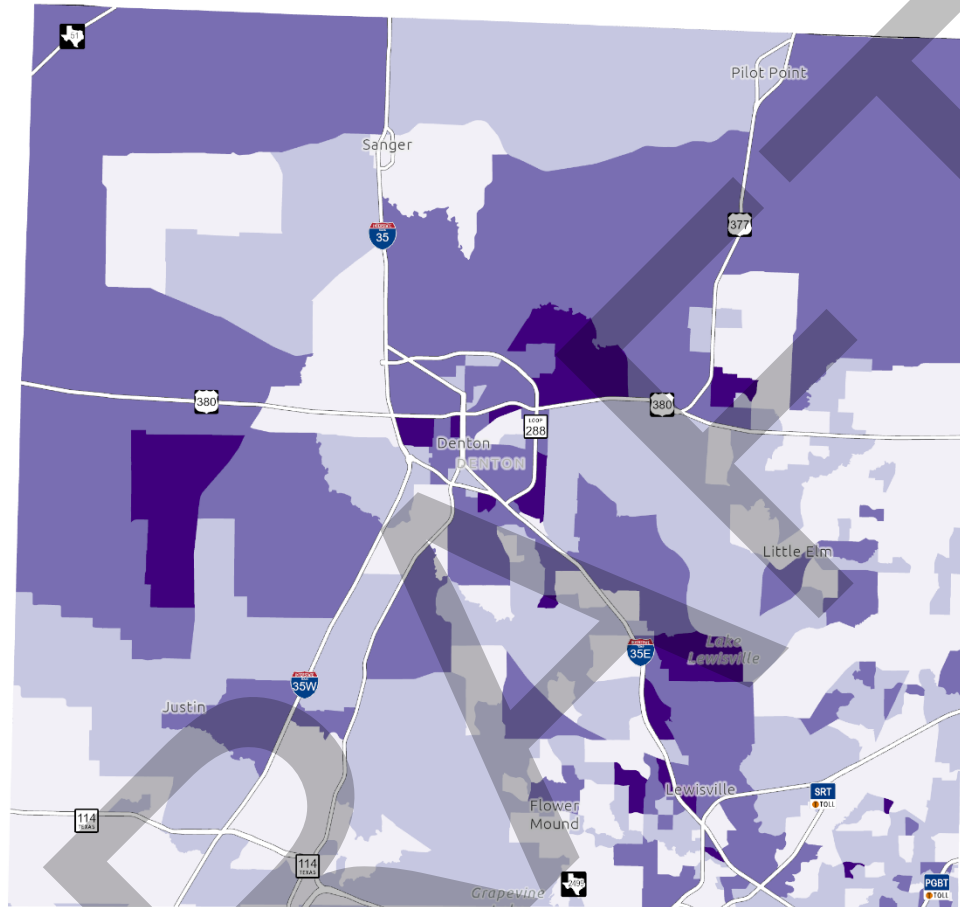
While the Demographics Assessment earlier in the chapter shows the number of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other transit dependent populations in Denton County, these figures describe the county as a whole and don't show where these populations are concentrated. The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) fills this gap by mapping seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals below poverty at the Census block group level to identify where transit-dependent populations may be located and where transit need may be greatest.

In Denton County, there are Census block groups where populations of individuals 65 and older, below poverty level, and with disabilities are above the regional percentages. For the TAIT map, illustrated in Figure 4, these areas are near the city of Denton and the city of Lewisville, while other areas are farther away from the cities. For example, the east side of the county south of US 380. There are large areas where two variables are above the regional percentage, as well as for one variable above the regional percentage.

For populations 65 and over, as illustrated in Appendix C, there are a few small areas with high concentrations of older adults, however, the range varies throughout the county with mostly moderately low to moderate ranges. Near Pilot Point, Flower Mound, and east of the city of Denton, there are more areas with moderately high concentrations of populations over 65. For persons with a disability population, as illustrated in Appendix C, the highest concentrations are found near the city of Denton and the city of Lewisville, with a small area southwest of Little Elm. Most areas in the northern half of the county fall

within a moderate to moderately high range, while the southern half has a mix moderate to moderately low ranging areas. For individuals with limited financial resources populations, as illustrated in Appendix C, the highest concentrations are found near the city of Denton. Populations under this variable appear more widely distributed in lower concentrations throughout the county, with only a few high to moderately high areas.

# Denton County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



- All Variables At or Below Regional Percentage
- One Variable Above Regional Percentage
- Two Variables Above Regional Percentage
- All Variables Above Regional Percentage

0 5 10 Miles



Source: 2024 American Community Survey  
5-Year Estimates

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) are preliminary screening 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 Level, and Persons with Disabilities.

Figure 4: Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool Map for Denton County.

## Denton County Zero-Car Households



Figure 5: Individual Variable Map showing Zero-Car Households in Denton County

For zero-car households, as illustrated in Figure 5, there are a few small areas with moderately high to high ranges, while most of the county is comprised of moderately low to low concentrations. Most areas with the moderately high to high areas are near roadways or cities such as Denton, Lewisville, and Little Elm.

### Goals/Strategies Development

The regional goals (five main categories identifying themes across the 16-county region) provide a framework for Access North Texas on a regional level, while the individual prioritized strategies applied to Denton County are applicable to furthering those goals while also addressing needs within the county. These goals and strategies help provide direction for transit providers and stakeholders to plan and implement future projects and services that support transit-dependent populations.

The prioritized strategies were developed using information from multiple sources, including outreach, meetings, surveys, available data, and regional knowledge through stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Data and information were compiled and analyzed to help identify patterns and gaps. Prior to the finalization of the plan, the goals and strategies were provided to stakeholders for feedback and review.

## Goals & Strategies – **MORE TO BE ADDED LATER**

| Regional Goal                                                                                        | Denton County – Specific Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Needs and Challenges                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct planning activities to further identify public transportation needs of residents outside of existing transportation authorities and define additional coordination opportunities for existing providers.</li> <li>2. Invest in programs to assist with filling gaps in public transportation.</li> <li>3. Prioritize programs that facilitate transportation trips for work-related trips, medical, and healthcare appointments.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Implement Services by Enhancing Transportation Options and Expanding Where Service Gaps Exist        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase access to employment, social (such as entertainment and shopping centers), religious, and well-being trips in areas with limited to no public transportation service.</li> <li>2. Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region without comprehensive service and support regional integration of new services.</li> <li>3. Implement service enhancements, including route frequency, service optimization, mode connectivity, and operating hours.</li> <li>4. Work with specialized service providers, those that may have limitations on populations they serve, to improve transit access by streamlining rider registration and scheduling processes.</li> </ol> |
| Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate, non-traditional ways to deliver and support public transportation, including, but not limited to, partnerships among public transit agencies, private transportation providers, transportation network companies, shared-use mobility programs, and volunteer drivers.</li> <li>2. Work with public transportation providers and stakeholders to improve or maintain services connecting riders to the transit system, healthcare, and other key destinations.</li> <li>3. Improve regional connectivity by increasing ease of travel across municipal and county</li> </ol>                                                                                 |

| Regional Goal                                                         | Denton County – Specific Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                       | <p>boundaries, providing access to different transit modes, and enabling transfers to existing systems across various fare structures.</p> <p>4. Facilitate collaboration between transit agencies and local governments for long-range strategic planning to benefit riders.</p>                                                                                             |
| Drive Sustained Growth of Public Transportation Ridership             | <p>1. Integrate various funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase availability of affordable public transportation options.</p> <p>2. Improve safety, security, and sanitation measures to build rider confidence and comfort.</p>                                                                                                                                  |
| Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options | <p>1. Enhance communication and outreach programs to improve awareness of existing or new transportation options.</p> <p>2. Conduct travel training to educate the public on available services and policies.</p> <p>3. Partner with agencies, recreation centers, communities, assisted living facilities, healthcare, and other organizations to publicize information.</p> |