

KAUFMAN 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 Kaufman County. This chapter will give an overview of the planning process, research conducted and collected, the public outreach meeting, the transportation poll used to collect personal input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Kaufman 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 Kaufman County. Through the process and methods described, prioritized strategies were developed so that future public transportation projects can be implemented when federal and State funding becomes available. Two different types of research were conducted during this plan update: data-based and people-based.

Data-based research included obtaining, reviewing, and analyzing Census data; using Census data to

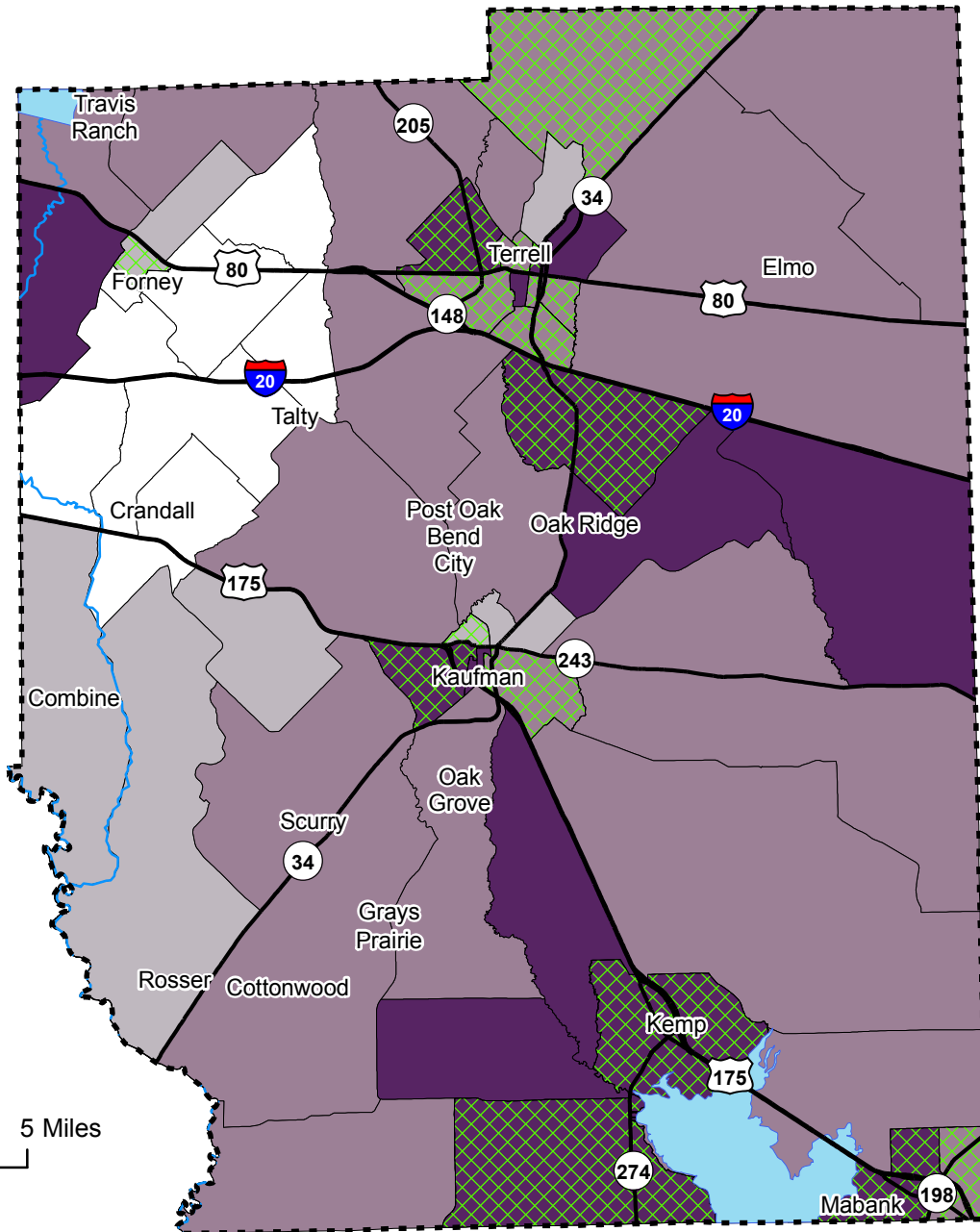
develop a mapping tool to identify locations where transit-dependent individuals may live; and identifying existing public transportation providers. The people-based research included reaching out to communities, organizations, and individuals to obtain feedback about the existing public transportation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

RESEARCH

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

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

Kaufman County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



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

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

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

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



North Central Texas
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In Kaufman 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 predominantly in the central and southern parts of the county, including Kemp, Mabank, south of I20 near Oak Ridge, along the US 80 corridor in Terrell and west of Forney, and the rural area west of US 175 in southern Kaufman County. The remaining majority of the county has two of the three variables above the regional percentage. Scurry and Post Oak Bend City block groups are above the regional percentage in residents below the poverty line and persons with disabilities, while the remainder of areas with two variables above the regional percentage were in persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. The areas around Combine south of US 175 and west of SH 34, as well as north of US 80 near Forney have one variable over the regional percentage, with the one variable being a higher than regional percentage population age 65 and over. Only western Kaufman County near Crandall, Talty, and Forney shows zero variables above the regional percentage. Zero car households in Kaufman County are located along the SH 34 corridor in Terrell, Oak Ridge, the city of Kaufman, and along US 175 in Kemp and Mabank. The rural area along SH 274 in southern Kaufman County is also above the regional percentage in zero car households. Kaufman County has a large proportion of persons with disabilities living in the northeast corner of the county as well as east of Oak Grove.

Additional Demographic and Commuter Information

Kaufman County continues to experience a steady amount of growth. According to the American Community Survey's 2015 5-year estimates, since the 2010 Census, Kaufman County's population has increased by 5.7%. In comparison, the 16-county region has grown 6.3% in that same time period. Public transportation needs will change as the population grows. Within Kaufman County, 6.8% of residents speak English less than very well. Efforts to promote existing

or new transit services should include strategies to reach this population.

According to U.S. Census employer information as of 2014, Kaufman County is home to nearly 25,000 jobs, and 9,000 residents of the county also work within the county. Around 16,000 workers commute into the county for employment, while approximately 39,000 people commute out of the county to access their job. Around 3 in 10 workers live within 10 miles of their jobs in Kaufman County, with the majority of incoming commuters from the west and northwest. The economy in Kaufman County is fairly diverse, with both the manufacturing and retail trade industries each providing around 14.5% of the jobs in the county. Workers in the county are also fairly well educated, with 40% having either some college experience or a degree.

Transportation Resources

STAR Transit is the main transportation provider in Kaufman County. They provide demand response service to the general public, including older adults and individuals with disabilities. STAR Transit's Kaufman Trolley operates in the city of Kaufman Monday through Friday. Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) also operates 16 vanpools that originate in Kaufman County.

See Appendix B4, Private Carriers for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

OUTREACH MEETING

The public meeting for Kaufman County was held on March 13, 2017 at STAR Transit in Terrell. 93 invitations were mailed and emailed to interested parties throughout the county. Meeting announcements and information were also posted online, and invitees were encouraged to share the invitation with partner organizations and clients to help promote the meetings. A

total of 24 people attended the meeting.

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

Attendees at the outreach meeting made it clear that additional capacity to the existing rural public transit system was needed to help residents access job training and opportunities (particularly for early morning shifts) within the county. A better connection between cities such as Terrell and Kaufman was also identified as a need. Individuals also noted that increased awareness of available public transit could help increase the opportunity to expand service.

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.

Kaufman County residents submitted fifteen responses to the transportation poll. The average age of respondents was 59, with the youngest 26 and oldest 92. Of the fifteen respondents, twelve said they get a ride with a friend or family member, seven responded they drive themselves, and six use public transportation for their transportation needs. Five of the respondents cite they have missed trips in the last six months, with three responding they have missed shopping trips, social or entertainment events, and religious activities. The most common reasons for missing trips

were that no public transportation service was available or the available transit did not meet their needs. Four respondents cited interest in a community wide dial-a-ride service, while three respondents said they would be interested in commuter bus service.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

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

Kaufman County Prioritized Strategies

Kaufman Strategy 1 Increase access to job training and job opportunities, particularly for:

1. Rural residents
2. Early morning shifts

Kaufman Strategy 2 Add capacity to the existing system by:

1. Continuing to develop partnerships with local employers, medical centers, cities, and other agencies to increase available public transit, particularly in the mornings or other high-demand times
2. Planning for additional services by identifying need, funding, and potential service structure in areas with high demand (e.g. circulator in Terrell)
3. Exploring opportunities to partner with other transit providers to add additional capacity

Kaufman Strategy 3 Increase public awareness of available transportation services by conducting targeted marketing to places such as:

1. Texas Workforce Commission
2. Lakes Regional MHMR
3. Health and Human Services
4. Housing Authorities
5. Food banks

6. Cities
7. Churches
8. Schools
9. Chambers of Commerce
10. Grocery stores
11. Direct mail

Kaufman Strategy 4 Advocate for agencies to integrate funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase available affordable public transportation

Kaufman Strategy 5 Conduct travel training or train-the-trainer that covers topics such as:

1. Available services
2. How to schedule a trip
3. Rider rules by type of service
4. What to do if a trip or pick-up is missed
5. How to request specific pick-up/drop-off locations for safety

Kaufman Strategy 6 Continue to conduct driver safety and sensitivity training to improve the rider's experience

Kaufman Strategy 7 Work with 2-1-1 at least twice a year to ensure public transportation resources are up-to-date

Regional Strategies for Coordinated Public Transportation

Much like the county strategies, the regional strategies may also be applicable to Kaufman 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 Kaufman County, please see Appendix C-Kaufman, 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 Kaufman 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.