

CHAPTER 12



TARRANT COUNTY



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Access North Texas is to document the public transportation needs for seniors, 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 existing services, research conducted and collected, the public outreach meetings, the transportation poll used to collect individualized input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Tarrant County.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

Trinity Metro is the main transportation provider in Tarrant County and provides a variety of services. Local bus service is operated in Fort Worth and River Oaks. There are also multiple limited and express bus routes connecting riders between Fort Worth and Burleson, Arlington, and DFW Airport. In 2019, Trinity Metro also began operation of four all-electric buses for its "The Dash" circulator, which travels between downtown Fort Worth and the city's Cultural District. Local bus fares are \$2, \$1 reduced. Express bus fares are \$2.50, \$1.25 reduced. Day passes may be purchased for \$5, \$2.50 reduced. Reduced tickets are available for individuals 65 years of age or older, persons with disabilities, Medicare card holders, and youth ages 5-19. Children aged 4 and younger ride for free. Trinity Metro's ACCESS paratransit service offers door-to-door transportation within Fort Worth, Blue Mound and River Oaks. The services are available roughly 4:20 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Monday – Saturday and approximately 4:40 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The agency offers the ZipZone on-demand rideshare service in five different zones

throughout Tarrant County. Service hours vary by zone. Fares range from \$1 to \$3 depending on the zone, and fares in the Alliance ZipZone are free when using a promotional code. In addition to other transportation options and services, Trinity Metro operates a commuter vanpool program within the North Central Texas region. As of May 2022, Trinity Metro operated up to 59 vanpools with origins in Tarrant County and up to 60 vanpools with destinations in Tarrant County. The Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), another transit agency within the North Central Texas region, also operated up to 2 vanpools with destinations in Tarrant County. The number of vanpools may change month to month as the program expands offering shared commuter transportation opportunities.

In 2019, Trinity Metro began operating the TEXRail commuter rail service between downtown Fort Worth and DFW Airport with stops in Fort Worth, North Richland Hills, and downtown Grapevine. Service is available from 3:20 a.m. to 2:44 a.m. seven days a week. TEXRail fares are \$2.50, \$1.25 reduced, each way. Additionally, the Trinity Railway Express (TRE), which is jointly owned and operated by Trinity Metro and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), connects Fort Worth to Dallas with stops in between. Service is available 3:55 a.m. to 12:22 a.m. Monday through Thursday, 3:55 a.m. to 1:52 a.m. on Friday, and 5:00 a.m. to 1:20 a.m. on Saturday. A local TRE pass (West Zone to CentrePort only) is \$2.50, \$1.25 reduced, each way. Riders may also pay \$12, \$3 reduced, for a regional multi-ride pass extending access to services in Tarrant, Dallas, and Denton counties.

Tarrant County also hosts a number of additional transportation services that specifically cater to non-member cities. Northeast Transportation Services (NETS) is a door-to-door, demand response paratransit service available to any resident of Bedford, Euless, Grapevine, Haltom

City, Hurst, Keller or North Richland Hills who has a disability or is 65 years of age or older. NETS partners with Trinity Metro and Catholic Charities of Fort Worth to provide this service in Tarrant County. Service hours are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fares are \$3.25 per one-way trip and personal care attendants ride for free. Pre-paid tickets are sold in books of 10 for \$32.50. Catholic Charities of Fort Worth also provides transportation in Tarrant County to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income adults who are unable to access other transit services. Service is available from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and fares start at \$2.50 per one-way trip.

The city of Arlington launched Via, an on-demand rideshare service available to the general public, in December of 2017. The service originally covered approximately 8 square miles within the city and eventually expanded to cover the entire city, with connections to CentrePort station, in January of 2021. The service is offered between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. on Saturday. Fares are based on a distance structure ranging from \$3.00 to \$5.00. Trips to CentrePort station are a flat \$3.00 rate. Riders can purchase a weekly pass that allows up to 4 trips per day for \$25.00. The city also operates HandiTran, a door-to-door, on-demand service for individuals with disabilities and seniors in the city of Arlington. Service is offered Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Fares are \$2 per one-way trip. Frequent riders can purchase monthly Handi-Passes for \$55.00 that provide unlimited, available service within a calendar month. In 2020, the city was awarded \$1.7 million in funding from the Federal Transit Administration through the Integrated Mobility Innovation competitive grant program. Partnering with Via, May Mobility, and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), the funding allowed the city to integrate autonomous vehicles into Via's

on-demand rideshare service around Arlington's downtown and UTA's campus. The one-year pilot of this service launched in March 2021. The service is available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and the standard Via fare applies.

In April 2022, the city of Grand Prairie launched VIA Grand Prairie, an on-demand, shared transportation service. The service provides rides primarily in Grand Prairie but also to select college campuses in neighboring cities. The fare for rides in Grand Prairie is \$3 per trip. Additional passengers in your group can ride for an additional \$1. Seniors, 65 years of age or older, ride for a reduced rate of \$2 each way. Wheelchair accessible vehicles are available. Rides to and from the University of Texas at Arlington or the TCC Southeast Campus are \$3 a trip. Rides to and from Dallas Baptist University or Dallas County College – Mountain View are \$4 a trip. The service is available Monday through Saturday between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Rides can be booked using the app or by calling 214-253-0874.

With such a complex network of services available to riders in Tarrant County, assistance is often needed to navigate service options. [My Ride North Texas 2.0](#) is a regional mobility management program which provides personalized travel navigation services and works to improve the coordination of transportation services. The program is currently operated through a partnership between the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and Community Council of Greater Dallas. My Ride North Texas serves all residents of North Central Texas but strives to connect aging populations and individuals with disabilities to transportation services and inform regional medical trips through public transit. In addition to direct assistance from travel navigators, the program offers the Get-A-Ride-Guide as a resource which provides information on various transportation resources

throughout the North Central Texas region (see Appendix B).

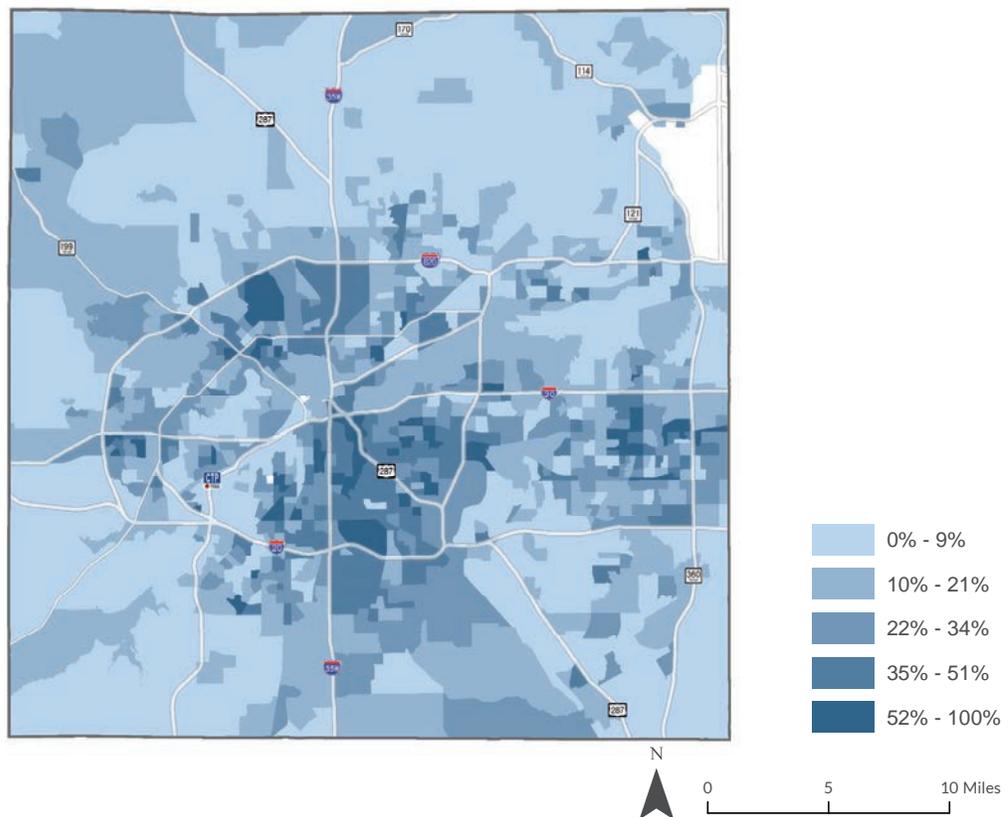
Organizations also exist to support the existing transportation network and educate advocates on issues surrounding transit. The Tarrant Transit Alliance is one such group of advocates for multimodal transit in Tarrant County. They focus on education, empowerment, and mobilization of the community to promote transit policy throughout the region. The Transit Coalition of North Texas is another non-profit organization focused on advancing transit projects in North Texas.

In addition to this already complex network of public transportation services, Tarrant County hosts a number of private transit services which connect residents to their destinations. See Appendix B for a list of private transportation

providers operating in Tarrant County and the rest of the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals may be able to use for personal trips. Organizations can also contract with them to provide specific service for clients.

Naturally, gaps in service still exist in Tarrant County due to a variety of factors and several studies and plans have been developed to address this. In 2021, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) completed the [Tarrant County Transit Study](#). The purpose of the study was to explore the transit and shared mobility needs of those who reside in municipalities without general-access transit service in Tarrant County. Three county-wide scenarios were developed, and an implementation plan outlined a framework for Tarrant County municipalities to

Tarrant County Low-Income Individuals



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Data aggregated to the Census block group level

establish or expand transit service based on those scenarios. In 2020, the city of Fort Worth began implementing a comprehensive long-range transit master planning process, , to determine transit improvements that will be needed for Trinity Metro services to catch up with current demands and to grow in a manner that will keep up with future growth. Beginning in 2020, Trinity Metro also conducted a network redesign process, [A Better Connection](#), and implemented the changes in 2021. The redesigned network improves service across the system and added service to new areas.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

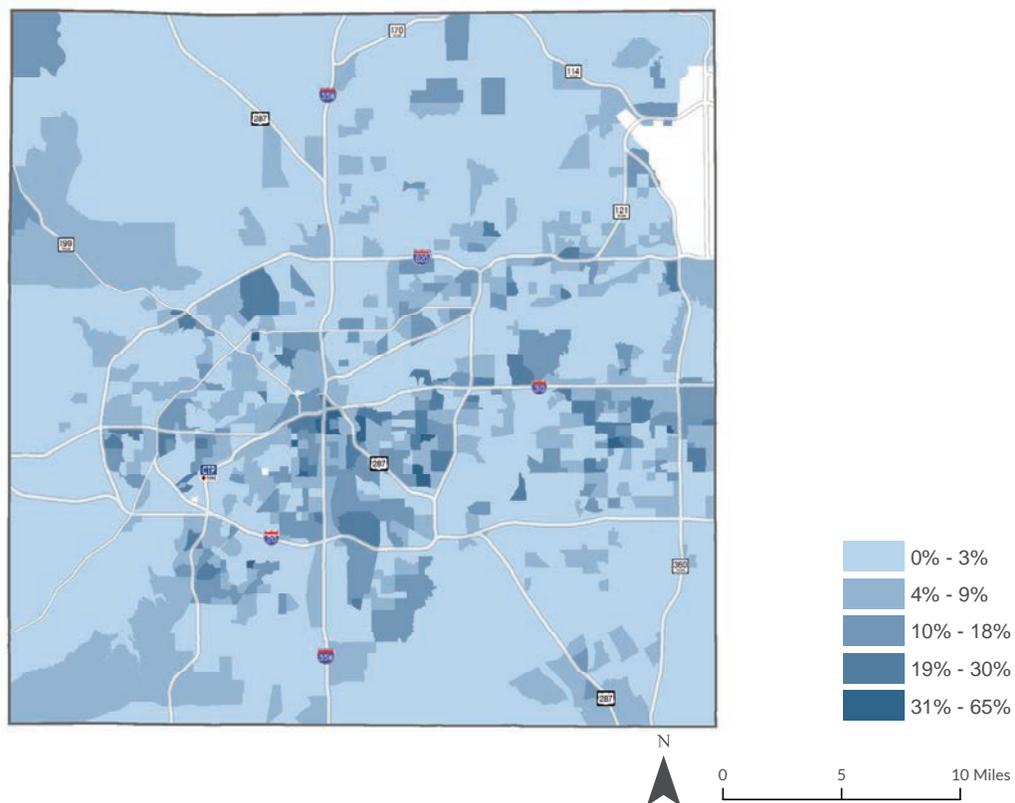
Tarrant County continues to experience a significant amount of growth. According to the American Community Survey’s 2019 5-year estimates, Tarrant County’s population has increased by 7% since 2015. According to these same estimates, Tarrant County’s total population

is made up of almost 2,050,000 individuals and 708,252 households. 225,738 of these individuals are 65 years of age or older, making up 11% of the population. Tarrant County also includes 208,695 individuals with disabilities who make up 10.2% of the population, as well as 334,614 low-income individuals who make up 16.5% of the population.

Tarrant County’s racial composition is majority white at 67% with a significant black population as well at 16.51%. This is comparable to the regional racial composition. Similarly, Tarrant County’s ethnic breakdown matches the regional breakdown with approximately 28% Hispanic or Latino population and approximately 71% non-Hispanic or Latino.

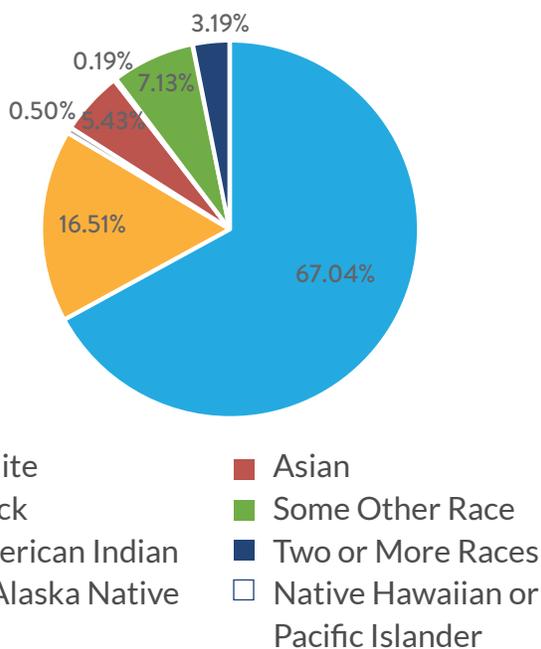
Tarrant County has a higher percentage of veteran individuals than the region at 7.2%. Although the county has a low percentage of zero-car households at 4.3%, that percentage is still higher

Tarrant County Zero-Car Households



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Data aggregated to the Census block group level

Tarrant County Racial Composition



than the regional percentage of 1.6%. Finally, while the number of homeless individuals is naturally difficult to estimate, the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition’s (TCHC) 2021 [State of the Homeless Report](#) indicated a total of 1,234 homeless individuals identified in the point in time count. 8% of those individuals are veterans. Physical and mental disability is one of the top three reasons people become homeless and TCHC identified chronically homeless individuals, who often suffer from long-term health conditions and physical disabilities, as the community’s priority population for the following year. Efforts to promote existing or new transit services should include strategies to reach each of these populations.

Outreach Process

Public outreach for Tarrant County was conducted through a series of virtual public meetings, one-on-one meetings with county stakeholders, surveys, and public mapping data. Outreach efforts were advertised through email invitations, the Access North Texas website, the Local Motion publication, a press release, and social media.

NCTCOG conducted three virtual public outreach meetings in Tarrant County. Email invitations were successfully shared with 371 stakeholders. 15 individuals registered for these meetings and 5 attended. Attendees included members of the public as well as representatives from local transit providers and non-profit agencies. Three additional one-on-one meetings were held with stakeholders in Tarrant County to supplement the larger meeting participation. These stakeholders primarily represented organizations serving homeless and low-income populations in Tarrant County.

A transportation survey was also available to residents and stakeholders, online and in paper, and available in English in Spanish. This survey 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. Responses to these surveys totaled 468 for Tarrant County. Of these, 456 responses were received from Tarrant County residents and 12 were received from agency representatives. Finally, 13 Tarrant County comments were received through Map Your Experience, a virtual public mapping tool that allows respondents to anonymously share comments and concerns by location.

Data Sources

The planning process for Access North Texas involved North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) staff, community stakeholders, transportation providers, and community members. Through virtual meetings, members from each county prioritized its main concerns about transit access in their area.

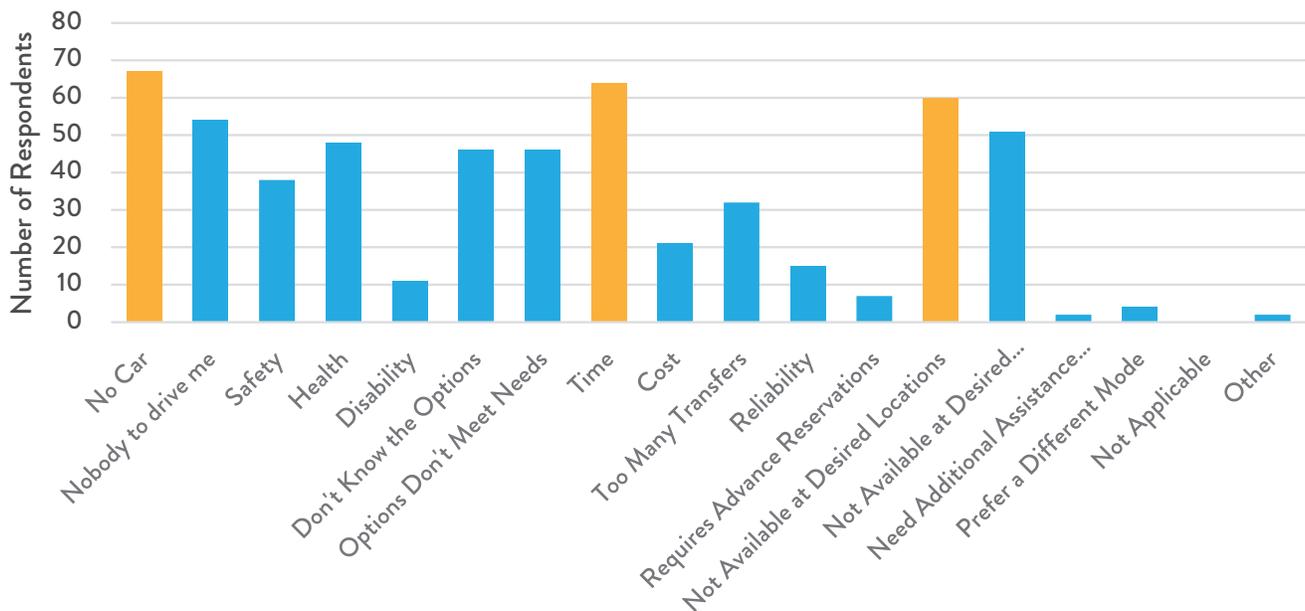
Discussions with Tarrant County residents and stakeholders highlighted the regional disconnect across provider service areas. Resources and opportunities exist across many different jurisdictions, but transit service is not aligned in a

way that allows riders to easily access them. The city of Arlington came up most frequently in these discussions as an area riders would like to access but are unable to find realistic connections to. Secondly, while the two rail offerings in Tarrant County, the TEXRail and TRE, are generally well-received by riders, access to rail services is not well-distributed throughout the county. As a result, access to key rail destinations like DFW airport is not offered to all residents in an equitable way. Several meeting attendees felt that increased frequency and extended service hours would make a significant impact on the ability of riders to utilize transit effectively. Examples such as riders budgeting over an hour of time to access destinations just 10 miles away demonstrated the impractical nature of the system for those trying to use it for daily activities. Conversations with organizations representing homeless and low-income populations also highlighted a need for transit service located in conjunction

with affordable housing, public schools, and employment. Despite the rapid increase in microtransit services in Tarrant County since the last plan update, these services were notably absent from most conversations. Some attendees had either not heard of these services at all or expressed a lack of familiarity that prevented them from trying them. Organizations serving low-income populations indicated higher fares, lack of smart phones, and an unbanked status may all be barriers to utilizing this specific type of transit service.

Another form of receiving data from Tarrant County residents and stakeholders was a transportation survey; made available online and translated into English and Spanish. Due to COVID-19 limitations, paper copies were available upon request or through transportation partners. The survey helped NCTCOG staff to collect first-hand data about public transportation in the

**Tarrant County
Reported Barriers to Mobility**



region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations.

Responses to the transportation surveys totaled 468 for Tarrant County. Of these, 456 responses were received from Tarrant County residents and 12 were received from agency representatives. The top 3 reported barriers were lack of car ownership, lack of connection to desired locations, and time. Similar to the meeting discussions, survey responses indicated a need for more frequency and extended service hours. Much of the current service does not operate efficiently enough for practical use by riders. The most desired transportation enhancement reported is an expansion of service areas. Crossing service area boundaries was once again named as a significant barrier to traveling across the county and across the region. Many respondents

requested better connections to employment and key destinations like the city of Arlington. The lack of rail options in Tarrant County compared to the eastern side of the region also came up several times. The most desired transportation mode indicated by respondents was light rail, followed by fixed-route bus and commuter bus connecting to light rail. All the information gained through outreach meetings and the transportation survey was gathered to develop the prioritized strategies for Tarrant County.

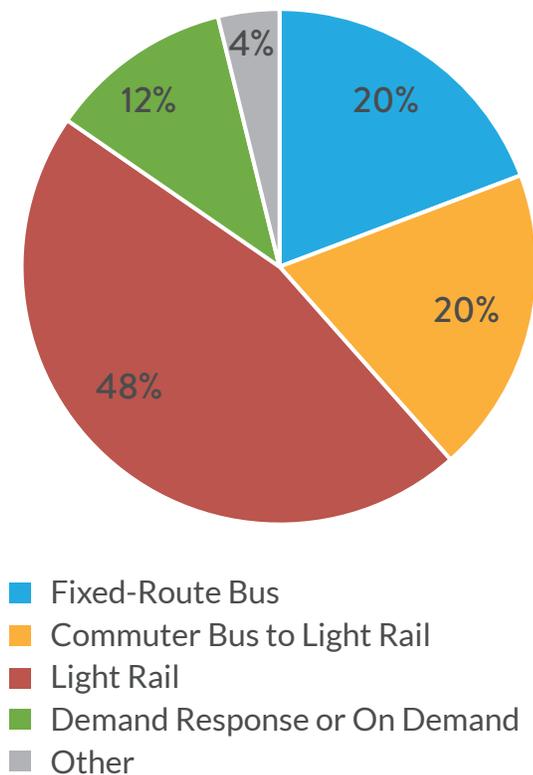
TAIT Tool and Environmental Justice

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) identifies communities who face transportation disadvantages and may have greater potential need for public transit. This tool is updated by the North Central Texas Council of Governments and is based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Based on information from TAIT, in Tarrant County there are significant amounts of census block groups where populations of individuals aged 65 and over, below poverty, and with disabilities are above the regional percentages.

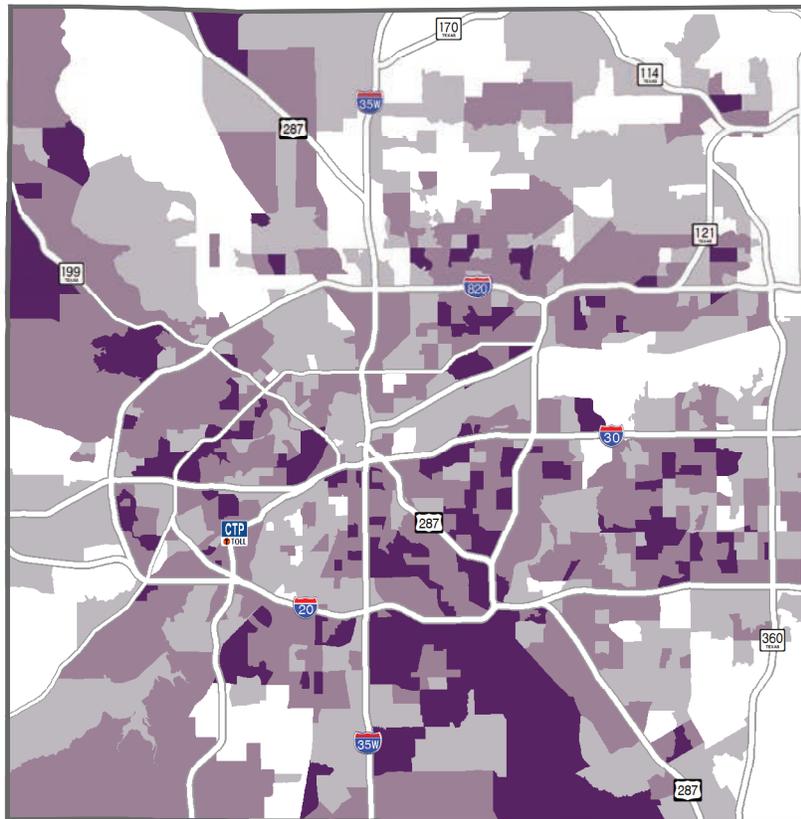
Analysis

The highest conglomeration of block groups within Tarrant County where the three variables are all above the regional percentage is in southern Tarrant County generally covering the cities of Everman, Kennedale, and Rendon. This is sandwiched between the southern portions of 35W and highway 287. Unlike Kennedale and Rendon, Everman also appears to have a higher percentage of zero-car households, perhaps indicating the necessity for more robust transit service. Other areas with three variables above the regional percentage include several portions of the western side of the county, such as Lakeside and Lake Worth. The area reaching from downtown Fort Worth to Arlington, south of 30, as well as portions surround eastern 820

Desired Transportation Modes in Collin County



Tarrant County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



Legend

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

0 7 14 Miles



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a 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, and Persons with Disabilities.

also show several three-variable block groups. Block groups that meet the criteria for only two variables or just one are much more prevalent, appearing in almost every single part of Tarrant County. The most central part of the county, within the 820 loop, has very few census block groups (approximately 12) that do not meet the criteria for at least one variable or more being above the regional percentage. Most block groups with high percentages of low-income individuals are found in this central part of the county as well as the area extending from downtown Fort Worth to Arlington south of 30. Individuals over the age of 65 are found throughout the county, trending only slightly toward the outer edges in intensity. Similarly, individuals with disabilities are found in varying degrees of prevalence throughout the county. Most zero-car households are found in the central and eastern portions of the county with a significant pocket in the northwestern corner as well.

Development of Strategies

The prioritized strategies were developed once information from outreach meetings, the transportation poll, and research data was compiled and analyzed for patterns and gaps of service. Observations and recommendations were coded into five main categories to identify themes across the 16-county region and inform regional goals. Those goals provide a framework for the Access North Texas and individual strategies were identified for Tarrant County to further those goals and provide a plan for transit providers and organizations in future implementation of services. Drafted goals and strategies were provided to the stakeholders for additional feedback and review prior to the finalization of the plan.

FINDINGS

In Tarrant County, 468 individuals completed the Access North Texas survey. Every single

respondent indicated some type of barrier preventing them from getting where they need to go. The combination of all outreach efforts, including surveys and meetings, revealed that riders are unable to reach key destinations such as Arlington, east Fort Worth, and employment hot spots due to a lack of transit connections. This is true both within individual service areas and when crossing service area boundaries. The TAIT analysis identified the southeastern portion of the county as having a high concentration of transit dependent populations and low levels of car ownership. The accessibility of transit in these areas is important for both bringing individuals to opportunity and for providing transportation to opportunity elsewhere. Multiple non-profit organizations mentioned in outreach discussions that significant employment opportunity is missed out on due to lack of mobility connections to areas where those opportunities exist. The Access North Texas survey showed that the majority of missed or delayed trips in the county were for employment. Within Tarrant County riders struggle to efficiently make connections between one part of the county and another. For instance, riders in Fort Worth find it challenging to travel to Arlington, as they must move between two different service areas, service providers, and modes. And still, some municipalities within the county don't benefit from transit service at all, resulting in transit deserts where life without car-ownership is next to impossible. In Tarrant County, 67 respondents to the public survey indicated they own no car and 60 respondents said public transit was not available at the locations they needed to go. These represented two of the three highest barriers indicated in the public surveys completed in Tarrant County.

Outreach efforts also indicated a need for increased frequency and expanded service hours. While most meeting attendees and survey respondents felt that current service is reliable, the lack of frequency and lack of availability at

later hours make it difficult to use. 64 survey respondents felt that public transit takes too long, and 51 respondents said that service was not available at the days or times needed. One example given by a meeting participant was that of an individual working just south of downtown Fort Worth until 8:30 in the evening. The individual's bus route stopped running at 8:00 pm, effectively stranding them at work. The individual had no choice but to rely on a personal vehicle to maintain employment, drastically increasing their cost of transportation. Another meeting participant named East Fort Worth as having lower frequency and lower route date and time availability than they perceived in other areas of the city. On routes with low frequency, riders may have to budget over an hour worth of time, or more, just to make necessary trips a few miles away. This lack of frequency forces transit-dependent populations to budget and negotiate time in impractical ways and prevents choice riders from using transit at all. It's worth noting that Trinity Metro, the largest transit provider in Tarrant County, implemented their bus network redesign, [A Better Connection](#), in September 2021 after outreach for this plan update was completed. Any associated improvements to the system that addressed frequency and service hours are not captured in the feedback collected for this plan but will be evident in future updates.

Finally, outreach revealed that next to an enhanced and improved fixed-route system, there is a strong desire for light rail service in the county. References to DART's light rail system benefiting the eastern counties of the region were used to demonstrate what meeting participants and survey respondents would like to see. Many that participated in outreach had the perception that light rail service would be faster, more efficient, and offer better connections than the current service being offered in the county. This relates directly to many of the barriers and challenges identified. Light rail service has the potential to

connect riders to new locations both within and outside the county, filling gaps that previously impeded access. It may also offer better frequency and service availability, which would create a more robust system when combined with the existing fixed-route network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals and strategies below identify ways to address the most important public transportation needs stakeholders identified as needing to be implemented over the next few years. The strategies build upon the progress and feedback that has been provided since the 2018 Access North Texas plan and should be referenced when state and federal funds for public transportation become available.

Implementing the Plan

Trinity Metro has most recently addressed transit challenges in the county through its bus network redesign, [A Better Connection](#). Through changes implemented in September 2021, Trinity Metro is now able to offer more frequent routes, direct travel, routes to destinations without Downtown transfers, better connections to rail, and consistent evening/weekend service. This relates to at least one, if not more, of the strategies listed for Tarrant County. The impact of these efforts will be more easily evaluated in future plan updates.

The [Tarrant County Transit Study](#) developed three countywide scenarios to reflect different combinations of local and regional service. These scenarios were evaluated through the lens of accessibility, trip coverage, and estimated usage. Scenario 1, reflecting a high investment in regional service and proposed new regional routes, aligns most directly with our strategy to simplify regional trips and increase the ease of travel across boundaries.

The [Transit Moves | Fort Worth](#) draft plan also includes six different initiatives, most of which

REGIONAL GOAL

TARRANT COUNTY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Need and Challenges

- A) Develop potential connections from commuter bus lines to light rail service
- B) Invest in programs to assist with filling gaps in public transportation and facilitate service for work-related trips

Implement Services by Enhancing Transportation Options and Expanding Where Service Gaps Exist

- A) Improve existing public transportation options to better fit the needs of riders and households with 1 or zero cars by increasing service frequency and availability
- B) 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
- C) Expand service hours to support needs of low-income individuals in the service industry and outside traditional 9am-5pm jobs
- D) Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region without comprehensive service and support regional integration of new services.

Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies

- A) Work with regional and local organizations to increase ease of travel across municipal and county boundaries
- B) Foster cooperation between public transit providers within counties to allow better connectivity and simplify regional trips
- C) Develop partnerships across transportation providers to improve access to trips in the evening and weekends

Support Public Transportation Recovery and Growth

- A) Promote safe and healthy practices on public transportation services
- B) Explore sources of local revenue for public transportation through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service

Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options

- A) Enhance communication and outreach programs to improve awareness of existing or new transportation options
- B) Conduct travel training to educate the public on available services and policies

relate directly to strategies in this plan. The plan prioritizes improving existing service, expanding transit to new areas, improving access to transit, improving facilities and amenities, and making service easier to use. Improvements in any of these areas will support all the strategies developed under Access North Texas for the county.

Agencies and organizations looking to develop transit projects aligned with these strategies may find support through NCTCOG's Transit Strategic Partnerships Program or the TxDOT Call for Projects. Competitive proposals will demonstrate innovative solutions, strategic value, sustainability, implementation capacity, and evidence of collaboration. Most importantly, the proposal's needs assessment will need to be supported directly by county specific strategies identified in this plan. The most competitive proposals will demonstrate how the proposed project or service will utilize one or more strategies to enhance transit accessibility for transit-dependent populations. More information on the Transit Strategic Partnerships Program can be found at www.nctcog.org/strategicpartnerships-transit. More information on the TxDOT Call for Projects can be found at www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/local-assistance.html

REFERENCE TO THE APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Tarrant County, please see Appendices A-E, available online at www.accessnorthtexas.org.

See Appendix A, Summary & Status of 2018 to review previously adopted goals and strategies that were included in the 2018 Access North Texas plan.

See Appendix B, Get-A-Ride Guide, for a list of public and private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These providers are an additional transportation resource that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

See Appendix C, Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool, for additional information on how the tool was developed and how to use it.

See Appendix D, Data & Analysis, for copies of the transportation surveys, statistics, and affiliated county-based maps.

See Appendix E, Outreach Meeting and Supplemental Information, for a list of previously held virtual meetings by county with a copy of the presentations.