

CHAPTER 06



# ERATH, HOOD, AND SOMERVELL COUNTIES



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Access North Texas is to document the public transportation needs 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 Hood 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 Hood County.

## EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

The Transit System, Inc. (TTS) serves as a rural transit district for Hood and Somervell Counties. TTS operates demand-response service for the public throughout their service area and allows trips outside the service area. TTS also operates non-emergency medical transportation service under a contract with LogistiCare and other local agencies. Reservations are required a day in advance of travel. Fares vary from \$6 to \$12 based on counties and zones. Additional fares include a Wait Time fare of \$25 per hour and Before/After Hour fare of \$50 per hour.

Texas Kidney Health Care (TKHC) Program, a statewide program that helps Texans with end-stage renal disease pay for their treatment, including travel to transplant or dialysis services. Program eligibility is required to access the service. Applications can be submitted through participating outpatient dialysis facilities, hospitals, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or a social worker.

Trinity Metro Vanpool service is intended for workplace commuters who live in an area not

served by Trinity Metro rail or bus. As of May 2022, there are two vanpools operating in Erath County and one vanpool in Hood County. Vans may use HOV lanes and are available to the driver seven days a week.

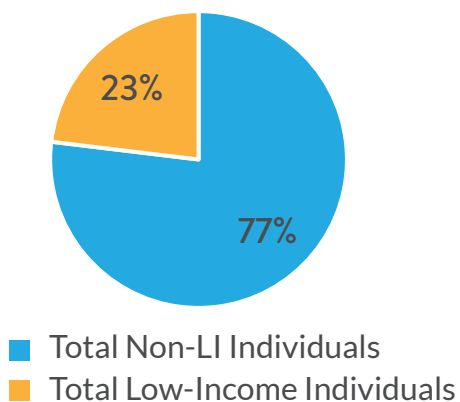
VA North Texas Health Care System Travel Benefits Program provides eligible Veterans and other beneficiaries with mileage reimbursement when utilizing plane, train, bus, taxi, light rail (common carrier) or when medically indicated, "special mode" (ambulance, wheelchair van) transport for travel to and from VA health care, or VA authorized non-VA health care for which the Veteran is eligible. Applications for travel reimbursements must be submitted within 30 calendar days from the date travel is completed.

Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) is designed to ensure that all qualifying Veterans have access to care through convenient, safe, and reliable transportation. VTS provides qualifying Veterans with free transportation services to and/or from participating VA medical centers (Va.m.Cs) in a multi-passenger van. This service ensures that all qualifying Veterans who do not have access to transportation options of their own, due to financial, medical, or other reasons, are able to travel to VA medical facilities or authorized non-VA appointments to receive care.

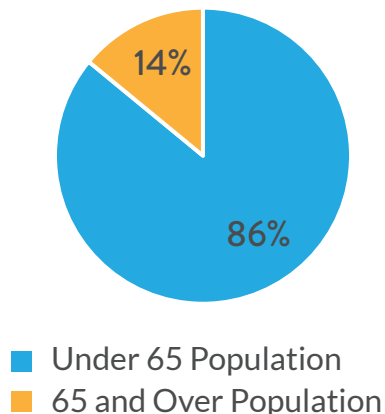
## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS : ERATH COUNTY

Demographic data in Erath County was analyzed to identify populations in particular need of public transportation. According to the American Community Survey's 2019 5-year estimates, Erath County's population has increased 5% to 41,841 since 2015. In comparison, the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area grew by 8% in the same period. As the county and region continue to grow, alternatives to traveling by car will be needed to reduce congestion and emissions.

Erath County Percentage of Population in Poverty



Erath County Percentage of Population 65+



Within Erath County, 4.5% of the population is considered to be of limited English proficiency. This is lower than the regional percentage, but promotional efforts for existing and new services should be inclusive of limited English proficiency population.

In Erath County, 23% of the population was recorded as low-income. These populations may have less reliable access to personal automobile transportation. Efforts should be made to identify geographies within Erath County which have larger concentrations of poverty and determine if they are currently served by existing transit services.

Additionally, 14% of the population in Erath County are age 65 and over. While some individuals who are 65 and over have full mobility, special consideration should be made for accessibility in any public transportation service being proposed for the county. Outreach to this population should determine what opportunities and services are accessible as well as what challenges prevent individuals from securing reliable transportation.

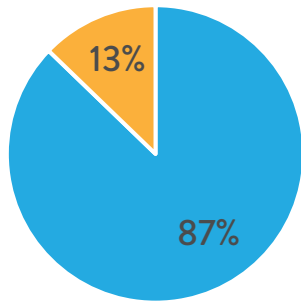
### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: HOOD COUNTY

Demographic data in Hood County was analyzed to identify populations in particular need of public transportation. According to the American Community Survey's 2019 5-year estimates, Hood County's population has increased 10% to 58,318 since 2015. In comparison, the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area grew by 8% in the same period. As the county and region continue to grow, alternatives to traveling by car will be needed to reduce congestion and emissions.

Within Hood County, 4.3% of the population is considered to have limited English proficiency. This is lower than the regional percentage, but promotional efforts for existing and new services should be inclusive of limited English proficiency population.

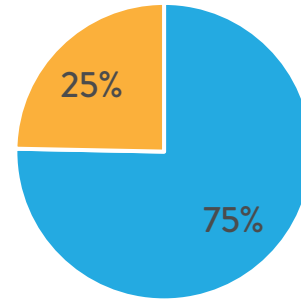
In Hood County, 13% of the population was recorded as low-income. These populations may have less reliable access to personal automobile transportation. Efforts should be made to identify geographies within Hood County which have larger concentrations of poverty and determine if they are currently served by existing transit services.

Hood County Percentage of Population in Poverty



- Total Non-LI Individuals
- Total Low-Income Individuals

Hood County Percentage of Population 65+



- Under 65 Population
- 65 and Over Population

Additionally, 25% of the population in Hood County are 65 and over. While some individuals who are 65 and over have full mobility, special consideration should be made for accessibility in any public transportation service being proposed for the county. Outreach to this population should determine what opportunities and services are accessible as well as what challenges prevent individuals from securing reliable transportation.

### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: SOMERVELL COUNTY

Demographic data in Somervell County was analyzed to identify populations in particular need of public transportation. According to the American Community Survey's 2019 5-year estimates, Somervell County's population has increased 3% to 8,860 since 2015. In comparison, the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area grew by 8% in the same period. As the county and region continue to grow, alternatives to traveling by car will be needed to reduce congestion and emissions.

Within Somervell County, 4% of the population is considered of limited English proficiency. This is lower than the regional percentage, but promotional efforts for existing and new services should be inclusive of limited English proficiency population.

In Somervell County, 25% of the population was recorded as low-income. These populations may have less reliable access to personal automobile transportation. Efforts should be made to identify geographies within Somervell County which have larger concentrations of poverty and determine if they are currently served by existing transit services.

Additionally, 18% of the population in Somervell County are 65 and over. While some individuals who are 65 and over have full mobility, special consideration should be made for accessibility in any public transportation service being proposed for the county. Outreach to this population should determine what opportunities and services are accessible as well as what challenges prevent individuals from securing reliable transportation.

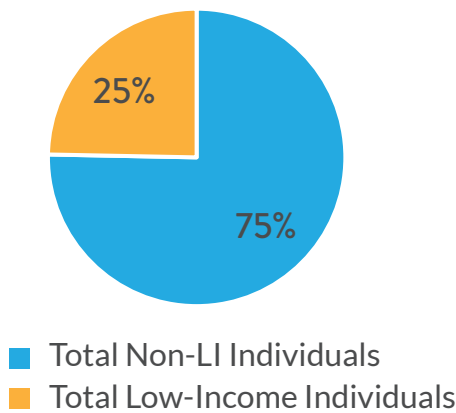
### PROCESS

#### Outreach

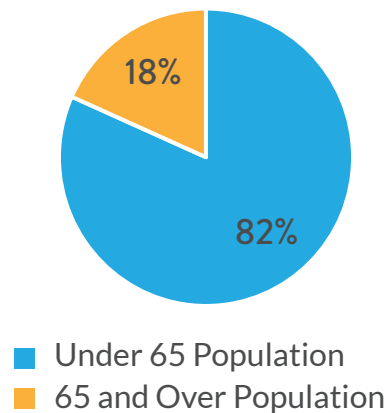
Public outreach for Erath, Hood and Somervell County was conducted through a series of virtual public meetings, surveys, and public mapping data. Outreach efforts were advertised through email invitations, the Access North Texas website, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Local Motion publication, a press release, and social media.



Somervell County Percentage of Population in Poverty



Somervell County Percentage of Population 65+



NCTCOG conducted two virtual public meetings in Erath, Hood and Somervell Counties. Invitations to the public meetings were shared with 78 people. Five members of the public/stakeholders attended a meeting, including local government, and human services organizations. A total of 59 survey responses were received.

**Data Sources**

The planning process for Access North Texas involved 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.

Another form of receiving data from Erath, Hood and Somervell County residents and stakeholders was a transportation survey; made available online in both 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 region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations.

All information gained through outreach meetings and the transportation survey was gathered to

help develop the prioritized strategies for Erath, Hood and Somervell Counties.

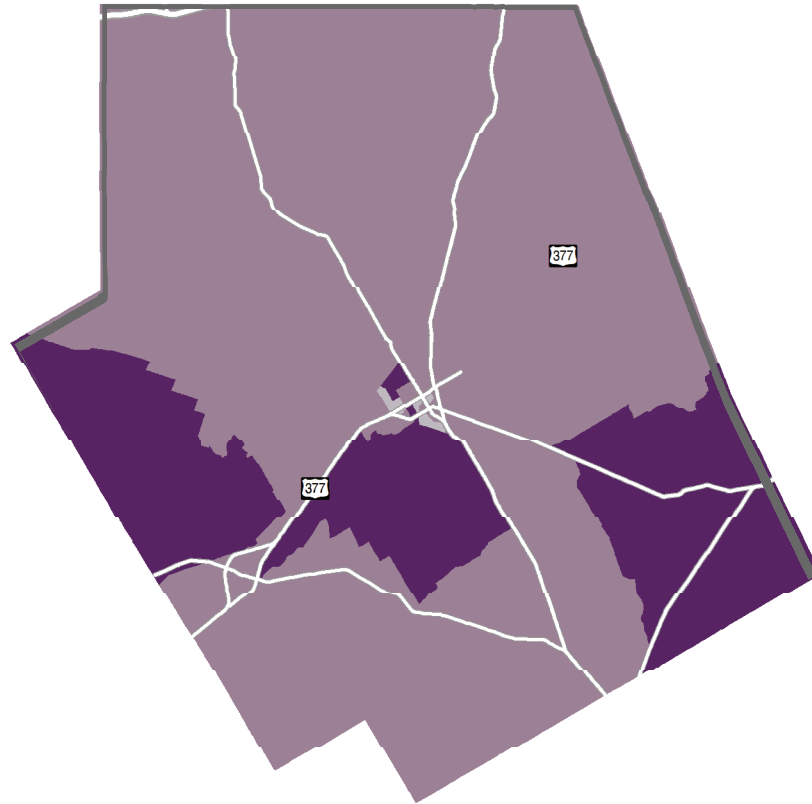
**TAIT Tool and Environmental Justice**

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, Erath, Hood and Somervell Counties have census block groups where populations of individuals are age 65 and over, below poverty, and with disabilities are above the regional percentages.

**Analysis**

In Erath County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals aged 65 and older, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentage. There are three primary concentration areas where all variables are above the regional percentage. This includes areas east, south, and west of Stephenville. From east to west, the first concentration of all variables being above the regional percentage is near the surrounding area

# Erath 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

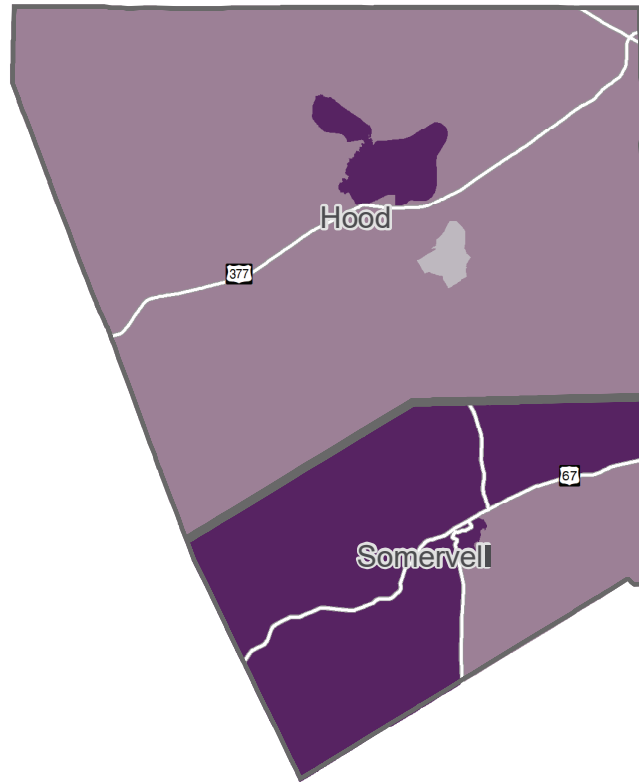
0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0 5.5 6.0 6.5 7.0 7.5 8.0 8.5 9.0 9.5 10.0 10.5 11.0 11.5 12.0 12.5 13.0 13.5 14.0 14.5 15.0 15.5 16.0 16.5 17.0 17.5 18.0 18.5 19.0 19.5 20.0 Miles



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool 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.

# Hood and Somervell Counties 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

07 .5 15 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.

of US 67 and SH 220 on the southeastern side of the county. The second concentration is directly south of Stephenville, between US 377 and US 281. The third is northwest of the City of Dublin and west of US 377. This also includes a small area directly northwest of Stephenville. The remaining area within the county exhibits at least two variables above the regional percentage.

In Hood County, there are census block groups where the population of individuals are age 65 and older, below the poverty line, and with disabilities is above the regional percentage. The area with all three variables above regional percentage is in northern Hood County, just north of US 377. Municipalities in the three-variable block groups include Granbury, Oak Trail Shores and Brazos Bend. There is one small area with one-variable census block group to the southeast of US 377. The rest of the county is above the regional percentage for two-variable census block groups.

In Somervell County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals are age 65 and older, below the poverty line, and with disabilities is above the regional percentage. The majority of Somervell County has all three variables above the regional percentage, including all areas north of

US 67, as well as the southwest portion of the county between US 67 and SH 144. The area with two variables above regional percentages is in the southeast Somervell County, between US 67 and SH 144.

### ***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 six (6) 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 Erath, Hood and Somervell Counties 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 Erath, Hood, and Somervell Counties, 59 people completed the Access North Texas survey. More than 50% of the respondents would like to be better informed on how to use transit as well as the other available transit options. All respondents would like expanded service areas and service hours. Another area of focus for those respondents was health and sanitation while riding transit.

## **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***

Agencies and organizations looking to develop transit solutions aligned with these strategies may find support through the [Transit Strategic Partnerships Program](#). Through this program, NCTCOG regularly accepts proposals for funding innovative transit projects in the region. Proposals are evaluated based on a comprehensive needs assessment, strategic value, sustainability, implementation capacity, and evidence of collaboration. Most importantly, the needs assessment will need to be supported directly by



REGIONAL GOAL	ERATH, HOOD AND SOMERVELL COUNTY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
---------------	--

<p><b>Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Need and Challenges</b></p>	<p>A) Conduct planning activities to further identify public transportation needs of residents outside of the existing transportation authorities and define additional coordination opportunities for existing providers</p>
--	---

<p><b>Implement Services by Enhancing Transportation Options and Expanding Where Service Gaps Exist</b></p>	<p>A) Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region – work, medical appointments, religious services, and social/entertainment needs</p>
---	--

<p><b>Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies</b></p>	<p>A) Work with regional and local organizations to increase ease of travel across municipal and county boundaries</p>
--	--

<p><b>Support Public Transportation Recovery and Growth</b></p>	<p>A) Promote safe and healthy practices on public transportation services</p>
---	--

<p><b>Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options</b></p>	<p>A) Enhance education 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</p>
---	--

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 program can be found at [www.nctcog.org/strategicpartnerships-transit](http://www.nctcog.org/strategicpartnerships-transit).

## REFERENCE TO THE APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Ellis and Navarro Counties, please see appendices A-E, available online at [www.accessnorthtexas.org](http://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.