

CHAPTER 05

ELLIS AND NAVARRO COUNTIES



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 Ellis County and Navarro 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 Ellis County and Navarro County.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

Community Transit Services (CTS) serves Ellis County and Navarro County with curb-to-curb, demand-response service. This service is intended for the general public and persons with special needs, as specified by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The service operates Monday – Saturday, 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.. CTS will take reservations Monday – Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.. CTS requires 48 hours’ notice

for scheduling a ride, and all vehicles are ADA accessible. Travel within a hub city begins at \$2 per one-way stop with a bus pass (which costs \$10), \$4 without a bus pass. Travel within one county is \$5 per stop. Travel between Ellis and Navarro counties is \$1 per mile.

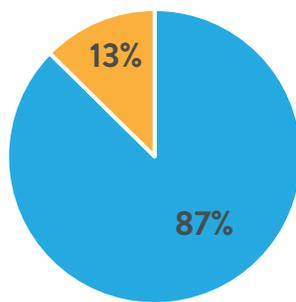
In addition to other transportation options and services, Trinity Metro operates a commuter vanpool program within the North Central Texas region. As of May 2022, Trinity Metro operated up to 9 vanpools with origins in Ellis County. The number of vanpools may change month to month as the regional program expands shared commuter transportation opportunities.

Finally, see Appendix B 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). Organizations can also contract with them to provide specific services for clients.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

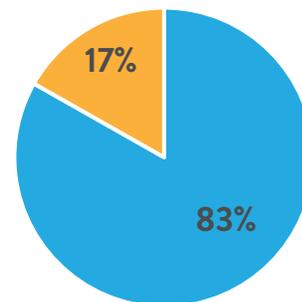
The population of Ellis County increased 10.6% between 2015 and 2019 according to the five-year American Community Survey estimates, while the population of Navarro County grew 1.8%. Combined, the populations of both counties grew

Ellis County
Percentage of Population 65+



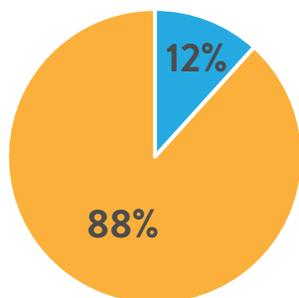
- Under 65 Population
- 65 and Over Population

Navarro County
Percentage of Population 65+



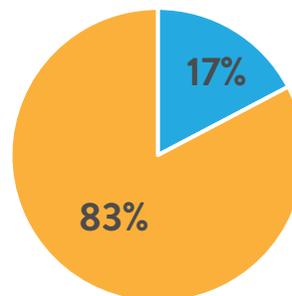
- Under 65 Population
- 65 and Over Population

Percentage of Individuals with a Disability in Ellis County



- Percent of Individuals with a Disability
- Percent of Individuals without a Disability

Percentage of Individuals with a Disability in Navarro County



- Percent of Individuals with a Disability
- Percent of Individuals without a Disability

8.6%. The region grew 8.0%; this indicates that both counties are continuing to add residents and will likely add more in the years to come as the region continues experiencing growth.

One area of focus for the Access North Texas plan has been the population of limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals. About 6.6% of the population in Ellis County is considered LEP, while 10.4% of Navarro County’s population is listed as LEP. These are lower than the regional percentage of 13.2% and suggest that outreach efforts in languages other than English would be more impactful in Navarro County.

In reviewing demographic data for the region, particular attention is given to groups that tend to be more reliant on public transportation services. One such group is the population aged 65 and older. Per our demographic data, Navarro County has a slightly larger share of elderly residents compared with Ellis County. Both counties are above the regional percentage of 11.2% of individuals over age 65.

For individuals with disabilities, reliable access to public transportation means improved mobility and accessibility to medical appointments and everyday travel needs. While some individuals with disabilities have full mobility, special consideration should be made for accessibility in

any public transportation service being proposed for the county. Outreach to populations with disabilities should determine what opportunities and services are unavailable to them due to challenges in securing reliable transportation.

About 12% of the population in Ellis County is identified as having a disability, and 17% of the population in Navarro County is identified as having a disability. The regional percentage is 9.5%, suggesting that particular attention be given to transportation needs for individuals with disabilities.

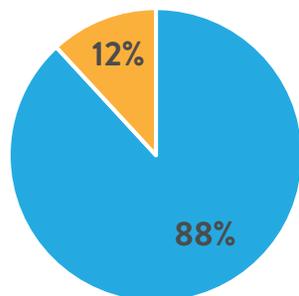
Additionally, low-income individuals often face greater challenges in mobility. Our demographic data indicates that Ellis County has a lower percentage of the population considered low-income compared to the region, while Navarro County exceeds the regional percentage (16.1%). Both counties exceed the regional percentage for zero-car households (1.6%), which is surprising given the more rural character of the counties.

PROCESS

Outreach

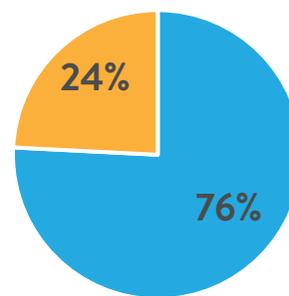
Public outreach for Ellis County and Navarro County was conducted through a series of virtual public meetings, surveys, and public mapping data. Outreach efforts were advertised through

Ellis County Percentage of Population in Poverty



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

Navarro County Percentage of Population in Poverty



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

email invitations, the Access North Texas website, NCTCOG’s Local Motion publication, a press release, and social media.

NCTCOG conducted two public meetings conducted over Zoom, and a survey shared by the community partners. Invitations to attend the public meetings, fill out the survey, and share the information about Access North Texas were sent to 85 people. 29 responses were received through all surveys. The community partners directly survey received ten responses from participants in Ellis County. 18 responses came from the online and paper survey, and one response was received from surveys sent to transit agencies. Three members of the public attended the online public meetings, including representatives from Community Services, Inc. (operator of Community Transit Services).

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 Ellis County and Navarro County residents and stakeholders

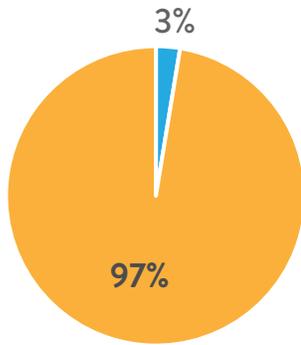
was a transportation survey; made available online and translated into English and Spanish. Due to COVID-19 limitations, paper copies were available upon request or through transportation partners. The survey helped NCTCOG staff to collect first-hand data about public transportation in the region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations.

All information gained through outreach meetings and transportation survey was gathered to develop the prioritized strategies for Ellis County and Navarro County.

TAIT Tool and Environmental Justice

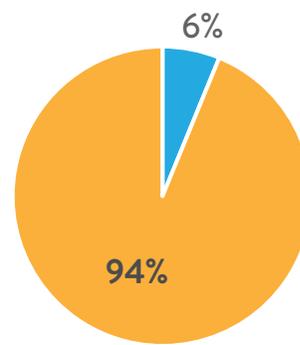
The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) identifies communities who face transportation disadvantages and may have greater potential need for public transit. This tool is updated by the North Central Texas Council of Governments and is based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Based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

Percent Zero-Car Households in Ellis County



- Percent of Individuals with a Disability
- Percent of Individuals without a Disability

Percent Zero-Car Households in Navarro County



- Percent of Individuals with a Disability
- Percent of Individuals without a Disability

Analysis

Within Ellis County, the census block groups with all three categories above the regional average mainly cluster in central Ellis County (in and around Waxahachie) and southwest Ellis County around the I-35E and US-287 corridors. For two-category block groups, most have a greater proportion of people with disabilities and seniors aged 65 and older. The areas with only one group above the regional average tend to have a greater proportion of individuals with disabilities. These areas are distributed throughout the county.

While the majority of Ellis County has a low percentage of zero-car households, there are a handful of census block groups where the percentage exceeds the regional rate. These groups are in central, northern, and southwestern Ellis County, including the cities of Waxahachie, Ennis, and the unincorporated areas between Pecan Hill and Palmer.

In Navarro County, the majority of census block groups exceed the regional rates for all three characteristics. The only block groups with one or two characteristics above the regional rates are concentrated in Corsicana and Retreat, and eastern Navarro County roughly bounded by State Highway 31 and US-287.

Zero-car households exceed the regional average near Corsicana and within the south / southwestern portion of Navarro County in an area roughly bounded by I-45 and State Highway 31.

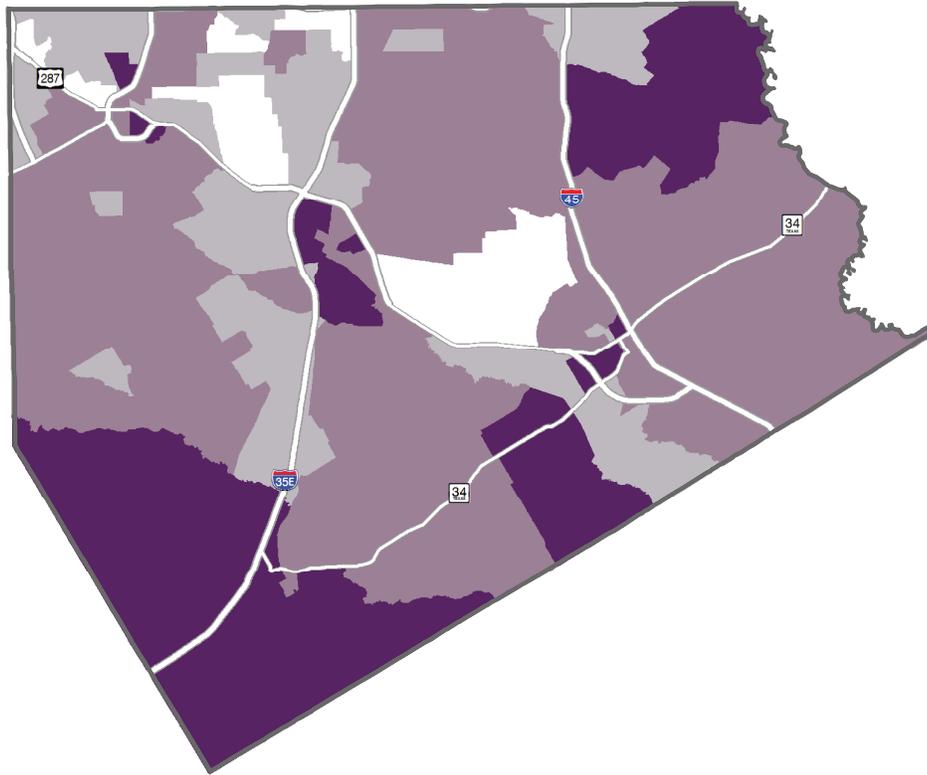
Development of Strategies

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 (5) main categories to identify themes across the 16-county region and inform regional goals. Those goals provide a framework for Access North Texas and individual strategies were identified for Ellis and Navarro 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

Per the results of the Access North Texas survey, while most respondents did not report missing any trips due to a lack of transportation, those who

Ellis 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

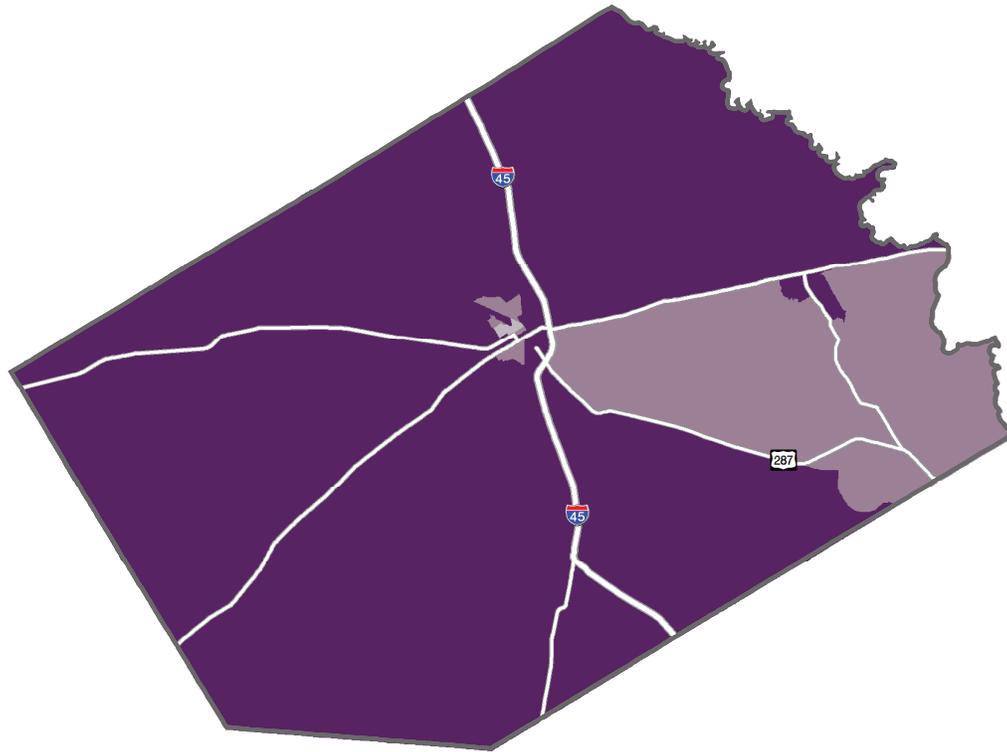
08 16 Miles



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.

Navarro 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

09 18 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.

did miss trips reported medical visits as the most common type of trip missed. Reported barriers to mobility included a lack of car or anybody who can drive the respondent, and that the available options do not meet respondents' needs.

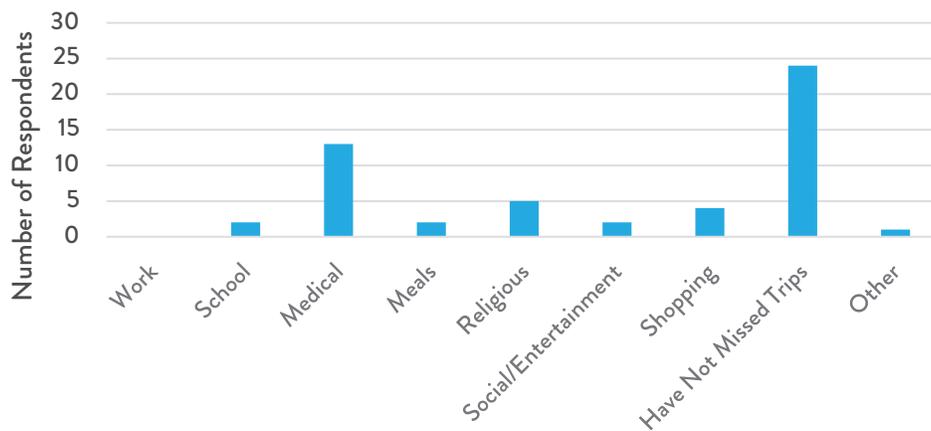
The three enhancements most desired by respondents include transit service frequency, service areas, and service times. According to feedback received from the public, a challenge that the population in the counties face is access to different types of trips. Existing services do not go into Dallas County for medical trips and provide

limited service for other types of trips (such as going to a courthouse or grocery store). Other concerns include the cost of travel with existing transit services, especially among populations that do not qualify for Medicaid or Title IIIB trips.

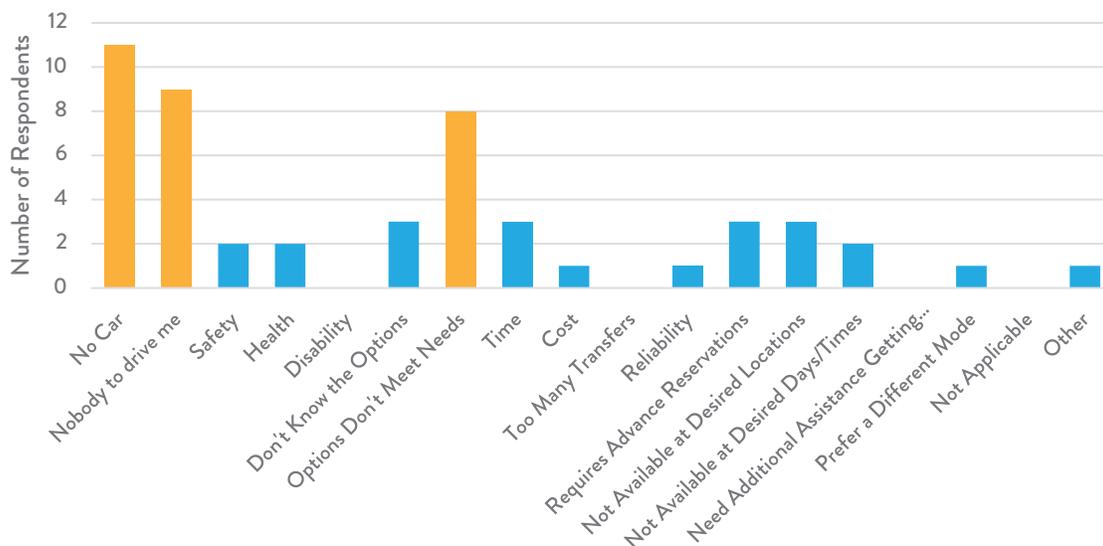
RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Ellis and Navarro Counties
Reported Missed Trips



Ellis and Navarro Counties
Reported Barriers to Mobility



REGIONAL GOAL

ELLIS AND NAVARRO COUNTY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Need and Challenges

- A) Invest in programs that facilitate transportation trips to medical and healthcare appointments

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) Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region without comprehensive service and support regional integration of new services.
- C) Establish additional assistance or more specialized public transportation options for customers who are not ADA paratransit eligible or physically capable of utilizing regular public transportation 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) Develop partnerships across transportation providers to improve access to trips in the evening and weekends

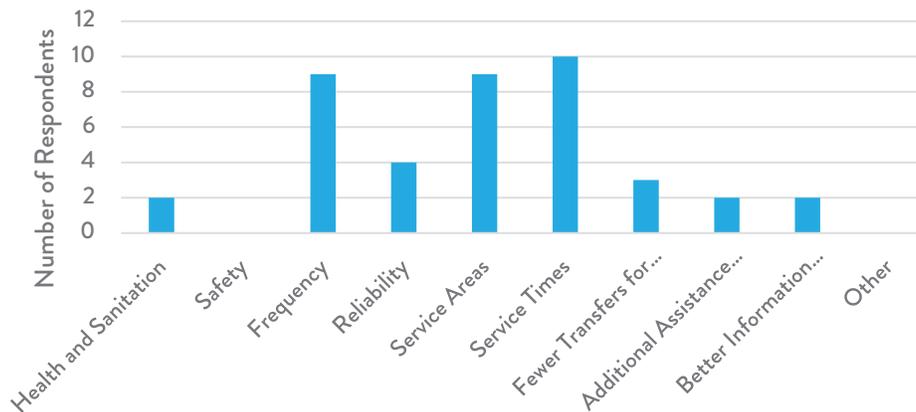
Support Public Transportation Recovery and Growth

- A) Promote safe and healthy practices on public transportation services

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

Desired Transportation Enhancements in Ellis and Navarro Counties



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 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 Ellis and Navarro Counties, 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.