APPENDIX C.11

Palo Pinto County and Parker County
Access North Texas – Parker & Palo Pinto Counties
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Kelli Schlicher, AICP

Weatherford Public Library
Weatherford, Texas
February 21, 2017
Agenda

Welcome and orientation

Introduction to Access North Texas

Identify needs and resources

Re-evaluate 2013 priorities

Questions, comments, discussion

Next steps
How to Use the Keypads

Press the number on the keypad that corresponds to the answer choice on the screen.

Press with the pad of your finger – not your fingernail.

A green light will illuminate briefly when the answer is received.

The answer will show briefly on the LCD screen.

Please do not push the channel button in the bottom left.
Do you or your agency focus on Parker County or Palo Pinto County?

1. Parker County
2. Palo Pinto County
3. Both

- Parker County: 69%
- Palo Pinto County: 23%
- Both: 8%
What type of agency do you work for?

1. Local or state government
2. Transportation provider
3. Healthcare provider
4. Non-profit
5. Social service organization
6. Community advocate / community member
7. Other
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Conducts planning and supports coordination for a variety of purposes

Transportation department coordinates service and creates short-term and long-term plans
Access North Texas

Is...

A plan to coordinate public transit and human services transportation

Identifying solutions to address unmet need

Specific, short-term plan

Prioritizing recommendations for limited federal and state funding

Focused on coordinating existing services
Access North Texas

Is not...

Unlimited funding

A transportation service

Detailed feasibility studies or highway planning

Top-down requirements for service or activities
Access North Texas

Timeline and Outcomes

Kick-off, August 2016

Parker County & Palo Pinto County, Feb. 2017

Final Plan Document, Fall 2017

County-by-County Outreach Meetings, Fall 2016 – Summer 2017

Plan Implementation and Maintain Partnerships, Early 2018
Updating the Plan

Continue to identify successfully implemented strategies

Work with communities to identify transportation needs

Identify, update, and prioritize solutions

Implement projects through ongoing partnerships and coordination
Parker County and Palo Pinto County

Goal: Clearly identify short-term transportation needs and resources to plan for efficiency and coordination

Successes and challenges to transportation

Destinations accessible and inaccessible

Barriers to accessing transportation

Benefits of transportation options

Kinds of service or accommodations needed
With the agency you work for, what is the highest day-to-day transportation need?

1. Medical  44%
2. Work  25%
3. Nutritional / Grocery store  13%
4. Social  0%
5. Other  19%

Access North Texas

C-PaloPinto&Parker11.13
What is your primary area of concern?

1. Improve awareness of available services
2. Increase coordination between agencies
3. Fund new services
4. Enhance the user’s experience
5. Create targeted implementation plans
6. Other
What funding approach will have the biggest impact on improving access to transit?

1. Focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit
2. Focus on getting additional local government investment in transit
3. Focus on increasing user choice
4. Focus on integrating funding sources from multiple programs (Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc.)
5. Other

35%  6%  29%  29%  0%
What method could improve the awareness of available services?

1. Targeted marketing to local agencies
2. Public marketing campaign
3. A centralized location to receive information about transit
4. Materials provided in another language
5. Other
What about coordination between agencies is the biggest barrier for you?

1. Knowing where to start
2. Identifying appropriate contacts
3. Successfully contacting other agencies
4. Developing agreements between agencies
5. Other

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
29%
36%
7%
14%
14%
What is the best way to enhance the user’s experience?

1. Personal instruction on the phone or in person
2. Better information about how to use transit
3. Additional assistance provided by the driver or personal attendant
4. Fewer transfers between providers for regional trips
5. Other
Which technology advances are most likely to help improve transportation options for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals in the next five years?

1. Transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft
2. Web or smartphone apps with info on multiple providers
3. Assistive driving technology (stay-in-lane, automatic breaking)
4. Driverless cars
5. Driverless cars, buses or shuttles
6. Other
7. None – most people won’t access these options

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Next Steps

Continue to identify successfully implemented strategies ✓

Work with communities to identify transportation needs ✓

Identify, update, and prioritize solutions

Implement projects through ongoing partnerships and coordination
## Your Feedback on Parker County Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Top Priorities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Additional Priorities</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Coordinate existing services</td>
<td>Acquire vehicles to better match vehicle size to type of service provided</td>
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<td>2) Create and maintain a coordinating committee</td>
<td>Develop centralized access to information about public transportation</td>
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<td>3) Identify and serve regional connections to Tarrant and Wise counties</td>
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<td>4) Grow service in the northeast corner</td>
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<td>5) Pilot service in areas with potentially high ridership</td>
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## Your Feedback on Palo Pinto County Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Top Priorities</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Increase awareness of available</td>
<td>Acquire vehicles to better match vehicle size to type of service provided</td>
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<td>2) Increase outreach and education</td>
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<td>3) Increase local and regional job</td>
<td>Create and maintain a coordinating committee</td>
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<td>4) Identify connections to regional</td>
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<td>transit services</td>
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</table>
Please Return Your Keypad!

Thank you
Questions or Comments

Please contact:

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www.accessnorthtexas.org
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   b. Introduction to Access North Texas................................. p.1
   c. Interactive Questions & Discussion................................ p.1
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1. Meeting Summary
   a. Welcome
      Kelli Schlicher from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the Parker County and Palo Pinto County meeting. Ms. Schlicher also announced that Mike Hensley with the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging (AAA) would be hosting a public hearing after her presentation. The AAA public meeting was an opportunity for residents and advocates to share current and future needs for older adults and individuals with disabilities in addition to transportation.

   b. Introduction to Access North Texas
      Ms. Schlicher provided a short presentation and covered the following material:
      - An overview of NCTCOG
      - What Access North Texas is and is not
      - The general timeline of the plan update
      - A summary of the 2013 plan

   c. Interactive Questions and Discussion
      The attendees answered several interactive polling questions and participated in open conversation about the public transportation needs and challenges in Parker County and Palo Pinto County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

      With the agency you work for, what is the highest day-to-day transportation need?
      44% of respondents indicated that the highest day-to-day transportation need for their agency is medical trips, while 25% specified that work-related trips is their highest transportation need. Medical transportation for veterans, older adults, for hospitals, and for mental health appointments were identified as high needs. Regarding work trips, it was noted that a lack of transportation affects job prospects. Additionally, access to grocery stores and other services (such as counseling) can be hampered because of a lack of access to transportation.
Regarding public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, etc., what is your primary area of concern?

30% of respondents indicated that their primary area of concern was funding new services, and an additional 30% specified that increasing coordination between agencies was their primary area of concern. One possible new service mentioned was transportation access to extracurricular activities for the youth of the community. A lack of coordination was identified as a problem. Increasing coordination/centralization were mentioned as important in order to increase efficiency. When it comes to enhancing the user's experience, it was mentioned that many dialysis patients using transportation find their trip back home difficult. On the ride home on transit after their treatment, they might experience extended waiting times at other dialysis centers (as other riders are picked up) and may not have assistance to get off the bus once they arrive at their final destination. It was mentioned that a lack of transportation was impacting some people needing trips to the Housing Authority, with some clients missing appointments. Others might have to pay for transportation (which some can't afford), and sometimes they might have to wait for an extended period of time for transit to pick them up after their appointments.

What funding approach will have the biggest impact on improving access to transit?

35% of attendees answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact, while 29% chose a focus on integrating funding sources from multiple programs (Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc.), and an additional 29% chose a focus on increasing user choice. Federal and state investment were mentioned as more likely to provide funds than local sources. Integrating funding sources was mentioned as important in order to obtain as much benefit as possible out of what is currently available. Increasing the user's choice was mentioned as imperative because currently there are very limited transportation choices (including limited service time frames). More funding for public transit would provide more opportunities. Currently, when community members need to go for unplanned medical care, they might end up using ambulance services (which is costly) because of a lack of alternative transportation options. Similarly, many patients who are discharged from hospitals have no ride back home. Many times, hospitals might pay for a taxi ride for them, which would be more affordable than an overnight stay at the hospital. However, in Mineral Wells, there are no taxi options available after 5 PM on weekdays or on the weekends to bring patients who have been discharged from a hospital back home. The need to learn about transportation network companies (TNCs like Uber and Lyft) latest efforts to serve people with special needs (including people with disabilities and older adults) was also mentioned.

What method could improve the awareness of available services?

33% of respondent indicated that targeted marketing to local agencies could improve awareness, while an additional 33% specified "other" in their answer. 27% answered that a public marketing campaign could improve the awareness of available services. It was noted that there aren't many options currently available, and many people might know what's available already. There is a small pool of transportation options and limited service hours. More focus should be placed on service expansion than increasing awareness of available services.
What about coordination between agencies is the biggest barrier for you?
36% of respondents indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was the biggest barrier to coordination, while 29% indicated that knowing where to start was the biggest barrier. Participants asked if other agencies provided transportation within Parker and Palo Pinto Counties. NCTCOG staff asked attendees to think more broadly about coordination rather than just between transit agencies. For example, an agency in need of transportation may coordinate with 10 other local agencies to help fund additional transit services (i.e. an additional hour of service in the evenings to accommodate trips home from work).

Regarding identifying appropriate contacts, local agencies and the private sector could coordinate to formulate a system to effectively identify and contact other agencies. An individual who works with a hospital in Mineral Wells picked knowing where to start because building a network of appropriate social contacts within other agencies and churches is key in order to get people to their destinations. In a smaller town like Mineral Wells, hospitals can be a hub for coordination.

Another agency noted that they’ve had transportation on their referral list for a couple years, but only some clients have used the service. The attendee was unsure if this is because people aren’t fully aware of the available transit service or if they’re unsure of how to actually use it. At their Weatherford clinic (more so than in Mineral Wells), riders find the time required between pick-up and drop-off can be inconvenient for quick trips because they have to wait (typically one hour) for their return trip.

A participant suggested one way to provide 24-hour transit coverage is for agencies to cover different shifts. Getting to appointments (such as a counselor) that aren’t covered by Medicaid transportation can be difficult. Additionally, for Medicaid trips, individuals are not able to take other passengers (such as additional children).

What is the best way to enhance the user’s experience?
42% of attendees voted for additional assistance provided by the driver or personal attendant, while 33% voted for better information about how to use transit. Regarding additional assistance, a couple other attendees noted their concerns about the 5-minute window (particularly in inclement weather). The rider may wait over an hour for the bus to arrive and then only have 5 minutes to board upon its arrival. If the rider misses the 5 minute window, they have to wait even longer. They noted a potential solution could be the driver getting off the bus to greet the rider. A participant mentioned that older adults and individuals with disabilities overall need more assistance. Showing and teaching them how to use public transit is better than just providing information.

Another attendee mentioned that the meeting’s conversation about transit has been population-specific (for older adults and people with disabilities). Moving forward, the transit system should be inclusive of all people and right-sized to the community’s density and transit needs.
Which technology advances are most likely to help improve transportation options for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals in the next five years?

38% of attendees believed that transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft are most likely to help improve transportation options. Conversely, another 31% of attendees indicated that most people wouldn’t access these option. One attendee thought the addition of TNCs would provide another transportation option for Parker and Palo Pinto Counties. A participant noted that these populations may not have or know how to utilize the technology necessary to access these services. However, it could be possible for them to access the services through their caretakers, caseworkers, and social service providers. It is important to ensure the information within any technology resource is maintained with up-to-date details. The cost of private transit service may be an additional barrier for people with low incomes. From a social worker’s perspective at a Mineral Wells hospital, the trouble is finding the transportation service more so than finding the funds to pay for patient trips.

d. Priorities & Solutions

In closing, Ms. Schlicher asked participants to rank the priorities (through a dot exercise) that were most important to them or indicate if new priorities have since arisen for Parker and Palo Pinto counties.

Participants ranked priorities for Parker County in the following order:

1. Pilot program of fixed route or trolley service in areas with potentially high ridership. (Parker County)
2. Develop centralized access to information about public transportation options in the county and surrounding area through a one call one click project coordinated among regional partners. (Parker County)
3. Acquire vehicles to better match vehicle size to type of service provide and evaluate the need for every vehicle in a prover’s fleet to be ADA accessible. (Parker County)
4. Identify and serve regional connections to Tarrant County and Wise County. (Parker County)
5. Grow service in the northeast corner of the county including Springtown (coordinate with existing providers. (Parker County)
6. Create and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs. (Parker County)
7. Coordinate existing services in the northeast Parker County and Azle area. (Parker County)

Participants ranked priorities for Palo Pinto County in the following order:

1. Acquire vehicles to better match vehicle size to type of service provided in order to more effectively use resources by using smaller vehicles for transporting one or two riders at a time. (Palo Pinto County)
2. Create and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs. (Palo Pinto County)
3. Improve the customer experience and ability to partner with funding agencies, including fare card improvements. (Palo Pinto County)
4. Identify connections to regional transit services and improve access to destinations outside the county including Weatherford and Tarrant County. (Palo Pinto County).
5. Expand local and regional job access. (Palo Pinto County)
6. Increase outreach and education about transit services for transportation disadvantaged populations in the county, especially in the southwest corner. (Palo Pinto County)
7. Increase awareness of available transit services and partnership opportunities. (Palo Pinto County)

e. Next Steps
A point-person committee for Parker County and Palo Pinto County will soon be developed. The committee will discuss and further refine transportation needs and solutions. Agencies or individuals interested in participating should contact Ms. Schlicher.

The final plan is slated for fall 2017 and implementation will begin in early 2018. The final plan will include prioritized solutions will improve the coordination and availability of public transportation for the 16-county region.

Contact: Kelli Schlicher, AICP, Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments; (817) 695-9287, kschlicher@nctcog.org
Sarah Chadderdon, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments; (817) 695-9180, schadderdon@nctcog.org

2. Attendee List
Advocate: Kyle Miller, Woody Willhite, and Teresa Willhite
Center of Hope: Jana Marbut-Ray
City of Weatherford: Terry Hughes
Graham: Kent Pettus
Lena Pope: Kristen McNeill
Mineral Wells ISD: Michaela Rothe, Parisa Lerma
North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging: Mike Hensley
North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Kelli Schlicher, Karina Maldonado, Chris Reed
Outreach Health Services - Palo Pinto County WIC: Tonya Fry
Palo Pinto General Hospital: Eric Werne
Parker County: Judge Mark Riley, Joel Kertok
Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental Healthcare: Janice Byrd
Public Transit Services: Terry Roberson
Weatherford Housing Authority: Rosie Mucino
Weatherford ISD: Danny Miller
Weatherford Regional Medical Center: Carolyn Hamilton
Prioritization Process

NCTCOG staff contacted stakeholders in Parker County and Palo Pinto County to follow up on the outcomes of the outreach meeting that took place on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 in Weatherford. The following individuals, representing a variety of interests in Parker County and Palo Pinto County, participated in the prioritization of strategies to address the needs identified.

Ashley Womack, Clinic Manager – Weatherford, Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental Healthcare
Janice Byrd, Mineral Wells Clinic, Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental Healthcare
Reta Brooks, Executive Director, Public Transit Services (PTS)
Kristen McNeill, Therapist, Lena Pope
Michaela Rothe, Special Education Counselor, Mineral Wells ISD
Tonya Fry, Clinic Supervisor, Outreach Health Services - Palo Pinto County WIC
Mark Riley, County Judge, Parker County
Terry Hughes, Director of Capital Transportation Projects, City of Weatherford
Danny Miller, Executive Director of School Operations, Weatherford ISD
Mack Huddleston, Veterans Service Officer, Palo Pinto County
John Hale, Veterans Service Officer, Parker County
Misty Clark, Executive Director, Mineral Wells Senior Center
Kathy Smith, County Extension Agent, Texas A&M Agrilife
Shelly Mowrey, Executive Director, Parker County Committee on Aging
Susan Baer, Executive Director, Meals on Wheels Palo Pinto County
Kelli Schlicher, Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments

This document summarizes conversations during the prioritization process.

PTS staff expressed the need for increased communication and coordination between local agencies. In the past, PTS and neighboring transit providers (The Transit System serving Hood County and Somervell County and City/County Transportation serving Johnson County) have met to discuss transit needs and potential coordination opportunities. Reta Brooks (PTS’ Executive Director) would like these meetings to resume. The meetings are a good opportunity to discuss how to make improvements to the existing transit system and improve the rider’s experience. Reta mentioned that other neighboring transit providers are also welcome to attend. It is also a good opportunity to invite local agencies to these meetings to increase knowledge about transit as well as learn more about the community’s needs.
PTS recognizes that there is a need for increased access to services during off peak hours and after PTS’ current hours of service. However, in order to justify a new service, there would need to be more than one person or a time-to-time need. Currently, if PTS is given enough advance notice, it is possible to accommodate some trips outside their current hours of operation. Additionally, PTS notes that grouping grocery trips is a safety issue due to properly securing all the groceries. PTS’ current policy is that riders are limited to what they can carry on their laps. PTS staff is working with the Texas Department of Transportation and NCTCOG to develop a solution to safely secure groceries in order to make group grocery trips possible.

PTS believes, compared to other transit agencies in the region, that their fares are rather affordable. PTS does have a contract with the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging (NCTAAA) to provide free trips for individuals 60+ living within the city limits of Mineral Wells and Weatherford. Staff within PTS’ call center help enroll eligible riders that aren’t taking advantage of this program. The program runs until the funding from NCTAAA is expended. PTS’ Board of Directors have discussed creating an indigent account to help pay for some individuals who cannot afford PTS’ fares, However, it has not yet been put into place due to the sensitive information necessary to determine eligibility. PTS is still trying to determine which questions are necessary to establish eligibility. This may be an admin heavy project for PTS who has a small staff.

On June 28, 2017 NCTCOG staff spoke with Dr. Ashley Womack, Clinic Manager for the Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral and Developmental Healthcare located in Weatherford noted that some individuals that use PTS to get to work and appointments are subject to the transit provider’s schedule. Long pick-up and drop-off window times are an inconvenience to the rider and sometimes bring them to their location very early. Patients that visit the clinic are often on limited incomes and cannot afford to use PTS for all of their trips (to the doctor, work, job search, grocery store, etc.).

Prioritized strategies for Parker County and Palo Pinto County that incorporate stakeholder feedback will be included in the plan document.