Access North Texas – Wise County
North Central Texas Council of Governments

Kelli Schlicher, AICP

Decatur Civic Center
Decatur, Texas
January 19, 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 agree? Dogs are better pets than cats.

1. Agree
2. Somewhat agree
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat disagree
5. Disagree

60%
20%
7%
7%
7%
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
- Wise County, Jan. 2017
- County-by-County Outreach Meetings, Fall 2016 – Summer 2017
- Final Plan Document, Fall 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
Wise 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
2. Work
3. Nutritional / Grocery store
4. Social
5. Other

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
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

- 53% 
- 27% 
- 13% 
- 7% 
- 0%
What is the biggest barrier for you when coordinating between agencies to improve public transportation?

1. Knowing where to start
2. Identifying appropriate contacts
3. Successfully contacting other agencies
4. Developing agreements between agencies
5. Other
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
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 2013 Priorities

## Top Priorities

1) Improve medical access

2) Link to Denton County & Tarrant County

3) Improve public awareness

4) County coordinating committee

5) Increase evening & weekend service

## Additional Priorities

- Driver recruitment and retention programs
- Provide travel training
Please Return Your Keypad!

Thank You
Questions or Comments

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Access North Texas
Wise County Meeting
January 19, 2017
Decatur, Texas

1. Meeting Summary
   a. Welcome
      Kelli Schlicher from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the Wise 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. This 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 Wise County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

      **With the agency you work for, what is the highest day-to-day transportation need?**
      67% of respondents indicated that the highest day-to-day transportation need for their agency is medical trips, while 20% specified that work-related trips is their highest transportation need. Regarding medical trips, attendees noted that trips to dialysis personal physicians were the highest needs. Out-of-county medical trips (to both Tarrant County and Denton County) and return trips home from emergency visits are difficult to accommodate. Additionally, as the medical industry continues to grow, the need for transportation for medical purposes will continue to increase.

      A shortage of qualified drivers for both public transportation and Independent School Districts remains a challenge. Updated federal Department of Transportation standards for obtaining a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) presents new hurdles for drivers testing for or renewing their CDL. Local workforce centers may be able to help prepare...
drivers looking to obtain or renew their license. There is also a need for transportation for social and nutritional/grocery purposes.

Regarding public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, etc., what is your primary area of concern?
47% of respondents indicated that their primary area of concern was funding new services, while 40% specified that increasing coordination between agencies was their primary area of concern. Attendees noted that increasing the available funds was necessary to maintain an efficient transit service. Participants indicated that improved information sharing and coordination between the sole transit provider (Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS)) and local social service agencies, medical providers, and local governments could improve the current level of services available. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness of transit services provided by TAPS. A participant mentioned that an educational campaign covering TAPS' services, how to schedule a trip, and cost of service would be beneficial for social service organizations who could help disseminate the information to the community. Lastly, Wise Health System noted that they host a senior focus meeting to network and raise awareness about community resources.

What funding approach will have the biggest impact on improving access to transit?
60% of attendees answered that a focus on integrating funding sources (Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc.) would have the biggest impact on improving access to transit, while 33% answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact. The need for integration is important because the transit needs in Wise County aren't going to be solved by one funding source. Multiple funding sources are necessary to match transportation resources to need. Additionally, as there is more public awareness of available service, the demand and cost for transit service will also increase.

What method could improve the awareness of available services?
53% of respondents indicated that targeted marketing to local agencies is the best method to improve awareness, while 27% answered that a centralized location to receive information about transit would be the best method. A participant noted that targeted marketing to local agencies would be preferred because they’re already tied into the community and can help distribute information. Agencies include social service agencies, local governments and medical providers. 2-1-1, housed in the United Way of Tarrant County, is a resource that could help disseminate information about local resources. Each agency is responsible for keeping their information up-to-date. Another participant mentioned that there is a need to for agencies to contract with an agency that has a language program (such as Catholic Charities) to assist with providing information in other languages such as Vietnamese, over the phone.

What about coordination between agencies is the biggest barrier for you?
56% of respondents indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was the biggest barrier to coordination, while 19% indicated that knowing where to start and successfully contacting other agencies was equally important. Participants noted that trying to identify
the appropriate contact, particularly in larger agencies, can be challenging. An attendee mentioned that community members often contact police departments inquiring about available resources. So, disseminating information about local resources to police departments and community organizations could help improve awareness of available services.

**What is the best way to enhance the user’s experience?**

69% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 19% voted for personal instruction on the phone or in person. Not only is better information on how to access and use transit needed, a participant noted that riders need to know how to file a complaint (if necessary). Attendees also mentioned that increased service availability would enhance the user’s experience. There are times when an individual calls to schedule an eligible trip, but TAPS is already booked. Additionally, further education on the impact of no shows and cancellations on TAPS, as well as how to book a trip with an attendant could enhance the user’s experience.

**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 38% of attendees indicated that most people wouldn’t access these options because technology is not economically accessible for many of the individuals they work with on a regular basis. A participant pointed out that TNCs in a rural area may be harder for a potential rider to rely on due to driver availability as compared to a public transit provider’s scheduled trip. It is also unknown how comfortable TNC drivers would be providing trips for riders that may require additional assistance. Those in attendance agreed that it could be an option in the future. TNCs could be a solution for healthcare providers to get patients home from appointments. Existing scheduling software at transit agencies has the capability to coordinate trips with on-demand, but current service structures funding and availability does not have the excess capacity to implement such service.

**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 Wise County.

Participants ranked priorities in the following order:

1. Improve public awareness and visibility of available service.
2. Establish and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs.
3. Improve medical access.
4. Establish connections to regional transit services in Denton County and Tarrant County.
5. Establish consistent and effective driver recruitment and retention programs for public transportation services to address difficulties in retaining drivers for vehicles in Wise County.
6. Increase evening and weekend service.
7. Provide travel training for older adults or individuals with disabilities to learn how to use public transportation.

e. Next Steps
A point-person committee for Wise 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.

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2. Attendee List
Bridgeport Economic Development Corporation: Kevin Holzbog
Bridgeport ISD: Kurt Kronenberger
Cigna: Terri Palomino
City of Bridgeport: Tiffany Evans, James Elliott, Erika McComis
Denton Workforce Center: Perry Singer
North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging: Mike Hensley
North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Jamie Patel, Kelli Schlicher, Donato Perez, Chris Reed
Transdev (operator of Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS)): Karen Kemp, Josh Walker
United Way of Wise County: Martin Woodruff
Weatherford College - Wise County: Matt Joiner
Wise County: Judge J.D. Clark, Commissioner Kevin Burns
Wise County Committee on Aging, Inc.: Amy Pegues
Wise County Messenger: Brian Knox
Wise Health System: Kelly Jones, Shawna Merchant, Sarah Ratliff
Prioritization Process

NCTCOG staff contacted stakeholders in Wise County to follow up on the outcomes of the outreach meeting that took place on January 19, 2017 in Decatur. The following individuals, representing a variety of interests in Wise County, participated in the prioritization of strategies to address the needs identified.

Terri Palomino, Community Outreach, Cigna
Perry Singer, Center Manager, Denton Workforce Center
Josh Walker, Operations Director, Transdev (operator of Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS))
Karen Kemp, Operations Manager, Transdev (operator of Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS))
Martin Woodruff, Executive Director, United Way of Wise County
Honorable J.D. Clark, County Judge, Wise County
Pat Slayton, Executive Director, Wise Hope Shelter and Crisis Center
Laura Spain, Veterans Service Officer, Wise County
Kurt Kronenberger, Assistant Superintendent, Bridgeport ISD
Matt Joiner, Dean, Weatherford College – Wise County
Amy Pegues, Executive Director, Wise County Committee on Aging, Inc.
Cherissa McConnell, Manager, Wise County Helen Farabee Center
Kelli Schlicher, Transportation Planner, North Central Texas Council of Governments

This document summarizes conversations during the prioritization process.

On June 6, 2017, stakeholders agreed that transportation to medical appointments and for older adults were a high priority. Amy Pegues (Executive Director of the Wise County Committee on Aging, Inc. (WCCOA)) identified that TAPS is often booked when individuals call to schedule a ride 48 hours in advance. Immediate or emergent needs typically cannot be accommodated. Out-of-county medical appointments to Denton County and Tarrant County are a large need for her clients. WCCOA volunteers help provide transportation to ambulatory clients but need a contract with an accessible transportation provider to transport clients using mobility devices.

Josh Walker (Operations Director at Transdev) will set up a meeting with Amy to discuss her client’s needs and determine how TAPS can better serve WCCOA. Josh noted that he will soon be meeting with the mobility managers at Span and Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) (both of which serve Denton County) to discuss how the three agencies can better coordinate trips between Wise County and
Denton County. Stakeholders noted that there is a natural draw for economic and medical purposes between these two counties. Transdev staff are working diligently to rebuild relationships with individuals and agencies within Wise County.

Martin Woodruff (Executive Director of United Way of Wise County) agreed that Transdev needs to rebuild local relationships. The United Way can help by connect Transdev to key agency contacts and by sharing information about transit services. Martin identified the Wise County Helen Farabee Center and Wise County Community Health Center as key destinations within the county that Transdev should reach out to.

Prioritized strategies for Wise County that incorporate stakeholder feedback will be included in the plan document.