

**Access North Texas
Hunt County Meeting
September 20, 2016
Greenville, Texas**

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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 Hunt County meeting. Ms. Schlicher also thanked Senior Center Resources and Public Transit (The Connection) for kindly hosting this meeting.

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 Hunt County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

Regarding public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, etc., what is your primary area of concern?

29% of respondents indicated that both improving awareness of available services and funding new services were equally necessary. Similarly, 14% of respondents indicated that increasing coordination between agencies and creating targeted implementation plans were equally necessary. One respondent noted that she chose other because she has difficulty making regional connections to Dallas County and Denton County for both medical appointments and to see family.

With the agency you work for, what is the highest day-to-day transportation need?

41% of respondents indicated that the highest day-to-day transportation need for their agency is medical trips, while 27% specified that work related trips is their highest transportation need. Although transportation for medical and work ranked highest in the poll, individuals noted that there was an equal need for all five options in Hunt County. Additionally, agencies noted that there is a need for accommodating same day trip

requests. Lastly, attendees described the need for transportation to medical appointments, particularly in Dallas, Plano, and the Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities in Bonham.

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?

50% of attendees believed 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. 28% of attendees voted for transportation network companies (TNC) like Uber and Lyft. Respondents saw this as an affordable transportation option that would add variety and be beneficial for students, but noted that TNCs are not yet widely available in Hunt County. Additionally, one agency noted that they could coordinate and pay for their client's trips ultimately eliminating the technology barrier. Attendees were interested in possibly developing relationships with TNCs to expand available options in Hunt County and partnerships with nonprofits.

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

38% of attendees answered that a focus on increasing user choice would have the biggest impact on improving access to transit, while 24% answered that a focus on integrating funding sources from multiple programs (Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc.) would have the biggest impact. Since there are currently two transportation providers in Hunt County (The Connection's public transit and On the Go's taxi service), attendees noted that increasing the number of available transportation options would help increase access to local services. Attendees proposed options for how to fund these new services. One participant suggested a market-based approach. Another participant suggested a public/private partnership. For example, a large employer could partner with a local transit provider to provide their employees trips to work.

What is the best way to enhance the user's experience?

47% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 26% voted for few transfers between providers for regional trips. Discussion centered on reducing transfers between providers and its relevance for Hunt County. As an example, Ms. Schlicher explained how a person's trip from Fort Worth to the Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center would require two transfers and three different transportation providers. Mr. Allembaugh (Executive Director of Senior Center Resources and Public Transit who operates The Connection) then announced that starting October 1, 2016, The Connection will be providing transit service to Dallas Area Rapid Transit's (DART) Rowlett station. A schedule will be posted soon. Mr. Allembaugh also noted that he is working with other agencies to develop solutions in order to create a more seamless connection (with few transfers) into Dallas for riders with limited mobility.

There was also discussion about how best to get information out about the currently available transportation options. Attendees noted that information should be available in a variety of different formats beyond static websites. Flyers that provide step-by-step

instructions on how to use a service could be made available in public locations such as libraries, city facilities and grocery stores.

What about coordination between agencies is the biggest barrier for you?

37% of respondents indicated that both identifying appropriate contacts and developing agreements between agencies were equal barriers to coordination. Similarly, 11% of respondents indicated that knowing where to start and successfully contacting other agencies were also equally necessary. One participant noted that finding an affordable transportation option in an emergency or with less than 24 hours' notice is her biggest barrier. Another participant indicated that identifying an appropriate contact within different agencies is a barrier because her clients' needs vary.

What method could improve the awareness of available services?

32% of respondents indicated that both targeted marketing to local agencies and a centralized location to receive information about transit were top ways to improve awareness of available services. 26% of respondents indicated that a public marketing campaign would help improve awareness. A participant noted that there are probably more innovative solutions to improving awareness other than those options presented at the meeting. The representative from On the Go said that she advertises in the Community Chest (a yellow card) that lists local resources.

Other comments included:

- Transit agencies should have policies in place to review reasonable modification requests to service (e.g. drop off location or additional assistance to the vehicle in inclement weather), when feasible.
- Reducing pick-up times and improving on-time performance remains a priority.

d. Priorities & Solutions

In closing, Ms. Schlicher asked participants to rank the priorities that were most important to them or indicate if new priorities have since arisen. Participants ranked priorities in the following order:

1. Establish mobility management activities to build, grow, and maintain partnerships focused on access to jobs, job training, and education in the county
2. Establish a regional transportation link to the Dallas-Fort Worth area to allow from improved employment and medical access; enable connections with regional transportation services
3. Explore partnerships with faith organizations in the county to maximize use of existing transportation resources and coordinate the provision of transportation service
4. Improve local and county access through a reduced scheduling pickup window or through improved rider familiarity with service parameters to facilitate access to community services, medical services, and jobs within Hunt County
5. Improve access to education in and around Hunt County through partnerships with colleges and universities; link education sites to community services and improve access for students living in rural areas
6. Increase awareness of existing services through a countywide education initiative

7. Coordinate with VA transportation programs to improve the availability of veterans transportation to Dallas and Bonham facilities
8. Create and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs

Participants also highlighted the following potential solutions:

- Partner and subcontract with other transit agencies to provide service as needed
- Customer-focus and service training for drivers and schedulers

e. Next Steps

A point-person committee for Hunt County will soon be developed. The committee will discuss and further refine Hunt County 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

Advocates: Judy Stephens, Kathryn Foote
 City of Greenville: John Wright
 Freese and Nichols, Inc. on behalf of Hunt County: Staron Faucher
 Greenville ISD: Shannon DeGarso
 Herald Banner: Brad Kellar
 Hope Center of Greenville: Jerry Speight
 Hunt County Children's Advocacy Center: Holly Robinson, Jewel West
 Hunt County News: Jim Satterwhite
 Hunt County Regional Healthcare: Richard Carter
 KETR Radio: George Hale
 North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Kelli Schlicher, Leah Brown
 On the Go: Joyce Dreiling
 Paris Junior College: John Shasteen
 Salvation Army: Diane Johnson, Susy Galvan
 Senior Center Resources and Public Transit: Sheryl Zelhart (Board member)
 Senior Center Resources and Public Transit: Danny Allembaugh, Diane Mason, Vickie Goodson, Arnie Padilla
 Texas Department of Transportation: Tommie Fugate
 United Way of Hunt County: Frances Dalbey
 Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4011: Jimmie Yaw