

**Access North Texas  
Ellis County and Navarro County Meeting  
November 9, 2016  
Waxahachie, 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 joint Ellis County and Navarro 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 Ellis County and Navarro County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

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

50% 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. Regarding medical trips, attendees noted that physicians' offices in Dallas and specialists at Parkland Hospital were particularly difficult to reach from both Ellis County and Navarro County. Attendees also noted that trips into Dallas-Fort Worth (or even within the county) can be cost prohibitive for riders with limited incomes. College representatives in attendance identified that students in Ellis County have trouble accessing campuses in Midlothian and Waxahachie. Lastly, attendees noted that individuals in Ellis County are able to find employment, however aren't able to find transportation to get them to work.

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

44% of respondents indicated their primary area of concern was increasing coordination between agencies, while 20% specified that funding new services was their primary area of concern. The Waxahachie Senior Center noted that their partnership with STAR Transit and Senior Connect is invaluable. Both agencies help get seniors to their facility and to medical appointments, particularly in Dallas. It was noted that Ellis County veterans aren't familiar with the available transportation options to get them to their appointments at Baylor Scott & White – Waxahachie and the Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Lastly, access to employment for individuals working the third shift is especially difficult since there isn't any public transportation provided during these hours.

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

44% 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 26% answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact. Attendees noted that there is not sufficient funding for transit for either Ellis County or Navarro County. A potential solution to this is coordinating and integrating the current sources of funds from Aging, Workforce, Medicaid, etc. in order to increase efficiency and capacity. Local government has not considered public transportation a priority for local funds.

**What method could improve the awareness of available services?**

36% of respondents indicated that a public marketing campaign is the best method to improve awareness, while 28% answered that a centralized location to receive information about transit would be the best method. A participant noted that Ellis County's information housed in the Dallas-area 2-1-1 needs to be updated, however she's not found the correct contact at 2-1-1 to update the information. It was mentioned that regular meetings with service agencies and transit providers would be an effective way to improve awareness as well as increase coordination. Marketing outreach to veterans would help them access services locally and in Dallas-Fort Worth. A potential solution is to have healthcare providers and service providers for adults with intellectual disabilities distribute information about available transportation services. For Navarro County, it was suggested that posting at laundromats and mailing information were effective ways to disseminate information.

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

40% of respondents indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was the biggest barrier to coordination, while 28% indicated that developing agreements between agencies was the biggest barrier. Agencies in attendance noted that trying to identify the appropriate contact, particularly in larger agencies, can be challenging. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), while necessary for organizations to coordinate and identify what each party is responsible for, are often seen as cumbersome. Lastly, a transit provider mentioned that determining how additional transportation services will be paid for by the requesting agency can also be a barrier to developing new partnerships for coordination.

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

32% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 28% voted for fewer transfers between providers for regional trips. Discussion centered on transit agencies providing better information about their specific service parameters (hours of service, areas covered, how to access service or register, etc.). As discussed in the question about improving awareness of available services, if better information was available other agencies could help disseminate that information to potential riders. Attendees noted that information about how to make regional trips to Dallas-Fort Worth, which require transferring to another provider, would also improve riders' experience and confidence in the transit system. In Navarro County, riders are concerned about booking return trips based on limited operating hours.

### **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. 29% of attendees voted for transportation network companies (TNC) like Uber and Lyft. Not all in attendance were familiar with the technological advances and TNCs. Attendees agreed that there is added liability with utilizing TNCs since there isn't vetting or driver training equivalent to what local transit agencies require. For riders with intellectual disabilities, a model similar to Meals on Wheels where the same volunteer driver can establish a relationship and provide consistent transportation could be a better solution. Participants felt that this model would also work well for seniors. Additionally, participants were concerned that TNCs wouldn't be an accessible option for individuals who utilize wheelchairs but cannot transfer themselves into a vehicle without a lift or ramp. Lastly, in both Ellis County and Navarro County, there was the additional concern that limited access to the internet and/or phone service in the rural areas would be a barrier to accessing a TNC.

#### **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 both Ellis County and Navarro County.

Participants ranked priorities for Ellis County in the following order:

1. Improve transportation options to access jobs within Ellis County, including employment locations in Waxahachie and Ennis.
2. Explore local service to connect key destinations in Waxahachie, including uptown, downtown, the new Baylor Hospital (that opened in 2014), and Navarro College.
3. Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need.
4. Improve public awareness of existing and new public transportation services, including raising awareness that services are not limited to older adults and individuals with disabilities.
5. Expand or introduce new transportation options that enable regional connections to Dallas for employment and medical services.

6. Evaluate different ways to provide public transportation services through partnerships with public and private transportation operators.
7. Enhance existing transportation service, expand service hours, or introduce new service within the county to better connect local communities.
8. Create language-specific marketing to reach individuals who have limited English proficiency.
9. Provide transportation to VA services in Dallas.
10. Expand service availability for youth under age 18.

Participants ranked priorities for Navarro County in the following order:

1. Improve local and county access through increased service frequencies or hours of service to address community and job access needs and access to medical care within Navarro County.
2. Increase awareness of existing services through a countywide education initiative.
3. Regional transportation link to the Dallas-Fort Worth area that can allow for greater employment opportunities and connections with regional transportation services.
4. Create and maintain a county coordinating committee to focus on ongoing transportation needs.
5. Establish training program that will assist first time bus riders in learning how public transportation operates and how to schedule services.

#### **e. Next Steps**

A point-person committee each for Ellis County and Navarro County will soon be developed. The committees will discuss and further refine Ellis County and Navarro 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.

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## **2. Attendee List**

Angels at Home: Rose Rash  
 Community for Permanent Supportive Housing: Brenda Catlett  
 Community Transit Services: Arlette Cobb, Katie Ragan  
 Corsicana ISD: Chris Gibbs  
 Ellis County: Judge Carol Bush, Sara Garcia, Joseph Jackson, Ted Kantor  
 Ellis County Veterans Services Officer: Nimchie Alce  
 Indigent Healthcare Program for Ellis County: Terri Klein  
 Lakes Regional MHMR: Crystal Richardson  
 Lakes Regional Community Center: LaZendra Rhodes

Midlothian ISD: Jim Norris  
Navarro College: Kenneth Martin, Alex Kajstura  
North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging: Mike Hensley  
North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Kelli Schlicher, Edgar Hernandez, Chris Reed  
STAR Transit: Ashley Ando  
Texas Workforce Solutions: Monte Hurt, Angela McCoy  
The Salvation Army of Ellis County: Frank Zuniga  
United Way of Ellis County: Casey Ballard  
Waxahachie ISD: Jane Hamilton  
Waxahachie Senior Center: Jeanee Smiles  
Waxahachie Workforce Center: Jana Edrington-Koennecke