

**Access North Texas
Kaufman County Meeting
March 13, 2017
Terrell, 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 Kaufman County 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 Kaufman County. The polling questions and discussion are summarized below.

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

58% of respondents indicated that the highest day-to-day transportation need for their agency is work trips, while 21% specified that medical trips is their highest transportation need. Regarding work trips, the Workforce Solutions clients in the rural areas are not able to get to their office in Terrell in order to find job opportunities. Once these individuals find a job, they need transportation to work. Lakes Regional MHMR identified that there is an early morning limitation on the existing transportation service. Timeliness of arrival is important for an individual to maintain employment. STAR Transit's service begins at 6:00 am in Kaufman County. Consequently, early morning (6:30 am) shifts for service industry employees are not well accommodated by the current hours of operation. Lakes Regional MHMR also identified that morning work commutes have not be accommodated because previously scheduled medical appointments have filled STAR Transit's morning capacity. A representative from Kaufman Economic Development Corporation noted that there are approximately 4,200 jobs within Kaufman and many works travel into Kaufman. It was also mentioned that trips to the food bank and for shopping are important. The Wal-Mart stop on the Kaufman Trolley is the most utilized.

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

39% of respondents indicated that their primary area of concern was improving awareness of available services, while 28% specified that funding new services was their primary area of concern. As noted in the previous question, STAR Transit's service hours does not match the early morning demand (6:00 am) for local work trips. Overall, morning demand exceeds STAR Transit's current availability. There are challenges that exist with properly connecting concentrations of people and employers via transit. STAR Transit is in the initial planning stages for a Terrell/Kaufman connection. There is also an opportunity to explore a local circulator benefiting Terrell residents and local employers. Riders can call STAR Transit up to a month in advance to schedule medical and dialysis trips which can fill most of STAR Transit's capacity leaving fewer trips for other purposes.

Additional marketing about available transportation services could help raise awareness about how residents can access STAR Transit's services. Attendees recommended leaving marketing materials in new resident packets, grocery stores, county courthouse, and churches. Some churches are using their buses to help parishioners to local services and hospitals. Another participant recommended that STAR Transit add the hours of operation as well as the times an individual can schedule a ride to their Facebook page.

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

47% 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 37% answered that a focus on getting additional federal or state investment in transit would have the biggest impact. Regarding integrating funding sources, awareness of available transit services could help increase the opportunity to expand existing service. Currently, both the county and some local municipalities financially support transit service. Together, these local contributions help STAR Transit access federal funds through the Texas Department of Transportation and the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

An attendee noted that additional federal investment is important because that's where a large portion of the funding is available. However, federal funding is often confusing due to the associated regulations. Lastly, when governments are considering infrastructure investments, public transportation should be included.

What method could improve the awareness of available services?

55% of respondents indicated that a public marketing campaign is the best method to improve awareness, while 30% answered that targeted marketing to local agencies would be the best method. Those in attendance identified the following agencies that could benefit from STAR Transit's marketing campaign (such as posters): Workforce Solutions, Lakes Regional MHMR, Health and Human Services and their Welfare office, housing authorities, food banks, cities, churches, chambers of commerce, Wal-Mart, Brookshires, Dollar Tree, Valpak coupons, and schools via packets sent home to students. Posters should reference STAR Transit's social media pages. Another participant mentioned that direct mail would be the best way for STAR Transit to market their transit services.

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

50% of respondents indicated that developing agreements between agencies is the biggest barrier to coordination, while 25% indicated that identifying appropriate contacts was the biggest barrier. Related to developing agreements, some agencies have a fear that they'll overcommit their existing resources. There's also uncertainty concerning creating the right balance between potential partners. Lack of communication can be a barrier to both developing agreements and identifying contacts. An additional barrier to getting started or identifying new contacts can be new agency staff. Typically, they haven't yet developed the necessary connections and relationships to facilitate agency coordination.

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

68% of attendees voted for better information on how to use transit, while 16% voted for personal instruction on the phone or in person. More information is needed on how to utilize STAR Transit's services including: clarification on how far in advance to call and schedule a ride and if there are different requirements for different types of trip (medical vs. work). A rider noted that she has not been picked up before for her return trip home from school. Another rider mentioned that a driver has parked across the street when picking her up. Increased communication between the provider and rider about how to schedule rides and pick-ups for their needs can help enhance the user's experience. Additionally, drivers should be properly trained on how to secure wheelchairs.

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 web or smartphone apps with information on multiple providers is most likely to help improve transportation options. Conversely, another 19% 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. Websites and smartphone apps are another way to get the info out about available transportation services. A participant noted that transit agencies should keep the end user in mind and consider if they'll be able to access the technology. Great customer service, people and face-to-face interaction, can be the bridge between technology and the end user.

A participant mentioned that transportation network companies (TNCs, like Uber and Lyft) give the rider more spontaneity when traveling. A partnership with local TNC drivers could increase STAR Transit's capacity to better match the demand by transporting ambulatory riders. However, there are some questions that remain regarding affordability and accessibility with this service. Another attendee mentioned that Terrell needs a local circulator like Kaufman.

An agency asked if it was possible to track refusals and negotiated trips in order to identify excess demand. STAR Transit answered that only recently, due to an upgraded scheduling system, have they been able to track refusals. An attendee noted that driverless cars would enable individuals with limited mobility to get around on their own

schedules. Additionally, driverless vehicles could be a future solution to increase transit providers' available capacity.

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 Kaufman County.

Participants ranked priorities in the following order:

1. Improve access to local employment destinations in areas such as Kaufman, Terrell, and Forney, focusing on options for low-income workers.
2. Improve public awareness of existing and new public transportation services.
3. Increase options for local transportation within and between communities in Kaufman County for those with limited mobility, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals.
4. Explore opportunities for regional connections that can address needs for commuter services connecting to major employment destinations in the region and needs for affordable and accessible transportation to medical services in the region, including Mesquite and Dallas.
5. Maintain and improve transportation options for older adults throughout the county, including rural northeast and southern parts of the county.
6. Increase usage or modify service to address low ridership on STAR Transit's Trolley in Kaufman.
7. Improve the availability and affordability of transportation to VA services in Dallas.

e. Next Steps

A point-person committee for Kaufman 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: Emma Pessognelli, Jamie Moore

City of Terrell: Mike Sims, Glenn Caldwell

Kaufman Economic Development Corporation: Lee Ayres

Kaufman Herald: Phil Major

Kaufman County: Judge Bruce Wood, Commissioner Mike Hunt, Aaron Conway

Lakes Regional MHMR Center: Wendy Roberts, Laura Vaughn, Sarah McManaway,
LaZendra Rhodes, Laurie White
North Central Texas Council of Governments: Sarah Chadderdon, Kelli Schlicher, Edgar
Hernandez, Jing Xu
Senior Connect: Melinda Polk
STAR Transit: Mike Sims, Tommy Henricks, Kim Britton, Teresa Elliot
Terrell Chamber of Commerce: Carlton Tidwell
Terrell Economic Development Corporation: Danny Booth
Terrell ISD: Freddie Pierce
TSH-SDHS: Michael Verseckes
Workforce Solutions of North Central Texas: Katherine Ware, Laura Dodson, Debbie
Berner