

Introduction

The purpose of Access North Texas is to document the public transportation needs for seniors (older adults), individuals with disabilities, individuals with lower income, and other transit-dependent populations. These populations can have difficulty finding public transportation options that connect them to medical appointments, work opportunities, job training, education, food access, and other essential destinations. This plan identifies where these transportation connections could be improved within Rockwall County. This chapter provides an overview of outreach efforts, demographics, existing transportation services, findings, and prioritized strategies. More information about the plan and findings can be found in the Executive Summary.

Outreach

Public outreach for Rockwall County was conducted through a survey and stakeholder outreach meeting. Outreach efforts were advertised through email communication, the Access North Texas website, a Local Motion publication, and social media. Opportunity to share transit-related comments and concerns anonymously by location in a virtual public mapping tool called Map Your Experience was also available through the Access North Texas website.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) conducted 13 meetings across the region, which included a virtual stakeholder outreach meeting for Rockwall County on April 1, 2025. Emails were sent to over 115 recipients on the Rockwall County email subscriber list. The meeting was also promoted on the Access North Texas website. Three individuals and five NCTCOG staff attended.

The transportation survey was also available to residents and stakeholders online, on paper, and available in English and Spanish. The online survey could also be translated into multiple languages by selecting the preferred language option from the drop-down box on the live survey page. The survey for the public collected input on public transportation in the region. A similar survey was also available online for organizations and agencies that work with transit-dependent populations. For the public survey, there were seven participants for Rockwall County. For the public agency survey, participants from three agencies indicated they operate in or serve Rockwall County. Finally, there was one transit-related comment received for Rockwall County through Map Your Experience.

All feedback from outreach efforts were cleaned, compiled, and coded for analysis, in addition to the survey feedback. Using the coding key, qualitative feedback was quantified to create visual representations of feedback for identified barriers, missed trips, desired modes, and enhancements. See Appendix D for the visualizations. Additional feedback was factored into the Rockwall County analysis as applicable, such as in situations where comments relate to multiple counties, no county was specified, or for transit providers operating across county boundaries.

Demographics Assessment

Rockwall County continues to experience significant growth. According to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, the current population exceeds 123,600 in comparison to 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates of just under 97,200. This shows an approximate 27.2 percent increase in population. According to the region's long-range transportation plan, Mobility 2050, the county population is expected to reach more than 245,600 by 2050.

When comparing the 2019 ACS to the 2024 ACS, the older adult population increased by 32.8 percent, individuals with a disability population increased by 44.9 percent, and low-income population increased by 3.5 percent. Areas with higher concentrations of these populations should be a particular priority in efforts to promote existing or new transit services. Detailed estimates and percentages for these key populations, as well as other demographics, are shown in the table below and in the appendix.

Metric	Rockwall County Population	Rockwall County	Regional
Households	41,237	-	-
Zero-Car Households	859	2.1%	4.8%
Older Adults (65 and over)	15,613	12.6%	12.3%
Individuals with a disability	11,114	9.1%	10.5%
Individuals with low-income	6,766	5.5%	14.1%
Veterans	6,850	7.5%	5.5%
Youth (under 18)	32,755	26.5%	24.9%
Limited English-Speaking Individuals	4,975	4.3%	11.9%

Table 1: Target Population and County Metrics for Rockwall County. Data from 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Transportation Services Assessment

Rockwall County is supported by a few different transit providers and programs. The map and descriptions below provide a brief overview of the extent of service offered. The most updated service area boundaries, fares, and hours of operation can be found on the

providers' website. Contact information per provider can also be found in the Get-A-Ride Guide in Appendix B.

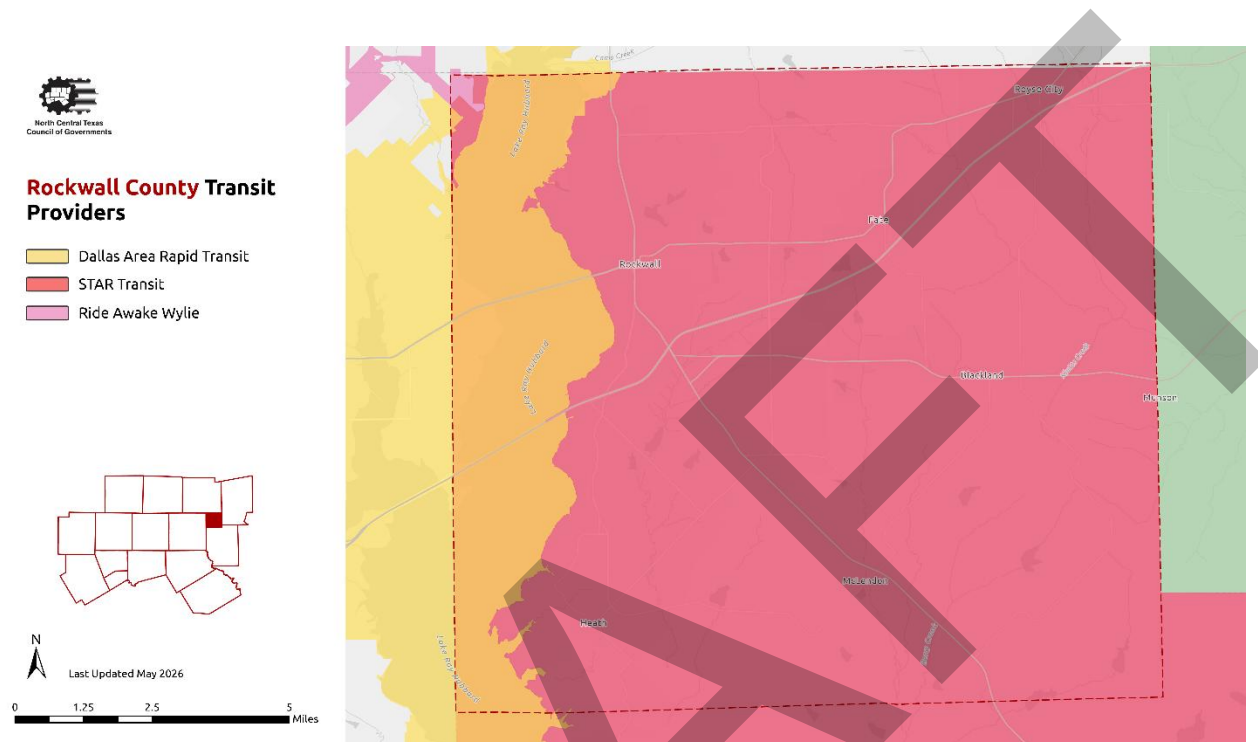


Figure 1: County Transit Service Map

Dallas Area Rapid Transit

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) operates bus, rail, GoLink microtransit, and paratransit programs in member cities, including Addison, Carrollton, Cockrell Hill, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Garland, Glenn Heights, Irving, Plano, Richardson, Rowlett, and University Park. However, DART only services a small portion of western Rockwall County through the Rowlett GoLink Zone. This service provides a connection to the DART Blue Line at Downtown Rowlett Station. From the Downtown Rowlett Station, riders can get connected to the overall transit system.

DART offers a variety of different fares for different programs, including reduced fares for eligible riders. Fare categories include local and regional options. Local includes rides on DART and Trinity Railway Express (TRE) services to CentrePort Station, while regional also covers rides on Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) and Trinity Metro services. DART offers a Day Pass, 3-Hour Pass, TRE One-Way Pass, Dallas Streetcar One-Way Pass, a 31-Day Pass, and Paratransit. DART also offers special and discounted pass opportunities for employers, trade schools, colleges, universities, and other groups. To

purchase tickets, riders can use the DART GoPass App, GoPass Tap Card, and Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) located at the platforms.

STAR Transit

STAR Transit offers multiple services, including an express bus route, same-day trip service, demand response trip service, and connections to DART. Riders may call customer service to book rides, use the STARNow app, or use the GoPass app (excluding demand response trips) to purchase tickets. Other payment options include using exact cash on STAR Transit vehicles, account credits, and pre-paying using a credit card. Reduced fares are available to eligible riders 60 years of age or older, veterans, and/or people with disabilities. Fare options for bus and same-day service include single ride, day pass, and 31-day pass.

Ride Awake Wylie

Subsidized program through a public-private partnership. This is an on-demand rideshare service. Rides are for anyone with origin and destination locations within the city of Wylie boundaries and a few locations outside of city boundaries. Additionally, the program also includes a separate service for riders with disabilities.

Vanpool Program

In addition to the other transportation options and services, DCTA and Trinity Metro operate a Vanpool Program in the North Central Texas region. Through Trinity Metro, as of April 2026, no vanpools originate in Rockwall County, no vanpools have destinations in Rockwall County, and no vanpools have an origin and destination in the county. Through DCTA, as of April 2026, there are no vanpools with origin or destination in the county. The number of vanpools may change month to month as the regional program expands shared commuter transportation opportunities.

Overall, gaps in service still exist in Rockwall County due to a variety of factors. Survey and outreach responses show some insight into what gaps may exist and where further assessment is needed. Through continued collaboration amongst stakeholders, the gaps in service can be identified, reviewed, and discussed.

Needs/Gaps Assessment (Data Analysis)

In Rockwall County, survey respondents helped to identify a variety of transportation barriers, potential enhancements, missed trips, and desired modes. The combination of all outreach efforts, including surveys and meetings, revealed that residents are interested in the topic of public transportation and would like to see greater access and availability of service. This section analyzes survey and outreach findings while incorporating inputs through the Map Your Experience tool and the Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool map

to identify priority need areas. A more comprehensive and detailed view of notes, input, feedback, and reports can be found in Appendix D.

Outreach Meeting

From the outreach meeting, no county residents, providers, or stakeholders attended.

Public Survey

Of the total regionwide survey participants who identified a county of residence, approximately one percent were from Rockwall County. While most public survey respondents indicated they are not missing trips, there are others who are. Of the respondents, the only missed trip identified was for airport connections. Of those who identified barriers that prevent them from getting where they need to go, the top selections were for safety concerns with public transportation and that services do not meet their needs.

With 86 percent of seven respondents indicating that public transportation does not meet their needs, the top identified reason is that services are not available at locations needed to travel. Figure two shows the top reasons why public transportation does not meet the participants' needs for the county.

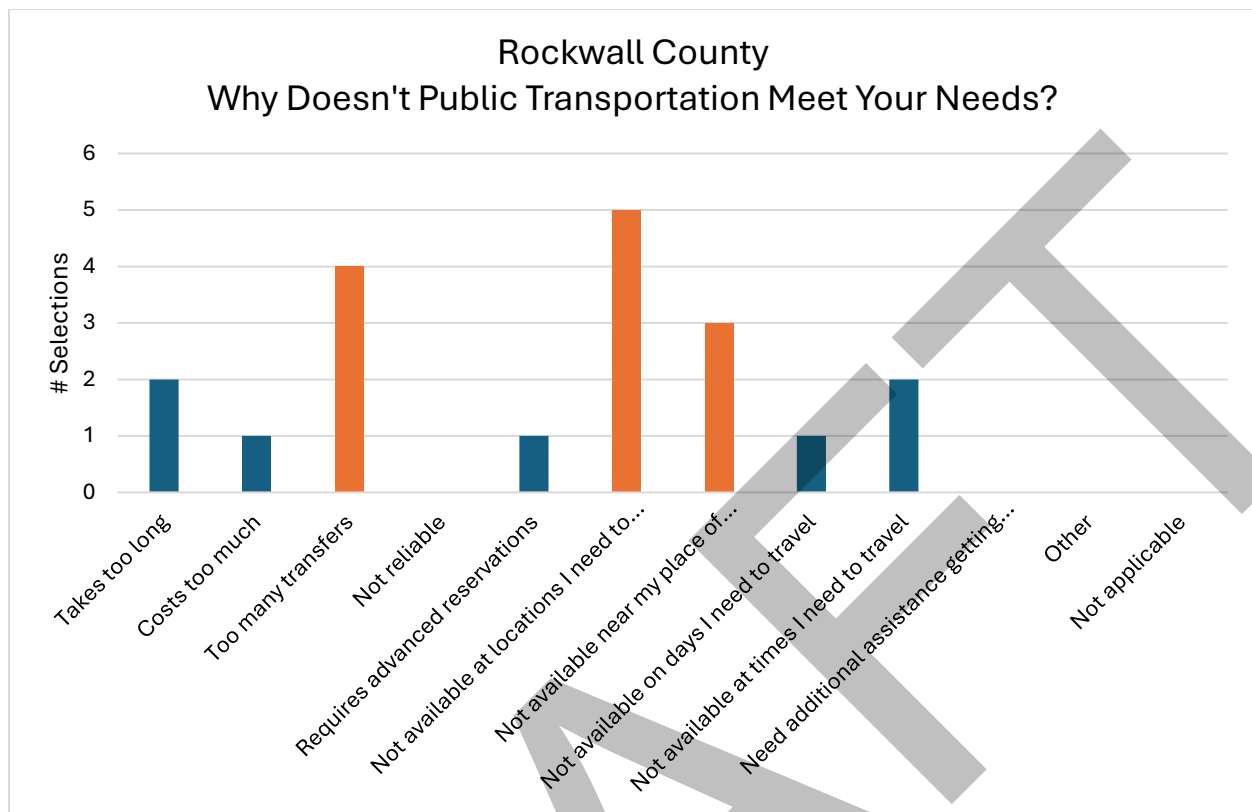


Figure 2: Visual of public survey question responses. Orange highlighted bars indicate most popular selections.

The survey also asked about potential ways to enhance the public transit experience. For this question, respondents selected desired enhancement options and ranked them in order of preference, with a score of 1 indicating the most preferred option. Of the six respondents for this question, increased security was selected as most preferred with a ranking of 1.67. Figure 3 below shows participant preferences on how to enhance the transit experience.

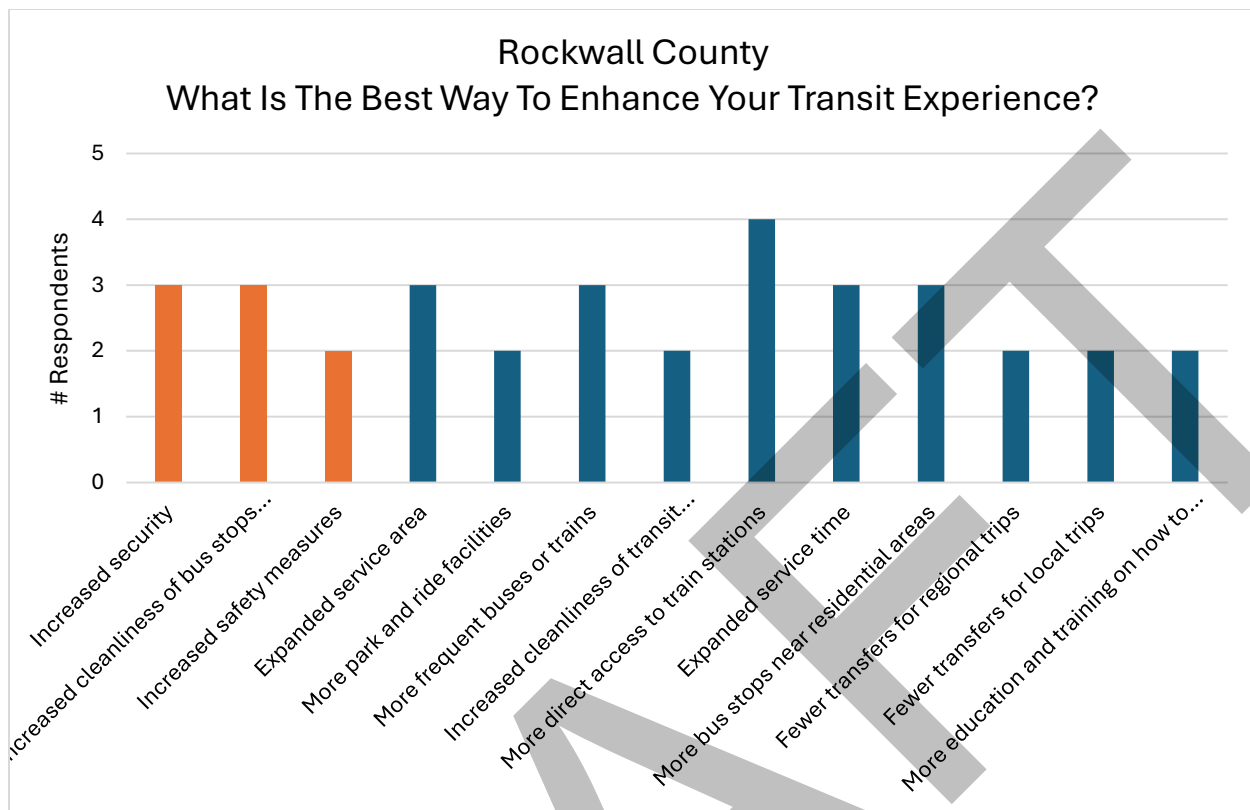


Figure 3: Visual of public survey question asking participants to rank options in order of preference. Orange highlighted bars indicate top three preferred enhancements. Increased security is the most preferred, followed by increased cleanliness of bus stops and train stations and increased safety measures.

Agency Survey

Approximately 19 percent of agencies who participated in the survey indicated they serve or operate in Rockwall County and that their agency serves multiple populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with lower income, and others. Agencies who provided transportation-related feedback include STAR Transit and the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging.

The table below identifies top responses provided by the agency representatives and/or staff who participated in the agency survey. More information on survey responses can be found in Appendix D.

What are the most requested trips among those you serve?
• Medical
What keeps your customers from getting where they need to go?
• No car available to them • Nobody to drive them
For public transportation options that don't meet your customers' needs, what is the reason?
• Not available at locations needed to travel • Need additional assistance getting to/from or on/off the vehicle
What is the best way to enhance your customer's public transportation experience?
• Expanded service area

Table 2: Summary of select public agency survey question responses. Not all responses apply to the individual county, however, the overall service area the agencies operate, which includes Rockwall County.

Categorized Qualitative Feedback

Meeting notes, comments in the survey questions, and additional feedback from providers offered insight into experienced barriers, missed trips, desired modes, and enhancements in the county. The table below summarizes qualitative feedback on top findings that may be compared to other findings. Participation and feedback varied among the different outreach methods.

Barriers	Missed Trips	Desired Modes	Enhancements
Lack of access and/or availability of service	None Identified	None Identified	Access and availability of service

Table 3: Summary of categorized qualitative feedback. More detailed information can be found in Appendix D.

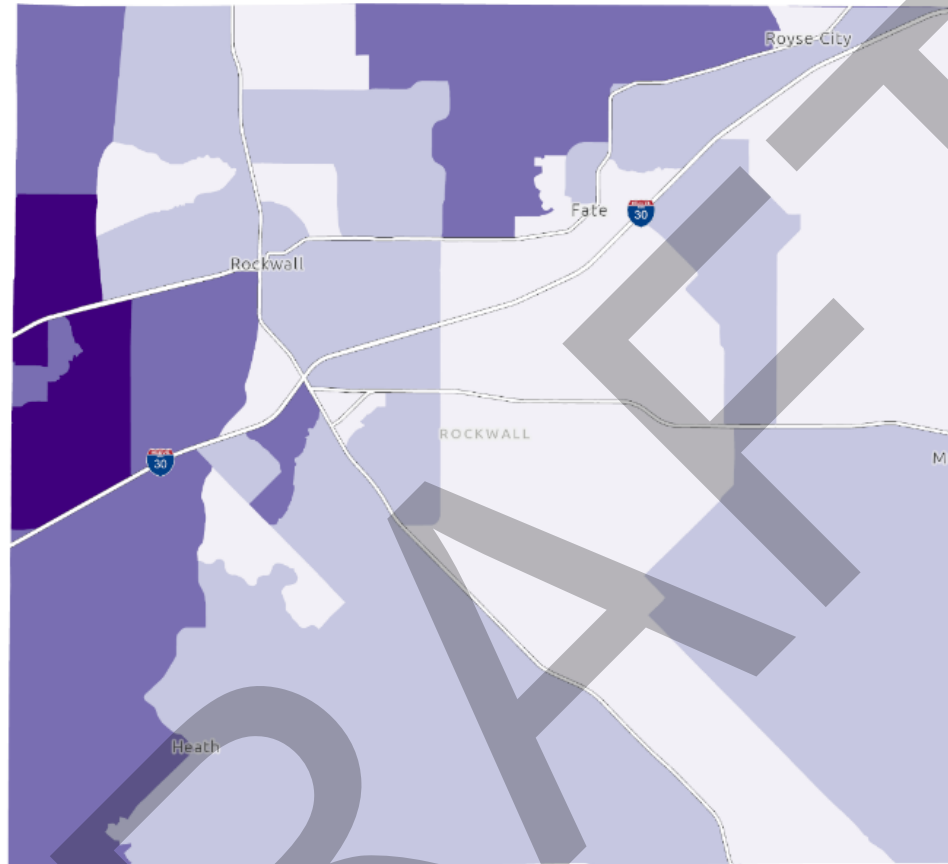
Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool Map

While the Demographics Assessment earlier in the chapter shows the number of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other transit-dependent populations in Rockwall County, these figures describe the county as a whole and don't show where these populations are concentrated. The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) fills this gap by mapping seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals below poverty at the Census block group level to identify where transit-dependent populations may be located and where transit need may be greatest.

The most concentrated area where all variables are above the regional percentage is west of the city of Rockwall, as illustrated in figure 4. For two variables above the regional percentage, there is a strong concentration bordering the west side of the county near the county border, with an additional area near Fate and east of Royse City which is in the northern area in the county. For one variable above the regional percentage and all variables below the regional percentage, these areas are more evenly distributed throughout the county.

As illustrated in Appendix C, populations 65 and over have the highest concentration just northwest and southwest of the city of Rockwall. Moderate to moderately high areas can be found near the city of Rockwall, Heath, and east of Royse City. Moderately low to low concentrated areas are widely disbursed throughout the county. For people with disabilities, there is a highly concentrated area south of the city of Rockwall along Highway 205 and near McLendon and Heath. East and northeast of the city of Rockwall, there are moderate to moderately low concentrated areas for people with disabilities. For low-income populations, the higher concentration area is south of the city of Rockwall and IH 30. Most of Rockwall County is comprised of low to moderately low concentrated areas.

Rockwall County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



- All Variables At or Below Regional Percentage
- One Variable Above Regional Percentage
- Two Variables Above Regional Percentage
- All Variables Above Regional Percentage

0 2.5 5 Miles



**Source: 2024 American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates**

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) are preliminary screening areas that may need additional analysis when considering transportation-disadvantaged groups in a plan, project, or program. The TAIT displays Census block groups above the regional percentage for three variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty Level, and Persons with Disabilities.

Figure 4: TAIT Map for Rockwall County

Rockwall County Zero-Car Households

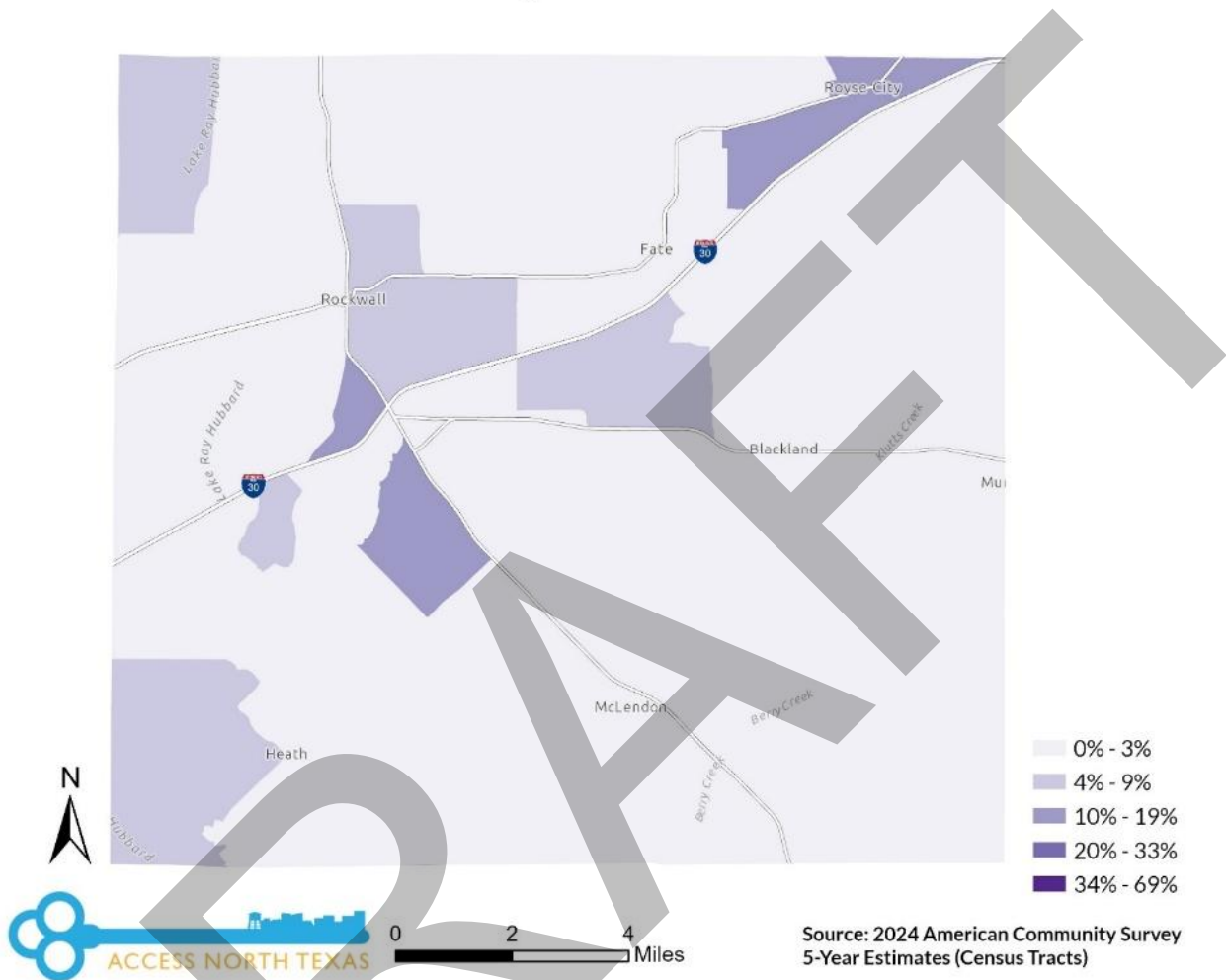


Figure 5: Individual Variable Map showing Zero-Car Households in Rockwall County

For zero-car households as illustrated in figure 5, the highest concentration areas are south of the City of Rockwall and in the northeastern side of the county toward Royse City within the range of 10-19 percent. Most of the county shows a low percentage of zero-car households with a few moderately low concentrated areas.

Goals/Strategies Development

The regional goals (five main categories identifying themes across the 16-county region) provide a framework for Access North Texas on a regional level, while the individual prioritized strategies applied to Rockwall County are applicable to furthering those goals while also addressing needs within the county. These goals and strategies help provide

direction for transit providers and stakeholders to plan and implement future projects and services that support transit-dependent populations.

The prioritized strategies were developed using information from multiple sources, including outreach, meetings, surveys, available data, and regional knowledge through stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Data and information were compiled and analyzed to help identify patterns and gaps. Prior to the finalization of the plan, the goals and strategies were provided to stakeholders for feedback and review.

Goals & Strategies – More strategies to be added later

Regional Goal	Specific Strategies
Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Needs and Challenges	1. Prioritize programs that facilitate transportation for work-related trips, medical, and healthcare appointments.
Implement Services by Enhancing Transportation Options and Expanding Where Service Gaps Exist	1. Provide accessible public transportation and supportive resources for older adults and individuals with disabilities, with a focus on improving connections between healthcare, housing, and transit services.
Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies	1. Work with public transportation providers and stakeholders to improve or maintain services connecting riders to the transit system, healthcare, and other key destinations.
Drive Sustained Growth of Public Transportation Ridership	1. Improve safety, security, and sanitation measures to build rider confidence and comfort.
Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options	1. Enhance communication and outreach programs to improve awareness of existing or new transportation options.