

TARRANT COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Access North Texas is to improve public transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. These populations can have difficulty finding public transportation options that connect them to doctor's appointments, work opportunities and education or job training. This plan identifies where these transportation connections do not exist or could be improved within Tarrant County. This chapter will give an overview of the planning process, research conducted and collected, public outreach, the transportation poll used to collect personal input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Tarrant County.

PROCESS

This plan is required by federal guidance to be updated every four years. The plan must be developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation; human services providers and other members of the public. The plan is updated to address current public transportation needs of the residents of Tarrant County. Through the process and methods described, prioritized strategies were developed so that future public transportation projects can be implemented when federal and State funding becomes available. Two different types of research were conducted during this plan update: data-based and people-based.

Data-based research included obtaining, reviewing, and analyzing Census data; using Census data to develop a mapping tool to identify locations where transit-dependent individuals may live; and identifying existing public transportation providers. The

people-based research included reaching out to communities, organizations, and individuals to obtain feedback about the existing public transportation system and how it could be improved. Feedback was obtained through public outreach meetings and a transportation poll. Through an interactive process, stakeholders prioritized concerns about transit access.

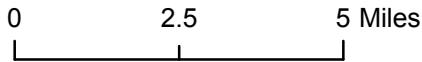
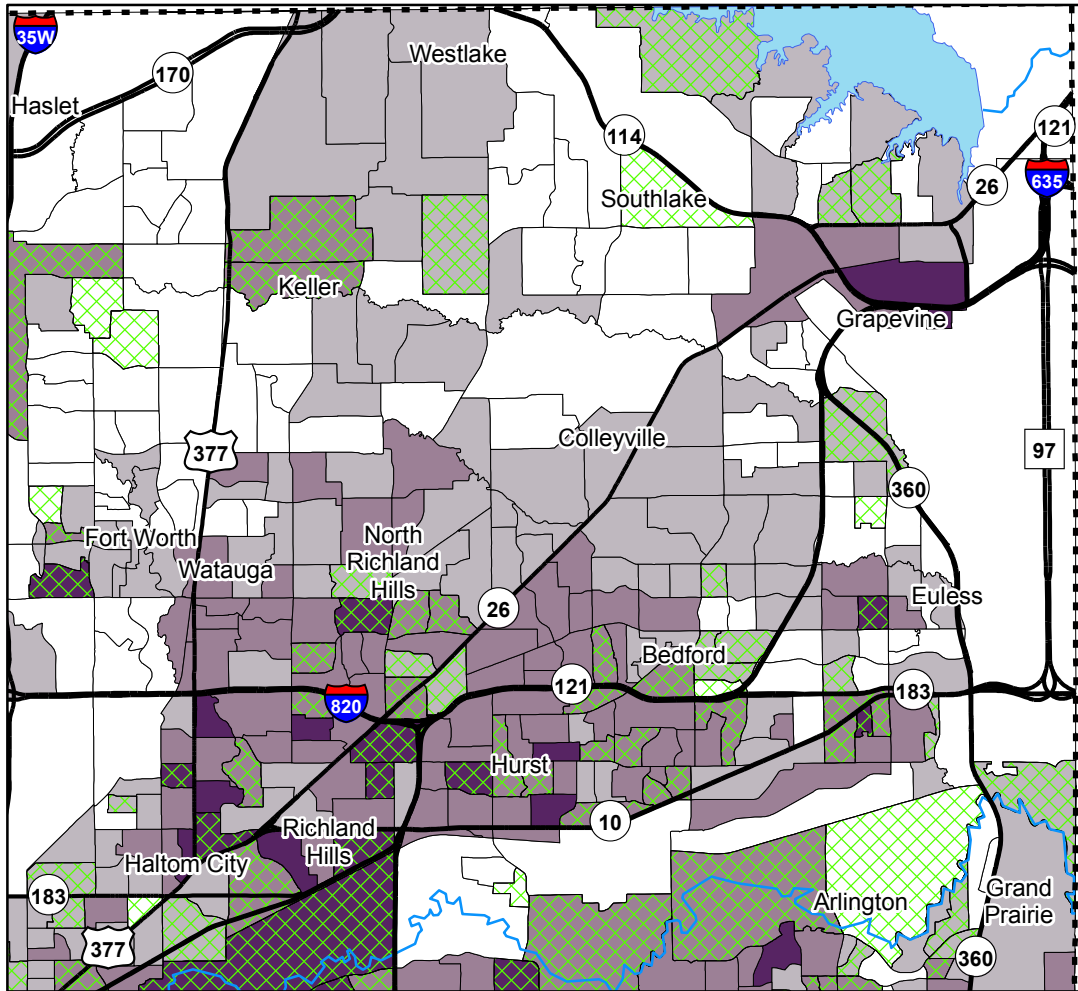
RESEARCH

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)

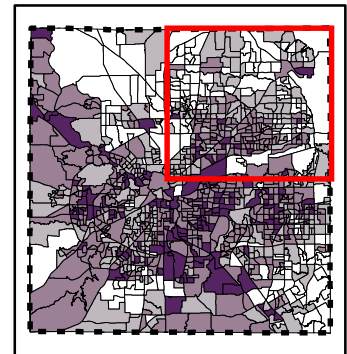
The TAIT was developed to identify locations with certain demographic factors that may indicate a greater need for public transportation. The populations of individuals over age 65, residents below the poverty line, and persons with disabilities were each compared to the regional percentage of the population in that demographic. A map was created based on areas that were above the regional percentage in zero, one, two, or all three of the demographic categories. The more categories that an area is deemed above the regional percentage, the more likely it is that area is to need transit. Zero car households was provided as a supplemental layer to identify households above the regional percentage that do not have a working vehicle available. The tool is useful in identifying groups of people who could benefit from transit services, but is not intended to be the deciding factor in decisions regarding public transportation.

In northeast Tarrant County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. These areas are primarily south of I820, near Richland Hills and

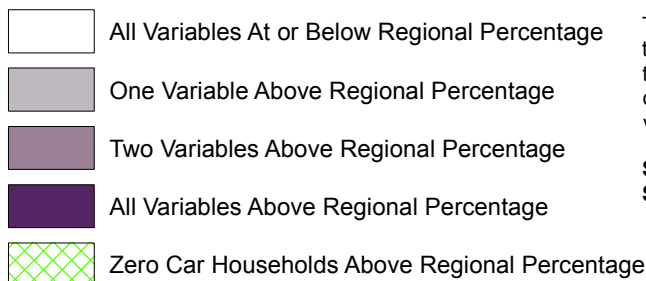
Northeast Tarrant County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



Tarrant County



Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities



The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool to identify 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, and Persons with Disabilities.

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



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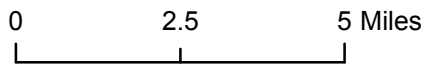
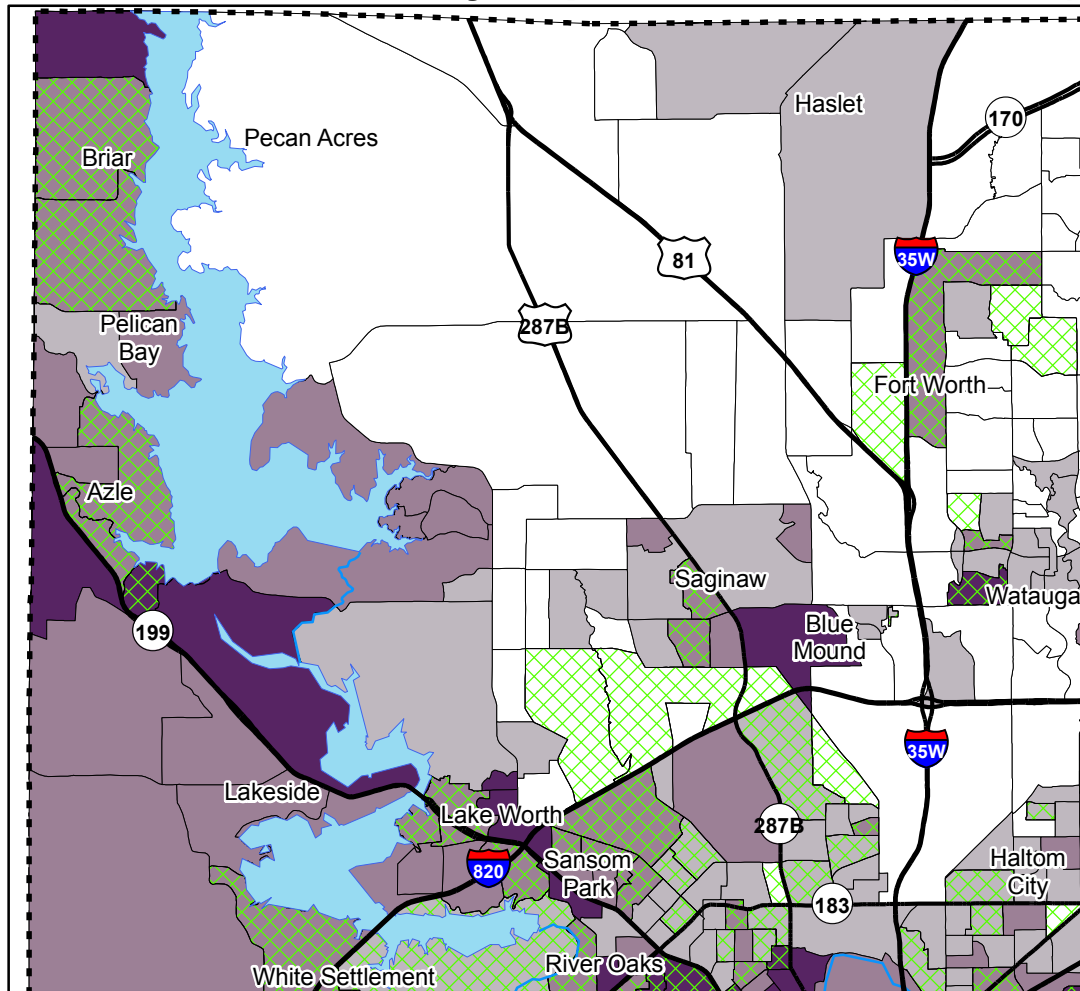
Hurst, with a few block groups in North Richland Hills, west of Watauga, and in Grapevine. Areas with only two variables above the regional percentage are mainly in the central and south central parts of this quadrant of Tarrant County. The vast majority of census block groups with two variables contain higher percentages of persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. Nearly all census block groups in northeast Tarrant County with only one variable above the regional percentage see higher numbers of persons age 65 and over. North of SH 26 in Grapevine, along the US 377 corridor south of Haltom City, and along the SH 360 corridor in Grand Prairie, the only variable above the regional percentage is persons below the poverty line. The SH 170, SH 114, and US 377 corridors in the northern part of northeast Tarrant County are the main areas with all three variables at or below the regional percentage. Some census block groups in Euless, Colleyville, Fort Worth, and Arlington are also at or below the regional percentage for all variables. Zero car households are mainly south of the I820 and SH 121 corridors, though some census blocks containing zero car households above the regional percentages are scattered throughout northeast Tarrant County.

In northwest Tarrant County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. These areas are mainly located along SH 199 in the western part of the northwest quadrant of Tarrant County, as well as in Blue Mound and Watauga. Census block groups with two variables above the regional percentage are mainly in the SH 199 corridor as well. Almost all of these census blocks see a higher level of persons age 65 and older and persons with disabilities. The census block groups with two variables highlighted along I35W as well as the southern areas in this quadrant see higher levels of persons age 65 and older and persons below the poverty line. The census block groups with a single variable above the regional percentage in the southern part of this quadrant are predominantly persons age 65 and older or persons below the poverty line, while

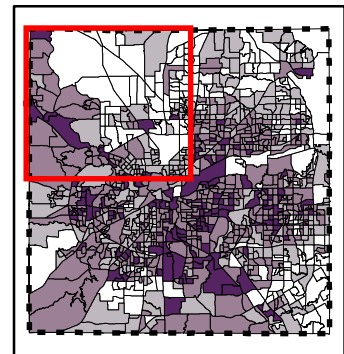
the central and northern census block groups have higher percentages of either persons with disabilities or persons below the poverty line. The north, central, and eastern parts of northwest Tarrant County see areas with all three variables at or below the regional percentage. Zero car households are predominantly in the southern part of this quadrant, with other areas near Briar, Pelican Bay, Azle, and north of Watauga.

In southwest Tarrant County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. These areas include the I35W Corridor, the I30 corridor, SH 121, and US 377 near Benbrook. Several areas in this quadrant of Tarrant County have two variables above the regional percentage. Along the US 377 corridor and in the northern part of the quadrant, the majority of census block groups see persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities above the regional percentage. Along and east of I35W, the majority of block groups above the regional percentage see higher levels of persons below the poverty line and persons with disabilities. The areas in Southwest Tarrant County where only one variable is above the regional percentage are mainly in the central and western parts of the quadrant. The block groups around Crowley in the southern part of the quadrant are evenly distributed between persons with disabilities and persons below the poverty line. The northwest part of southwest Tarrant County sees mostly persons age 65 and over above the regional percentage, while the areas north of I20 are dispersed across all three variables. Between SH 121 and I35W in southern and west of US 377 in the western part of southwest Tarrant County are the main areas where all three variables are below the regional percentage. There are also a few census block groups with all three variables below the regional percentage scattered in Fort Worth. Zero car households in this quadrant are most prevalent north of I20 and east of I820. South of I20, there are also several census block groups above the regional percentage for zero car households, especially along SH 121.






Northwest Tarrant County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



Tarrant County



Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities

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

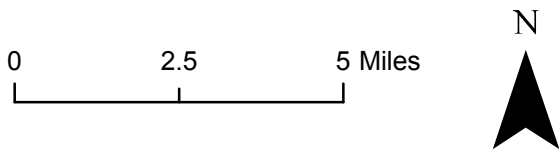
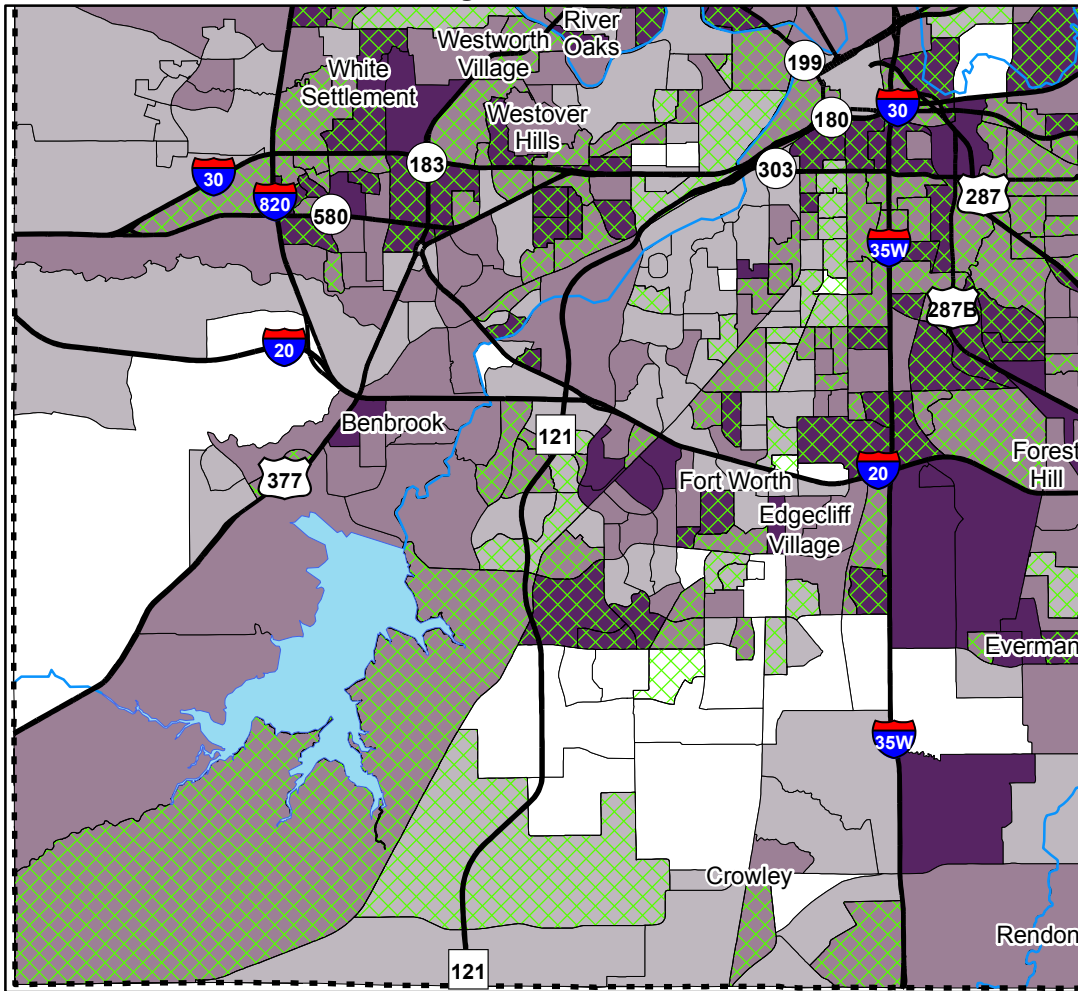
The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool to identify areas that may need additional analysis when considering transportation-disadvantaged groups in a plan, project, or program. The TAIT displays Census block groups above the regional percentage for three variables: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

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

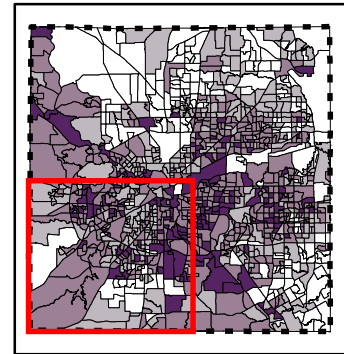


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




Southwest Tarrant County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



Tarrant County



Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities

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

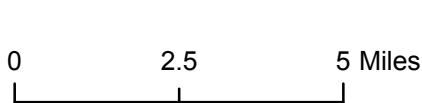
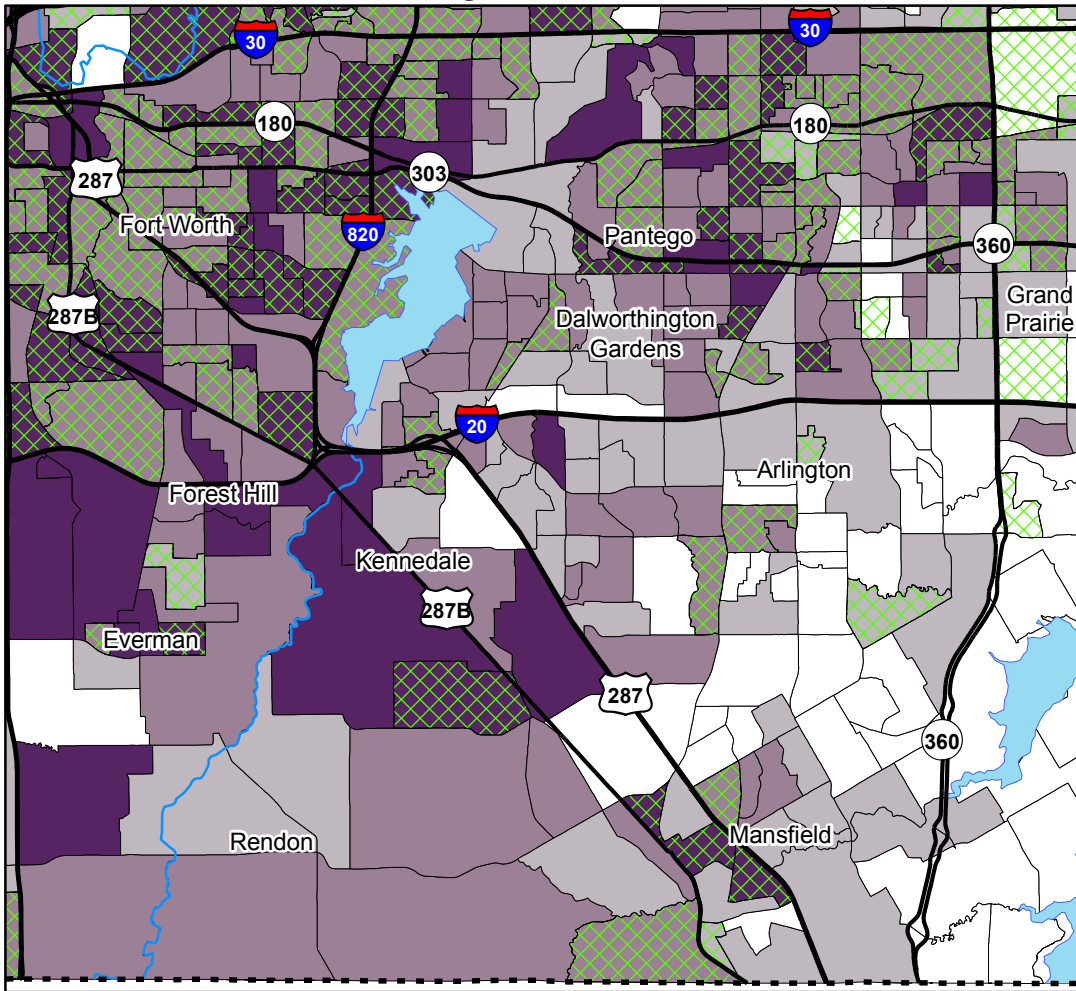
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Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

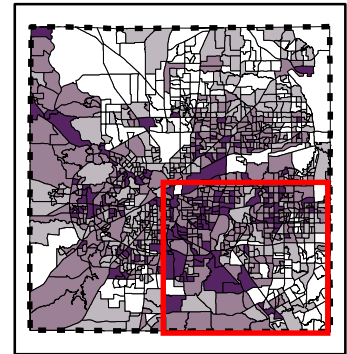


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Southeast Tarrant County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



**Tarrant
County**



Variables: Age 65 and Over, Below Poverty, and Persons with Disabilities

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

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a preliminary screening tool to identify 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, and Persons with Disabilities.

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



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In southeast Tarrant County, there are census block groups where the populations of individuals age 65 and over, below the poverty line, and with disabilities are all above the regional percentages. These areas are mainly along I820 in Fort Worth, US 287 and US 287 Business in Kennedale and Mansfield, and along SH 180 and SH 303 in the northern part of the southeast quadrant of Tarrant County. Areas with two variables above the regional percentage are mostly located in the north and west parts of the quadrant. North of US 180 and east of I820, as well as east of US 287 in Arlington and Mansfield. Most block groups with two variables above the regional percentage contain higher numbers of persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. Areas with only one variable above the regional percentage are mainly in the southern and eastern parts of the quadrant. South of I20 and east of US 287, most block groups are higher in either persons age 65 and over or persons with disabilities. In the northern part of the quadrant, and near the SH 303 and SH 360 intersection, the single variable above the regional percentage is persons below the poverty line. Areas where all three variables are below the regional percentages are predominantly in the southeastern part of the quadrant, with some block groups interspersed within the northeastern and western parts of the quadrant. Zero car households above the regional percentage are mainly located north of I20 throughout the northern part of the county. Some areas in southern Arlington and Mansfield, as well as in Everman, and south of Kennedale also see zero car households above the regional percentage.

Additional Demographic and Commuter Information

Tarrant County continues to experience a steady amount of growth. According to the American Community Survey's 2015 5-year estimates, since the 2010 Census, Tarrant County's population has increased by 5.8%. In comparison, the 16-county region has grown 6.3% in that same time period. Public transportation needs will change as the population grows. Additionally, within Tarrant County, 12.6% of residents speak

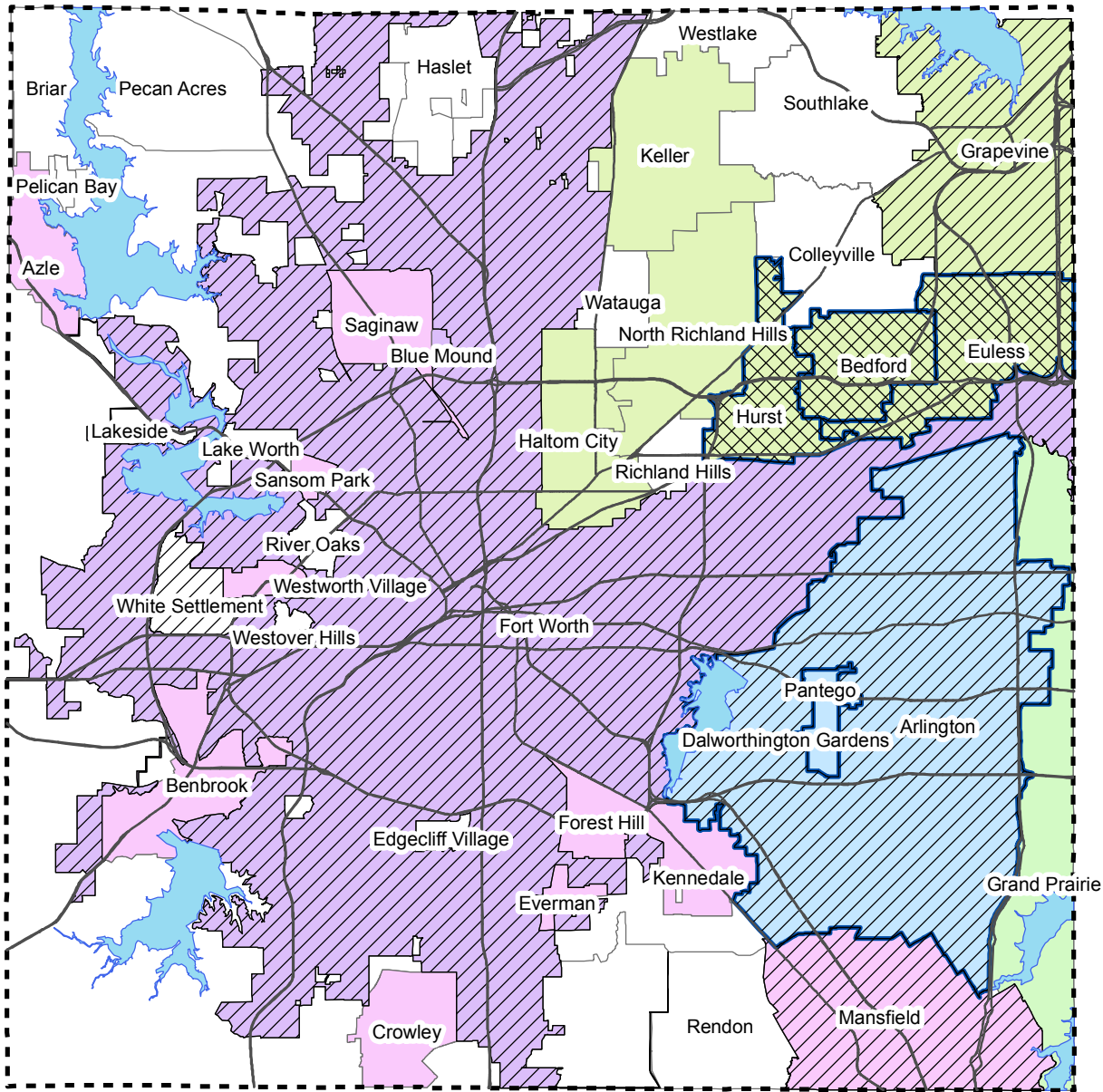
English less than very well and information about available transit services may be difficult for these individuals to access if it is provided only in English.









According to U.S. Census employer information as of 2014, Tarrant County is home to around 811,000 jobs, with around 473,000 employees also residing within the county. Around 338,500 workers commute into the county, while 332,000 people commute out of the county to access their jobs. 40% of employees living in Tarrant County reside within 10 miles of their place of employment, while commuters in the county generally enter from the east or south. The economy in Tarrant County is diversified, though around one-third of jobs are provided by the Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Retail Trade industries. Employees in the county are well educated, with around 46% of workers possessing either some college experience or a degree.

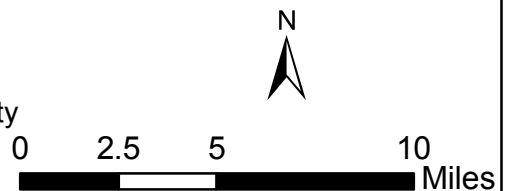
Transportation Resources

There are a handful of transportation options within Tarrant County. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA, previously referred to as "The T"), is the main transportation provider with services including local bus service in Fort Worth, Blue Mound and River Oaks. FWTA offers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service in same three cities. FWTA, in partnership with the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), operates bus service that connects downtown Fort Worth with Denton with stops in Alliance. FWTA, DCTA, and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) operate commuter vanpools in Tarrant County. In total, 48 vanpools originate in Tarrant County, while 53 vanpools arrive in the county as their destination. Additionally, the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) is jointly owned and operated by FWTA and DART and connects Fort Worth to Dallas and points in between.

Tarrant County Transportation Providers



-  Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA)
-  Handitran
-  Grand Connection
-  HEB Transit
-  Ride2Work
-  Northeast Transportation Service (NETS)
-  Tarrant County Transportation Services (TCTS)
-  Senior Citizens Services of Greater Tarrant County



There are also specialized transportation providers in Tarrant County including HandiTran that provides door-to-door, on demand transportation for individuals with disabilities and older adults in the city of Arlington. Northeast Transportation Services (NETS) and Tarrant County Transportation Services (TCTS) provide transportation for people with disabilities in participating cities. Catholic Charities of Fort Worth’s transportation programs provide transportation in Tarrant County to older adults and people with disabilities who are unable to access other transit providers.

My Ride Tarrant is a project of MHMR of Tarrant County that focuses on connecting Tarrant County residents to transportation resources and providers. Tarrant Riders Network is a coalition of stakeholders in Tarrant County that have a vested interest in improving public transportation options within the county.

See Appendix B-4, Private Carriers, for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with them to provide specific service for clients.

Despite the variety and complexity of services available in Tarrant County, gaps in service still exist due to factors such as eligibility and geographic limitations. Opportunities for improved coordination among transportation providers also exist where providers serve transit-dependent populations in similar geographies. There are some barriers for riders looking to travel between cities with different providers, rural areas and seamless connections into Dallas County.

OUTREACH MEETINGS

NCTCOG partnered with the Tarrant Riders Network (TRN) to conduct outreach meetings in Tarrant County. A total of eight focus groups and 120 interviews with individuals were conducted. 453 invitations were mailed and emailed to interested parties

throughout the county. A total of 231 people attended the meetings.

The TRN, over six months, engaged with stakeholders to identify ongoing and future transportation needs, barriers to success, and possible solutions to problems. Their two-stage engagement process started with seeking stakeholder input on the transportation domains of greatest concern on November 7, 2016. Participants included elected officials and their staff; state, regional, local agency representatives; health insurance companies, and publicly funded transportation providers. Consensus was achieved on several areas where significant attention and investment is needed. TRN stakeholders identified four areas as priorities:

1. Access to wellness,
2. Access to employment,
3. Access to community, and
4. Access to existing services.

Access Domains by Priority



Having determined the domains of greatest importance, participants identified top priorities for action. These priorities, identified by the largest number of participant votes, were:

1. Developing county-wide public transportation services.
2. Pairing vouchers with an array of public/private transportation options.
3. Using service participants as drivers and coordinating passengers for rideshare programs.
4. Eliminating barriers for individuals re-entering the community from the justice system.
5. Coordinating services with medical providers, pairing available appointments and trips.

As part of the second phase of public involvement, on May 17, 2017, the TRN held a general interest meeting with over 60 participants that included citizens, elected officials, government staff, and policy experts. The group developed a list of priorities and identified key barriers. The key barriers that were identified through the process are as follows:

- Lack of affordable, reliable, and dependable mobility options for all Tarrant County residents.
 - Lack of countywide mobility services.
 - Limited available transportation services infrastructure throughout the county.
 - Limited availability of affordable mobility options at needed days and times, particularly in the early evening and on weekends.
 - Limited on-demand mobility options, outside of those provided by for-profit providers.
 - Limited accessible mobility options provided by for-profit providers.
 - Lack of accessible complimentary infrastructure to mobility options.

- Lack of knowledge among the general public and the business sector of existing mobility options.
- Lack of flexible funding options to provide service when trips require multiple providers.
 - Lack of mobility services for employment, particularly for those who work outside of the traditional Monday- Friday, 8 – 5 p.m. schedule.
- Lack of coordinated infrastructure yields a process that is not user friendly and slows response time.
- Lack of reliable transportation services that can viably link a patient to the multiple locations and timing of wellness services.
 - Medical services, particularly specialty services, are limited. Transportation services that viably connect patients to care may not be available because they are scattered geographically across the county.
 - Critical services such as kidney dialysis and outpatient surgery centers may require patients to arrive before 6 a.m., hours before many transportation providers begin service.
 - To ensure continued stability and improvement; services such as kidney dialysis, wound care and rehabilitation may require a specific schedule of treatment, including weekend care. For those relying on services, other than the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, accessing appointments on weekends has traditionally required more expensive, for-profit providers, such as taxis.
 - Transportation to same-day, non-emergency medical services is highly limited often resulting in system inefficiencies.

See Appendix C-Tarrant County for the Tarrant Riders Network Strategic Outcomes and Priorities for more information on the public involvement process, as well

as additional details from stakeholder interviews.

TRANSPORTATION POLL

A transportation poll was also available to residents and stakeholders, online and in paper, and available in English and Spanish. The poll collected first-hand data about public transportation in the region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations. Individual poll data revealed personal experiences with transportation. Polls completed by organizations on behalf of their clients explained issues seen by advocates of the people served by each organization. Both forms of the poll provide personal views of the public transportation system. Respondents totaled 155 from Tarrant County.

34% of individuals indicated that they get a ride with a friend or family member while 17% use rail or bus service to get where they need to go. The top reasons individuals couldn't get where they needed to go included public transportation takes too long, there is no public transportation available, and no one is available to give them a ride. The transportation services that sounded most appealing to survey takers were community-wide dial-a-ride service, commuter bus service, and local bus service.

A number of individuals noted that transit connections to and from Arlington need to be improved for multiple trip purposes. Important destinations include Fort Worth and Dallas. Respondents from other suburban communities in Tarrant County, such as Azle, Forest Hill, Everman, and the mid-cities identified Fort Worth and the Fort Worth Veterans Administration Outpatient Clinic as destinations that need improved transit options. Additionally, some poll respondents noted that improved county-wide transportation was necessary.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The strategies below identify ways to address the most important public transportation needs stakeholders thought should be implemented over the next few years. These strategies build upon the progress

that has taken place since the 2013 Access North Texas plan and should be referenced when state and federal funds for public transportation become available.

Prioritized Strategies

Tarrant Strategy 1 Increase affordable mobility solutions:

1. Develop public-private and community partnerships, including joint pursuit of funding, to offset passenger and provider costs as a means of expanding access
2. Develop incentivized ride-sharing solutions

Tarrant Strategy 2 Connect communities county-wide and across the region

1. Expand and connect existing and future transportation services
2. Develop mobility solutions that meet community needs
3. Enhance communication and coordination between community partners and service providers
4. Coordinate trip scheduling and service information infrastructure

Tarrant Strategy 3 Expand public awareness, education, skills development, and traveler support services

1. Engage individuals with disabilities, older adults, families with lower incomes, those re-entering the community from the justice system, or others who lack access to reliable transportation
2. Provide ongoing education and skills development to engage employers, employer associations, community partners, medical practitioners, and transportation providers

Tarrant Strategy 4 Implement a holistic approach to wellness transportation

1. Integrate transportation-appointment service options
2. Collaborate with insurance companies, medical service providers and others to respond to barriers to wellness

Regional Strategies for Coordinated Public Transportation

Regional strategies may also be applicable to Tarrant County.

Regional Strategy 1 In areas with no public transit service, assess community needs and implement transit

Regional Strategy 2 Continue and expand projects that have a no-wrong-door approach to accessing transit or information about available transit

Regional Strategy 3 Create partnerships to simplify regional trips and reduce the number of transfers between providers

Regional Strategy 4 Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need

Regional Strategy 5 Work towards uniform, regional fares to simplify and reduce the cost of regional trips for riders

Regional Strategy 6 Advocate to integrate funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase available affordable public transportation

Regional Strategy 7 Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate non-traditional ways to deliver public transportation service, including partnerships among public transit agencies, private transportation providers, and transportation network companies

Regional Strategy 8 Identify, recruit, educate, and support influential champions for public transportation (elected officials, community leaders, or business leaders) to promote and support public transit through leadership or policy initiatives and to advocate for increasing investment in public transit

Implementing the Plan

Transportation providers and local stakeholders will collaborate to determine next steps, form needed partnerships, identify and pursue funding, and ultimately implement selected strategies. Organizations that want to implement a strategy listed in this plan will need to develop strong partnerships with transportation providers, stakeholder agencies, communities, and counties. NCTCOG staff is available to help

organizations identify potential partners and coordination opportunities. Organizations should also identify potential funding sources, which can be a mix of private and public funds, including funds from local, state, and federal sources. Local funds from public and private sources are important to demonstrate a community or organizational commitment to implementing specific strategies. Local funds are especially important to leverage state and federal dollars. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and NCTCOG have regular calls for projects to award federal funds that support projects and strategies listed in this plan.

Characteristics of a highly competitive project:

- Is multi-year. A three year request is recommended for projects providing transit service;
- Identifies an existing public transit provider or existing non-profit transportation provider when proposing to provide transit service;
- Targets individuals with lower incomes for requests of Urbanized Area Formula Program (Job Access/Reverse Commute projects) funds;
- Targets older adults and individuals with disabilities for requests of Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds; and
- Supports one or more strategies outlined in this plan.

If a project is funded through NCTCOG or TxDOT, staff will document the project funding in the Transportation Improvement Program, coordinate necessary approvals, develop contract agreements, and work with implementing agencies to manage the project and all compliance activities associated with federal or state funding.

APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Tarrant County, please see Appendix C-Tarrant, available online at

www.accessnorthtexas.org. The Public Transportation Toolbox (see Appendix B-3) highlights transit services that can be implemented in the near term to meet specific needs within Tarrant County.

See Appendix B-4, Private Carriers, for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

See Appendix B-5, Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool, for additional information on how the tool was developed.

See Appendix B-6, Transportation Poll, for more information about the transportation poll.

