

CHAPTER 09



KAUFMAN COUNTY



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Access North Texas is to document the public transportation needs for seniors, 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 Kaufman County. This chapter will give an overview of existing services, research conducted and collected, the public outreach meetings, the transportation poll used to collect individualized input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Kaufman County.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

In addition to other transportation options and services, The Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) operates a commuter vanpool program within the North Central Texas region. DCTA's vanpool program service area includes Kaufman County. Within Kaufman County, there are 6 vanpools in operation by another transit agency that have origins within the county. Future vanpools within Kaufman County will be operated by DCTA. The number of vanpools may change month to month as the program expands offering shared commuter transportation opportunities.

STAR Transit provides demand-response service as well as Medicaid transportation within parts of Kaufman County. The Medicaid transportation must be scheduled at least one (1) day in advance, and is available from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday. Users must call STAR Transit to request a ride. Fares are based on trip distance and range from \$2 to \$12 for the general population, with a 50% discount for qualified reduced fare riders (seniors 60+, veterans, people with disabilities). All STAR Transit Medicaid

transportation vehicles are ADA-accessible, and drivers are trained in first aid and CPR.

STAR Transit's STARNow demand-response service is available within the cities of Kaufman, Terrell, Mesquite and Seagoville and operates from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday. Trips must originate and end within the same city. Trips may be booked in advance, but only for the same day. Riders may book by calling STAR Transit at least 30 minutes in advance, or they may book by using the STARNow mobile app, available on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Fares are \$2 per trip, or \$1 for qualified seniors 60+, veterans, and people with disabilities. Children 12 and under may ride free when accompanied by a paid fare rider. The STARNow service in Seagoville can connect riders to the DART Buckner Station, part of the DART Green Line.

Finally, see Appendix B 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). Organizations can also contract with them to provide specific services for clients.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Demographic data in Kaufman County was analyzed to identify populations in particular need of public transportation. The county's population has grown sharply since 2015, expanding 13.3% to a total of 123,804 per the 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. In comparison, the Dallas / Fort Worth metropolitan area grew by 8% in the same period. As the county and region continue to grow, alternatives to travelling by car will be needed to reduce congestion and emissions.

Within Kaufman County, 5.8% of the population is of limited English proficiency. This is lower than the regional percentage, but promotional efforts

for existing and new services should be inclusive of limited English proficiency populations.

In Kaufman County, 15% of the population was recorded as low-income. These populations may have less reliable access to personal automobile transportation, or no access whatsoever. Efforts should be made to identify geographies within Kaufman County which have larger concentrations of poverty and determine if they are currently served by existing transit services.

Additionally, 13% of the population in Kaufman County reports having a disability, compared with 9.5% in the region overall. While some individuals with disabilities have full mobility, special consideration should be made for accessibility in any public transportation service being proposed for the county. Outreach to populations with disabilities should determine what opportunities

and services are unavailable to them due to challenges in securing reliable transportation.

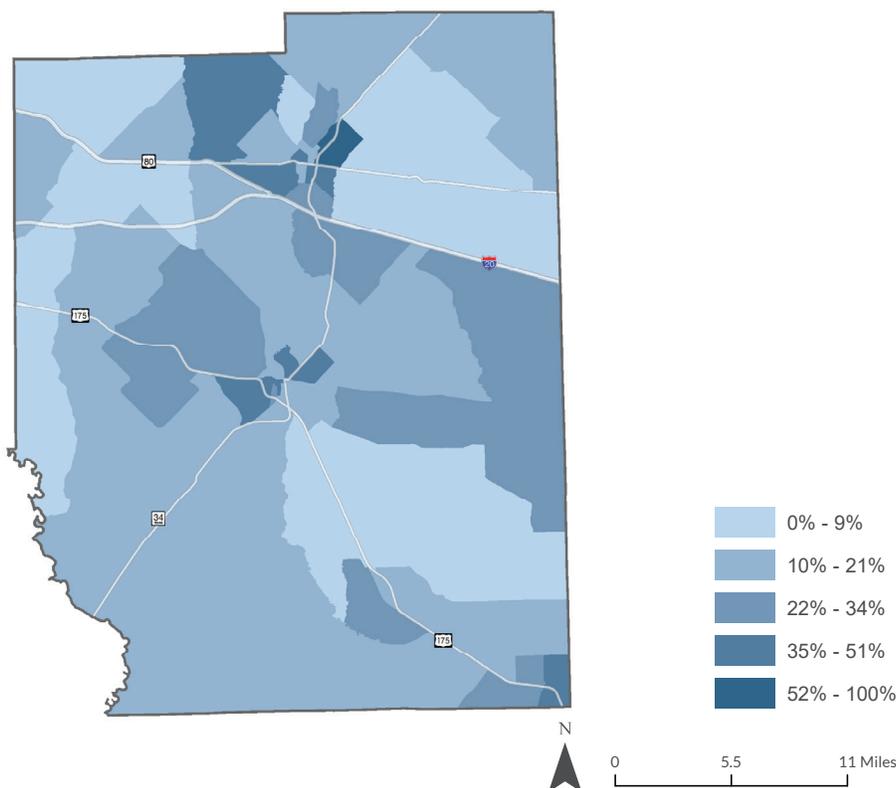
PROCESS

Outreach

Public outreach for Kaufman County was conducted through a series of virtual public meetings, surveys, and public mapping data. Outreach efforts were advertised through email invitations, the Access North Texas website, NCTCOG's Local Motion publication, a press release, and social media.

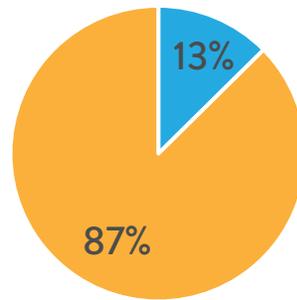
NCTCOG conducted two public meetings conducted over Zoom, and a survey shared by the Community Council of Greater Dallas (CCGD). Invitations to attend the public meetings, fill out the survey, and share the information about Access North Texas were sent to 50 people. Three comments were received in the online

Kaufman County Low-Income Individuals



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Data aggregated to the Census block group level

Percentage of Individuals with a Disability in Kaufman County



- Percent of Individuals with a Disability
- Percent of Individuals without a Disability

public meetings, and 28 responses were received through the surveys. The CCGD survey received eight responses from participants in Kaufman County, while the online and paper surveys received ten responses. Five members of the public attended the online public meetings, including representatives from STAR Transit, local government, and a human services organization.

Data Sources

The planning process for Access North Texas involved North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) staff, community stakeholders, transportation providers, and community members. Through virtual meetings, members from each county prioritized its main concerns about transit access in their area.

Another form of receiving data from Kaufman County residents and stakeholders was a transportation survey; made available online in both English and Spanish. Due to COVID-19 limitations, paper copies were available upon request or through transportation partners. The survey helped NCTCOG staff to collect first-hand data about public transportation in the region from riders and organizations that work with transit-dependent populations.

All information gained through outreach meetings and transportation survey was gathered to develop the prioritized strategies for Kaufman County.

TAIT Tool and Environmental Justice

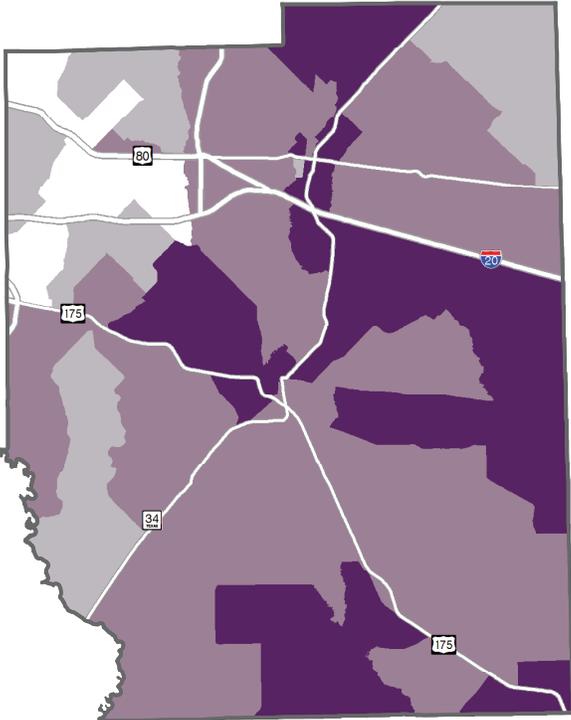
The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) identifies communities who face transportation disadvantages and may have greater potential need for public transit. This tool is updated by the North Central Texas Council of Governments and is based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

Analysis

Based on information from TAIT, in Kaufman County there are several census block groups where populations of individuals age 65 and over, below poverty, and with disabilities are above the regional percentages. Additionally, there are seven census block groups with all three variables above the regional percentage that also have a greater percentage of zero-car households than the region overall.

The three-variable census block groups are concentrated in central Kaufman County, parts of northern Kaufman County, and southeastern Kaufman County, running along the eastern

Kaufman County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



Legend

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



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT) is a 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, and Persons with Disabilities.

I-20 corridor, central and southern US-175 corridor, and northern State Highway 34 corridor. Municipalities in the three-variable block groups include Kaufman, Terrell, Mabank, and Poetry. Additionally, the unincorporated areas bounded by I-20 to the north, TX-34 to the west, and US-175 to the south contain several of the three-variable census block groups.

Of the two-variable census block groups, the majority appear to exceed the regional percentages for population over age 65 and population with disabilities, not population below the poverty line.

The only census block groups without any variables above the regional average are in the northwestern part of the county, roughly bounded by US-165 to the south and US-80 to the north. This includes the city of Forney.

Development of Strategies

The prioritized strategies were developed once information from outreach meetings, the transportation poll, and research data was compiled and analyzed for patterns and gaps of service. Observations and recommendations were coded into five (5) main categories to identify themes across the 16-county region and inform regional goals. Those goals provide a framework for the Access North Texas and individual strategies were identified for Kaufman County to further those goals and provide a plan for transit providers and organizations in future implementation of services. Drafted goals and strategies were provided to the stakeholders for additional feedback and review prior to the finalization of the plan.

FINDINGS

In Kaufman County, 28 people completed the Access North Texas survey. While the majority of respondents did not report missing trips due to a lack of transportation, improved service areas and service times made up 50% of the reported desired enhancements. Of particular focus was the expansion of same-day service for demand-response transportation within the county, with demand-response making up 63% of the responses for desired modes. As of writing, this is only available in the STARNow service areas.

While the STARNow service is available in Terrell, it is not available in the cities of Kaufman, Mabank, or Poetry, nor is it available in the unincorporated areas which contain many of the three-variable census block groups identified in the TAIT.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals and strategies below identify ways to address the most important public transportation needs stakeholders identified as needing to be implemented over the next few years. The strategies build upon the progress and feedback that has been provided since the 2018 Access North Texas plan and should be referenced when state and federal funds for public transportation become available.

Implementing the Plan

Agencies and organizations looking to develop transit projects aligned with these strategies may find support through NCTCOG's Transit Strategic Partnerships Program or the TxDOT Call for Projects. Competitive proposals will demonstrate innovative solutions, strategic value, sustainability, implementation capacity, and evidence of

REGIONAL GOAL

KAUFMAN COUNTY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Need and Challenges

- A) Invest in programs that facilitate transportation trips to medical and healthcare appointments

Implement Services by Enhancing Transportation Options and Expanding Where Service Gaps Exist

- A) Improve existing public transportation options to better fit the needs of riders and households with 1 or zero cars by increasing service frequency and availability
- B) Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region without comprehensive service and support regional integration of new services.
- C) Establish additional assistance or more specialized public transportation options for customers who are not ADA paratransit eligible or physically capable of utilizing regular public transportation services

Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies

- A) Work with regional and local organizations to increase ease of travel across municipal and county boundaries
- B) Develop partnerships across transportation providers to improve access to trips in the evening and weekends

Support Public Transportation Recovery and Growth

- A) Promote safe and healthy practices on public transportation services

Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options

- A) Enhance communication and outreach programs to improve awareness of existing or new transportation options.
- B) Conduct travel training to educate the public on available services and policies

collaboration. Most importantly, the proposal's needs assessment will need to be supported directly by county specific strategies identified in this plan. The most competitive proposals will demonstrate how the proposed project or service will utilize one or more strategies to enhance transit accessibility for transit-dependent populations. More information on the Transit Strategic Partnerships Program can be found at www.nctcog.org/strategicpartnerships-transit. More information on the TxDOT Call for Projects can be found at www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/local-assistance.html

REFERENCE TO THE APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Kaufman County, please see Appendices A-E, available online at www.accessnorthtexas.org.

See Appendix A, Summary & Status of 2018 to review previously adopted goals and strategies that were included in the 2018 Access North Texas plan.

See Appendix B, Get-A-Ride Guide, for a list of public and private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These providers are an additional transportation resource that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective), or organizations can contract with to provide specific service for clients.

See Appendix C, Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool, for additional information on how the tool was developed and how to use it.

See Appendix D, Data & Analysis, for copies of the transportation surveys, statistics, and affiliated county-based maps.

See Appendix E, Outreach Meeting and Supplemental Information, for a list of previously held virtual meetings by county with a copy of the presentations.