

NAVARRO 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 Navarro County. This chapter will give an overview of the planning process, research conducted and collected, the public outreach meeting, the transportation poll used to collect personal input on public transit needs, and the prioritized strategies for Navarro 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 Navarro 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

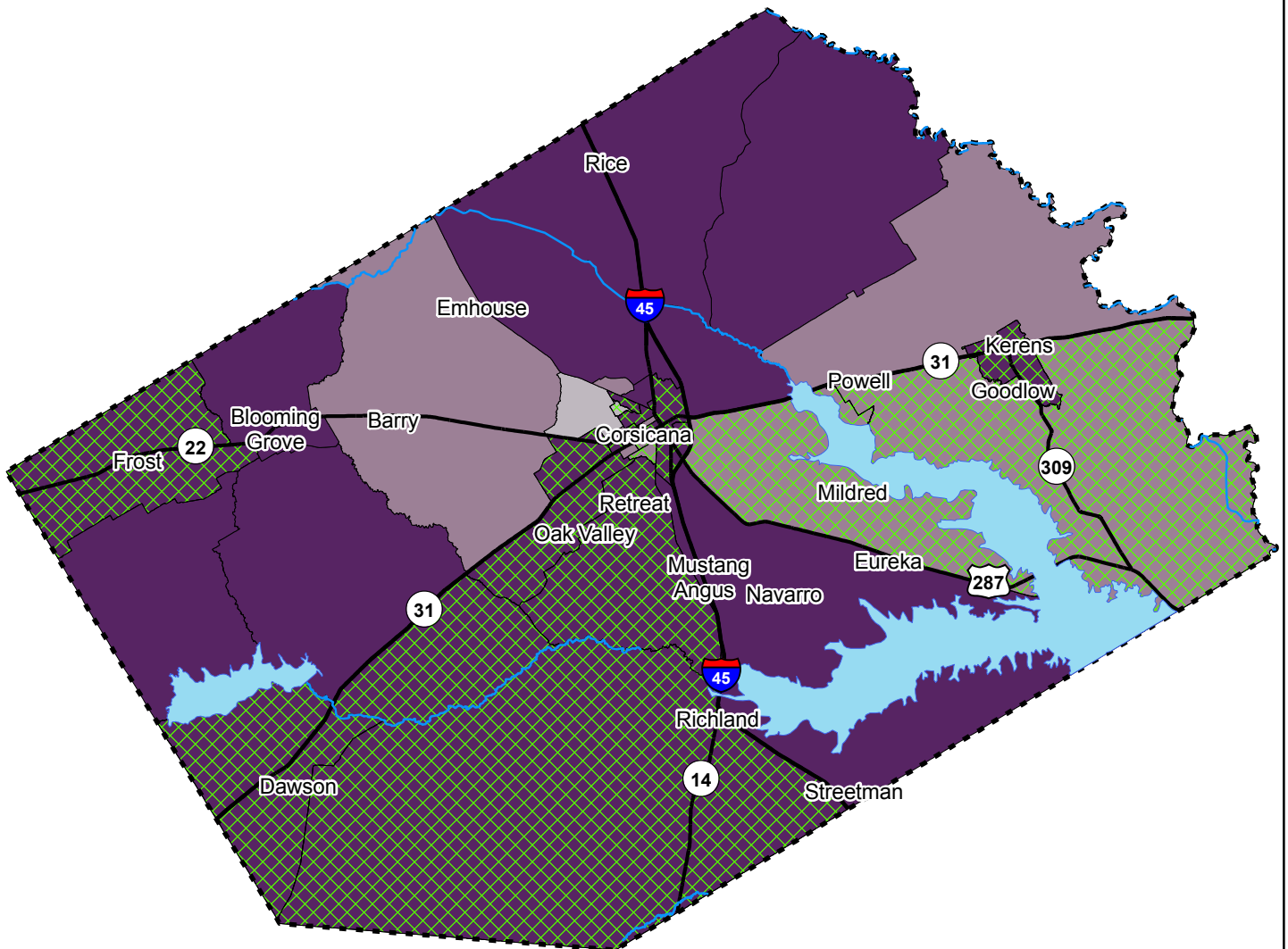
develop a mapping tool to identify locations where transit-dependent individuals may live; and identifying existing public transportation providers. The people-based research included reaching out to communities, organizations, and individuals to obtain feedback about the existing public transportation system and how it could be improved. Feedback was obtained through a public outreach meeting 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 having 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.






Navarro County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)



0 2.5 5 Miles



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



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

In Navarro 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 percentage. These areas above the regional percentage cover the majority of the county, especially along the I45, SH 22, SH 31 west of I45, and SH14 corridors. Eastern and northwestern Navarro County along SH 31 and SH 309 are home to the census block groups with only two variables above the regional percentage, with all of those block groups containing a higher percentage of persons age 65 and over and persons with disabilities. The block groups in Corsicana with two variables above the regional percentage are predominately persons below the poverty line and persons with disabilities. The western part of Corsicana, north of SH 22, has the only block groups where only one variable is above the regional percentage, which is persons with disabilities. There are no areas in Navarro County where all three variables are at or below the regional percentage. The northern part of the county is the primary area where zero car households are not above the regional percentage. Southern and eastern Navarro County is dominated by areas with higher than regional percentages for zero car households. A high concentration of persons living below the poverty line lives within Corsicana. All of Navarro County has a higher proportion of persons living with a disability.

Additional Demographic and Commuter Information

Navarro County continues to experience some growth. According to the American Community Survey's 2015 5-year estimates, since the 2010 Census, Navarro County's population has increased by 0.8%. In comparison, the 16-county region has grown 6.3% in that same time period. Additionally, within Navarro County, 11.1% 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, Navarro County is home to around 14,500 jobs, with around half of those workers also living within the county. Nearly 7,500 people commute into the county for employment, while around 12,000 people commute out of the county for work. Around 38% of Navarro County employees live within 10 miles of their jobs, while the majority of commuters into the county from the north and northwest. The economy is somewhat diverse in Navarro County, with manufacturing, educational, health care and social assistance, and retail trade industries providing around 54% of the jobs. Employees in the county are fairly well educated, with around 40% of workers either having some college experience or a degree.

Transportation Resources

Community Transit Services (CTS) is the primary general public transportation provider and serves Navarro County.

See Appendix B4, 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.

OUTREACH MEETING

A joint public meeting for Ellis County and Navarro County took place at Navarro College in Waxahachie on November 9, 2016. 174 invitations were mailed and emailed to interested parties throughout the county. Meeting announcements and information were also posted online, and invitees were encouraged to share the invitation with partner organizations and clients to help promote the meetings. A total of 24 people attended the meeting.

Following a general welcome and presentation about public transit within the county, staff led an interactive keypad polling session to instigate discussion of transportation issues with attendees. Based on discussion question answers, community members prioritized current issues in the county and re-prioritized strate-

gies from the 2013 Access North Texas Plan.

Comments and discussion during the outreach meeting identified that Navarro County residents needed reliable transportation to medical appointments both locally and in Dallas County. In particular, the cost of trips, locally or regionally, can be cost prohibitive for riders with low incomes. 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. Currently, riders are concerned about booking return trips based on limited operating hours.

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 12 from Navarro County.

83% of individuals indicated that they get a ride with a friend or family member while 42% of respondents said they use a bus or van of a community organization or other agency. 50% indicated they use existing public transit. The transportation services that sounded most appealing to poll takers were local bus service, community-wide dial-a-ride service, commuter bus service, and bus routes between communities. Poll responders identified that the available level of transportation isn't meeting the need and additional capacity is needed. Improved connections are needed to Dallas County as well as clinics in Waco and Tyler.

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.

Navarro County Prioritized Strategies

Navarro Strategy 1 Improve local and regional access to medical appointments in Dallas County

Navarro Strategy 2 Improve transportation options for local access to job and education opportunities

Navarro Strategy 3 Explore partnerships to increase the affordability of fares for those most in need

Navarro Strategy 4 Expand transportation services to provide service for late-shift workers in Dallas County

Navarro Strategy 5 Explore partnerships with local employers, medical centers, cities, and other agencies to fund additional transit services

Navarro Strategy 6 Conduct targeted marketing to local agencies about existing transportation resources, including transit resources for veterans

Navarro Strategy 7 Work with 2-1-1 at least twice a year to ensure public transportation resources are up-to-date

Navarro Strategy 8 Create and maintain a coordinating committee to discuss ongoing transportation needs

Navarro Strategy 9 Establish consistent and effective driver recruitment and retention programs for public transportation services to address difficulties in retaining drivers for vehicles in Navarro County

Navarro Strategy 10 Explore partnerships with existing transportation providers to reduce the number of transfers for regional trips

Regional Strategies for Coordinated Public Transportation

Much like the county strategies, the regional strategies may also be applicable to Navarro 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 Navarro County, please see Appendix C-Navarro, 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 Navarro 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.