COLLIN 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 Collin 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 Collin County.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES.

Collin County is supported by several different transit providers and services. DART operates bus, rail, and GoLink microtransit services in the southwest portion of the county. DART fixed route bus and rail operates 7 days a week between 5:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. Schedules for each individual route vary. Single ride fares for DART buses start at $2.50, $1.25 reduced. Day passes, midday passes, a.m./p.m. passes, and 31-day passes are available for use on DART buses and rail. A local day pass is $6.00, $3.00 reduced. Regional day passes are also available for $12.00 and include TRE service West of CentrePort Station, Trinity Metro service, and DCTA service. DART GoLink zones in Collin County operate from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, with Saturday service available in some zones. GoLink one-way fares are available for $2.50, $1.25 reduced, and can only be purchased on the GoPass app or using the GoPass Tap Card. Cash can be added to the GoPass Tap Card in person at several retail locations such as participating 7-Eleven stores.

Local and regional multi-trip passes can also be used for GoLink but only through contactless payment. GoLink vehicles does not accept cash fares, paper passes or vouchers.

DART also operates Collin County Rides for qualified residents of Wylie, Allen and Fairview that are age 65 or over or have a certified disability. Registered residents may travel anywhere within Collin County. Travel may include connecting to or traveling within the DART service area for any purpose as long as the origin or destination of the trip is within the resident's city. The program operates from approximately 5:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. on Sundays and holidays. Fares are calculated at the time of scheduling a trip and trip cost will be given at the time of booking. Once approved for the program, riders may purchase fare funds for their subsidy wallet at a 75% discount. For instance, for a value of $500 to be added to the wallet riders must pay just $125. Riders are not able to book a trip if the calculated trip fees exceed the available wallet balance. There is an additional $2 fee for each additional passenger or personal care attendant. These are paid at the time of scheduling and are included in the total trip cost.

DART operates an additional service known as Collin County Transit. This service provides on-demand shared rides to qualifying riders from McKinney, Melissa, Celina, Lowry Crossing, Princeton and Prosper. In addition to the residency requirements, riders must be low-income, 65 years of age or older, or have a qualifying disability. Fares are $3 for travel between participating service area cities or $5 for travel to/from service area cities and Collin County. The service is operated Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

In the City of Frisco, DCTA operates curb-to-curb demand response transit service to eligible Frisco residents for trips within the City of Frisco and designated portions of Plano. Riders must be Frisco residents who are 65 years of age or older, disabled, or who require transportation for medical-care related purposes. The service is operated Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Fares for trips traveling within Frisco are $3 while fares for trips traveling outside Frisco are $5.

The City of Richardson offers transportation service to Richardson residents aged 50 and over. The City's van service operates Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Service is provided anywhere within the city limits of Richardson for 25 cents each way or 50 cents round trip. Similarly, the City of Sachse offers a demand response transportation option to senior residents. Rides are provided to senior centers and appointments within the city limits. Daily drop off

and pick-up fees are $0.50 one way or $1.00 round trip.

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. As of May 2022, DCTA operated up to 21 vanpools with origins in Collin County and 3 vanpools as destinations in Collin County. Trinity Metro, another transit agency within the region, also operated 1 vanpool with a destination in Collin County. The number of vanpools may change month to month as the regional program expands shared commuter transportation opportunities.

With such a complex network of services available to riders in Collin County, assistance is often needed navigating what's available. My Ride North Texas 2.0 is a regional mobility management program to improve the coordination of transportation services and expand travel

Collin County Persons with Disabilities

0% - 6%
7% - 10%
11% - 13%
14% - 18%
19% - 26%

N

0   4.5   9 Miles
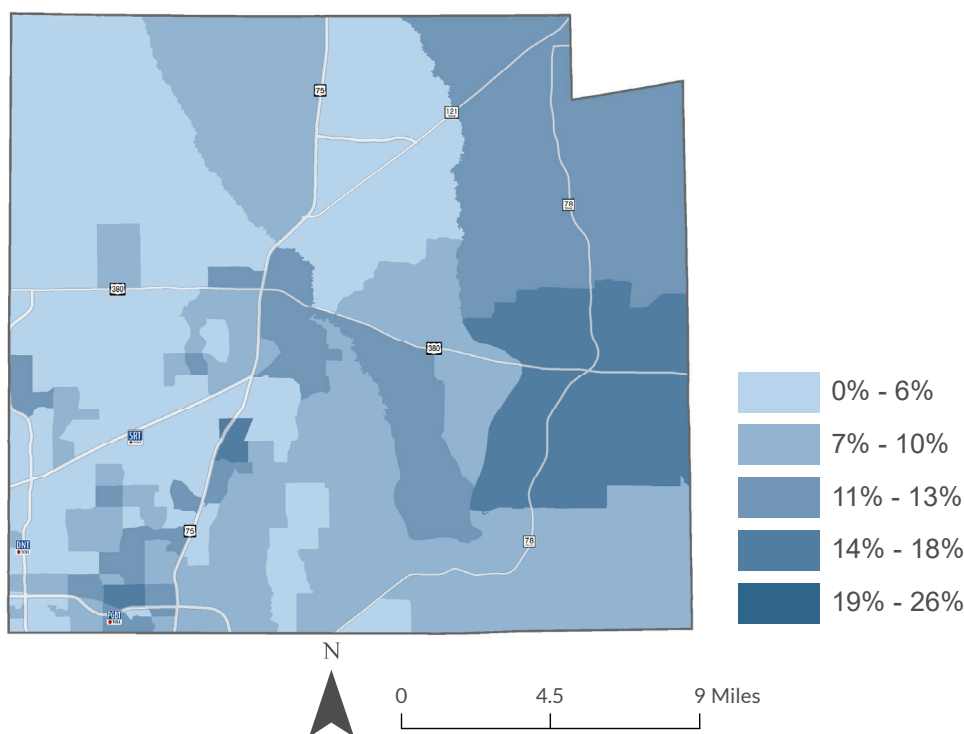
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Data aggregated to the Census tract level

navigation. The program is operated through partnerships between the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Community Council of Greater Dallas, and My Health My Resources Tarrant County. My Ride North Texas serves all residents of North Central Texas but strives to connect aging populations and individuals with disabilities to transportation services and inform regional medical trips through public transit. In addition to direct assistance from travel navigators, the program offers the Get-A-Ride-Guide as a resource which provides information on various transportation resources throughout the North Central Texas region.
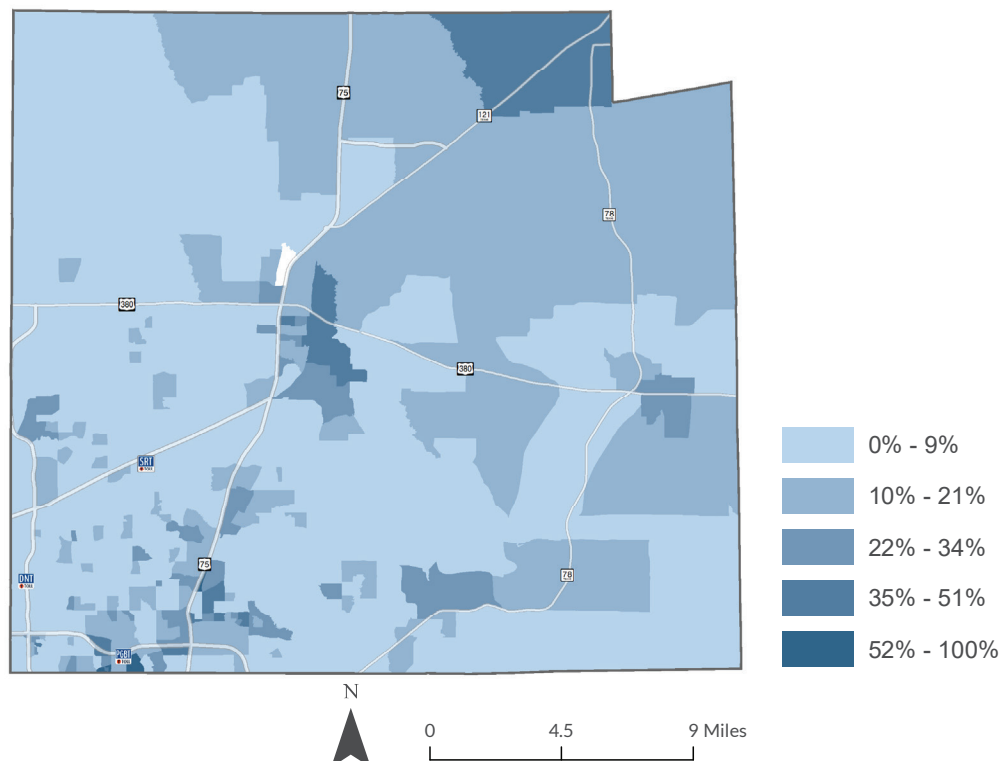
Finally, see Appendix B for a list of private transportation providers operating in the 16-county region. These private providers are an additional transportation option that individuals can use for personal trips (if cost-effective). Organizations can also contract with them to provide specific service for clients.

Naturally, gaps in service still exist in Collin County due to a variety of factors. At least one study has been developed to address this. In 2021, NCTCOG completed the Collin County Transit Study. The purpose of the study was to develop a comprehensive public transportation plan that can be strategically implemented and is complementary to other planning efforts. The study identified three transit investment strategies of increasing intensity that could be employed to enhance transit services and facilities in Collin County and to better meet growing mobility and access needs. The analysis supports coordination with existing public transportation providers to develop transit in the county. A complementary study on the Irving to Frisco corridor was also completed in 2021.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Collin County continues to experience exceptional growth. According to the American Community

Collin County Low Income Individuals

0% - 9%
10% - 21%
22% - 34%
35% - 51%
52% - 100%

N

0   4.5   9 Miles

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

Survey's 5-year estimates, Collin County's population grew by 13% between 2015 and 2019. This puts it in the top 3 counties in our region for population growth over that period. Collin County's population is expected to reach more than 1,600,000 by 2045. According to those same estimates, the county has 973,977 people and 341,163 households. 104,035 of those people are 65 years of age or older, making up just over 10% of the population, just slightly lower than the percentage for the region. Collin County includes more than 67,000 individuals with disabilities, making up 6.9% of the population, as well as more than 86,000 low-income individuals who make up 8.9% of the population. These populations are concentrated in various areas throughout the county (see maps below). The areas with higher concentrations of these populations should be a particular priority in efforts to promote existing or new transit services.
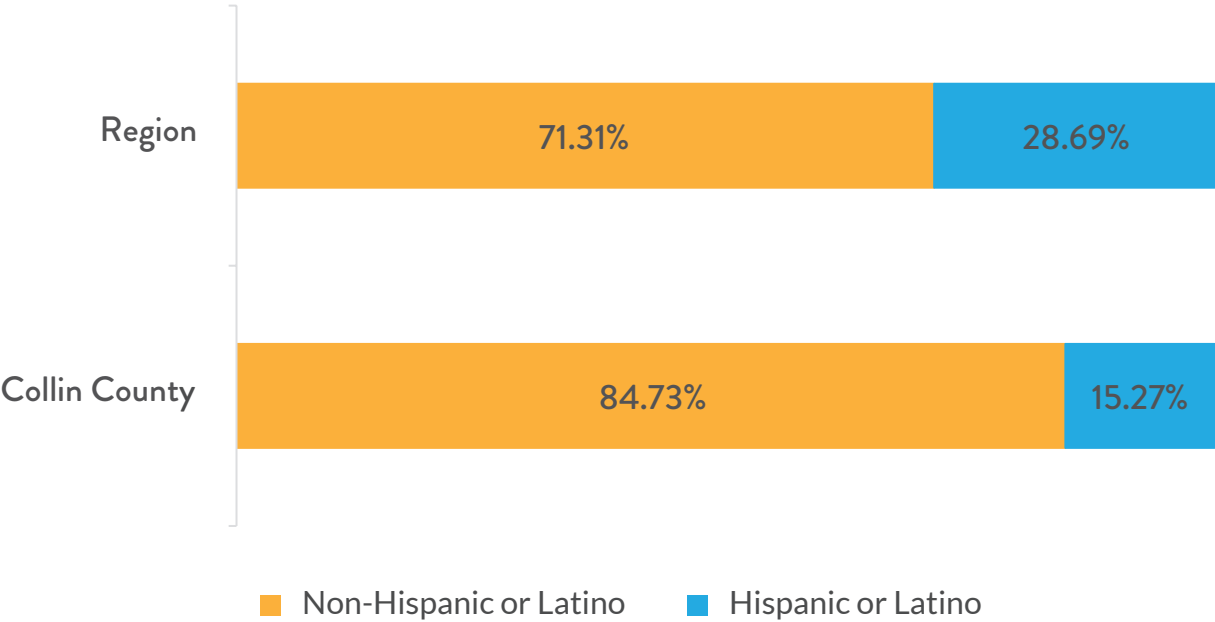
Collin County's racial composition generally matches the region, with the exception of a slightly lower black population at 9.7% and an Asian population that is more than double the regional percentage at 15.2%. In terms of the ethnic breakdown, the county has a higher percentage of individuals with Hispanic or Latino origin at 84.7% compared to 71.3% in the rest of the region. At 2.8%, zero-car households are slightly higher but still comparable to the regional percentage. The percentage of individuals with limited English proficiency is slightly lower than the regional percentage at 9.7%. Collin County's veteran population is very similar to the regional percentage, at 5.8%. The promotion of new or existing services in Collin County should take these populations into account.
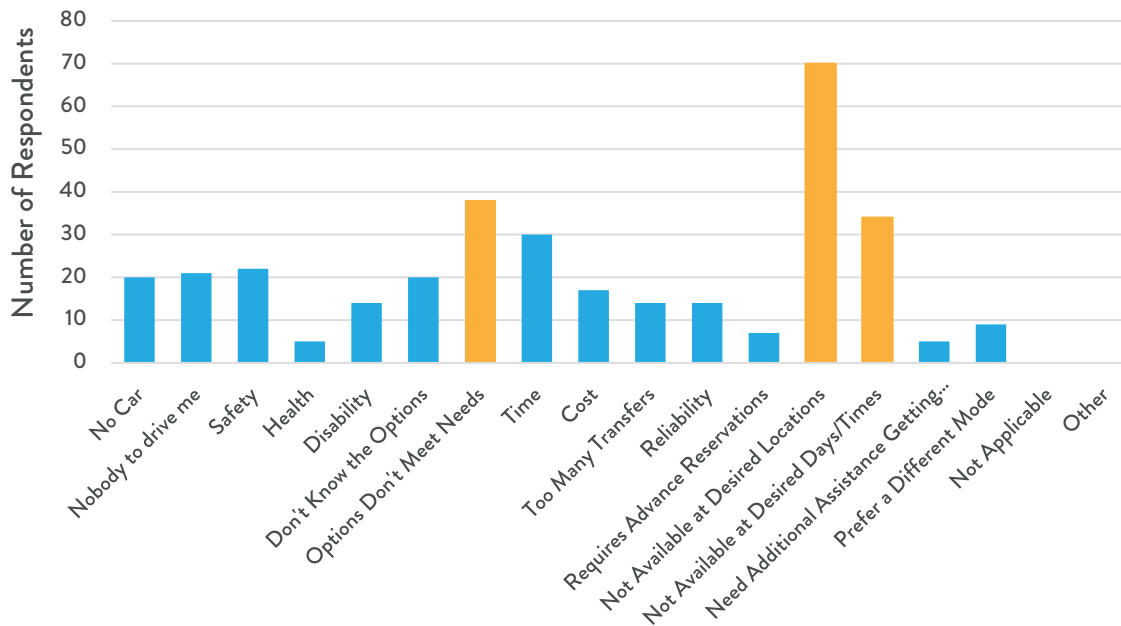
OUTREACH PROCESS

Public outreach for Collin 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.

Collin County Ethnicity
Compared to Regional Ethnicity

	Non-Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino
Region	71.31%	28.69%
Collin County	84.73%	15.27%

■ Non-Hispanic or Latino   ■ Hispanic or Latino

Collin County
Reported Barriers to Mobility

NCTCOG conducted a total of three virtual outreach meetings in Collin County. Email invitations were successfully shared with 181 stakeholders. 9 individuals registered for these meetings and 6 attended. Attendees included members of the public as well as representatives from local transit providers and non-profit agencies.
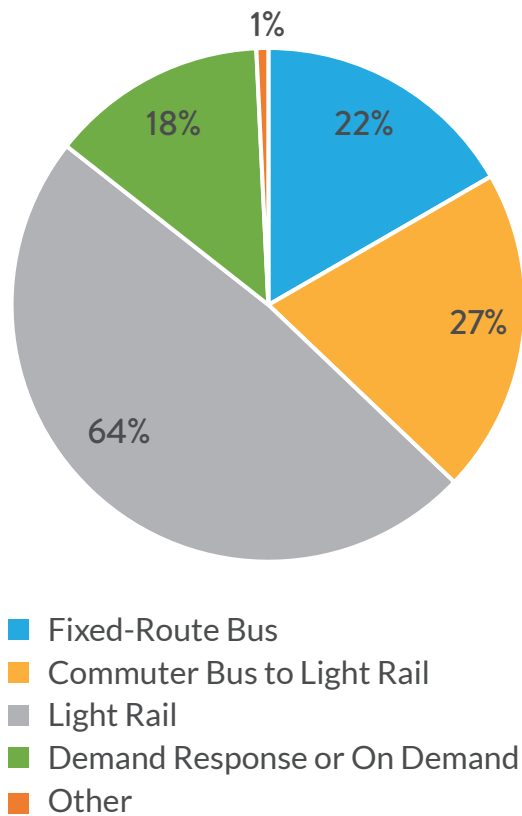
A transportation survey was also available to residents and stakeholders, online and in paper, and available in English or Spanish. This survey collected input on public transportation in the region. A similar survey was also available online for organizations and agencies that work with transit-dependent populations. In total, 86 responses were received for Collin County. Of these, 70 were received from Collin County residents and 16 were received from agency/organization representatives. Finally, 4 Collin County comments were received through Map Your Experience, a virtual public mapping tool that allows respondents to anonymously share comments and concerns by location.

Data Sources

The planning process for Access North Texas involved 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.

Discussion with Collin County residents and other stakeholders highlighted several key concerns. While a handful of transit options exist in Collin County, residents feel the services are restrictive in terms of eligibility, service hours, or destinations. Attendees at meetings noted needing connections to schools, employment, and volunteer work. Residents would also like to see service that creates better connections to existing DART services. McKinney was one location mentioned that it was felt could benefit from a light rail connection. Several attendees mentioned being limited by a one-car household in an area that largely does not provide public transit for the general public. Safety concerns were also common irrespective of mode type.

Desired Transportation Modes in Collin County

1%

22%

18%

27%

64%

- Fixed-Route Bus
- Commuter Bus to Light Rail
- Light Rail
- Demand Response or On Demand
- Other

These concerns, legitimate or perceived, create a barrier to meaningful use of the available services in Collin County and beyond. When discussing preferred modes, expansion of light rail was considered extremely desirable. However, an on-demand service that's open to the general public was also mentioned as an interim step to fixed-route. Overall, residents are looking for a sustainable service that ideally connects to existing successful services in the DART network. Finally, meeting attendees expressed that champions for these improvements are needed in local government to prioritize them now.

Another form of receiving data from Collin County residents and stakeholders was a transportation survey; made available online and translated into 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.

Responses to the transportation surveys totaled 86 for Collin County. Of these 70 were from Collin County residents and 16 were received from agency/organization representatives. The top 3 reported barriers were lack of connections to desired locations, existing options that don't meet rider needs, and lack of service on desired days and times. The survey responses differed slightly from the meeting discussions with most respondents indicating they are not missing any trips. However, similar to the meeting discussions, the most desired transportation enhancement reported was an expansion of service areas. Respondents would also like to see higher frequency and expanded service times. One respondent mentioned needing over an hour of time to go just five to six miles on existing transit options. Over half the responses mentioned specific connections representing desired destinations across the county, underscoring the lack of meaningful transit options currently available. Similar to the meeting discussion, connections to and throughout McKinney, Frisco, and Allen came up multiple times in survey responses. Express buses and light rail were again popular desired modes. All information gained through outreach meetings and transportation survey was gathered to develop the prioritized strategies for Collin 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 NCTCOG and is based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Based on information from TAIT, in Collin County there are several census block groups where populations of individuals age 65 and over, below poverty,

Collin County Transit Accessibility Improvement Tool (TAIT)
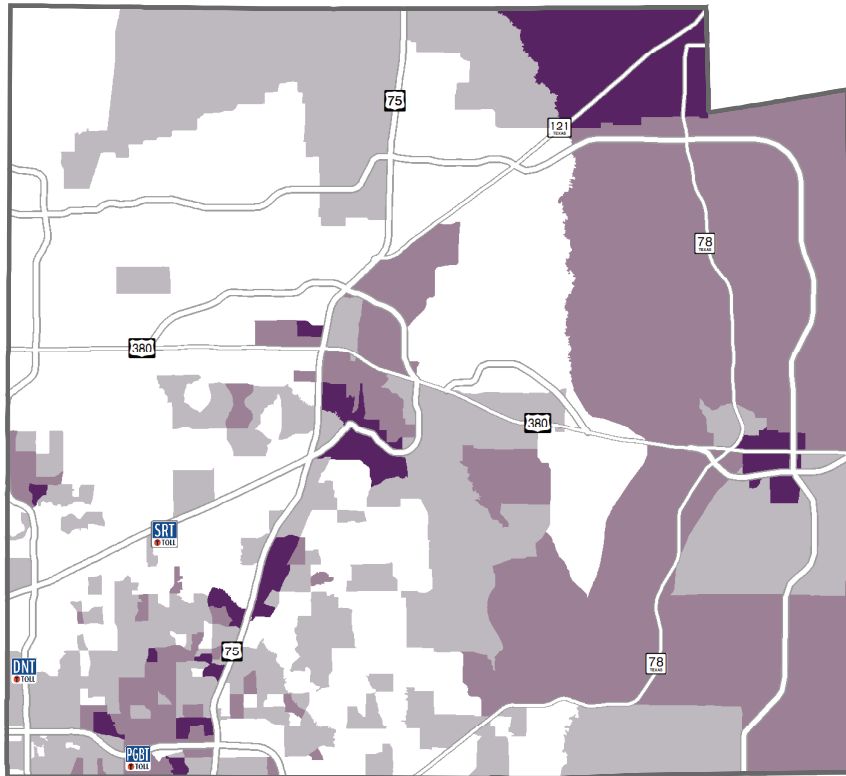
Legend

All Variables At or Below
Regional Percentage

One Variable Above
Regional Percentage

Two Variables Above
Regional Percentage

All Variables Above
Regional Percentage

06   .5   13 Miles

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.

N

and with disabilities are above the regional percentages.

Analysis

The highest conglomeration of census block groups within Collin County where the three variables are all above the regional percentage is along US-75 and in the eastern portions of the county. The area including the cities of Westminster and Anna in the northeastern portion of the county represents one of these hot spots. The City of Farmersville is another similar area in the far eastern portion near the intersection of SH 78 and US-380. The majority of the remaining eastern portion falls into the category of two variables above the regional percentage. Other areas of note for meeting both two and three variable thresholds exist near the intersection of US-380 and US-75 and on either side of US-75 moving south. The northwestern portion of the county has the largest amount of block groups with no variables above the regional percentage. In terms of individual variables, the highest number of low-income individuals exists near the cities of Westminster and Anna in the northeastern portion of the county and near the intersection of US-380 and US-75. Individuals with disabilities are found most prominently in the far eastern portion of the county. Concentrations of the senior population are distributed more widely across the entire county. Finally, vehicle ownership is high in Collin County, but block groups with the highest number of zero-car households align with the TAIT three-variable hotspots near the intersection of US-380 and US-75.

Development of Strategies

The prioritized strategies were developed once information from outreach meetings, the transportation survey, and research data was compiled and analyzed for patterns and gaps of service. Observations and recommendations were coded into five 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 Collin 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 Collin County, 86 individuals completed the Access North Texas survey. Every single respondent indicated some type of barrier preventing them from getting where they need to go. The combination of all outreach efforts, including surveys and meetings, revealed that residents are eager to see increased transit connections across the county. Existing services only serve portions of the area or are limited to riders that meet certain eligibility requirements. Multiple respondents mentioned wanting expanded service open to the general public. The number of desired connections specified is too great to name them all individually. Currently, most residents do not feel they can live in Collin County without owning a personal vehicle, putting pressure on families in single-car households to meet lifestyle demands. The high level of population growth in this county will only exacerbate the challenges to transportation access. Many are worried about what they will do when they age to a point where they are unable to drive themselves around and would find relief if robust transit options were available.

While most respondents indicated they are not currently missing trips, the number that are will only continue to increase over time. Of those that are missing trips, most are going to employment or social/entertainment destinations. Residents of Collin County consistently shared a desire for light rail service connecting to the larger DART network, as well as other fixed route options.

They are looking for broader coverage in terms of service areas, service times, and frequency that aligns with their needs. 70 of the survey respondents indicated that transit service is currently not available at the locations they need to go and 34 indicated it is not available at the days or times they need. One survey respondent put it best by saying that their time is valuable and the time it currently takes to get to their destination on public transit is too great to justify. Finally, they are also looking for service that feels safer, as many feel uneasy with the perceived lack of safety on transit services they've experienced elsewhere.

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

The **Collin County Transit Study** identified transit investment strategies of increasing intensity that could be employed to enhance transit services and facilities in Collin County and to better meet growing mobility and access needs. The analysis supports coordination with existing public transportation providers to develop transit in the county. The near-term (1-5 years) phase of the investment strategy most closely aligns with the goals and strategies in this 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

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 **https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/local-assistance.html**

REFERENCE TO THE APPENDIX

For more detailed information about Collin 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.

REGIONAL GOAL	COLLIN COUNTY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
Plan and Develop Transportation Options by Assessing Community Need and Challenges	A) Develop potential connections from commuter bus lines to light rail service B) Invest in programs to assist with filling gaps in public transportation and facilitate service for work-related trips
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 eligible trips for specialized public transportation services to include employment, social, religious, and well-being trips C) Expand public transportation services to key destinations throughout the region without comprehensive service and support regional integration of new services.
Coordinate with Transportation Providers, Public Agencies, and Stakeholders to Increase Efficiencies	A) Improve coordination among public transit providers and cities that lack public transportation B) Work with regional and local organizations to increase ease of travel across municipal and county boundaries C) Identify, evaluate, and implement where appropriate, non-traditional ways to deliver and support public transportation, including but not limited to partnerships among public transit agencies, private transportation providers, transportation network companies, shared use mobility programs, and volunteer drivers
Support Public Transportation Recovery and Growth	A) Promote safe and healthy practices on public transportation services B) Explore sources of local revenue for public transportation through partnerships, sponsorships, and contracting for service C) Advocate to integrate funding sources to maximize efficiency and increase availability of affordable public transportation options
Promote Access and Information about Available Transportation Options	A) Identify, recruit, educate, and support influential champions for public transportation (elected officials, community leaders, or business leaders) to promote and support public transportation through leadership, policy, or funding initiatives