

Memorandum

Memorandum No: 25-104

Date: January 23, 2025
To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Ryan Henderson, City Manager 
Re: Ongoing Discussions on Transportation Solutions

Anna neighbors have reached out to city officials and staff expressing concern with the lack of affordable transportation service for seniors and those with disabilities within Anna and to medical appointments outside of the Anna area. Staff has reviewed several options to get elderly neighbors and neighbors with disabilities to and from medical appointments within and outside of the city limits. Previously, staff has reviewed establishing a volunteer-led program, joining Collin County Transit, and establishing a rural transit district. At the recommendation of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), our area's metropolitan planning organization, staff reviewed three additional options for transit service: partnering with a regional transit provider via interlocal agreement, partnering with a small public transit provider via interlocal agreement, and procuring service through a 3rd party contract with a private provider. Staff has also been researching funding opportunities for the potential program and other program considerations.

Previous Transit Discussions

Volunteer-led Approach: Staff has considered and researched a volunteer-led approach by coordinating discussions between the Community Enhancement and Compliance Division and the faith-based community in Anna. There is great deal of liability if facilitated through the City with volunteers and an option that area churches do not have the resources to organize or commit to regularly.

Collin County Transit: Staff have has researched joining an existing transit district. Previously, the City of Melissa was a part of the Collin County Transit program and we've received feedback from neighbors asking staff to explore joining their program. In the past, the hope was that after the 2020 Census, the McKinney Urban Transit District (MUTD) which Collin County Transit serves would grow to expand north based on increased density in Anna so that we could join their program. The transit district was instead redrawn to primarily encompass McKinney, Frisco, and their surrounding cities making the option of joining the McKinney Urban Transit District no longer viable. The City of Melissa is still able to participate in Collin Country Transit until previously allocated funds run out – which is estimated to be in approximately 5 years.

Rural Transit District: After learning Anna was unable to join the Collin County Transit program, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) suggested the City work with Collin County to create a county wide Rural Transit District (RTD) to access federal funding. The Collin County Commissioners Court is the lead agency in establishing an RTD and will be engaging with local municipalities to explore this option. According to Collin County Commissioners, there is no timeline for establishing a Collin County RTD. Collin County is [one of eight counties](#) in the state of Texas not participating in an RTD.

Recent Transit Service Provider Research

At the recommendation of NCTCOG, staff has researched three additional options for transit service for elderly neighbors and neighbors with disabilities:

Partner with a Regional Transit Provider via interlocal agreement:

- NCTCOG recommended we look at Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) to connect with their regional system via interlocal agreement. After brief discussions, the potential for a partnership exists in the long-term but not in the short-term, and the DCTA Board would need to have discussions about strategic growth of their services and whether or not Anna could fit into the equation.

Partner with Small Transit Provider via interlocal agreement

At the recommendation of NCTCOG, staff has connected with three smaller providers in the area to determine their ability to provide services to Anna neighbors:

- Senior Center Resources and Public Transit (SCRPT Transit): SCRPT Transit, operating out of Hunt County, is open to expanding to Collin County and a partnership with the City of Anna. SCRPT would provide transit service for seniors and people with disabilities at approximately \$120 an hour. Estimating a Monday through Friday service from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., the program would cost about \$374,400 annually. If this is an option Council would consider, staff could further explore utilizing funds through the TxDOT Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program.
- SPAN Transit: SPAN Transit, operating out of Denton County, is currently focused on meeting demands on post-pandemic increased ridership in their current transit area. Right now, they are facing capacity restraints in the area they currently serve resulting in service denials and are not able to expand. SPAN is open to and interested in partnership with Anna in the longer-term future when resources allow.
- STAR Transit: The STAR board has determined that South Dallas County is the area where they would like to target for growth and are not interested in expanding to our area at this time.

Procure service via a 3rd-party contract

Without the ability or willingness to join an existing transit service or public provider, staff has reviewed procuring a third-party contract to provide transportation services.

- TRIPPP Consulting Partnership: TRIPPP Consulting works with cities to create a microtransit partnership that provides on-demand rides for individuals within a service area. TRIPPP partners with Uber to provide the basis for the microtransit system and employs Maritius to provide Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) for the rideshare area so disabled neighbors are well-served in a capacity that a stand-alone partnership with Uber couldn't provide. City funding for the program would provide a discount for eligible residents in using ride-shares within the program's boundaries. Per their most recent quote, they estimate a rideshare and WAV budget of \$135,938 combined and \$135,000 in one-time implementation costs for the first year. After the first year, they anticipate the rideshare and WAV budget to grow slightly each year as use

grows. The rideshare budget could generally be adjusted by the city, but the implementation costs could not.

- Via Transportation Partnership: Via offers a microtransit service that provides on-demand rides for individuals within a service area. Their microtransit system utilizes what would be a dense network of virtual bus stops established in partnership with the city that neighbors could access a ride to and from. Users would request a ride by calling the designated number or utilizing a smart phone app. Users could travel anywhere within the designated zone – city limits – on the Via buses. Per their most recent quote, employing three buses and 1 WAV within the city would cost \$70,000 upfront and \$540,000 operationally for the first year. Employing five buses and 1 WAV would cost \$92,000 upfront and \$840,000 annually.
- Voucher Program: There are smaller private transportation providers in the North Texas area that describe their services as medical transportation to doctor’s appointments. If one was interested in exclusively partnering with us, we could provide vouchers to neighbors to utilize their service at little to no cost to them. Generally, we estimate a budget of \$25,000 to \$50,000, but it would depend on the willingness of the private provider to partner at that amount and the cost per trip would likely depend on the private provider’s frequency to our area. If we established a budget of \$25,000, and the average ride cost was \$250, it would provide an estimated 100 rides for neighbors. If the average ride cost was \$100, it would provide an estimated 250 rides. Once the budget was depleted for the year, no more vouchers would be given. Setting eligibility, establishing verification of eligibility, and establishing max number of vouchers per person would be needed.

Funding Opportunities

Transit Strategic Partnership with North Central Texas Council of Governments

The North Central Texas Council of Governments Surface Transportation Technical Committee recommended \$1.2 million total in Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) or Carbon Reduction Program funds for the City of Anna to implement new transportation services at 50% Federal/50% local match. The city will need to identify a transportation provider or identify if a 3rd party contract is needed and be approved by the Regional Transportation Council. NCTCOG staff have advised city staff that the RTC has a strong preference that these funds be used for a public transportation provider and that if the city is going to request to utilize them with a private provider, we should demonstrate good-faith efforts to explore options with local public providers.

Federal Earmark Funding

In conversations with the private providers, they have suggested the city consider pursuing Federal Earmark funding set aside for transportation. Typically, these requests range in size from one to five million dollars, which can be utilized over the course of a multiple-year period. A request for this type of funding would need to be made through the Offices of Congressman Self and Senators Cruz and Coryn. Typically, their offices put out information before the end of March each year to their local communities soliciting potential requests and choose 10-15 to advocate for at the federal level. If Anna submitted a request for this funding, the earliest it would be approved would be December 2025 and the earliest funds would be released is anticipated to be June 2026.

Considerations

The considerations below are important for understanding the difficulty in solving the lack of transportation access in the City of Anna.

Program Purpose

Some of the programs staff researched would be best suited to serve seniors and people with disabilities trying to get to medical appointments in and outside of city limits, whereas others would largely serve all Anna neighbors within city limits. Staff has received limited feedback from neighbors who would be interested in one idea or the other. Some seniors reach out to look for transportation for medical appointments, other seniors are seeking transportation to our senior programming, and another group are parents of teenagers with disabilities seeking transportation for their children to be able to get to work independently. In determining a best path forward, it is useful to understand any program the city participates in will likely not fully serve interests.

Anna Medical Offices

Within Anna, there are approximately 30 locations serving medical needs. There are currently six dental offices, two orthodontal offices, two chiropractic offices, two physical therapy offices, an urgent care, and an emergency room. In anecdotal conversations with neighbors interested in medical transit, they have described their needs as transportation to both general practitioners and more specialized medical offices that may exist in areas with hospitals and medical complexes like McKinney, Allen, and Plano have. Telehealth services may cover some of what lacks locally. Looking into the future, there are vacant medical office spaces within the city limits that will likely be filled in time, and Economic Development staff continue to seek opportunities to add more medical options within the city. At this point in time, it is difficult to know what types of medical offices neighbors need that don't exist within city limits, where they go to receive those medical services, and what medical services may exist within Anna in the future.

Senior Living

Within Anna, there are two senior living developments. Parmore Anna Senior Living is an independent living community focused on providing quality housing towards individuals 55 and up. They opened in 2024 and were approved for 185 apartment units. The Villages of Hurricane Creek – North is anticipated to be senior living with quadplexes and single-family homes attached only. They have been approved for 115 units, but we do not have an estimated timeline in place for the project and no site plan has been approved. The more senior living units built in the city, the greater the need may exist for senior transit to medical appointments.

Data

Data in establishing neighbors' overall need is limited to qualitative information provided by neighbors that have reached out to the city. In 2022, The City facilitated the statistically valid Anna Community Survey for the first time in which residents ranked ten facets of livability with the city like economic health, public safety, etc. on both quality and importance. Mobility, a category encompassing ease of travel by car, walking, public transportation, and more was ranked lowest in quality but also lowest in importance. The conclusions we may draw from this could include that public transportation isn't a high priority for the public at-large, but the data doesn't tell us much about the depth of need for the smaller group of neighbors who the programs are intended to serve. Many cities that staff have researched transportation program examples from had more quantitative data from prior programs that they used to establish need.

City of Melissa and Census 2030

North Texas is undergoing a lot of growth. After the most recent census, the boundaries of the MUTD changed based on population density. This could change again after the next census. When the City of Melissa's transit funding runs out, their citizens may be in the same position the City of Anna neighbors are with a lack of access to transportation. In the future, the City of Anna may have more options than we do now, or we may have another city to explore programming with.

Unique Position

The City of Anna is in a unique position being in one of only 8 counties in the state without an urban transit district, which typically serve seniors and people with disabilities. Five of those eight counties are primarily served by a metropolitan transit authority, putting only two others in a position similar to ours. Within Collin County, there are only a few cities not served by the MUTD or by DCTA.

Concluding Thoughts and Next Steps

As Anna continues to grow, there are many factors that may affect the need or interest in city-funded transit for seniors and individuals with disabilities to their doctors' appointments. These include the availability of medical services within town, the amount of senior living developments that are built within the city, as well as the general expansion of telehealth services and how that affects medical services. Furthermore, as Collin County continues to grow, the opportunity for the City of Anna to participate in a regional transportation program seems likely, but with whom and at what point we're able to participate are much more nebulous. What also makes addressing this need complex is that there seem to be limited ways to start small with providing this type of transit. Some options seek to serve all neighbors which is not the priority for the program, and would not serve those in need of transportation to doctor's appointments very well. Access to medical appointments would be secondary to general public transit for those. Most options also come with a hefty price tag that is difficult to expend without a pilot program or better data establishing need.

A presentation of this material will be presented to the Neighbor Engagement and Inclusion Advisory Commission at their February meeting for their input and recommendations to the City Council in this regard.

c: Taylor Lough, Assistant City Manager
Greg Peters, Assistant City Manager
Carrie Land, City Secretary
Management Team