

Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) participated in a collaborative effort with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and local governments to perform a complete evaluation of the NHS for the first time since its inception in 1996. Staff recommendations from this evaluation were presented to the RTC and transmitted to the FHWA in June 2019. The Federal Highway Administration and TxDOT returned with a set of suggested changes. Staff worked with both partners to review the suggested changes and arrived on a revised list of modifications on July 17, 2020. [Electronic Item 3.1](#) contains a detailed listing of the proposed modifications to the NHS.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pavement and Bridge Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transit Asset | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System Performance/Freight/CMAQ |

3.2. Endorsement of State of Good Repair Grant Application Submitted on behalf of Trinity Railway Express, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, and Trinity Metro

Presenter: Jeff Hathcock, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Endorsement for the Grant Application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the Federal-State Partnership for the State of Good Repair Program, submitted on behalf of Trinity Railway Express, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), and Trinity Metro will be requested.

Background: In June 2020, the FRA announced the Federal-State Partnership for the State of Good Repair Program. The Notice of Funding Opportunity indicated availability of funding for capital projects across the United States to repair, replace, or rehabilitate qualified railroad assets to reduce the state of good repair backlog and improve intercity passenger rail performance. The grant submittal deadline was July 27, 2020. Staff requests endorsement for the submittal of a grant application in partnership with Trinity Railway Express, DART, and Trinity Metro that will help the region improve the state of good repair of transit assets, enhance passenger/freight rail service performance, and improve overall freight/passenger integration. The total grant budget requests approximately \$58 million (\$30 million in federal and \$28 million in local match) with BNSF Railway, DART, and Trinity Metro providing the required local match. More information is available in [Electronic Item 3.2](#).

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Pavement and Bridge Condition |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transit Asset | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System Performance/Freight/CMAQ |

3.3. **Approval of Application for Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative Grant Program: S.M. Wright**

Presenter: Natalie Bettger, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval to support and provide funding for the City of Dallas application for the 2020 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative Grant Program will be requested. This is for the S.M. Wright Corridor.

Background: In July 2020, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued the announcement for the Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative to develop model deployment sites for large-scale installation and operation of advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment. The Notice of Funding Opportunity that details the \$60 million grant program for Fiscal Year 2020, as well as the application requirements are available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=327953>. Applications are due to the USDOT by August 31, 2020. Details are provided in [Electronic Item 3.3](#).

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Pavement and Bridge Condition |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transit Asset | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System Performance/Freight/CMAQ |

3.4. **Approval of Application for Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative Grant Program: Goods Movement**

Presenter: Thomas Bamonte, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval to support and provide funding for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) application for the 2020 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative Grant Program will be requested.

Background: In July 2020, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued the announcement for the Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative to develop model deployment sites for large-scale installation and operation of advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment. The Notice of Funding Opportunity that details the \$60 million grant program for Fiscal Year 2020, as well as the application requirements are available at

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=327953>. Applications are due to the USDOT by August 31, 2020. Details are provided in [Electronic Item 3.4](#).

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety Pavement and Bridge Condition
 Transit Asset System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

1:20 – 1:35

4. **Orientation to Agenda/Director of Transportation Report**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 15
Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG

1. Presentations on the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) COVID-19 #00X Program
2. Conduct of Future RTC Meetings
3. Thank You to Loyl Bussell, P.E., TxDOT Fort Worth District Engineer for Service to the Region and Congratulations on Retirement
4. Comments on the 2021 Unified Transportation Program
5. Denton County Transportation Authority Withdrawal of Transit Survey Request/Participation with Statewide Effort
6. Agreement Approval Reducing the Amount of RTC Local Funds Needed in the \$300,000 Program
7. 2020 TxDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program Call for Projects – Submittal Deadline for Applications Due to District Offices October 1, 2020 (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/safety/transportation-safety/statewide-safety-initiatives>)
8. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Upcoming Events (<https://www.dfwcleancities.org/dfw-clean-cities-meetings>)
9. Air Quality Funding Opportunities for Vehicles (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/funding-and-resources/fundingvehicle>)
10. Status Report on Ozone ([Electronic Item 4.1](#))
11. Environmental Protection Agency Proposes to Retain Existing National Ambient Air Quality Standard for Ozone (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/ozone-pollution-continues-decline-under-president-trump-epa-proposes-retain-existing>)
12. Update on Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Program Funding ([Electronic Item 4.2](#))
13. August Online Input Opportunity Notice ([Electronic Item 4.3](#))
14. Public Comments Report ([Electronic Item 4.4](#))
15. Recent Correspondence ([Electronic Item 4.5](#))
16. Recent News Articles ([Electronic Item 4.6](#))
17. Recent Press Releases ([Electronic Item 4.7](#))

1:35 – 1:45

5. **COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Funding (COVID-19 #00X Program)**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10
Presenter: Christie Gotti, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will request Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of COVID-19 Infrastructure Program projects in [Electronic Item 5.1](#), a proposed federal/Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) funding exchange with Denton County, and the ability to

Background: amend the Transportation Improvement Program and other planning/administrative documents to incorporate the projects. Due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak, the economies of the United States, Texas, and the Dallas-Fort Worth region have suffered large setbacks and there is an urgency to stimulate the economy. North Central Texas Council of Governments staff recommends funding projects that need expedited action and meet one or several of the RTC policies outlined in Mobility 2045, such as better school integration, improved freight connections, and new regional bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These projects will also inject much needed money into the local and state economies. In order to facilitate expedited implementation of several projects, a federal/RTR funding exchange is proposed with Denton County as well. [Electronic Item 5.2](#) contains additional details about the program and projects being requested.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Transit Asset
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

1:45 – 1:55

6. **High-Speed Rail and Hyperloop Update**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10

Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will present recent progress by Texas Central Partners on high-speed rail from Dallas and Houston. In addition, staff will provide an update on the Hyperloop Certification Center. Staff has been informed that North Central Texas Council of Governments will not be considered in Phase 3 of the Virgin Hyperloop One Certification Center.

Background: Texas Central Partners has made significant progress on high-speed rail between Dallas to Houston. In addition, the Tier II high-speed rail environmental is underway between Dallas, Arlington, and Fort Worth.

Regarding the Hyperloop Certification Center, [Electronic Item 6.1](#) contains correspondence from Virgin Hyperloop One indicating the region will not be included in the Phase 3 competitive selection. The North Central Texas Council of Governments appreciates the hard work by former Regional Transportation Council Chair Andy Eads, Denton County Judge, and Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams. Also included in [Electronic Item 6.1](#) is information regarding Virgin Hyperloop One's interest to go from Fort Worth to Laredo. [Electronic Item 6.2](#) contains correspondence requesting a presentation by these six impacted Metropolitan Planning Organizations to the Texas Transportation Commission.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Transit Asset
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

1:55 – 2:05

7. **Metropolitan Transportation Plan Policy Bundle and Transportation Development Credits**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10

Presenter: Kevin Feldt, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will brief the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) on results from the fourth round of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Policy Bundle survey, including the plan to distribute available Transportation Development Credits (TDCs). The RTC will be briefed on TDC distribution for successful policy bundle participants.

Background: The MTP Policy Bundle Program was created to encourage entities like local governments, school districts, and transportation agencies to voluntarily adopt a minimum of 50 percent of the list of policies identified in Mobility 2045. By voluntarily adopting these policies, participating entities will receive TDCs to offset local funds for federal transportation projects.

Recommendations in Mobility 2045 consist of policies, programs, and projects reflecting the region's priorities and support Mobility 2045 goals. As construction of infrastructure projects alone cannot achieve the goals of Mobility 2045, a voluntary list of policies available for adoption by local agencies was designed to encourage the development of alternative, strategic solutions. By voluntarily adopting 50 percent of these policies, participating agencies are slated to receive TDCs to offset local funds for federal transportation projects. MTP Policy Bundle applications have been reviewed and staff will present a draft recommendation for distributing TDCs to successful entities. [Electronic Item 7](#) includes a draft recommendation of TDC distribution for successful policy bundle participants.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

Safety Pavement and Bridge Condition
 Transit Asset System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

2:05 – 2:15

8. **Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10

Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will provide an update on performance metrics to help understand the impacts of COVID-19 to the transportation system.

Background: Four performance metrics have been developed that will be tracked through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery process: 1) travel behavior response to COVID-19, 2) financial implications to traditional revenue sources, 3) benefits of travel behavior responses to areas of RTC responsibility, and

4) prioritization of infrastructure improvements that offset unemployment increases. Additional information is provided in [Electronic Item 8](#).

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- Transit Asset
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

2:15 – 2:25

9. **Federal Highway Administration Measure Target Reaffirmation or Revisions**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10

Presenter: Chris Klaus, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will update the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) on latest activities related to regional transportation targets for federally required performance measures.

Background: In December 2015, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law. The FAST Act requires certain performance measures be included in the long-range metropolitan transportation planning process. These measures were established by a series of four rulemakings: Safety, Infrastructure Condition, System Performance/Freight/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, and Transit Asset Management. In 2018, the RTC adopted 2020 and 2022 targets for a subset of these measures related to infrastructure condition, congestion, and air quality.

Each performance measure rulemaking consists of several specific performance measures. This fall, the RTC will have an opportunity to adjust 2022 targets for these measures. Analysis considering observed trends, project implementation, and the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 will impact the decision on whether target adjustments will be recommended. RTC action is anticipated on September 10, 2020. Please refer to [Electronic Item 9](#) for more details. This effort will generate financial and policy discussions on resources needed in current and future transportation planning.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- Transit Asset
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

2:25 – 2:35

10. **Regional Trails Videos (Postponed from the March 12, 2020, Meeting)**

Action Possible Action Information Minutes: 10

Presenter: Karla Weaver, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will highlight the series of “Trail of the Month” videos.

Background: The Sustainable Development team developed a series of videos highlighting various regionally significant shared-use trails within the Dallas-Fort Worth region through a series of “Trail of the Month” videos.

These videos detail benefits of the trail facilities including economic development, regional connectivity, increased mode share for active users, and improved quality of life within the community. Staff will provide a brief description of the videos developed to date. The videos are posted to North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) website and local governments are encouraged to share them with the public through social media platforms. Visit NCTCOG's Local Trails webpage, <https://www.nctcog.org/trans/plan/bikeped/bikeweb>, to view the Trails of the Month videos.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- Transit Asset
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

2:35 – 2:45 11. Clear Path™ Technology Program

- Action
- Possible Action
- Information
- Minutes: 10

Presenter: Jeff Hathcock, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will brief the Regional Transportation Council on the Clear Path™ Technology Program.

Background: North Central Texas Council of Governments staff has been coordinating with each of the freight and transit rail agencies in the North Central Texas region to identify the benefits associated with implementation of the Clear Path™ technology system. As outlined in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Mobility 2045, passenger rail service is anticipated to increase with the planned implementation of new and expanded service on existing freight rail corridors throughout the region. Increasing the rail networks' operational efficiency is key to expanding passenger service on existing corridors.

The Clear Path™ system is a technology solution that monitors and forecasts train traffic conditions in critical transportation gateways, such as Chicago, to help reduce train congestion. Clear Path™ is enabled by continuous real-time feeds of railroad train dispatching and infrastructure status data used to maximize the efficiency of the freight and passenger rail network. Clear Path™ technology will increase capacity of the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) rail network and allow DFW metroplex rail system agencies to exchange timely, accurate, and actionable information on train movements throughout the region, by facilitating inter-carrier operations. Implementation of Clear Path™ technology would advance transit operation opportunities as designated in Mobility 2045.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed:

- Safety
- Pavement and Bridge Condition
- Transit Asset
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ

12. **Progress Reports**

Action Possible Action Information

Item Summary: Progress Reports are provided in the items below.

- RTC Attendance ([Electronic Item 12.1](#))
- STTC Attendance and Minutes ([Electronic Item 12.2](#))
- Local Motion ([Electronic Item 12.3](#))

13. **Other Business (Old or New):** This item provides an opportunity for members to bring items of interest before the group.

14. **Future Agenda Items:** This item provides an opportunity for members to bring items of future interest before the Council.

15. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Regional Transportation Council is scheduled for ***1:00 pm, Thursday, September 10, 2020.***

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL
July 9, 2020

In accordance with the Texas Governor's March 13, 2020, Disaster Declaration which was renewed through July 11, 2020, and subsequent suspension of certain Texas Open Meetings Act provisions, the July 9, 2020, meeting of the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) was conducted as a videoconference via Zoom. Staff conducted a roll call of members and the presence of a quorum was confirmed. The following members or representatives were present on the videoconference: Tennell Atkins, Richard Aubin, Mo Bur, Loyl Bussell, Dianne Costa, Theresa Daniel, Jeff Davis, Pat Deen, Rudy Durham, Andy Eads, Kevin Falconer, Gary Fickes, George Fuller, Rick Grady, Lane Grayson, Mojoy Haddad, Roger Harmon, Ivan Hughes, Clay Lewis Jenkins, Ron Jensen, Jungus Jordan, Ray Smith (representing John Keating), Mike Leyman, David Magness, Curtistene McCowan, B. Adam McGough, William Meadows, Cara Mendelsohn, Robert Miklos, Cary Moon, Barbara Odom-Wesley, Philip J. Ritter, John Ryan, Chris Schulmeister, Jeremy Tompkins, T. Oscar Trevino Jr., William Tsao, Paul N. Wageman, Dennis Webb, Duncan Webb, B. Glen Whitley, W. Jeff Williams, and Ann Zadeh. Individual attendance was not taken for non-RTC member attendees.

1. **Opportunity for the Public to Speak on Today's Agenda: Consistent with HB 2840:** This item allows members of the public an opportunity to give input on agenda items. Regional Transportation Council Chair Roger Harmon asked if there were any public comments. No members of the public chose to speak.
2. **Approval of the June 11, 2020, Minutes:** The minutes of the June 11, 2020, meeting were approved as submitted in Reference Item 2. B. Glen Whitley (M); Andy Eads (S). The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Consent Agenda:** The following items were included on the Consent Agenda.
 - 3.1. **FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program Modifications:** Regional Transportation Council approval of proposed modifications to the FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program, provided in Electronic Item 3.1.1, was requested. Action also included direction for staff to amend the Transportation Improvement Program and other administrative/planning documents, as appropriate, to reflect the approved modifications. Details were provided in Electronic Item 3.1.2. A positive comment was received through the public involvement process and provided to members in Electronic Item Handout 4.5.1 as part of the June Online Input Opportunity minutes, as well as posted online.
 - 3.2. **Ratification of Action Approving \$300,000 in Temporary Interim Funding for Air Quality Initiatives:** Regional Transportation Council (RTC) ratification of staff action to approve \$300,000 in temporary, interim RTC Local funding to support air quality initiatives was requested. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 3.2.
 - 3.3. **2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects – Recommendations:** Regional Transportation Council approval of the 2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects recommendations for an amount not to exceed \$1.375 million was requested. Project

recommendation tables were provided in Electronic Item 3.3.1 and the presentation was provided in Electronic Item 3.3.2.

A motion was made to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. Curtistene McCowan (M); Dianne Costa (S). The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Orientation to the Agenda/Director of Transportation Report:** Michael Morris welcomed new members of the Regional Transportation Council (RTC). In addition, he discussed the passing of former RTC member John Monaco. He also provided follow-up information to questions asked by members at the June 11, 2020, meeting. On the SH 360/SH 161 Connector, the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) has the lead on the project. It is moving ahead on all projects under construction and will monitor its revenue stream to determine when to focus on new projects. B. Glen Whitley thanked staff for the follow up and requested that the project remain a priority for NTTA. Regarding progress on the IH 30 project from Linkcrest to IH 820, the project is slotted for 2023 and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is working to advance the project sooner. Mr. Morris reviewed additional items on the Director of Transportation report. He thanked members for their support on the Dallas to Houston high-speed rail project. In addition, he noted that North Central Texas Council of Governments staff would be providing comment on the TxDOT 2021 Unified Transportation Program. A letter of support to the Texas Transportation Commission on the Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study was provided in Electronic Item 4.1. The State plan for high-speed rail was highlighted. The remaining items were not presented. The Trail of the Month Video item was postponed at the March 12, 2020, meeting and will remain postponed. Electronic Item 4.2 contained the latest auto occupancy/high-occupancy vehicle quarterly subsidy report. Details on future updates to federal performances measures was provided in Electronic Item 4.3. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities upcoming events were provided at <https://www.dfwcleancities.org/dfw-clean-cities-meetings> and current air quality funding opportunities for vehicles were provided at <https://www.nctcoq.org/trans/quality/air/funding-and-resources/fundingvehicle>. Electronic Item 4.4 contains the latest status report on ozone. The North Central Texas Council of Governments was recently featured on SmartWay Affiliate in Action. Details are available at <https://www.epa.gov/smartway/smartway-affiliates-action>. In addition, details regarding Clean Air Action Day, August 5, 2020, are available at www.airnorthtexas.org/socialdistancing. June online input opportunity minutes were provided in Electronic Item 4.5, the public comments report in Electronic Item 4.6, and news articles in Electronic Item 4.7.
5. **Regional Transportation Council Policy Position Establishing Guidelines for Ratification Actions:** Michael Morris highlighted a potential opportunity for the region to host the National Hockey League (NHL) Hub City Tournament discussed at the June 11, 2020 Regional Transportation Council (RTC) meeting. At the meeting members were asked to support interim authority to fund transportation elements of the bid, with ratification requested at today's meeting. The letter of commitment provided to the Dallas Stars as part of the effort was provided in Electronic Item 5.1. The NHL did not select the Dallas-Fort Worth region as one of the host sites. However, he noted staff believed it is important to formalize a policy for ratification actions outside of the Transportation Improvement Program modification process. The proposed policy provided in Electronic Item 5.2, P20-02, establishes guidelines for instances when an emergency or time-sensitive item must be implemented prior to the ability for staff to request official RTC approval. It is anticipated that the provision would be used rarely. Specific guidelines define that projects or initiatives would be lower cost, likely less than \$5 million, with projects over this dollar amount requiring the Chair to call a special meeting of the RTC. Instances would occur infrequently

and would require approval by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Transportation Director, who would notify the RTC Chair. The item would need to be placed on the next scheduled meeting of the RTC for ratification. If an item is not ratified, staff would be required to outline the implications from the lack of action. To minimize complications related to federal funds, the use of RTC Local funds for emergency purposes would be encouraged. Curtistene McCowan asked if it would be prudent to cap the dollar amount before a special meeting would need to be called. Mr. Morris noted that staff used the term "most likely less than \$5 million" to allow flexibility. A motion was made to approve P20-02, Regional Transportation Council Policy Position Establishing Guidelines for Ratification Actions, as provided in Electronic Item 5.2. Theresa Daniel (M); Dianne Costa (S). The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery:** Michael Morris provided an update on performance metrics to help understand the impacts of COVID-19 to the transportation system. Four policy metrics were highlighted: 1) travel behavior response to COVID-19, 2) financial implications to traditional revenue sources, 3) benefits of travel responses to areas of Regional Transportation Council (RTC) responsibility and how we preserve those, and 4) prioritization of infrastructure improvements that offset unemployment increases and utilize lower costs. The first policy metric, travel behavior response to COVID-19, was discussed and specific data for freeway volumes, average speeds, crashes and fatalities, transit ridership, enplanements, and bicycle/pedestrian counts were highlighted. Freeway volumes have increased in recent weeks and are currently approximately 20 percent lower than pre COVID-19 restrictions. Bicycle and pedestrian activity are up approximately 65 percent. Toll tag transactions are currently down by approximately 40 percent, which is an improvement. Transit ridership is increasing, as well as airport passengers, which was previously down by approximately 98 percent. Presentations slides with additional details were emailed to members, as well as posted on the RTC website. The second policy metric is the financial implications to traditional revenue sources. Reductions in vehicles sales tax, motor vehicles sales and use, and motor fuel tax were highlighted, all of which have experienced significant reductions. He noted this is one reason the RTC believes the Texas Transportation Commission will not have the revenues anticipated for the Unified Transportation Program. Also discussed was the reduction in the North Texas Tollway Authority's toll transactions, as well as express lane transactions. Staff will continue to monitor data from projects in the region with associated TIFIA loans. Data from the GoCarma application was also highlighted. Policy metric three is the benefits of travel behavior responses, and staff is focused on the benefits to air quality. He stressed the importance of developing policies to take advantage of some of the behaviors that have had positive impacts in the region. With the reduction in emissions levels due to lower vehicle travel, the region's ozone season is more positive than normal, although it is currently not as improved as expected. The idea that a State Implementation Plan can be developed that focuses on urban regions as a way to come into compliance of the ozone standard is no longer the correct assumption, as seen by the fact that ozone exceedances have still occurred despite a 40-50 percent reduction in roadway travel. He noted this will be a topic that will be brought back before the RTC and the State. The final metric is how the RTC can use innovation to advance projects. Examples include high-speed rail investment between Dallas and Houston and the advancement of the environmental document for high-speed technology between Dallas and Fort Worth. Other candidate projects include the next phase of the Hyperloop Certification Center, autonomous transit, freeway induction loops, SH 183 improvements by the private sector, and the Y Connector. In addition, the COVID-19 #00X Program is an effort to document the advancement of smaller projects the region moves forward with through innovation. Projects

documented to date were highlighted. Mr. Morris noted that future reports will highlight the differences in new data and efforts as staff works to understand transportation behaviors, financial implications, and benefits that can be sustained into the future.

Dianne Costa discussed the transportation issues related to COVID-19 and the major impacts on transit ridership, developments, small businesses, major employment centers, school districts, and others. She noted the near-term plan seems to be the biggest struggle for the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) as it works to prepare for its response when activity increases. In addition, she discussed a return to work survey conducted by DC Metro questioning employers and employees to help it develop plans for increasing levels of rail and bus service in the DC region. The survey is confidential and includes questions related to employee telework, current employee travel patterns, employer in-office work schedules, and others. She noted she believes a similar survey in the Dallas-Fort Worth region would be beneficial to DCTA as well as business, universities, cities, counties, and school districts to help plan for appropriate responses in the next 90-120 days. She requested input from members regarding potential benefits of a similar survey. Mr. Morris discussed the challenges of a survey due to the ever-changing elements of the COVID-19 environment and that a continuous survey would likely provide more benefit and help identify changes that result from the stochastic set of circumstances. Ms. Costa agreed that such a survey could be challenging but that questions could request future planning options being considered. In addition, she noted that the North Central Texas Council of Governments would likely be the best organization to lead such a survey. RTC Secretary Theresa Daniel asked if the request is part of the data already being collected by staff. Mr. Morris noted that staff is currently collecting data from observed actions, but that the survey would be directed at individuals and agencies to determine future activities/plans. He added staff will need time to consider the elements of the request and bring information back to the RTC for approval. RTC Secretary Ann Zadeh discussed the delivery of innovative projects during COVID-19 recovery and the importance that the innovative projects should help the region not only return to normal, but also continue some of the actions that resulted in positive benefits within the region for air quality and congestion. If Ms. Costa is asking for a way to collect information to deliver projects that will encourage people not to just go back to the previous behaviors but to continue some of the behaviors that resulted in benefits, then questions addressing options that will help the region with air quality and congestion should be included. She suggested that experts should look for options to use roadways in the future that are more multimodal and that help with air quality and congestion. Mr. Morris clarified the Ms. Costa is asking for a survey that helps plan for future service improvements as ridership increases based on what institutions such as universities are planning in the near future. The request from Ms. Zadeh is to ensure that the region does not return to some of the past behaviors that produce negative air quality and congestion outcomes. Ms. Costa noted she believed the survey could present options that help the region to start thinking differently. Mr. Morris noted staff would work with Ms. Costa on the details of her request, as well as others who are interested. Details will be presented to the RTC in the future.

7. **Congestion Management Process Update:** Natalie Bettger provided an update on efforts underway to update the region's Congestion Management Process (CMP). The CMP is a federally mandated planning document required for urbanized areas with populations exceeding 200,000. Unlike other planning documents, there is not a mandated cycle update and the current CMP was last updated in 2013. The purpose of the CMP is to reduce the amount of roadway capacity that is added to the transportation system by implementing other strategies such as demand reduction, traffic operational improvements, public

transportation improvements, and others with capacity added as a last resort. Projects adding single occupant vehicle capacity must be evaluated and comply with the CMP by integrating congestion management strategies. The eight-step process to develop the CMP was highlighted and details were provided in Electronic Item 7. Regional goals and objectives of the CMP are consistent with those of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and as strategies are identified they are programmed into the Transportation Improvement Program and implemented. The strategies are then evaluated for effectiveness and the results are then fed back into the performance measures, as well as recommendations for the MTP plan. During the evaluation process, there are four main criteria for identifying deficiencies within corridors: 1) recurring congestion, 2) safety, 3) non-recurring congestion, and 4) pavement and bridge condition. In addition, staff conducts a corridor asset inventory to determine available roadway capacity, non-roadway capacity, and operational assets in the corridor. Corridors are then evaluated to determine if they need improvement or if they meet the needs of the corridor/are under construction. For those with deficiencies, staff identifies areas of deficiencies and selects strategies to help alleviate the congestion on the corridor. Staff also reviews performance measures after a strategy is implemented, often in comparison to performance before implementation, to better assess and understand the benefits of the identified strategies that may be applicable in other corridors. Ms. Bettger highlighted the schedule for the CMP update which includes a proposed Surface Transportation Technical Committee workshop in the fall, additional information presented in November, and a request for action by the Regional Transportation Council in December. Feedback on the process was requested.

8. **Transit-Oriented Development Parking Study:** Karla Weaver presented information on the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) parking utilization and management study that was completed in 2019 as part of a TOD Planning Pilot. Approximately \$1.75 from the Federal Transit Administration grant was received and the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) partnered with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and the Cities of Dallas, Richardson, Plano, and Garland. The pilot looked at three main components, including parking. The goal of the effort was to increase transit-oriented development and ridership in the identified corridors, and as part of the process a series of parking tools and an interactive website was developed as a resource for communities. Parking challenges, particularly around TOD, were highlighted. Parking, especially around transit, subsidizes driving. If parking is free there is a reduced economic incentive to take another mode because transit has a cost. Parking also increases the initial development costs, as well as creates an environment that generally discourages walking and activity. The parking study helped to generate data to inform policy decisions such as appropriate parking ratios and development practices. Staff also wanted to develop best practices and recommendations for parking management around transit and areas of dense concentration, as well as identify ways managing parking can increase TOD performance such as increased ridership and dense development in these areas. With consultant assistance, staff conducted onsite observations at 16 locations for a continuous 72 hours to understand parking utilization at each of the developments. These developments were within walking distance of DART stations. Interviews were also conducted with property managers and developers to understand their perceptions of parking availability, issues with the finance industry, city codes, and other areas that may influence their parking construction decisions. Of the 16 sites, 13 never peaked above 80 percent utilization which is consider optimal use in the market. This meant that over 4,000 spaces were unutilized. Additionally, findings indicated that significantly less parking is utilized at workforce affordable housing developments than other traditional-type developments. Ms. Weaver discussed the cost of parking, noting that the impact of the nearly 4,500 underutilized parking spaces, when calculated at an average

cost of \$17,000 to \$40,000 per garage spaces, has a value of approximately \$80 million that is not being utilized. These costs impact the private developer, as well as public-private partnerships, local governments, and State investments. A smarter parking policy could help reduce construction costs. The developer influence to build beyond the minimum number of parking spaces, as well as the influence of lenders, brokers, and tenants in determining the supply of parking was discussed. To help advance the conversation for both the public and private sector, a toolbox has been created where agencies can find the study and relevant data: www.parkingtoolboxntx.org. Michael Morris noted that parking is an area in which it is important, as a region of 8 million, to advance a policy that addresses fundamental elements and appropriate solutions for parking in the region. Ann Zadeh discussed workforce housing and the benefit of using unneeded parking space for more affordable housing, as well as potential cost savings. She also noted the importance of educating the public who often have the perception that there is not enough parking. Cara Mendelsohn noted the areas included in the pilot and the estimated cost of \$17,000-\$40,000 per space for garage structures. She asked if staff had an estimate of surface parking costs, which is primarily the type of parking at the locations observed. Ms. Weaver noted that the \$1.75 million funding was for a study conducted at private developments that included multifamily, office complexes, or a combination of those near stations which were primarily parking garages. Ms. Mendelsohn also asked if staff has looked at places such as Galatyn Park that does not have parking to determine how many people are walking to the location versus being dropped off. Ms. Weaver noted that staff will confirm if Galatyn Park was an area that was studied and added that initial feedback from the pilot will help determine if this study can potentially be expanded to other areas. Ms. Mendelsohn noted she believed this is an important conversation, but that in her opinion the information presented does not quite hit the target of the situation and estimates that parking costs \$17,000-\$40,000 per space is not a fair way to measure since much of the parking is surface parking. Mr. Morris discussed the parking study and noted this is just one of many parking strategies on which staff works. Staff can provide any information that is helpful. Ms. Weaver added that as part of the study, surveys were conducted with users of the system, residents, employees, and employers and the information will be available soon.

9. **Federal and State Legislative Update:** Rebekah Hernandez provided a federal legislative update. Regarding transportation reauthorization, action is needed by September 30, 2020. Currently, the House has approved the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act as part of HR 2. The Senate approved a partial version of a surface transportation bill in 2019 that only includes the highway portion and would still need to act and provide language for transit, safety, and rail. Funding must also be identified for the bill. HR 2, the Moving America Forward Act, is a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure bill that includes transportation, water, broadband, housing, energy, and healthcare, as well as INVEST text. The INVEST in America Act includes nearly \$500 billion in federal funding for FY2021 through FY2025 and was approved by the House Transportation Committee on June 18. The text was then rolled into HR 2 and approved by the House on July 1, mostly along party lines. The bill is divided into four divisions. Division A maintains existing program structure for FY2021 and extends authorized funding levels. In addition, it provides some additional funding for specific agencies for relief from COVID revenue loss. Division B reauthorizes highway, transit, and safety programs for four more years. Division C is for hazardous material safety reauthorization and Division D is for rail reauthorization. Major themes of the INVEST in America Act include focus on improvements to existing facilities versus new capacity, creates at least 20 new programs/grant programs, includes climate, resiliency, and greenhouse gas reductions, as well as bicycle/pedestrian access and safety, increased transit funding, and bridge

improvements. Ms. Hernandez noted that Congress must also act on appropriations by September 30 or a continuing resolution. On the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development section, the bill provides \$75.9 billion for the standard four titles in the bill, which is a \$1.65 billion increase over 2020 funding levels. However, there is a new, additional title that provides an additional \$75 billion in appropriations for FY2020. This basically doubles the bill but is designated for off-budget emergencies that both Congress and the President would have to designate and approve. The bill will go before the full House Appropriations Committee in mid-July and Senate markups have been delayed. Ms. Hernandez also provided a State legislative update. The House and Senate legislative committees have canceled all interim hearings due to COVID-19. Staff will continue to monitor if interim hearings are scheduled and will also continue to review comptroller revenue estimates. The comptroller is expected to provide a mid-cycle revenue estimate later in July. This is usually done at the beginning of a legislative session and legislators review the information as they craft the next two-year budget. Additionally, the Texas Transportation Commission continues to meet monthly and the public comment period for the draft FY2021 Unified Transportation Program is open from July 10-August 10. As a reminder, Ms. Hernandez noted that the first day of the 87th Texas Legislature is January 12, 2021. Bill filing begins November 9, 2020. North Central Texas Council of Governments staff will soon begin preparations for the draft Regional Transportation Council Legislative Program for the Texas Legislature and will provide updates to members.

10. **Update on Volkswagen Settlement and Zero Emission Vehicle Corridor:** Lori Clark provided an update on Volkswagen Settlement activities and specifically discussed those related to zero-emission vehicles. The Volkswagen Settlement includes two separate programs creating opportunities to reduce emissions and improving air quality: 1) Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Program and 2) Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Investment. Several programs are included in the mitigation program and are in various stages. Funding opportunities for refuse vehicles and freight/port drayage vehicles remain open and applications are accepted on a first-come, first served basis. Staff continues to track the progress of the individual programs and the percentage of available funding that has been requested. The Dallas-Fort Worth region continues to lead the State in demonstrating demand for the funding and staff continues to prepare for potential opportunities to request consideration for allocation of funds remaining unallocated in various programs. Program eligibility and current funding availability for the two open programs were highlighted and details were provided in Electronic Item 10. She noted that staff has worked with the City of Dallas to help ensure that small contractors for cities have an opportunity to apply for funding and that those interested should contact staff. Ms. Clark also discussed Electrify America, a subsidiary of Volkswagen that is responsible for investing \$2 billion nationwide in ZEV infrastructure and education/outreach to raise awareness of zero-emission vehicles. Most of the emphasis has been on battery electric vehicles, but Electrify America is now requesting information to help guide its next funding opportunity. Comments are due July 31, 2020. The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) will be submitting information at the regional level, but individual communities were encouraged to provide community-specific information that may help with future funding investments in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. Details are available at www.electrifyamerica.com. In addition, Ms. Clark highlighted information about the IH 45 ZEV Corridor Deployment Plan. In 2019, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded funds to NCTCOG to develop zero-emission infrastructure on IH 45 from the Dallas-Fort Worth region through Houston to the seaports, including both hydrogen refueling and battery electric vehicle charging. The corridor currently has a 111-mile gap in electric vehicle charging between Ennis and Madisonville. NCTCOG staff has submitted that this

should be an area of focus. Possible future infrastructure sites were highlighted in Electronic Item 10. By May 2021, NCTCOG expects to finalize a ZEV deployment plan that outlines a suggested number of stations and potential locations. Four stakeholder groups will be established to address infrastructure deployment, vehicle availability, customer identification, and policy/incentives and interested members and communities were encouraged to participate and asked to submit a stakeholder survey, provided through a link on page 12 of Electronic Item 10.

11. **Progress Reports:** Regional Transportation Council attendance was provided in Electronic Item 11.1, Surface Transportation Technical Committee attendance and minutes in Electronic Item 11.2, and the current Local Motion was provided in Electronic Item 11.3.
12. **Other Business (Old or New):** There was no discussion on this item.
13. **Future Agenda Items:** There was no discussion on this item.
14. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Regional Transportation Council is scheduled for 1:00 pm, Thursday, August 13, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

National Highway System Review

Roadway Modifications

Facility	County	From	To	Modification
BU 287P	Tarrant	Blue Mound Road	McElroy Road	Add to NHS
BU 287P	Tarrant	Kennedale Broadway Street	Mansfield Main Street	Add to NHS
SH 114	Denton/Wise	FM 156	US 81/US 287	Add to NHS
SS 244/Northwest Highway	Dallas	SH 78	IH 635	Add to NHS
SH 78	Collin/Dallas	President George Bush Turnpike	US 380	Add to NHS
US 69	Hunt	BU 69D	MPA Boundary (larger corridor extends north to US 82)	Add to NHS
FM 544/Plano Pkwy	Collin	US 75	SH 78	Add to NHS
FM 2499	Denton	FM 2181	IH 35E	Add to NHS
Berry Street	Tarrant	University Drive	IH 820	Remove from NHS
University Drive	Tarrant	White Settlement Road	Berry Street	Remove from NHS
Blue Mound Road	Tarrant	BU 287P	US 81/US 287	Remove from NHS
Clark Road	Dallas	Danieldale Road	Couch Drive	Remove from NHS
Midway Road	Tarrant	US 377/SH 183	SH 121	Remove from NHS
Walnut Hill Lane	Dallas	SH 161	SH 114	Remove from NHS

National Highway System Review

Modifications to NHS Intermodal Facilities

Facility	Modification Type	Facility	Modification Type
Arapaho Center Station	Updated Name	Parker Road Station/Transit Center	Updated Name; Modify Connector (Archerwood Dr/Park Blvd)
Downtown Garland Station	Updated Name	TRE Centreport Station	Add to NHS
Fort Worth Central Station	Modify Connector (Jones St/E 9th St)	West Irving Station	Add to NHS
Alliance Airport	Modify Connector (Eagle Pkwy)	LBJ/Skillman Station	Add to NHS
Hampton DART Bus Transfer Center	Modify Connector (Wright Ave)	MedPark Station	Add to NHS
Westmoreland Transit Center	Modify Connector (Westmoreland Ave)	Downtown Rowlett Station	Add to NHS
Park Lane Center	Remove from NHS*	Arlington Station (Railtran)	Remove from NHS^
UP/Wilmer Intermodal Terminal	Add to NHS	Belt Line Station	Modify Connector (Valley View Rd)
Lake Ray Hubbard DART Bus Transfer Center	Modify Connector (Greenbelt Pkwy/Duck Creek Pkwy)	Farmers Branch DART Transfer Center	Remove from NHS*
Mockingbird DART Station	Modify Connector (Twin Sixties Dr)	BNSF Railway Company Intermodal Facility	Updated Name
Jack Hatchell Transportation Center	Updated Name; Modify Connector (15th St)	Smithfield Station	Add to NHS

*Does not meet the 5,000 daily passenger/500 parking spot threshold

^Never Constructed

National Highway System Review

Deferred Additions*

Facility	County	From	To
SH 34	Ellis/Kaufman/Hunt	IH 35E	FM 1570
SH 274	Kaufman	US 175	MPA Boundary/Henderson Co. Line
US 80	Kaufman	FM 429	MPA Boundary/Van Zandt Co. Line
SH 205	Collin/Rockwall/Kaufman	SH 78	US 80
FM 148	Kaufman	US 80	IH 20
SH 276	Rockwall/Hunt	SH 205	MPA Boundary/Rains Co. Line
FM 1570	Hunt	US 380	SH 34
SH 78	Collin	SH 121	US 380
FM 455	Collin	US 75	SH 5
SH 5	Collin	FM 455	SH 121
Greenville/K Ave	Collin	SS 399	Spring Creek Pkwy
Park Blvd	Collin	Coit Rd	US 75
Spring Creek Pkwy	Collin	Ave K	Parker Road
Parker Road	Collin	Spring Creek Pkwy	FM 2551 (S)
FM 1461/Frontier Pkwy	Collin	DNT Extension	FM 2478
FM 2478/Custer Road	Collin	FM 1461	PGBT
FM 3537/FM 2786 (Main St and Stacy Rd)	Collin	SH 289	FM 2551/Angel Pkwy
FM 2170/McDermott Rd	Collin	Coit Rd	FM 2551/Angel Pkwy
Collin County Outer Loop Frontage	Collin	US 75	SH 121
US 377	Denton	MPA Boundary/Grayson Co. Line	US 380
FM 720	Denton	US 380	Eldorado Pkwy
Josey Ln	Denton	SRT	Hebron Pkwy
FM 2181	Denton	FM 2499	IH 35E
FM 3040	Denton	FM 2499	IH 35E
FM 1171 Proposed Extension	Denton	FM 156	IH 35W
FM 156	Denton/Tarrant	FM 1171 Extension	Meacham Blvd

Haslet Pkwy (Future)	Tarrant	Intermodal Pkwy	IH 35W
Intermodal Pkwy	Tarrant	Westport Pkwy	Haslet Pkwy (Future)
Bryant Irvin Road	Tarrant	IH 20	Alta Mesa Blvd
Alta Mesa Blvd	Tarrant	Bryant Irvin Road	Campus Dr
Campus Dr	Tarrant	IH 20	Alta Mesa Blvd
Great Southwest Pkwy	Tarrant	IH 30	SS 303
Trinity Blvd	Tarrant/Dallas	FM 157	Belt Line Rd
Camp Wisdom Rd	Tarrant/Dallas	Lake Ridge Pkwy	FM 1382
SL 9	Dallas	IH 35E	IH 45
Danieldale Rd	Dallas	IH 35E	Houston School Rd
University Hills Dr/Houston School Rd	Dallas	Camp Wisdom Rd	Danieldale Rd
Miller Rd	Dallas	PGBT	Dalrock Rd
Dalrock Rd	Dallas	SH 66	IH 30
Royal Ln	Dallas	IH 635	PGBT
FM 1810	Wise	SH 101	US 81/287
SH 101	Wise	FM 1810	US 380
SH 114	Wise	US 380	US 81/287
FM 51	Wise/Parker	US 81/287	Ric Williamson Memorial Loop
Ric Williamson Memorial Loop	Parker	FM 51	IH 20
US 180	Parker	Erath Co. Line/MPA Boundary	Ric Williamson Memorial Loop
SH 171	Parker/Johnson	IH 20	US 67
FM 51	Parker/Hood	SH 171	SL 567
SL 567	Hood	FM 51	US 377 (S)
FM 917/Heritage Pkwy	Johnson/Tarrant	IH 35W	SH 360

* To be added once determined that they warrant inclusion the NHS

Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair Program

2020 NCTCOG Submitted Project

Requesting endorsement for the following projects submitted on behalf of Trinity Railway Express, Dallas Area Rapid Transit and Trinity Metro:

Project	Non-Federal Funds ¹			Federal Funds ¹		Total Project Cost ¹
	Local	State	Private	Other Federal	Proposed SOGR Request	
Trinity Railway Express Corridor State of Good Repair Improvements	\$26.0 ²	\$0.0	\$2.0 ³	\$2.0 ⁴	\$28.0	\$58.0
	48%			52%		

1. All funding and cost values indicated in millions (rounded)
2. Trinity Metro, TRE and DART funding commitments
3. BNSF Railway funding commitment
4. NCTCOG funding commitment



U.S. Department of Transportation Funding for Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative



**Regional Transportation Council
August 2020**

Overview of Funding Opportunity

\$60 Million Total; 5 – 10 awards, up to \$12 million each

FY 2016 to 2020; applications will be solicited annually for competitively selecting grant recipients for that funding year

Transportation Technologies to improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment

Applications due **August 31, 2020**

Minimum **50% non-federal cost share**

ATCMTD Program Focus Areas

For this grant cycle, USDOT is particularly interested in deployment programs and projects in the following areas:

- Multimodal Integrated Corridor Management
- Installation of Connected Vehicle Technologies at Intersections and Pedestrian Crossing Locations
- Unified Fare Collection and Payment Systems across Transportation Modes and Jurisdictions
- Freight Community System
- Technologies to Support Connected Communities
- Infrastructure Maintenance, Monitoring, and Condition Assessment
- Rural Technology Deployments
- Complete Trips

City of Dallas – S. M. Wright Corridor

Technology Arterial Corridor

Traffic Signal Improvements and Connectivity

Transit Improvements – Smart Shelters

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement and Progression

Air Quality Sensors

Broadband Communications to Community

Work Zone Management

Sidewalk Delivery Freight

City of Dallas – S. M. Wright Corridor

New Data Sources

- Construction Zone Monitoring
- Bike and Pedestrian Detection
- Traffic Signal Data
- Vehicle-Based Video/Sensors

City of Dallas

- Data for Corridor

NCTCOG

- Data for Region

Project Budget

City of Dallas will supply 50% local match.

NCTCOG will provide up to \$2M in RTC local funds as supplemental support for the application in order to extend data sharing benefits to the region.

Request for Letters of Support

Please send requests for letters of support to Kyle Roy at kroy@nctcog.org by August 14, 2020.

Action Requested

Regional Transportation Council Approval

Support and provide up to \$2 Million in RTC local funds to extend data sharing benefits to the region as supplemental funding in support of City of Dallas application for the 2020 Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative Grant Program.

Contacts

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Tom Bamonte
Senior Program Manager
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nbettger@nctcog.org



U.S. Department of Transportation Funding for Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Initiative



**Regional Transportation Council
August 2020**

Overview of Funding Opportunity

\$60 Million Total; 5 – 10 awards, up to \$12 million each

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- Complete Trips

Connected Freight Corridors

Focus:

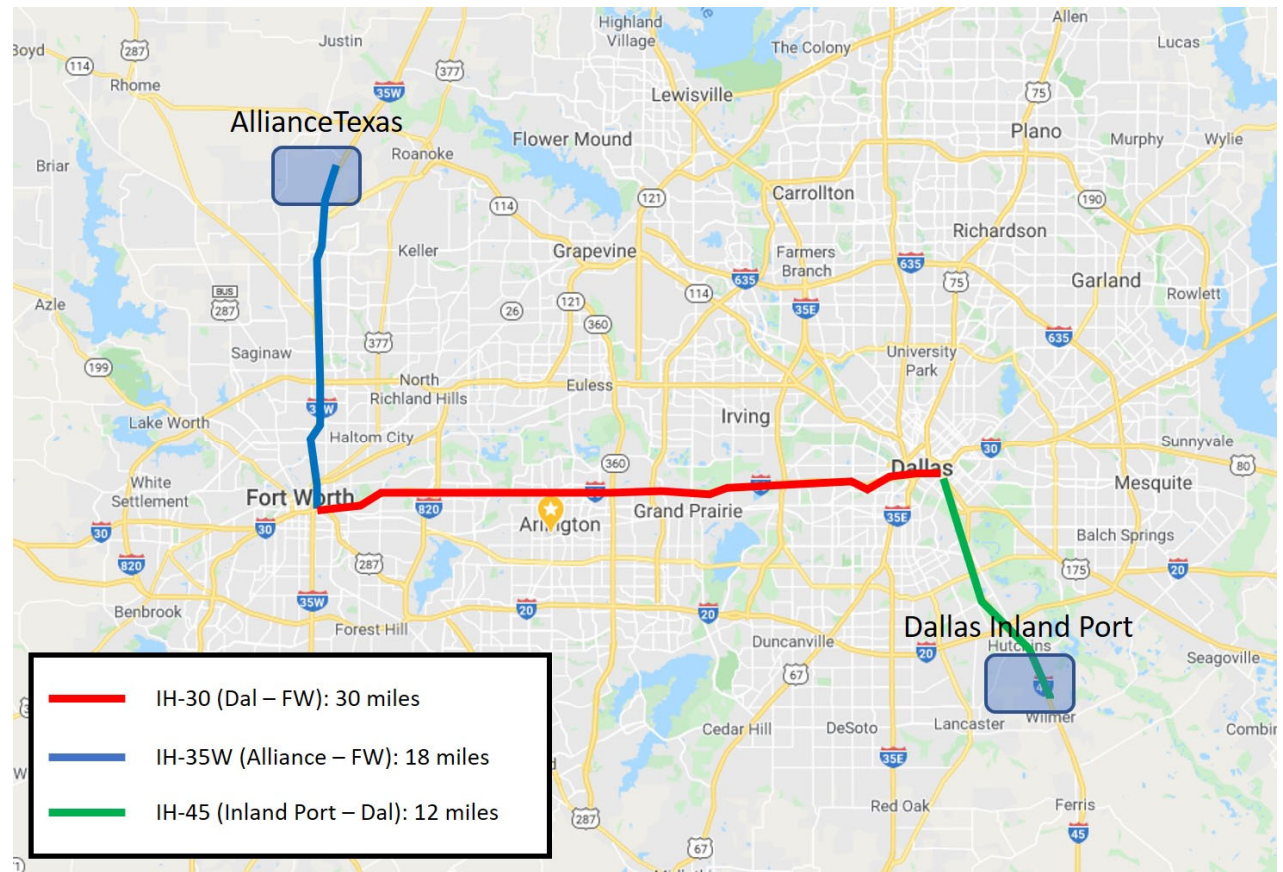
Freight movement

Connected vehicles (CV)

Automated vehicles (AV)

Freeways & arterials

Industry/DOT/NCTCOG
collaboration



Note: For illustration only; final proposal may include additional/different freight hubs.

Connected Freight Corridors

1. Extend CV tech on TxDOT expressways to link DFW intermodal ports to TxDOT's CV highway environment.
2. Build data sharing partnerships with AV truck companies located near the hubs to improve TxDOT roadway operations/safety.
3. Provide traffic signal priority for trucks on key arterials linking the intermodal ports to TxDOT's CV expressways.
4. [Under consideration] Build prototype AV truck transfer site(s) along TxDOT expressway(s) near freight hub(s) to allow AV trucks to transfer between human/robot operation.

Connected Freight Corridors

TxDOT Responsibilities

CV system project

AV truck data project

AV transfer point project

Grant application and administration

NCTCOG Responsibilities

Optimizing freight movement on arterials project

Action Requested

Regional Transportation Council Approval

Approval of collaboration with TxDOT on the Connected Freight Corridors ATCMTD Grant application and provision of up to \$2 Million in RTC local funds as local match to help fund (a) the AV truck data sharing project and (b) the freight movement on arterials project that NCTCOG will implement in coordination with TxDOT in conjunction with the ATCMTD grant, if awarded, or on its own, if the ATCMTD grant award is not received.

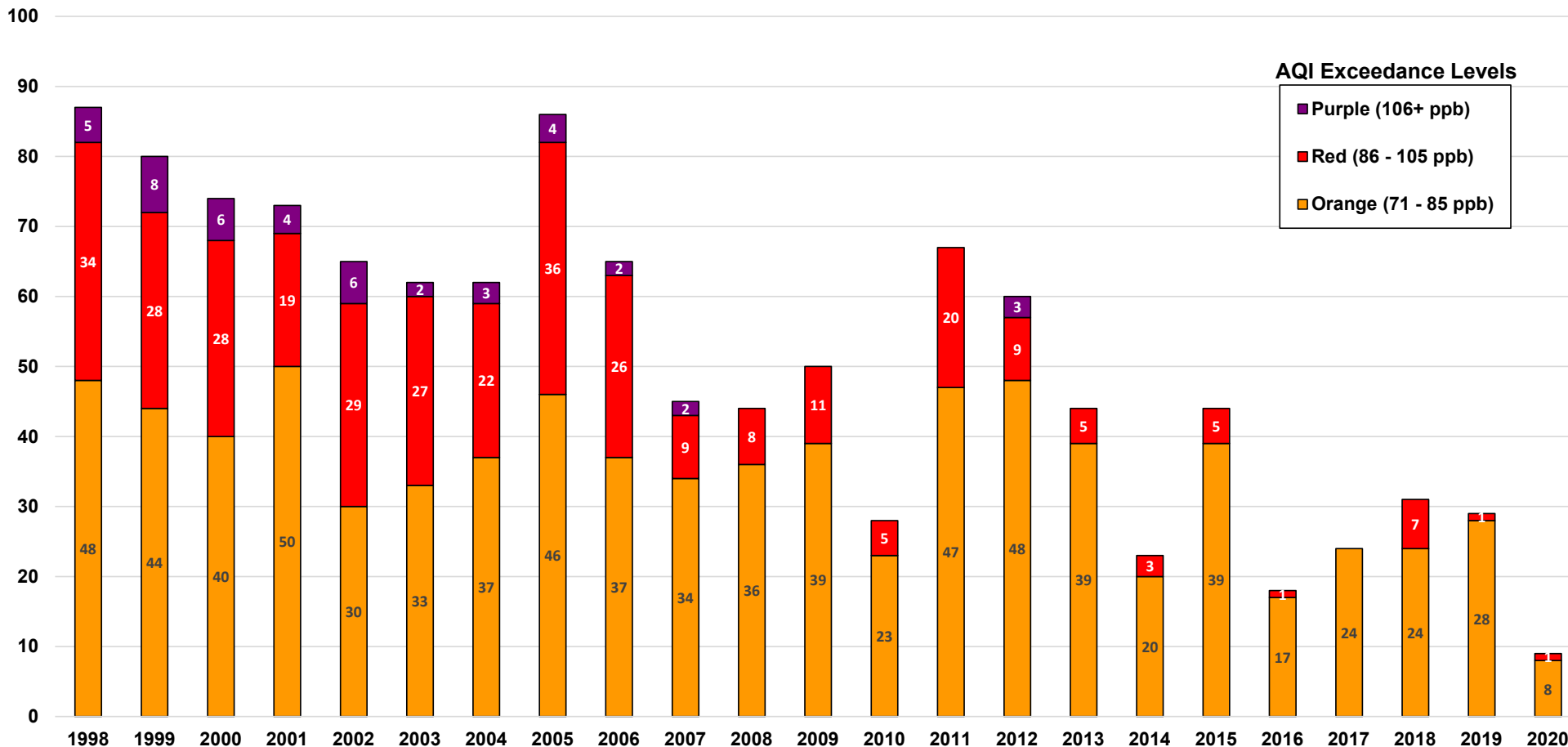
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8-HOUR OZONE NAAQS HISTORICAL TRENDS

Based on ≤ 70 ppb (As of August 3, 2020)

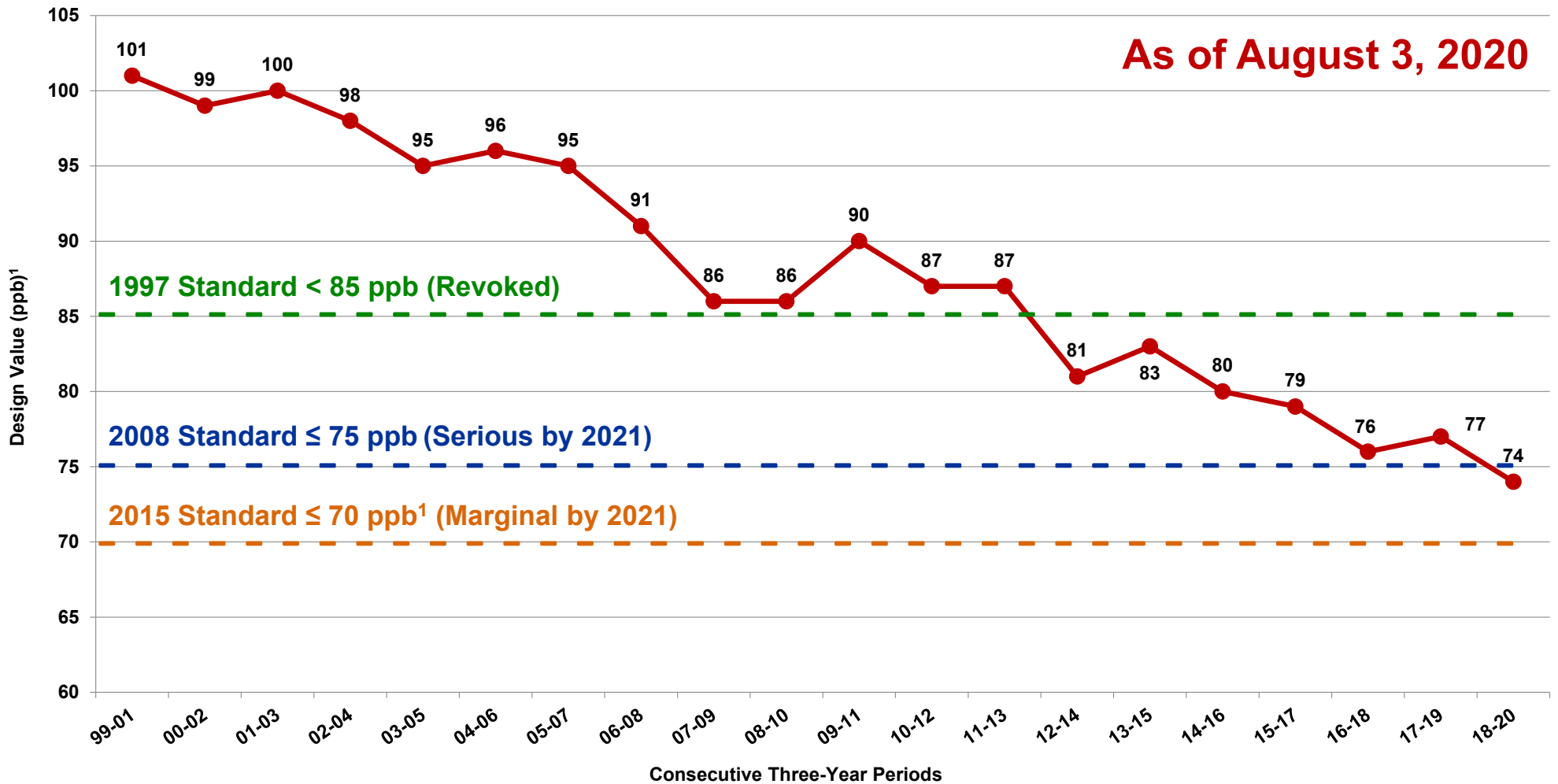


Exceedance Level indicates daily maximum eight-hour average ozone concentration.
Exceedance Levels are based on Air Quality Index (AQI) thresholds established by the EPA for the revised ozone standard of 70 ppb.

Source: TCEQ, http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/cgi-bin/compliance/monops/8hr_monthly.pl
ppb = parts per billion

8-HOUR OZONE NAAQS HISTORICAL TRENDS

As of August 3, 2020



¹Attainment Goal - According to the US EPA National Ambient Air Quality Standards, attainment is reached when, at each monitor, the *Design Value* (three-year average of the annual fourth-highest daily maximum eight-hour average ozone concentration) is equal to or less than 70 parts per billion (ppb).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/ozone>

Update on Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Program (TxVEMP) Funding

In follow up to the July presentation about the Volkswagen Settlement, NCTCOG staff is providing new information about **funding for purchase and installation of Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations** from the Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Program (TxVEMP).

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is hosting two free informational webinars covering program requirements and the application process:

- Tuesday, August 11, 2020, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. CT
- Wednesday, August 12, 2020, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. CT
- RSVP to VWsettle@tceq.texas.gov to receive instructions to attend

NCTCOG expects that the webinar presentations will be posted on the grant program website soon after the events, and should be available by going to www.texasvwfund.org, then click on the “Grants” tab, then choose the “Learn More” button in the box for this particular funding cycle.

Key program details:

Eligible applicants: individuals, corporations, organizations, governments or governmental subdivisions or agencies, business trusts, partnerships, associations, or other legal entities, in the State of Texas.

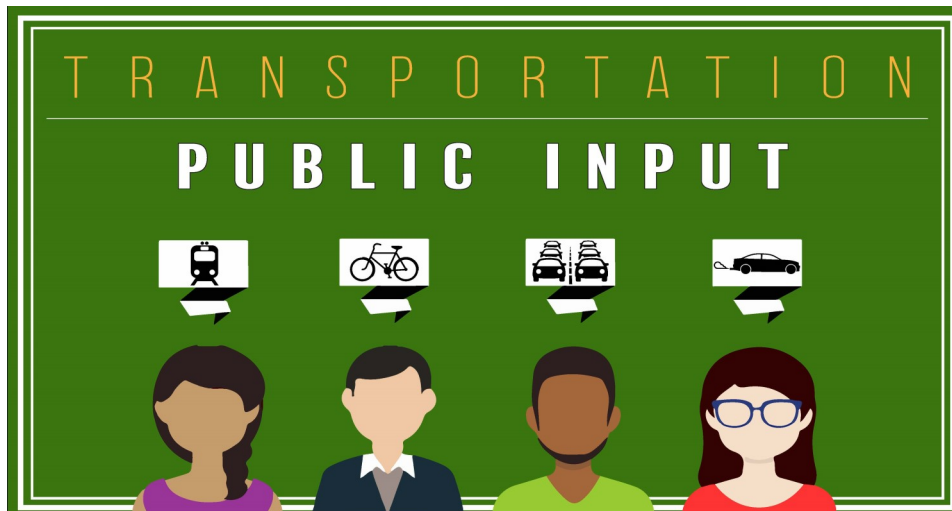
Eligible Activities: purchase and installation of new light-duty electric vehicle Level 2 charging equipment installed:

- in a public place, workplace, or multi-unit dwelling (i.e. not located at a private residential dwelling that is not a multi-unit dwelling in Texas); and
- at a site without existing light-duty electric charging services or to expand the number of vehicles that may be serviced at an existing site.

Funding Availability: \$10.4 million will be available for reimbursements of up to \$2,500 per installation. Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis and may not exceed the following percentages of eligible costs:

- electric chargers available to the public: 70%
- electric chargers available at a workplace or multi-unit dwelling: 60%

For more information: Contact TxVEMP staff at (833) 215-TXVW (8989); at VWsettle@tceq.texas.gov; or visit www.TexasVWFund.org.



WHAT DO YOU THINK? TELL US.

Information will be posted online at www.nctcog.org/input for public review and comment **August 10 - September 9, 2020**. To request printed copies of the information, call 817-608-2365 or email cbaylor@nctcog.org.

Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery

Staff will provide an update on performance metrics to help understand the impacts of COVID-19 to the transportation system.

Transportation Performance Measures

Recent Federal transportation rules require regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to monitor and set targets for a specific set of performance measures. In 2018, NCTCOG adopted 2020 and 2022 targets for a subset of these measures related to infrastructure, congestion and air quality. This fall, the MPO will have an opportunity to adjust 2022 targets for these measures. Observed trends, project implementation and the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 will impact the decision on whether target adjustments will be recommended.

2020 Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects: Recommended Funding Awards

Staff will present a recommended summary of projects to receive funding as part of the 2020 Call for Projects for the North Central Texas Region.

IH 45 Zero Emission Corridor Plan Update

In 2019, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded funding to NCTCOG to develop a plan for infrastructure to support both battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles along IH 45 from Dallas to Houston. NCTCOG is seeking stakeholder involvement from fuel providers, fleets, infrastructure developers, fuel associations, government agencies, utilities, and interest groups and will provide an update on planning progress.

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- Interactive Public Input: Map Your Experience: www.nctcog.org/mapyourexperience
- Regional Smoking Vehicle Program (RSVP): www.smokingvehicle.net
- Vehicle Incentives & Funding Opportunities: www.nctcog.org/aqfunding
- Mobility Plan Administrative Revisions: www.nctcog.org/input

WWW.NCTCOG.ORG/INPUT



NCTCOGtrans



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ONLINE INPUT OPPORTUNITY

Learn about transportation in the region and help set future priorities. The Regional Transportation Council and North Central Texas Council of Governments, together serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth area, are seeking public input.

Submit comments and questions to NCTCOG:

Email: transinfo@nctcog.org

Website: www.nctcog.org/input

Fax: 817-640-3028

Phone: 817-695-9240

Mail: P.O. Box 5888

Arlington, TX 76005-5888

For special accommodations due to a disability or for language translation, call 817-608-2365 or email cbaylor@nctcog.org.

Reasonable accommodations will be made.

Para ajustes especiales por discapacidad o para interpretación de idiomas, llame al 817-608-2365 o por email: cbaylor@nctcog.org. Se harán las adaptaciones razonables.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REPORT

WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY WEBSITE, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA

Purpose

The public comments report is in accordance with the NCTCOG Transportation Department Public Participation Process, which became effective June 1, 1994, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and amended on November 8, 2018.

This report is a compilation of general public comments submitted by members of the public from Saturday, June 20, through Sunday, July 19. Comments and questions are submitted for the record and can be submitted via Facebook, Twitter, fax, email and online.

This month, public comments were received on a number of topics across social media platforms and via email. Transit comments related to resumption and expansion of services were in the majority.

In addition, comments are currently being accepted through a new, online map tool. Users can drop a pin on a location in the region and leave a detailed comment. The tool is in test mode and open to the public through August 2020. This month, there were 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian comments, 13 Roadway comments and 3 transit comments. To read them, visit:

<http://nctcoggis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CrowdsourceReporter/index.html?appid=b014e6d39b604b3ca329d9094ed1e9e2>.

Air Quality

Facebook –

1. CORRECTION: The previously posted PM Action Day alert is for SATURDAY, due to the cloud of Saharan dust moving into our region this week. Children, older adults and people with lung disease, such as asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis, should limit outdoor activity. For more information, visit AirNorthTexas.org. – NCTCOG Transportation Department



wralweather @wralweather · 1d
The latest Saharan Dust Model shows the dust making its way into North Carolina this coming weekend. If current trends persist the dust appears substantial enough to dim our incoming sunlight. We will follow this all week. @WRALWeather

30 106 202
Madame Hardy Retweeted

Juh-G @Cred_Just_ible
Replying to @wralweather and @katcampbellwx
Awesome! I always wondered what it was like to live during the times of the Civil War, Spanish Flu, Great Depression, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate, and the Dust Bowl. Not all at once, mind you, but ya know, "beggars/choosers" and all.

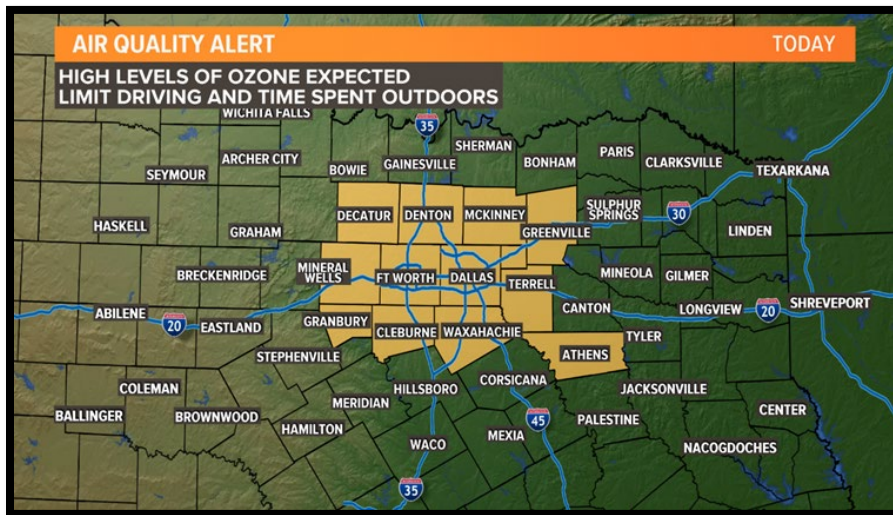
– Christopher Morris

2. Please keep in mind the following Air Quality information for this weekend! – City of Denton Sustainability



3. Read this!

What is an Ozone Action Day and why are they issued? <https://bit.ly/2N1uVuC> – NCTCOG Transportation Department



To whom it may concern,

Why are we seeing an aqi of only 28-32-25 today on your site? Earlier today my wife showed me values ranging from 191 to 170 and now, at 8 in the evening she still has a 150 value? Her source was Google. Thank you, Jason – Jason Lynch

Hi, Jason! There could be a few factors related to what you're seeing. Could you send us a good way to contact you so that we can follow up? Feel free to send us a private message. – NCTCOG Transportation Department

Bicycle & Pedestrian

Twitter –

1. This includes Denton. Add comments to the map on how your biking experience could be made better! – Bike Denton (@bikedenton)



Facebook –

1. Did you know you can access everything you need to know about the Dallas-Fort Worth area's extensive trail system thanks to the NCTCOG Transportation Department? From Trail of the Month videos to interactive maps, local cycling groups, and more, learn about our regional bicycle and pedestrian trails organized by county. Visit Plano 🚲 🚲 – Plano Parks & Recreation

Innovative Vehicles & Technology

Facebook –

1. Currently testing version 4.0 of the eCarra app. Built for the electric mobility community. Introducing subscriptions, food delivery, on demand shuttle services and much more!
#electricmobility #tesla @cityofdallas NCTCOG Transportation Department – Rock Robinson IV



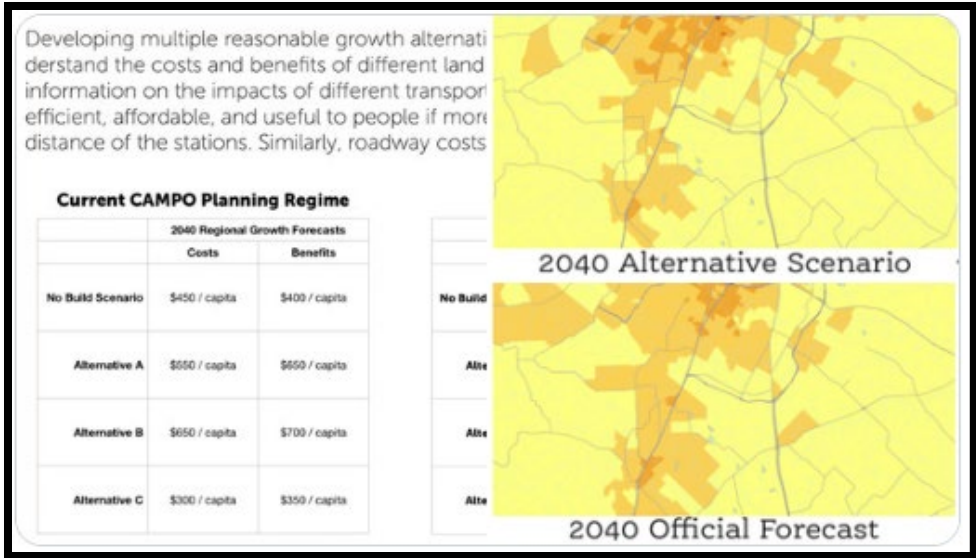
Project Planning

Twitter –

1. One of the most important ways @TxDOTHouston could have a more meaningful EIS process for I-45 would be to use multiple reasonable regional growth scenarios to analyze costs, benefits, & travel demand models of various I-45 proposals against different reasonable future scenarios. – Jay Blazek Crossley (@JayCrossley)

We have proposed such a shift in the Austin region, asking @CAMPOTexas to adopt a scenario planning concept to yield better information in these crucial long term decision making exercises. @HGACmpo (&@NCTCOGtrans & @AlamoAreaMPO) should also do this.

<https://drive.google.com/a/farmandcity.org/file/d/17Y9kyOwMKZ8WmFHI4Lp5FCDbU5Q7kPHj/view?usp=sharing> – Jay Blazek Crossley (@JayCrossley)



Thanks for tagging us. In the next few months, we'll be getting started updating our long-range plan and can look into this work. – Alamo Area MPO (@AlamoAreaMPO)

Great

- 1- @FarmAndCity is happy to help if we can or just meet about it
- 2-We're working on a broader report on this concept for all TX MPOs so I'll send it to y'all in draft form by August
- 3-Maybe I'm wrong about the answers, but just ask MPOs seriously question current methods

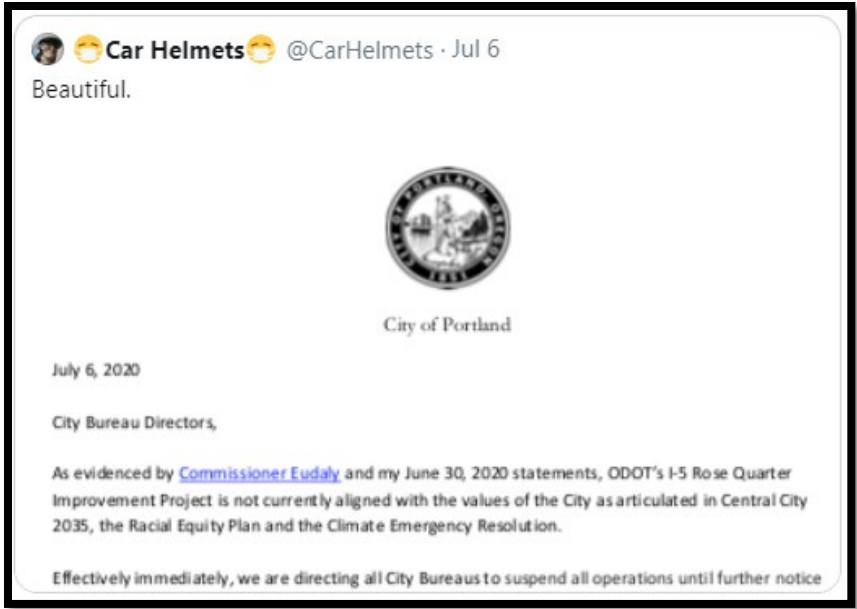
Have you seen the 2045 demographics? – Charlie Henry (@ShiftModal)

CAMPO 2045 Demographics

campotexas.maps.arcgis.com

yes – Jay Blazek Crossley (@JayCrossley)

2. Hint hint on I-345 @TxDOT @NCTCOGtrans @CityOfDallas #TearItDown – Andrew Wallace (@agwallace92)



3. A deck park is rising in southern Dallas. Can it heal a highway's deep gash through Oak Cliff? @NCTCOGtrans provided \$40m for the structure. One of my proudest accomplishments during my tenure at RTC . @CityOfDallas – Lee M. Kleinman (@LeeforDallas)



Great, great work Lee!!! And everyone else who has played a part in this. – Darren Boruff (@Darren_Boruff)

No! But Corporate relocation jobs would help. – Tony (Silverback King) Morris (@TA_Morris)

The deck park in itself can't, but the community, private sector, and city hall working together can. – Erik with a K Morrison (@erw150)

Public Meetings, Input & Forums

Twitter –

1. TONIGHT (July 9) The City of Dallas and @NCTCOGtrans will host a virtual information session for minority and women-owned business enterprises in the hauling and transportation industries. Here's how to join - <http://dallascitynews.net/office-business-diversity-hosting-information-session-women-hauling-transportation> – City of Dallas (@CityOfDallas)



INFORMATION SESSION
FOR MINORITY AND WOMEN OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES
IN THE HAULING AND TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRIES.

THURSDAY JULY 9, 2020 AT 6:30 P.M.

HOW TO JOIN:
WEBEX: bit.ly/2NXZ1hB
DIAL IN: 408-418-9388
ACCESS CODE: 126 935 8148

PRESENTED BY:
Office of Business Diversity
Office of Environmental Quality

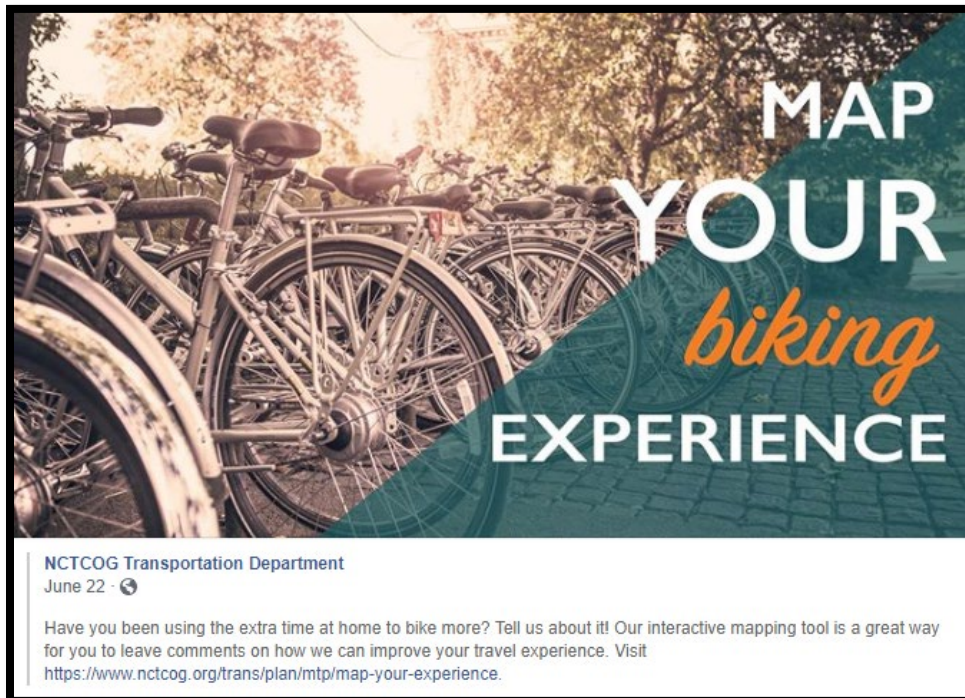
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:
North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

City of Dallas | North Central Texas Council of Governments

(Note: The flyer also features a white truck icon in the top left and a yellow truck illustration on the right side.)

Facebook –

1. Did you know that NCTCOG Transportation Department has a free mapping tool? You can chart your walk or bike ride! Keep track of those miles!! – Keep Grapevine Beautiful



MAP YOUR *biking* EXPERIENCE

NCTCOG Transportation Department
June 22 · 🌐

Have you been using the extra time at home to bike more? Tell us about it! Our interactive mapping tool is a great way for you to leave comments on how we can improve your travel experience. Visit <https://www.nctcog.org/trans/plan/mtp/map-your-experience>.

(Note: The post features a background image of a row of bicycles parked outdoors.)

Safety

Twitter –

1. Have a safe weekend #LewisvilleTX! #WorldEmojiDay – (@LewisvillePD)



Transit

Email –

1. Tammy Flores Chan

Grand Prairie needs public transportation and connectivity to other public transportation services in surrounding cities so those without cars and needing jobs can get to jobs. There used to be a grant called something like the reverse access job commute grant. That, or something like that needs to be offered. An idea would be to run a van or bus to specific intersections on HWY 180 to connect with stop at Loop 12 and 180 and to connect with newly created bus stops in Arlington on Division and in Fort Worth in Lancaster. This would help people gain access to jobs. Maybe you could offer grants to nonprofits to create this system where we could purchase a van or bus and hire drivers and pay a driver to transport people to the nearest stops in other cities. Please contact me if you have questions.

Response by NCTCOG Staff

Thank you for reaching out to us about public transportation needs in Grand Prairie. Although the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) repealed the Job Access Reverse Commute (Section 5316) grant, job related activities are still eligible for funding under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307). Grand Prairie is a direct recipient of federal funds and are eligible to utilize their Section 5307 funds for public transportation. Currently Grand Prairie is not a member of a transit agency but uses federal funds to implement transit service through the city's Grand Connection, which provides public paratransit services in the area. The Grand Connection provides a door-

to-door, demand response service for any resident of Grand Prairie who is at least 60 years of age or has a physical or mental disability. For more information please visit Grand Connection's website.

We recognize there is still additional demand for public transportation services in the area. In coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, we document in Access North Texas the transportation needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with lower incomes and others with transportation challenges within our 16-county region and outline strategies to address those needs for the next four years. For projects that seek to address challenges in the region and implement strategies from Access North Texas, NCTCOG will be introducing our Strategic Partnership Program (formally known as Call for Projects) late-Summer 2020.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Gypsy Gavia at ggavia@nctcog.org or 817-695-9134.

***Please note a majority of our staff is currently working at home. If you call, kindly leave a message, and we will get back to you shortly.**

2. Crystal Taylor

Grand Prairie does not offer public transportation. IF this were to change, what kind of change could GP residents expect? How were previous cities impacted?

Response by NCTCOG Staff

Thank you for reaching out to us about public transportation in Grand Prairie. Cities usually have two options when it comes to implementing public transportation, either they will join or partner with an existing transit agency, or they will provide service through a city department or contractor. In order for a city to be a member of a transit agency, a ballot initiative would have to be passed by the citizens of the city. The city would then dedicate a portion of the city's sales tax revenues to support the transit agency. For members of Trinity Metro (formerly the Fort Worth Transit Authority), the required commitment is one-half cent of the city's local sales tax. For members of Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), the required commitment is one cent of the city's local sales tax.

Grand Prairie is not a current member of a transit agency but has implemented service through the city's Grand Connection, which provides public paratransit services in the area. The Grand Connection provides a door-to-door, demand response service for any resident of Grand Prairie who is at least 60 years of age or has a physical or mental disability. For more information, please visit Grand Connection's website.

We also recognize there is still additional demand for public transportation services in the area. The North Central Texas Council of Governments is implementing a Tarrant County Transit Study that focuses on non-member transit cities, such as Grand Prairie, to develop a comprehensive public transportation plan, including funding and institutional structure options, that can be strategically implemented in the region. This study has recently begun and will be completed in Spring 2021. For more information about the

current Tarrant County Transit Study, please contact David Garcia at dgarcia@nctcog.org or 682-433-0444.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Gypsy Gavia at ggavia@nctcog.org or 817-695-9134.

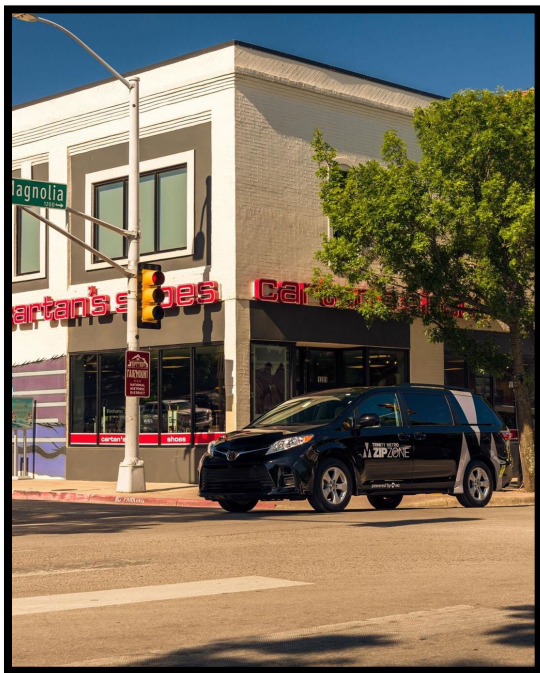
***Please note a majority of our staff is currently working at home. If you call, kindly leave a message, and we will get back to you shortly.**

Twitter –

1. From @TrinityMetro: Good morning! Yesterday we resumed regular service on most bus routes and Trinity Metro TEXRail. To view a list of all service updates, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/ydguanoc> @CityofFortWorth @TarrantCountyTX @TarrantTransit @NCTCOGtrans – Salvador Espino Michel (@SAL_FW)



2. From @TrinityMetro ZIPZONE is coming to the @nearsouthside on July 19. To get the latest updates about this service delivered to your inbox, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/ybasoz4y> @CityofFortWorth @TarrantCountyTX @TarrantTransit @NCTCOGtrans – Salvador Espino Michel (@SAL_FW)



3. From @TrinityMetro: From Trinity Metro: The latest edition of our bi-weekly newsletter is live on our blog. Click here to read it [Right pointing backhand index https://tinyurl.com/yc4dnqt5](https://tinyurl.com/yc4dnqt5)
@CityofFortWorth @TarrantCountyTX @NCTCOGtrans @TarrantTransit – Salvador Espino Michel (@SAL_FW)



Other

Twitter –

1. RIP to a great American hero & icon John Lewis @TrinityMetro @CityofFortWorth @TarrantCountyTX @NCTCOGtrans @TarrantTransit @FTWChamber @fwhcc @FWMBCC @VisitFortWorth – Salvador Espino Michel (@SAL_FW)



VAN TAYLOR
3RD DISTRICT, TEXAS

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL SERVICES

August 5, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I write to you to ask you to review the Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives (STSFA) Program grant application submitted by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

Businesses and families are consistently choosing to make North Texas home due to the job and economic opportunities in the state. As a result, Collin County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation with already over one million residents. According to TxDOT, the total daily miles of vehicle travel in Collin County alone is over 8 million. As the metroplex continues to be a high-growth area, day-to-day traffic congestion continues to worsen, increasing safety concerns and inefficient road usage.

Preserving and providing quality infrastructure is critical to the prolonged prosperity of Texas and my district. Respectfully, I ask that your office provide full and fair consideration on the merits of TxDOT's application during the evaluation process. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (202) 225-4201.

Respectfully,



Van Taylor
Member of Congress



June 24, 2020

Mr. Michael Morris, P.E.
Director of Transportation
North Central Texas Council of Governments
616 Six Flags Drive
Arlington, Texas 76011

Dear Mr. Morris:

Once again, I want to thank you and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) for its generous support to bring the National Hockey League's (NHL) Hub City Stanley Cup playoff tournament to Dallas. Unfortunately, yesterday the NHL informed us that Dallas was not selected to be one of the two hub cities. Though disappointed, we understand the reasoning behind their determination. The remaining candidate cities have better "bubble" environments than that offered by Dallas. I am sending you this letter so that you can communicate the decision to the RTC at its next meeting and properly reallocate the funds to another project.

Please pass on my gratitude to the RTC members for their support of our proposal. Despite this decision, the NHL continues to have great confidence in our region to host major events. Our recent success with both the NHL Draft and Winter Classic are evidence of that.

I look forward to working together in the future to continue to enhance and grow the North Texas region. Please don't hesitate to call me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brad Alberts
President

DALLAS STARS HOCKEY CLUB



New report on Dallas' Preston Center parking garage offers some slim hope

By Jon Anderson, Culture Map Dallas

Preston Center is as out of place in Preston Hollow as a Hershey's Kiss on a Ritz-Carlton pillow.

The Preston Center parking garage, which sits on land owned by the city of Dallas, is the city's biggest chance to fix that. A 2016 plan recommended an underground garage with a park on top, and Dallas City Council member Jennifer Gates has been working with the neighborhood, North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), and local landowners to move that vision forward.

But any momentum has been dashed due to the Preston Center West Corporation (PCWC), made up of the landowners who own the neighboring businesses and property.

To refresh, the garage is a textbook bad agreement worked out decades ago and reaffirmed by legal battles between the city and PCWC, who have veto power on everything. Any plan put forth by either party requires 100 percent buy-in – so it always ends in a stalemate.

In March, NCTCOG and Walker Consultants put together a new 145-page report for the city on the existing (deteriorating) conditions, with two options for redevelopment.

Two options

Option one is what everyone but PCWC wants – a fully underground garage with a park on top.

Option two is sorta what PCWC wants – an apartment tower on part of the land with a smaller park on top.

I say sorta, because the last time we saw Robert Dozier, PCWC representative and presumed developer of the apartment tower, he wanted to cover the entire lot with parking and a high-rise with zero green space outside a pair of earmuff parkettes on two corners of the 3.15-acre parcel.

The PCWC plan was developed by people who think trees are useless without actual cash falling from them. That is, unless it's their own home. Dozier's 7,700-square-foot home on a half-acre lot in University Park has five mature trees in the front yard.

New concessions

The new plan offers a possible compromise by conceding half the block for an apartment building. I think that's a mistake. As we saw [two weeks ago](#), there are two residential high-rises, by Leland Burk and by Rosebriar, proposed for the Hopdoddy corner of the garage. Combined, they will bring 360 housing units and 245 hotel rooms to Preston Center – and 39 trees.

Should they face Dozier's high-rise or overlook a park? Mercurially, the garage tower is competition to Leland Burk's apartment tower, while Rosebriar's hotel and condos on the corner get blocked views and no benefit from more apartments.

Were I Burk or Rosebriar and members of the PCWC, I'd vote against the garage high-rise, killing it cold. Did Burk, a Preston Center task force representative for Preston Center's Zone One, know that the park written into the plan didn't have the support of PCWC?

Interesting tidbits

Most of the information in the 145-page report has been hashed before, but there were some interesting tidbits:

- Regardless of whether option one or two is selected, the construction time is the same: 23 months.
- Both options require the entire parking garage be closed for the duration of construction. They'll need to find alternate parking.

Whether it's a full-park or half-park, it'll require the same timetable and the same inconvenience.

Money

The other big consideration is money.

- The estimated cost for the full park is between \$38.5 and \$41.2 million.
- The estimated cost for the half park is between \$38.1 and \$39.7 million.

The potential savings by building a half-park are between \$400,000 and 1.5 million (less for the half-park). Operations and maintenance costs are identical.

With no time savings, no inconvenience savings, and virtually no money savings, why not be bold and go for the fully underground option with its full park?

The PCWC's veto, that's why.

City should wait it out

The PCWC doesn't seem to have ever wanted the full park – they're probably squeamish about the half-park. But the city is not on the hook for the crumbling garage's maintenance. PCWC is.

Sitting on the land and waiting for the garage to die doesn't hurt the city, except for any insurance needed in case a chunk falls off.

Those wanting to breathe life into moldering Preston Center feel cursed by the PCWC's veto, but the option to do nothing is just as powerful. If those landowners are okay with their lower-rent tenants operating in a slum, so be it. Time is on their side. What can't be controlled is whatever the next D13 council person does. Gates is on her final term.

Her successor may believe in the PCWC's aesthetic wasteland vision. But I remind City Hall, nowhere on earth is there a city complaining about too much green space.

This assumes Dozier still wants that original plan of a single high-rise. But as we'll share in part 2 tomorrow, he's been hard at work to fully develop an ugliness that lines pockets at the neighborhood's expense and the city's dime

Neighbors in Garland Ask Council to Reconsider Concrete Batch Plant Approval

Plant to Support Reconstruction and Widening of I-635

By Diana Zoga, 5 NBCDFW

A group of neighbors in Garland said they are planning to speak in opposition of an already approved concrete batch plant at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

The plant would be located on the former Hypermart site on South Garland Avenue.

April 7, the Garland City Council voted to approve [plans](#) for a temporary off-site construction campus for the [I-635 East project](#) to reconstruct and widen 635 between US-75 and I-30.

The campus will include field offices for construction staff, storage of materials and supplies including tool trailers and trucks and a concrete batch plant for five years.

Neighbors said they didn't feel they had enough time to rally the community before the council voted in favor of the batch plant plans.

"We heard of it through a Nextdoor post for the neighborhood and we mobilized immediately, but it was just too little too late," said Garland resident Don Phillips.

Phillips, who is part of a grassroots group called [Clean Up Garland](#), said he opposes the plant because he's concerned about the environmental impact of another industrial operation in Garland.

The city said it required rezoning request notification letters go out to property owners within 400 feet of the site, doubling the state's requirement of 200 feet.

That added up to 64 households.

"I think they have a duty to expand past the 400 feet because we're not talking about what they have to do and don't have to do," said Phillips. "We're just talking about ethics and morals. Let the people know what's coming."

Phillips said he's concerned the letters weren't translated to Spanish – pointing to a number of neighbors who speak English as a second language.

The city said the letter summarized the proposed project in English, with a note in Spanish directing people to call a bilingual city staff member for details.

Councilman Rich Aubin, who's district includes the former Hypermart site, held a [public meeting](#) in March.

He said he's open to policy discussions in the future addressing how the city can better notify communities of a zoning change request but does not see the council overturning its approval for the batch plant.

“That applicant has now been granted a bundle of rights that the government can’t just take away,” said Aubin.

Aubin said he voted in favor of the project, noting an expanded I-635 with more access to the former Hypermart site would improve redevelopment prospects for the 24-acre property.

Hypermart opened in the late 80s as a mega-shopping destination but later fell into decay. The city bought the property in 2017 and had it demolished in 2018.

Aubin noted the challenges in developing the site, saying he ran for city council after opposing plans to turn the property into a storage warehouse.

“It was not something that was going to develop into what we had hoped for without putting a lot more of the city’s money in it and putting that money at risk - which is not something we were willing to do,” Aubin explained.

“If we can accelerate the development of 635 through Garland and get the traffic going through there, then we can start looking at developing that into something that would be great for the city,” explained Aubin.

“I just want to make sure we have a good plan in place if there isn’t a way to get this out of our community,” said Garland resident Melissa Massey.

Massey, a teacher, said the council approved the plant at the height of pandemic concerns in early April. She says she wants the council to know her concerns now and push for a change in how residents are formally notified about zoning issues in the future.

“While the state minimum says 200 feet, we might want to target a mile, really get those best practices in place,” said Massey.

“We’re not here to attack anybody, we just want what’s best for our community,” Massey added.

In an email to NBC 5, the contractors for the I-635 East project wrote, “The batch plant for Pegasus Link Constructors (PLC) is a temporary plant that will produce concrete for the 635 East Project. PLC followed all required guidelines to obtain a permit with the City of Garland, including the public process involved in meeting the Planning and Community Development requirements; PLC also ensured all requirements were in compliance with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).”

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/neighbors-in-garland-ask-council-to-reconsider-concrete-batch-plant-approval/2401878/>

TX: Notorious criminal group hacks Fort Worth agency, holding data for ransom, experts say

The group NetWalker hacked Trinity Metro's private files and is threatening to release all their data unless Trinity Metro gives them money, threat analysts from Emsisoft and Binary Defense told the Star-Telegram.

By Kaley Johnson, MASS Transit

Jul. 2--A ransomware gang is holding Fort Worth's regional transportation agency's private data hostage, according to two cybersecurity companies that monitor the criminal group.

The group NetWalker hacked Trinity Metro's private files and is threatening to release all their data unless Trinity Metro gives them money, threat analysts from Emsisoft and Binary Defense told the Star-Telegram.

A Trinity Metro spokeswoman said they cannot comment on cybersecurity issues. As of Thursday, the agency had not sent any information on the hack. On their website, Trinity Metro posted a notice that their phone lines and ACCESS booking system were down due to a "technical issue."

NetWalker is a notorious ransomware group that has attacked agencies, universities and groups across the world. On Thursday, the criminal group posted screenshots of Trinity Metro's encrypted data files on their online blog on the dark web, said Randy Pargman, senior director of threat hunting and counterintelligence at the cybersecurity company Binary Defense.

Emsisoft Malware Lab also sent the Star-Telegram the screenshots from NetWalker's blog.

RansomLeaks, a Twitter account that describes itself as "Scouring the dank web for fresh ransomware leaks" also identified Trinity Metro as NetWalker's latest victim. The screenshots on the blog show a list of hundreds of files with labels such as "Vendor W9s," "Passenger information system," and "ACCESS stuff."

In the upper right corner is a countdown clock that reads, "Secret data publication in --" and a time period. As of Thursday afternoon, the blog threatened all information would be released in eight days.

Pargman, who is also a former FBI senior computer scientist serving on the Cyber Task Force, said NetWalker has extorted dozens of other groups for money through this method.

"Once this time runs out, they will release those stolen files to the whole world," Pargman said.

"And anyone who wants to can download them and make use of them."

Pargman said he has not seen any evidence of instructions to Trinity Metro or copies of the posted files, but there is a "very, very high degree of certainty" that Trinity Metro has become NetWalker's latest victim.

He also emphasized the hack is not Trinity Metro's, or other victims', fault. NetWalker and other ransomware groups target organizations "that they feel provide some kind of important service that can't be interrupted for long."

Hospitals, health care providers, transit authorities and banks are common targets.

"It's just not fair to blame them as if they were at fault for a criminal wanting to target them," Pargman said. "Just like if somebody's house was broken into by a burglar, you don't blame the person who had their house broken into."

When a ransomware group targets a company in this way, the group has the option to either pay up -- which Pargman discourages, but said he knows some companies cannot avoid doing so -- or they can rely on backups of the data and risk the information being posted publicly.

Based on Trinity Metro's press release that their phone systems were down, Pargman said it was clear to him that the agency knows what happened.

Ransomware groups used to focus on quietly attacking encrypted files and dealing with their victim directly, Pargman said. But recently, more criminal groups publicize the hack to put pressure on the victim to pay up quickly.

The NetWalker ransomware group has extorted other major groups for money. On June 1, the hackers attacked the University of California -- San Francisco. The university recently paid the hackers \$1.14 million to prevent the release of student records and other information, according to a BBC investigation. Michigan State University and Columbia College of Chicago were also hacked by NetWalker in June.

In 2019, at least 966 companies or agencies were attacked or impacted by ransomware networks at a cost of more than \$7.5 billion, according to Emsisoft Malware Lab.

Mesquite says goodbye to former mayor

By Anny Sivilay, Star Local Media

On Sunday, the city of Mesquite announced that former Mesquite Mayor John Monaco died. Monaco served on the Mesquite City Council from 2001-2005 and was mayor from November 2007 to May 2015. According to the city, during his tenure, the city launched several community programs that are still making an impact today.

Monaco was a resident of Mesquite for over 40 years and a member of Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church. He served as the city's first volunteer coordinator and was a graduate of both the Mesquite Police Department Citizen's Police Academy and Mesquite Fire Department Citizen's Fire Academy.

Additionally, he served as the president of the Texas Municipal League and on many state, regional and local boards and committees to help make Mesquite a better community including:

U.S. Conference of Mayors, North Central Texas Council of Governments, Mesquite Chamber of Commerce, American Heart Association, Regional Transportation Commission, Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition, Emergency Preparedness Planning Council, and City of Mesquite's Board of Adjustment, Water Conservation Advisory Committee, Civil Service Commission/Trial Board, Planning and Zoning Commission as well as various reinvestment zone boards, according to the city.

Mayor Bruce Archer noted in a social media post that he has known Monaco since the first time he got involved in Mesquite civic affairs around 1989.

"I was privileged to have served with Mayor Monaco on this council, but I also knew and worked with him many previous years in the community. I spoke with him just a few weeks ago and we had a good conversation, and I was grateful for some advice and wisdom that he graciously imparted to me," Archer said during Monday night's City Council meeting.

Pastor Ron Ward led the council attendees in a moment of silence for the former city leader after sharing a memory of Monaco that got him involved in the city.

Councilman Kenny Green said he was contacted by neighbors and friends of Monaco. Due to the pandemic, Monaco's family and friends are not able to mourn in the traditional way, but Green said the family gave permission to allow those who want to, to leave flowers and mementos at the residence, 1128 Warwick St. The family asks that items be left along the fence at Downing Way.

After years of delays, could Panther Island's bridges be ready sooner than expected?

By Luke Ranker, Fort Worth Star Telegram

Work on the downtown Fort Worth bridges, needed for the Panther Island project, has moved swiftly enough that officials now say two of the three spans may be done slightly early.

Of course, early at this point is still behind the original completion date and a later delayed schedule, but Doug Rademaker, a senior project manager for the city, said work on bridges for Henderson and North Main streets is moving faster than expected.

The bridge on White Settlement Road, the only road without a detour [and the cause of much anxiety for businesses in the area](#), is on track to be done by the end of December. The other two bridges are scheduled to be done by the end of 2021. Rademaker said it's too early to tell exactly how far ahead those bridges are, but they could be completed several weeks sooner.

Traffic may be allowed on the bridges before they're completely finished.

Once scheduled to open in 2017, the bridges were delayed by design issues, and officials have pushed the completion date back several times.

Contractor Texas Sterling increased workers on site to as many as 120, Rademaker said, and had been running three shifts seven days a week. Sunday shifts were recently canceled.

The progress has been a welcome site for business owners along White Settlement Road, which have taken a financial beating from the road closure, said Steve Metcalf, president of the White Settlement Road Development Task Force. The road has no detour, making places like Angelo's BBQ and an assortment of automotive shops difficult to access.

"It's crazy how busy they've been," Metcalf said of the bridge workers.

While White Settlement's completion date hasn't changed, the progress has been encouraging, he said, since for years updates about the bridges often involved delays.

The coronavirus pandemic appears to have not hampered the contractor's work, Rademaker said.

"It's been full steam ahead even through the outbreak," he told the Star-Telegram.

Earlier this year, project managers [increased the bridges' \\$69.9 million budget to a little more than \\$89 million](#). The North Central Texas Council of Governments' Regional Transportation Council approved the extra money in the form a \$15 million federal transportation grant and another \$5 million that will be paid back to the council of governments through a special tax district.

TxDOT reached an agreement with Texas Sterling late last year and paid the contractor about \$15 million to continue work under a new agreement designed to speed up work.

Trinity River Vision Authority board members heard an update on the bridges Wednesday during a virtual meeting. Members of the public trying to watch the live stream could not hear discussion or presentations for nearly 20 minutes due to a technical glitch.

The three bridges are needed for a \$1.17 billion project that would create Panther Island by cutting a bypass between the two forks of the Trinity River as a means to control river flooding.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would dig the channel, but the project has not received significant federal funding in at least three years. Annually the local Corps office requests between \$35 million and \$40 million. This year, [the federal government provided \\$1.5 million for a feasibility study.](#)

Mark Mazzanti, the former Army Corps executive hired last year as a consultant for the local effort, told board members funding is not out of question for fiscal year 2021. The Corps and Congress are preparing budgets with details expected by late September, he said.

Panther Island could be eligible for other funds, if Congress were to take up a new stimulus bill or increase infrastructure spending, Mazzanti said.

“We are definitely positioning this project” for that type of funding, he said.

Fort Worth: North Texas Mayors Hosting Regional Blood Drive July 14

The event is sponsored by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the North Texas Commission and Carter Blood Care.

By Press Release Desk, News Partner

Press release from the City of Fort Worth:

Join fellow North Texans for a regional blood drive presented by the North Texas Mayors Council from **10 a.m. to 6 p.m. July 14.**

[Make an appointment](#) to donate at one of three locations:

- Fort Worth City Hall, 200 Texas St.
- Irving City Hall, 825 W. Irving Blvd.
- Richardson City Hall, 411 W. Arapaho Road.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and a reduction in donations, blood supply levels are at a critical low. As a thank-you from Carter Blood Care, donors will receive a Texas Rangers baseball cap.

The event is sponsored by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the North Texas Commission and Carter Blood Care.

Say goodbye to the ugliest building in Dallas — and hello to new playgrounds along the Trinity

Trinity Park Conservancy plans to replace 'beige-block eyesore' jail as part of ambitious overhaul.

By Mark Lamster, Dallas Morning News

Over the past few months, as the city's focus has been diverted by the convulsions of pandemic and protest, plans have progressed behind closed doors on the proposed Trinity Park in ways that promise to both symbolically and literally reshape Dallas.

In that time, the Trinity Park Conservancy, the nonprofit overseeing the park design and construction, and its lead project designer, Michael Van Valkenburgh Architects, have settled on a preliminary design for a large overlook park on top of the west levee, straddling Commerce Street.

The conservancy has begun a national search for a "visionary architect" to "reimagine" the Jesse R. Dawson State Jail, the 10-story, 238,000-square-foot, beige-block eyesore on the opposite side of Commerce that is one of the most visible gateways to the city.

The conservancy purchased Dawson and the land linking it to the Trinity last year, as a part of the plan to extend the park into the city.

It will take quite a bit of imagination to remake Dawson, which is not so much a work of architecture as an obscenity in three dimensions. It opened in 1997, built at a cost of \$39 million by the Houston developer North Village Corp. From the outset, it was run by the Corrections Corporation of America (now rebranded as CoreCivic) and was notorious for its poor conditions.

One federal lawsuit alleged that a female prisoner's premature baby died after she was delivered into a toilet. It was closed in 2013.

A remaking is an opportunity to address that history, and the broader issue of systemic racism in the justice system that the Black Lives Matter protests have thrown into such striking relief.

The conservancy envisions it as a "visual anchor and hub" for the future park and also "a place of healing" for those coming and going to the adjacent Dallas County justice complex across Commerce Street. Determining how such a project might occupy a 10-story concrete block with grim and less than flexible interiors will be a considerable challenge.

Giving the building a less odious exterior appearance is the least of the obstacles; determining a program for the building, and then accommodating it, will take far greater feats of vision.

Architects submitting for the job must have their applications in to the conservancy by July 23. A selection will be chosen from a group of finalists by Aug. 7. There will be no public review, an unfortunate state of affairs, given legitimate concerns that, over the years, decisions on the Trinity have been made in closed settings and without broad public consent.

A park can't pull the city together if the process by which it is made is not fully inclusive.

Plans, meanwhile, have progressed considerably further on the West Overlook, a proposed destination park and playground perched atop the west levee, with views out over the Trinity flood plain and across to downtown.

The park, designed by MVVA, is divided by Commerce Street. Its two sides would be linked by a pedestrian bridge. On its west side, it would be bound by Beckley Avenue. The Conservancy has estimated its cost at roughly \$45 million.

The signature feature of the south side will be a maze garden and a large “over/under” playground with customized elements — slides, tunnels — embedded into the landscape, all linked by meandering, shaded paths.

The north end will have more programming, including a cafe with roof deck; a civic plaza with an interactive water feature; a separate playground for water-based play with toy bridges and other quirky features; a swing area set into a ridged landscape with views of downtown and the levee; and a small theater, inspired by the German playground designer Günter Beltzig, that can be used for puppet shows, performances, classes, and other play.

“We’re going to be making future engineers and architects,” MVVA principal Matt Urbanski says of the imaginative play spaces.

For the present, MVVA and the conservancy have selected Austin-based Mell Lawrence Architects to design the cafe and roof-deck structure and an additional maintenance building in the park. Lawrence was chosen, without public input, from an invited pool of 10 Texas architects asked to submit for the job on short notice. The original pool was in fact just five, but several of the Dallas firms backed out due to the time constraint, and the field was expanded.

The selection process was flawed, to say the least, but the outcome is defensible. Lawrence’s architecture seems particularly attuned to the commission: His work is modest but modern, durable, respectful of context and humane in its details. “He had a really nice combination of practicality and creativity and collaboration,” says Elizabeth Silver of MVVA.

Lawrence has but one completed project in Dallas, but it is, appropriately, a park pavilion; specifically, the Cotillion Park Pavilion (2011) in Far East Dallas, a handsome rectangular structure of black steel with louvers to provide shade for the sun. It is defined by an elliptical steel mobile in orange red that floats above, twisting slightly in the breeze. Nearly a decade after its completion, it remains in excellent condition.

The park, along with the remade Dawson jail, will dramatically reshape the entry into downtown, transforming what is now an unremarkable journey into a dramatic scenic passage.

Traveling toward downtown from the intersection of Commerce Street and Beckley Avenue will mean ascending through a tree-lined valley up to the edge of the levee, with the Dallas skyline revealing itself fully at the apex. Instead of moving on toward the hideous jail block, there will be something new — a work of actual architecture that speaks to both the city’s future and its past.

It is not an accident that these developments are taking place on top of and adjacent to the levees, rather than between them. These projects do not interfere with the approval process for the Army Corps of Engineers’ \$300 million Trinity improvement project, which includes reshaping the levees and bottoms.

The conservancy believes that the corps’ project will eventually be congruent with its own park plans for the area within the levees. According to the conservancy, the reshaping the corps does undertake will help it realize its own designs.

For the moment, however, the conservancy has its hands full, and Dallasites can look forward to seeing what comes of its respective architectural searches. And when the time comes to choose a path forward on Dawson, that public must be included in the decision-making process. Put that on lockdown.

Cancer-causing chemicals found in Fort Worth well. Could they be in city water?

[BY HALEY SAMSEL](#)

JULY 10, 2020 05:30 AM , UPDATED JULY 10, 2020 10:40 AM

The Navy is asking homeowners within a 1-mile radius of Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth who have private drinking water wells if the agency can test their water. Officials are looking for potentially hazardous chemicals. BY JACK HOWLAND

After years of using chemical-laden foam to put out fires on Fort Worth's Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, the Navy has found that at least one nearby private drinking water well has been contaminated with cancer-causing chemicals.

The chemicals, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are commonly found in food packaging, electronics, carpets and other plastics. They're better known as PFAS, which refers to thousands of chemicals that share similar components.

Most Americans have been exposed to the two most well-known PFAS chemicals, PFOS and PFOA, due to its use in many consumer products, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Most important for military bases, PFAS chemicals are found in flame retardants like aqueous film-forming foam, or AFFF, which Navy firefighters formerly used to extinguish flames caused by training exercises or plane crashes.

The chemicals can seep into soil and groundwater, which has led to [contamination and health concerns](#) in communities across the United States. Known as "forever chemicals," PFAS are highly persistent and accumulate in the environment and in people's bodies rather than breaking down, said Dr. Katherine Pelch, a professor at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth who studies how chemicals found in everyday products can impact public health.

"We know that PFAS can have very harmful effects in humans, and this evidence is supported by the science that has been produced in lots of different animal species," Pelch said. "In humans, we know that they are associated with development of certain cancers and ... with a decreased immune response, particularly in children, so kids have a decreased ability to respond to vaccines when they are exposed to these chemicals."

While the Navy's testing in Fort Worth did not find widespread PFAS contamination, Pelch and her fellow scientists have spent several years sounding the alarm about the lack of regulation of PFAS chemicals and their presence in water systems across the country at levels that could cause health problems.

Dallas-Fort Worth residents should continue to be concerned about contamination because state or federal agencies are not required to test for PFAS in drinking water, Pelch said.

“Even though we know that they’re widespread across the country, there’s no mandate that water systems test for them,” Pelch said.

In 2016, the Navy began to respond to public health concerns by looking at its historical record to determine where firefighting foam was used on bases and how it may have affected groundwater in surrounding communities, said Susan Brink, a Navy spokesperson.

Officials [announced last fall](#) that the Navy was testing private water wells within a one-mile radius of the Fort Worth base for PFAS chemicals, [holding an open house in September](#) for locals to learn more about how to opt in to testing. The base sent more than 1,000 postcards to residents and consulted municipal water records to notify residents believed to own a private water well, Brink said.

Since then, the Navy has tested seven out of 16 identified wells and found that one contained a combined amount of PFOS and PFOA that surpassed the [EPA’s lifetime health advisory](#), defined as 70 parts per trillion.

“The owners were using municipal drinking water, so the Navy did not provide them with drinking water,” said Tread Kissam, a Navy hydrogeologist who led testing in Fort Worth. “We advised them not to drink from the well and only to drink from their municipal supplied water.”

The Navy did not test the municipal water supply near the base since the city is responsible for its own water testing. The Fort Worth Water Department last tested for six PFAS chemicals in 2013 and 2014 under an EPA requirement to test for contaminants that are not covered by the Safe Water Drinking Act, according to department spokesperson Mary Gugliuzza. Each of the city’s five plants had four samples tested for the chemicals, she said.

“None of the six compounds were detected in any of the 20 samples,” Gugliuzza said. “The 2013 to 2014 testing was the first and only time Fort Worth has tested its drinking water for these compounds.”

While Fort Worth’s testing met EPA standards, Pelch noted that the city’s detection levels for PFAS chemicals are above the levels now considered safe by other states. In New Jersey, for example, water departments [must now take action](#) if more than 13 parts per trillion of PFOS, a chemical in the PFAS family, is found in its drinking water. Fort Worth’s testing only reported a PFOS detection if the number was above 40 parts per trillion, according to data provided by the water department.

“The detection limits that were used in 2013 to 2014 are just too high to be health protective,” said Pelch, who co-wrote an [academic paper in June](#) arguing that federal and state governments should regulate PFAS as a class of chemicals rather than addressing substances one by one.

The EPA will likely require water departments to monitor for PFAS in the next five years at lower minimum reporting levels than Fort Worth used in its previous testing, Gugliuzza said. As for the Navy, Kissam said bases have stopped using firefighting foam during training exercises and changed the foam’s formula to contain different chemicals. However, that formula still has some PFAS components.

“They’re looking for a solution to use in firefighting foam that does not contain any PFAS, but at this time, there is no complete substitute for it,” Kissam said.

The Navy is also moving forward with plans to test soil and groundwater on the Fort Worth base for PFAS chemicals, which should begin this summer, Kissam said. While the formal testing period is over, residents living near the base can still contact Navy officials to receive on-site testing of their private wells, Brink added.

Concern about PFAS testing should not be limited to people living near the base, Pelch said.

“I think it’s particularly important that we begin, as a community, to ask what is in our drinking water and to be able to start those discussions if we do need to consider reducing our exposures,” Pelch said.

Bright future taking shape in Texas Triangle

North Texas is well-positioned for economic growth as part of business-friendly mega-region

By Henry Cisneros and Cullum Clark, Dallas Morning News

North Texas has experienced stunning growth in the 20th century, and its economy is weathering the COVID-19 storm better than most regions.

One of the key reasons for that resilience is that it's an integral part of an increasingly cohesive, powerful economic system: the Texas Triangle, stretching from North Texas to Austin and San Antonio in the southwest, with Houston anchoring the southeast corner.

The fate of Dallas as well as Texas will hinge on the region's success in seizing the opportunities and answering the challenges posed by an urbanized future, one that will look very different from what Texas has known throughout history.

Urban scholar Richard Florida has furthered the idea that the pivotal geographic units driving the economy today are neither states nor cities, but "mega-regions" comprising interlinked metro areas. Around the world, mega-regions are where the action is.

In a recent report on America's economic future, consulting firm McKinsey argues that 30 U.S. metro areas are pulling ever further ahead of the rest of the country in terms of innovation and growth. Virtually all, including each of the metros of the Texas Triangle, are in America's top eight mega-regions. And leading mega-regions now compete with each other for talent, business and even political and cultural influence in the nation.

The Texas Triangle stands out among America's mega-regions in numerous respects. In demographic and economic terms, it's younger, less white, more Hispanic, more economically expansive, more lightly taxed, and more permissive in business and land-use regulations than other mega-regions.

The Triangle's population grew some 50% from 2000 to 2020 — far ahead of most other mega-regions — and now exceeds 19 million. The 2020 U.S. Census will likely confirm that the region's four largest cities, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas and Austin, are among America's 10 largest, the first time that a single state has had four of the top 10. Fort Worth is close behind, as America's 13th largest city.

The Triangle is home to 48 Fortune 500 headquarters. If it were a nation, it would be the world's 15th largest economy.

Among the drivers of the Triangle's success is its exceptionally diverse economy. The region's strong positions in business services, finance and health care alongside its historic dominance in energy have helped shield it from downturns in particular sectors, such as Michigan has experienced with autos and numerous regions are now suffering with tourism.

The Triangle has long offered better housing affordability than most other mega-regions, reflecting its pro-growth attitude toward development. While it faces divides between haves and have-nots like all mega-regions, it's given lower-income residents more upward mobility than most other mega-regions, based on a measure developed by Harvard economist Raj Chetty.

Underlying these advantages is a pragmatic style of politics in local government that runs counter to the image conveyed by some Texas leaders in Austin. The Triangle has remained committed to greater economic freedom than any other mega-region, according to data from Southern Methodist University's O'Neil Center for Global Markets and Freedom.

The Triangle's growth is reshaping the economy and identity of Texas. Its metros make up just 35 of the state's 254 counties but account for 66% of its population and more than 77% of its economy. Texas now has more of its population in metropolitan areas than most states, refuting outdated stereotypes of Texas as a land of wide-open spaces dominated by ranches and oil derricks.

Demographers project the Triangle's population will grow to 35 million-plus by 2050, fully 8% of the American people. While the COVID shock may weaken dense, public transit-dependent cities, the lower-density but highly productive cities of the Triangle are well-positioned for a changing urban landscape.

The scale and momentum of the Triangle economy are making Texas into a more powerful force than it's ever been before. At the same time, the realities of a highly urbanized future demand that state and local leaders update their thinking.

First, Texas must raise its game in education, particularly in large urban school systems. The Triangle performs behind most leading mega-regions in its population share with a bachelor's degree or higher. While each of the Triangle's urban districts have made helpful reforms, each face serious challenges in raising outcomes, particularly for the Hispanic and Black students who now dominate each district. The Triangle has been successful in importing skilled workers from elsewhere, but it must do a better job in growing a skilled, diverse, home-grown workforce.

Second, housing attainability is emerging as a severe challenge for moderate-income people, especially in core cities where construction has slowed in recent years. The problem is most acute in Austin, which approaches West Coast levels of housing market dysfunction, but Dallas is close behind. Almost all the Triangle's population growth is now in more affordable suburban areas like Collin, Comal, Hays and Fort Bend counties, but even there, housing supply isn't keeping up with demand. Unaffordable housing forces many people to live too far away from job centers to access available jobs, holding back productivity. The Triangle needs much more housing supply.

Third, the Triangle needs to make major investments in physical infrastructure to keep up with its growth. Above all, this means water supply and transportation infrastructure, since Texas is growing drier, and the roads in its leading cities have become among the most congested in the nation.

And fourth, the Triangle's cities face challenges in developing more inclusive models of metropolitan growth. Neighborhoods and schools are almost as segregated on racial and economic lines as they were in the 1960s. That said, the region's high-growth urbanizing suburbs are rapidly growing more diverse, and in some ways are leading the way toward a future of greater integration and opportunity.

To secure the future of the large metros that will power the state's economy after the COVID crisis and for decades to come, our leaders need to step up on these challenges, adjust their priorities, and adapt to the emergence of a new and different Texas.

Henry Cisneros served as secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under Bill Clinton and is a former mayor of San Antonio.

Cullum Clark is a director at the Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative and an adjunct professor of economics at SMU.

They are among the authors of a forthcoming book on the Texas Triangle to be published by the Texas A&M University Press.

Potential Funding for Texas Central High Speed Rail in New Federal Infrastructure Bill

An infrastructure bill recently passed in the House could provide financial benefits and funding to Texas Central, a high-speed rail project.

By:Kim Roberts, July 13, 2020, Texan

When the U.S. House of Representatives passed a large infrastructure bill, tagged the “Moving Forward Act” (H.R. 2) on July 1, it included a few provisions that could provide financial benefits and assistance to the planned high-speed rail project, Texas Central Railway.

Texas Central aims to build a high-speed rail between Dallas and Houston with one stop in the Brazos Valley.

H.R. 2 provides \$19 billion over five years in Passenger Rail Improvement, Modernization, and Expansion (PRIME) Grants. The House Transportation Committee report confirmed that high-speed rail projects would be eligible for PRIME grant funds. The program offers federal cost-sharing of 90 percent. The bill did not make clear who would administer the PRIME Grant program, but the Federal Railroad Administration has handled other grant programs like the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program.

Rep. Colin Allred (D-TX-32) lauded the grant program funding. “Private entities like Texas Central, which is trying to build a high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston, would also be eligible for financing through the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program,” he said in a press release.

The bill now moves to the Senate, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said it “is not going anywhere in the Senate.” The bill contains many provisions funding other projects besides transportation infrastructure, including funding for broadband internet, low-income housing, health care, the postal service, and “green” energy.

Texas Central was originally said to be privately funded as seen in the Texas Department of Transportation 2016 Texas Rail Plan Update. “TCR [Texas Central Railway] proposes an entirely privately funded high-speed passenger rail service between Dallas and Houston with no state or federal funds for the EIS [environmental impact statement] study, the development, construction, or operation of the service.”

The Texas Central website says, “The Railroad will not seek grants from the US Government or the State of Texas, nor any operational subsidy once operation begins. The project will be financed with a blend of debt and equity.”

Since then, a spokesperson for Texas Central said in June that they have made clear for the last two years that they would explore all types of funding available, including federal programs.

In a letter to Texas State Senator Robert Nichols (R-Jacksonville) in April, Texas Central CEO Drayton McLane said that the cost of the project has grown to nearly \$30 billion and that he hoped to receive “monies from President Trump’s infrastructure stimulus.”

Another possible benefit to Texas Central in the “Moving Forward Act” was an amendment to H.R. 2 proposed by Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30), a vocal supporter of high-speed

rail. It would change current law to alter the Credit Risk Premium (CRP) by creating a new payment schedule.

According to the Federal Railroad Administration, the CRP is intended as a protection in case of default and is “assessed as a percentage of the total loan amount and varies by the loan terms and overall risk of each unique transaction.”

This amendment allows Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) applicants to pay half the premium upfront, and the other half in installments over the 10 years after getting a loan.

Johnson believes the CPR premium payment requirement has been an impediment to RRIF assistance for projects like Texas Central.

“I am encouraged that my amendment to provide a workable option for Texas Central to meet the CRP was included in the bill,” Johnson said to *The Texan* in a statement.

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX-8) spoke against the amendment on the floor of the House. He believes that Texas Central’s “financial situation [is] so poor, they will not be able to pay the risk premium upfront – the altered CRP payment schedule would allow them access to government loans without putting down a full premium payment to protect taxpayers. If the project fails, then taxpayers could be left holding the bag for TCR,” a spokesperson for his office said.

Texas Central did not respond to request for comment before the time of publication.

<https://thetexan.news/potential-funding-for-texas-central-high-speed-rail-in-new-federal-infrastructure-bill/>

Arrival of rail for DART's \$2 billion Silver Line, from Plano to DFW Airport, keeps project on track

Published by: Texas Daily, July 14, 2020

DALLAS, Texas (Dallas Area Rapid Transit) — Long portions of steel rails were delivered Friday, July 10, to Addison, Texas along the Silver Line, a sure sign that construction on Dallas Area Rapid Transit's (DART) \$2 billion project is underway.

Manufactured by Steel Dynamics, Inc. (SDI) in Columbia City, Indiana, the rail traveled 1,100 miles to its new home in North Texas by special train.

The rails arrived to a spot between Marsh Lane and Midway Road as part of an overall shipment of 50 rail segments, each spanning about 1,600 feet long, or slightly longer than 5 football fields.

Preparation for the entire 26-mile Silver Line has been underway since early 2019 to link Plano to DFW Airport. The anticipated completion is 2022.

The corridor traverses Grapevine, Coppell, Dallas, Carrollton, Addison, Richardson and Plano, where workers have been surveying, staking, identifying and relocating utilities, doing geotechnical investigations, acquiring soil samples, preparing design work and coordinating with cities on Quiet Zones and Hike & Bike Trails.

The new line will provide DART passenger rail connections and service in the northern part of their service area, improve mobility, accessibility and system linkages to major employment, population and activity centers, and interface with DART's three light-rail lines: The Red/Orange Lines in Richardson/Plano, the Green Line in Carrollton and the Orange Line at DFW Airport. At DFW Airport, customers will connect to Trinity Metro's TEXRail Regional Rail Line to Fort Worth.

The Silver Line Project along the Cotton Belt Corridor has been included in various DART and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) planning documents since 1983. DART purchased 52 miles of the Cotton Belt Corridor in 1990 to preserve for future regional rail service the stretch from Wylie, Texas to north Fort Worth.

https://www.mytexasdaily.com/north-texas/arrival-of-rail-for-darts-2-billion-silver-line-from-plano-to-dfw-airport-keeps/article_5812861a-c5fc-11ea-8aca-7f949c4a0039.html

North Central Texas Council of Governments receives regional SolSmart designation

By Solar Power World Online, July 14, 2020

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has received a Bronze designation from the national SolSmart program for helping local governments across the Dallas-Fort Worth area make it faster, easier and more affordable to go solar.

“We congratulate NCTCOG as the first regional organization in Texas to achieve SolSmart designation,” said Andrea Luecke, president and executive director at The Solar Foundation.

“This designation recognizes the superb leadership from NCTCOG in leading a collaborative effort to encourage solar and other renewable energy growth in the Lone Star State. Other Texas communities that are interested in going solar should take advantage of the resources that NCTCOG has to offer.”

The SolSmart designation recognizes NCTCOG for helping area communities remove obstacles to solar energy development. NCTCOG has provided guidance to local governments through solar energy training sessions and educational resources available on the Go Solar Texas website, www.gosolartexas.org.

NCTCOG launched the website as a comprehensive guide to increasing solar deployment across Texas. It includes steps for homeowners to go solar, best management practices for local governments, an extensive resource library, training for a variety of audiences, including real estate professionals and fire and code officials, and much more.

“NCTCOG is honored and excited to receive the Bronze SolSmart designation,” NCTCOG Executive Director Mike Eastland said. “Our agency has worked with our member governments over the past few years to develop resources and provide training, to increase deployment of solar energy systems in North Central Texas.”

NCTCOG has also hosted trainings throughout the state for fire and emergency medical professionals on safely responding to house fires where solar panels are installed.

The SolSmart designation recognizes both recent accomplishments and years of leadership from NCTCOG in advancing solar energy growth in Texas. Beginning in 2017, NCTCOG served as a SolSmart advisor, providing technical assistance on solar energy to area communities.

To date, six Dallas-Fort Worth communities have achieved SolSmart designation. Cedar Hill and Corinth were designated SolSmart Gold; Kennedale was designated SolSmart Silver; and Denton, Lewisville and Plano were designated SolSmart Bronze.

These communities achieved the designation by making changes to local procedures to remove barriers and encourage solar development. For example, Cedar Hill, Corinth and Kennedale now recognize solar as by-right in their zoning codes, which avoids requirements for special permits or hearings to install solar panels.

NCTCOG plans to expand its outreach to help more North Texas communities achieve SolSmart designation. Municipalities or counties interested in technical assistance on solar energy can contact energy@nctcog.org.

<https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2020/07/north-central-texas-council-of-governments-receives-regional-solsmart-designation/>.

2 freeway closures go down in Dallas, one temporary, one not so much

By Teresa Gubbins, Culture Maps Dallas

Two major freeway closures are in the works in Dallas. One involves a closure that begins this weekend. The other represents a closure that will last all summer. Dallas Love Field is also soliciting input on a possible new entrance.

Here is your transportation roundup:

I-30 closure in far east Dallas

Out on the border of Dallas and Mesquite, I-30 at Galloway Avenue will be closed for two weekends in a row:

- July 18-19: the eastbound lanes of I-30 at Galloway Avenue will be closed
- July 25-26: the westbound lanes of I-30 at Galloway Avenue will be closed

This will be accompanied by full closures of Galloway Avenue at I-30 and certain I-30/I-635 direct connectors.

These closures are to perform bridge work for the 635 East Project. The [635 East Project](#) is an 11-mile project on Interstate 635 in Dallas County, which wraps around the northeast border of Dallas. Construction includes the addition of a lane in each direction, building continuous frontage roads, and rebuilding the interchange at I-635 and I-30.

Construction began in early 2020 and is expected to make any trip to the Town East Mall in Mesquite probably a living hell until late 2024, which is the project's anticipated completion date. The 635 East Project is part of the [Texas Clear Lanes initiative](#) by TxDOT, to address growing traffic congestion in the state.

A video has been produced by the project team to show what's going on, which explains it so much better than words ever could. It's posted on [YouTube](#).

The scheduled closures and detours will begin at

- 8 pm on Saturday July 18 and run through Sunday July 19 at 1 pm
- 8 pm on Saturday July 25 and run through Sunday July 26 at 1 pm

To stay informed on construction progress, lane closures, and traffic changes, you can sign up for text alerts by sending the message "635 East" to 31996. Or sign up for e-blasts at 635east.com/receive/e-blasts/.

Design District exit ramp

An exit ramp from I-35 to Dallas' Design District will be closed for two months, beginning Monday July 20.

Weather permitting, TxDOT will close the northbound I-35E exit ramp to Hi Line Drive (Exit 429C) on Monday July 20 at 8 pm. It will remain closed until Monday September 21 at 5 am. But all is not lost. You can go to the next exit, Oak Lawn Avenue (Exit 430A), then pull a U-ie onto the southbound frontage road to get to Hi Line Drive.

The two-month closure is part of the 2.3-mile Lowest Stemmons project on I-35E from I-30 to north of Oak Lawn Avenue.

Love Field second entrance

Dallas Love Field is doing outreach on the possibility of a second entrance to the airport.

An "[Alternate Entry Analysis](#)" was undertaken to address the risks of having a single point of entry to the airport, currently the intersection of Mockingbird Lane and Herb Kelleher Way. The airport has observed a big increase in traffic in recent years, with an average daily traffic count of more than 80,000.

The project is being led by the Department of Aviation in coordination with consultant firm Ricondo & Associates and the North Central Texas Council of Governments. They've created a shortlist of potential second entries. Three that have been under consideration in the past include Shorecrest Drive, Northwest Highway, and Lemmon Avenue.

Alternatives were evaluated based on their ability to provide an evacuation route in case the current entry were blocked due to an incident, as well as traffic impacts, environmental and air quality impacts, and the ability to accommodate an automated people mover system.

All community members, including public officials, aviation enthusiasts, DAL customers, local businesses, and residents are encouraged to attend and understand the project. Virtual meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Thursday July 23, 6-7:30 pm. Register [here](#).
- Thursday September 3, 6:07:30 pm. Register [here](#).
- Tuesday September 22, 6:07:30 pm. Register [here](#).

The airport is also encouraging the public to take a survey, which will be open until September 30. It's available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

A deck park is rising in southern Dallas. Can it heal a highway's deep gash through Oak Cliff?

'This will be a park with a purpose,' says April Allen, whose public green foundation vows to bring equity and a beautiful space to struggling neighborhoods.

By Sharon Grigsby, Dallas Morning News

Look carefully into the massive reconstruction of Interstate 35E and you'll find the first stitches in the mending of a deep tear through historic southern Dallas.

The path of the original highway, laid down in the 1950s, ripped through the heart of Oak Cliff. As bulldozers rolled south from downtown Dallas, the road work destroyed homes and businesses, broke apart long-established communities and isolated neighbors from one another.

Now, more than 60 years later, a piece of the current I-35E infrastructure project may right some of those wrongs.

Rising slowly amid the Texas Department of Transportation's overhaul is a concrete skeleton that will hold the Southern Gateway deck park. Adjacent to the Dallas Zoo, a 5-acre green space eventually will sit atop the freeway from Ewing to Marsalis avenues and, at least symbolically, bridge the long-ago ruthless splitting.

The park's backers have big dreams for a space true to Oak Cliff's roots and a spark for community and economic improvements in an area challenged by poverty but bolstered by strong neighborhoods of committed residents.

TxDOT, which broke ground in March 2018 on the 11-mile Southern Gateway project, hopes to finish its part of the deck park in about two years. With a little luck — and a lot of private dollars, \$28 million of them — the first of the park's two phases could be completed in late 2023.

Yes, that's a long way down the road. With most every headline these days revolving around protests, politics and pandemic, the Southern Gateway deck park may sound like a lofty, out-of-touch idea.

But it's not, which I figured out as soon as I met April Allen, the just-announced president of the Southern Gateway Public Green Foundation, the private organization that will build the park in partnership with the city of Dallas, the North Central Texas Council of Governments and TxDOT.

While Allen's team is intent on bringing Dallas a beautiful gathering place, top of mind is creating a park that provides a large measure of equity for nearby residents.

Allen is sensitive to the present moment as many of her neighbor's struggle to put food on their tables and care for family members suffering from COVID-19.

"People, especially people of color, are feeling so much stress right now," she said. "But they are responding to talk of the park as something coming that they can feel hope around and that may change the reality of today's circumstances."

Southern Gateway foundation chair Michael Gruber is hearing something similar all over the city.

In the weeks since George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis, and the ensuing protests and conversations about social justice, "a shock wave went through people everywhere in Dallas that we have to do something to change the way things have always been done," Gruber said.

"That's what this project is about," he said. "Now all of a sudden we have people saying, 'OK, this is an answer.'"

Gruber and others on the team know the deck park is an answer only if they start with the right questions. That's why selecting Allen, who has held corporate and nonprofit jobs, to lead the effort was so wise.

After graduating from Harvard Business School, she was recruited in 2004 to Dallas and immediately picked Oak Cliff as her new home. In 2010, she married Sean Allen, whom she met at Concord Church, and became part of a family that has lived in southern Dallas for 50 years. Sean's father, Billy, has a long resume of civic work, including serving as Park Board president in the 1980s and playing a key role in the campaign to build the African American Museum in Fair Park.

Allen understands that Oak Cliff residents who live around the future deck park want the amenity, but they also want to have equitable access to it — and not be priced out of their longtime homes.

So while HKS Architects works on the park's physical design, consultant Dr. Lorin R. Carter is creating an equitable development study with the help of a \$200,000 grant from the W.W. Caruth, Jr. Fund at Communities Foundation of Texas.

A large number of the people who live in a 1-mile radius of the deck park — the 20,000 residents who will be most affected and whose input is most important — are hurting. Many live in poverty. Many have poor education or employment prospects. Many suffer health problems.

Carter understands that her equity blueprint must ensure that the park lifts up the surrounding communities when it comes to housing, economic development, education, health and safety.

At a recent community meeting, Carter described her work like this: Prioritizing existing residents and reducing racial disparities while focusing on quality-of-life issues once the park is in place.

Concerns about gentrification — and ensuring that low- and moderate-income people and small businesses share in real-estate benefits and aren't priced out of the neighborhoods — is unsurprisingly a hot topic.

No community is more important to the deck park effort than the Tenth Street Historic District, the original Freedman's Town whose struggles landed it on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places last year.

The neighborhood got big news Thursday: It will receive a significant grant from the National Trust that will allow the Tenth Street Residential Organization to hire a staff person to help with efforts to preserve the neighborhood.

The deck park team hosted two virtual town halls this month and about 300 people tuned in, most of them from Oak Cliff. The residents sounded cooperative but cautious. People in this part of the city have been burned before with big promises.

But in their more than 100 comments and questions, there was no mistaking the residents' pride in area neighborhoods and excitement about what the deck park might spark.

The wish list grows with every meeting: playgrounds and water features for all ages and abilities, Wi-Fi access, walkability, connections to nearby trails, programming for seniors, events with artists and musicians, pickleball courts, a fenced area for dogs, a community garden.

Many of those items are already in the initial plans, and the park team vowed it would look at every additional suggestion.

Amenities aren't the only thing on residents' minds. Several pressed on the need for construction jobs to go to local residents and minority contractors to get a fair share of the work. Others pointed to basics lacking in their neighborhoods, such as sidewalks that would allow people to get to the park safely.

In addition to the town halls, the deck park team has met with 17 neighborhood and community associations, nine area churches, the Oak Cliff Chamber, Dallas Black Chamber and Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber and the Dallas Zoo.

With the pandemic upending traditional community meetings and outreach, Allen and Gruber are looking for every opportunity for feedback. More virtual town halls will be scheduled in coming months, and an interactive tool for comments will soon launch on [the Southern Gateway deck park website](#).

"Like we've said from the beginning, this will be a park with a purpose," Allen told me. "It's very close to my heart and I want this to be a park our community can be proud of."

A third of Fort Worth is prone to flooding, but some don't want the areas publicized

By Luke Ranker, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

About a third of Fort Worth's roughly 350 square miles could flood regularly, but some of those at-risk areas do not show up on federal flood maps.

The city is considering developing local flood assessments by the end of the year, if the City Council approves. But Fort Worth's mayor and a group of real estate professionals worry doing so could hamper development, affect property values and open the door for lawsuits.

Roughly 118 square miles of the city has some kind of flood risk, according to a city assessment. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has designated about 50 square miles as part of its flood zone, which is used by lenders and insurance agencies. But FEMA's assessment is associated with waterway flooding and not urban flash floods.

The city's stormwater management department says an additional 68 square miles, including portions of popular neighborhoods like the Near Southside, Linwood and Arlington Heights, are also prone to flooding. That information is not easily available to residents, said Jennifer Dyke, stormwater program manager.

The department wants to make these non-FEMA flood zones public through online maps and notifications to property owners. Developers of properties one acre or smaller would be required to certify that they took into account flooding on their property as well as the development's impact on neighboring properties. Currently projects on an acre or smaller have no requirement to assess flood risk.

"This is really a flood warning effort," Dyke said. "We don't obviously have enough funding to fix all of the problems citywide, so that's where this mapping comes in, to inform people of those risks."

The idea is part of an effort to address the city's \$1 billion stormwater management problem, said assistant transportation and public works director Greg Simmons. [Fort Worth has more than 300 dangerous flash flooding spots](#), but even with a voter-approved fee increase, it can afford to fix only 40, about \$70 million worth.

Dyke's team compared reports of flooding to engineering modeling and found where floodwaters may reach outside FEMA flood zones. Two designations were developed beyond the federal risk assessment.

About 65 square miles falls under what the city calls "potential high-water areas." These areas have a risk of flooding, based on previous reports. Just three-square miles lie in "city flood risk areas." Here the stormwater employees drilled down to the parcel level and looked at hydrological models.

The proposal is to require developers to certify projects within the three-square miles that are most at risk, Dyke said. The potential high-water designation would simply inform residents that a property or street may experience flooding not predicted by FEMA.

Annually in Texas, the amount of flooding that occurs outside FEMA's flood plain has risen from an average of about 15% in 1986 to an average of 55% in 2014, according to a report from Gov. Greg Abbott's commission to rebuild Texas following Hurricane Harvey.

In Fort Worth, 76% of flooding between 1980 and 2019 was outside the federal flood plain.

LOCAL FLOOD MAPS

Fort Worth would not be alone in mapping flooding beyond FEMA's assessment.

Through its zoning map portal, the city of Dallas shows non-FEMA flood risks.

In Denver, "potential inundation areas" can be highlighted on the city's interactive map. A similar option is available in Raleigh, North Carolina. Suburbs are also advancing non-FEMA flood mapping, including Grand Prairie, which shows localized flooding through the city's drainage master plan.

In Houston, Texas A&M professor Sam Brody piloted a flood map program similar to Fort Worth's that focused on the statistical likelihood a property would flood, rather than hydrological engineering. The Center for Texas Beaches and Shores has since developed a parcel-level tool that shows non-FEMA flood risk in Dallas, Galveston, New Orleans and Miami.

The localized maps are increasingly more important as the risk of urban flooding grows, he said. A combination of aging drainage systems, rapid development and increasing rainfall make it more likely cities experience flooding outside the federal flood zone.

These maps cost less and take less resources to update than hydrological models, he said. "It's not a replacement of the FEMA maps, but a complement, to better understand the flood hazard and risk at a household level," Brody said.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS

But there is some hesitation from the City Council and Realtors.

Price, when the council was briefed on the project last month, said she has had reservations for a long time about the idea of local flood maps.

She said she worried properties would be placed on a local flood map and then not removed if the issue was fixed. Such a designation could hurt property appraisals and insurance rates, she said.

"I still think there's a lot of work yet to be done on this program," Price said. "I think we still really need the critical answer to exactly why we are doing this? It won't address our drowning issues on our roadways or that kind of flooding."

In 2018, four people died in five months on flooded Fort Worth streets. The Greater Fort Worth Association of Realtors shares Price's concerns said CEO Robert Gleason.

Disclosure forms require sellers to note if a property is in a FEMA flood zone and if it has flooded, but there's no requirement regarding local flood designations. This could open the door to liability issues if a seller doesn't note that a property is on the city's flood map. But disclosing the information, even if the property hasn't flooded, may make it difficult to sell, he said. Gleason said he saw merits for city staff to use the non-FEMA flood maps internally while vetting proposed developments, but he wasn't sure it should be public knowledge.

"On the outside, you may say, 'well, wouldn't it be great if we had this mapping out there that shows some of these at-risk flood areas,' but there's some pretty major consequences, I think," he said.

Dyke said the local flood designations would be significantly easier to change than those produced by FEMA, which often take years to update. If a property is mislabeled, city staff can quickly reevaluate and remove it.

Being placed in the city's flood map likely wouldn't hamper development in the long run, she said, noting other factors developers consider include the market, economy and location to jobs or schools.

"If the structure actually floods that will have a significant impact on property values, but just mapping itself would probably just have a small impact," she said.

Arrival of rail for DART's Silver Line keeps project on track

Staff report, Rowlett Lakeshore Times

Long portions of steel rails were delivered Friday, July 10, to Addison, Texas along the Silver Line, a sure sign that construction on Dallas Area Rapid Transit's (DART) \$2 billion project is underway.

Manufactured by Steel Dynamics, Inc. (SDI) in Columbia City, Indiana, the rail traveled 1,100 miles to its new home in North Texas by special train.

The rails arrived to a spot between Marsh Lane and Midway Road as part of an overall shipment of 50 rail segments, each spanning about 1,600 feet long, or slightly longer than 5 football fields.

Preparation for the entire 26-mile Silver Line has been underway since early 2019 to link Plano to DFW Airport. The anticipated completion is 2022.

The corridor traverses Grapevine, Coppell, Dallas, Carrollton, Addison, Richardson and Plano, where workers have been surveying, staking, identifying and relocating utilities, doing geotechnical investigations, acquiring soil samples, preparing design work and coordinating with cities on Quiet Zones and Hike & Bike Trails.

The new line will provide DART passenger rail connections and service in the northern part of their service area, improve mobility, accessibility and system linkages to major employment, population and activity centers, and interface with DART's three light-rail lines: The Red/Orange Lines in Richardson/Plano, the Green Line in Carrollton and the Orange Line at DFW Airport. At DFW Airport, customers will connect to Trinity Metro's TEXRail Regional Rail Line to Fort Worth.

The Silver Line Project along the Cotton Belt Corridor has been included in various DART and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) planning documents since 1983.

DART purchased 52 miles of the Cotton Belt Corridor in 1990 to preserve for future regional rail service the stretch from Wylie to north Fort Worth.

Dallas-to-Houston high-speed rail project just got easier to build, but hurdles still remain

By Evan Hoopfer, Dallas Business Journal

Texas Central won a key ruling Thursday that will make it easier to build the proposed high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston, but hurdles remain before construction can begin.

The Surface Transportation Board, which oversees regulation of various modes of transportation, primarily freight rail, in addition to some passenger rail, reversed a prior decision, and will now take jurisdiction over the project. [Here's the full STB ruling.](#)

The STB's decision doesn't clear the way entirely for Texas Central to make its high-speed rail line a reality, but it represents a major hurdle the company has now overcome.

Texas Central wanted the STB to take jurisdiction because while high-speed rail is uncommon in the U.S., the STB does have experience overseeing rail construction. If the STB had again declined to take jurisdiction, the permitting process would have likely been kicked to the state which has far less experience in these matters.

The project's opposition group, Texans Against High Speed Rail, pointed out the STB also denied a Texas Central request that would have expedited the construction process. Now, Texas Central must go through a full application with the STB.

"It is noteworthy that the Board mandated (Texas Central) provide a full application and receive approval in order to move forward with construction of this proposed high-speed rail project, making the company's desired construction start of later this year impossible," TAHSR said in a statement. "However, we are confident that the Board will deny (Texas Central) upon review of their "full" application based on the merits."

[Carlos Aguilar](#), Texas Central CEO, said the company is pleased with the STB decision. "This decision is an important milestone for Texas Central, Texas and the United States," Aguilar said.

How'd we get here?

Thursday's decision was years in the making. Texas Central previously sought STB jurisdiction over the project, but in 2016, the STB said no.

The primary reason was the project is contained to the state of Texas and the STB oversees projects that cross state lines. To fix that problem, Texas Central entered into a ticketing agreement with Amtrak, similar to how airline codeshares work.

When Texas Central's track is up and running, travelers will be able to buy one ticket if their journey goes from Houston to Dallas and then up to Oklahoma City, for example. The Houston-Dallas leg would be on Texas Central's high-speed rail line, and then the Dallas-Oklahoma City leg would be on Amtrak's line — all under one ticket.

"In light of the evidence presented on reopening, the Board now finds that the Line would be part of the interstate rail network and subject to the Board's jurisdiction," the STB said in a filing.

Many local politicians and business leaders, who support the project, lobbied the STB to take jurisdiction.

"I envision a traveler making a trip from Oklahoma to Dallas to College Station for a football game or New Orleans via Houston to Dallas to come to the State Fair," Dallas Mayor [Eric Johnson](#) wrote in a letter in September to the STB in support of Texas Central. "... These are real examples of journeys that will be made easier and faster as a result of this new travel option."

TAHSR argued against this reasoning, pointing out that the proposed site of the Texas Central station in Dallas is 0.8 miles away from Amtrak's Dallas station. And in Houston, the two stations are more than seven miles apart, meaning travelers will need a bus to connect between the two stations. TAHSR said this shows Texas Central's proposal is not a true interstate system.

But the end, the STB said it found TAHSR's arguments "unpersuasive" and sided with Texas Central. And because the Dallas stations are less than a mile apart from one another, the STB seemed to discount the bigger issue of the stations being over seven miles apart in Houston.

"While the connecting transfer service would be provided in both Dallas and Houston, the Board's finding that the Line would be part of the interstate rail network is based on the connection in Dallas, where the distance between Amtrak and the Line is less than a mile," the STB said in a filing. "The Board need not decide whether the connection in Houston, where the Amtrak and Texas Central stations would be over seven miles apart, is sufficient, given the findings pertaining to the Dallas stations."

Petition for exemption denied

Texas Central didn't get everything it wanted, however.

The company also requested exemption from filing a full application to build its railroad, a request the STB shot down. It's unclear how long the application process will take and when Texas Central can actually start construction.

As reason for denying Texas Central's request to fast-track the permitting process, the STB cited the growing cost of the project as an issue. As [previously reported](#) by the *Dallas Business Journal*, Texas Central's chairman [Drayton McLane, Jr.](#) disclosed in a letter to a state official the project cost is now around \$30 billion.

The cost has risen considerably through the years.

Up until a few weeks ago, Texas Central's website said the project would be "more than \$12 billion to construct." The company updated its website after a [June 5 Business Journal story](#) detailed the existence of the McLane letter, and now the Texas Central's website says "the civil infrastructure costs (or hard costs) for the project will be around \$20 billion." Aguilar said the \$30 billion figure represents "a conservative estimate of 'all in' numbers" when taking the cost of financing into account.

"Scrutiny under the application process here is appropriate given the magnitude of the project, the questions about increased costs and funding sources, the substantial public interest, and the potential impact on numerous local landowners," the STB said in the filing. "For these

reasons, the Board finds that requiring the additional information on the financial feasibility of the project that would be required in an application is necessary."

Busy summer

Building a high-speed rail line is complicated and involves approval from many government agencies, and the company has made headway this summer in several different facets.

Thursday's news follows the Federal Railroad Administration [releasing its Final Environmental Impact Statement](#), another process that was years in the making.

Also, Texas Central recently won a [key legal ruling](#) giving it the right of eminent domain authority — a useful tool it will use if some landowners along the track won't sell their land to the company. TAHSR has already said it plans to file an appeal, setting up a potential showdown in the Texas Supreme Court to decide once and for all if the company has the right of eminent domain.

In Thursday's filing, the STB made clear that "issues pertaining to eminent domain authority are matters of state law."

Electric motor company to develop manufacturing plant in Northeast Fort Worth

By Ian Pribanic, Community Impact

In June, Fort Worth City Council approved a nearly \$70 million economic incentive package that will allow electric motor company Linear Labs to develop a manufacturing facility in the Alliance area.

The 500,000-square-foot manufacturing plant is expected to create at least 1,200 new jobs during the next decade. The plant will focus on research and production of electric motors for a number of industries, such as electric vehicles and robotics, according to a city news release.

“Fort Worth is our home, and we can see the strategic moves the city is making to shape its infrastructure into the next major technology hub,” said Brad Hunstable, co-founder and CEO of Linear Labs. “The area offers a highly skilled talent pool with world-renowned universities and innovative companies.”

Linear Labs is responsible for the creation of electric motor technology that increases torque while reducing the size of the motor. The technology helps increase the motor’s power and reduce overall costs, the release said. The company’s new production facility is expected to be located in the Alliance area at 2060 Eagle Parkway, Fort Worth, and will be operational by 2023.

In addition, the facility will utilize Dark Factory methodology to allow for the use of robotic automation with human oversight, the release said. The methodology requires the hiring of skilled workers and is designed to increase production efficiency and overall safety, the release said.

“Fort Worth continues to establish itself as a hub for technology and innovation companies, and we are thrilled to add Linear Labs’ new research and production facility to that list,” Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price said.

This \$2 billion highway expansion prompts concerns about noise, tree removal in Arlington

By Haley Samsel, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

When Shelley Ames and her family of five moved into the Willow Bend subdivision in Arlington last year, she was attracted to the shady front yards and friendly neighbors. She had not heard of the Southeast Connector, a \$2 billion project the Texas Department of Transportation says will [transform a 16-mile stretch of highway](#) along Interstate 20, East Loop 820 and U.S. 287.

Ames' home is right behind an I-20 access road, separated by a backyard fence and a tree-filled ditch. TxDOT plans to expand the access road from one to two lanes without building a noise barrier wall, which Ames and her neighbors fear will lead to increased traffic and the inescapable sound of cars whizzing by.

"Had we known that something like that was in the works, I don't know if I would have chosen to live right here," Ames said. "I don't want them to take down our tall trees right behind our fence that help with the sound and certainly help with the view."

The Southeast Connector, which has been moving steadily forward since 2017, will affect parts of Fort Worth and Arlington when construction begins in late 2021 and continues through 2026, according to TxDOT plans. About 24 businesses and residential buildings are slated to be destroyed in east Fort Worth, with owners receiving compensation for their properties, said Rep. Nicole Collier, who represents the area in the state legislature.

"It's bound to happen with most projects: businesses are going to be displaced and homes are going to be displaced, but the state is going to have to offer compensation for that," Collier said.

"The only thing you can ask for is cooperation, and that is what TxDOT has been providing in terms of my district."

While Fort Worth residents have been [working with local representatives](#) and neighborhood associations to hammer out details of the project since 2018, Arlington residents say they have only learned about plans to clear out several acres of trees and expand lanes near their homes in the past few months. The city of Arlington last held a meeting with TxDOT concerning the project in June 2018, according to TxDOT documents.

"This was the first that I had heard anything of it when it popped up on Nextdoor a few weeks ago," said Kathy Mitchell, an Arlington resident who serves on the city's Citizens Environmental Committee. "They have held lots of meetings, especially in Fort Worth, but there's been nothing that really addressed us here and all we got was that public hearing that was held online."

Val Lopez, a spokesperson for TxDOT, said the agency has held more than 20 meetings and events to discuss the project with affected neighborhoods, businesses, and municipalities. Those efforts have continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, including [a virtual public hearing in June](#) that made TxDOT plans available to residents through PowerPoint slides and a YouTube presentation.

Expanding lanes with the Southeast Connector is necessary in order to update the original 1960s design into a modern highway system that can meet the growing population and development needs in Tarrant County, Lopez said.

“The improvements, which include adding lanes and rebuilding approximately 16 miles of highway, will reduce congestion, improve mobility and enhance safety — key goals of both the department and our partners in mobility throughout the region,” Lopez said in an email.

MAKING NOISE FOR A SOUND BARRIER

Roy Hopkins, who lives next door to Ames in a home he has owned since 1981, has major concerns about the noise levels near the neighborhood. Using his iPhone, Hopkins has measured noise decibels on his backyard deck, which is right behind the access road.

Hopkins found that that the noise levels are consistently between 60 and 80 decibels, and he expects that number to increase once construction begins. Noise above 70 decibels over a long period of time may cause hearing loss, and noise over 120 decibels can cause immediate harm to ears, [according to the Centers for Disease Control](#).

When Hopkins reported this issue to Curtis Loftis, TxDOT’s project manager for the Southeast Connector, Loftis told him “there is no proposed noise barrier” between Hopkins’ property and the eastbound I-20 frontage road, according to their email exchange.

“If it’s reasonable to build this whole Southeast Connector, a noise wall is peanuts,” Hopkins said. “That’s small potatoes compared with road construction. This is a simple wall, and if you look for noise barrier walls throughout the Metroplex, you’ll see ‘em everywhere.”

During the public hearing, TxDOT’s presentation noted that measures to address noise problems must be “both feasible and reasonable to be incorporated within the project.” In practice, this means that a sound barrier must reduce noise levels by at least five decibels to be considered economically feasible, Mitchell said. Mitchell’s submission to TxDOT asks for more details on how the agency determined that a sound wall would work on the south side of I-20 but not on the north side.

TxDOT has proposed 22 noise barriers along I-20, I-820 and U.S. 287 after conducting a traffic noise analysis using the Federal Highway Administration’s guidelines for analysis and abatement of roadway traffic noise, according to Lopez.

“TxDOT is currently evaluating the comments received during the public hearing earlier this summer, which would include any comments associated with noise barriers,” Lopez said.

TREE REMOVAL REMAINS CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Mitchell, Hopkins and Ames say they are also skeptical that a lane expansion is even necessary near their Arlington neighborhood, noting a lack of traffic congestion on their section of I-20.

“They’re talking about trying to help with congestion and traffic, and all of us around here are just kind of laughing about that because there’s never any traffic at the stop lights around here,” Mitchell said. “Unless there’s some huge wreck or something, this part of the highway doesn’t even back up.”

Hopkins is pushing the agency to reconsider the need to add lanes all the way up to the Park Springs exit on I-20 and advocated for noise barriers to be constructed without destroying any trees.

“The trees line our subdivision and do provide a little eyesore relief from seeing the freeway,” Hopkins said. “That helps tremendously, and these trees are meaningful and give you a little noise attenuation.”

Mitchell, who volunteers with the environmental organization Livable Arlington, points to maps showing that about 15 acres of trees are in danger of being cut down as a result of the project.

This move could lead to increased land erosion near the Kee Branch Tributary, which has been the site of floods, and reduce the trees’ ability to cool the air, she said.

“We hate to see any loss of trees that are helping to reduce some of that heat coming off the highway as well as just the pollution that trees can help to filter out,” Mitchell said. “I am hopeful that they will listen to our concerns and preserve those trees, but I’m also concerned that they will dismiss our concerns in the name of what they consider to be progress.”

Environmental considerations have been a “substantive part” of TxDOT’s work on the Southeast Connector, Lopez said. The agency has determined that the project is “not expected to result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts to environmental justice populations,” according to TxDOT plans.

“Impacts to vegetation would be avoided or minimized by limiting disturbances to only those which are necessary to construct the proposed project,” Lopez said. “The removal of native vegetation, particularly mature native trees and shrubs, would be avoided to the greatest extent possible.”

The project does have some unique benefits for Tarrant County, Collier said, including moving traffic through the U.S. 287 corridor that has been a headache for commuters. In addition, TxDOT has increased its commitment to contract with minority-owned businesses in the region, which is a key priority of hers.

“We have a lot of bottleneck and congestion in that area so it is time that we have this investment in the community, and it’s going to provide opportunities for work for people in the area,” Collier said.

Arlington residents concerned about the connector say they recognize the opportunity to address traffic congestion and improve mobility. But Ames said she fears that her neighborhood may not maintain its value to homeowners and its reputation as a safe area for kids to play if TxDOT does not address local anxiety.

“We already have someone who is thinking about selling specifically because of this going on, so that makes me nervous that all our wonderful people are going to move,” Ames said. “And who wants to move in if there’s tons of traffic and you’re going to have an access road in your backyard with no barrier in between? A little fence doesn’t do it.”

Sam Rayburn Tollway fourth lane project through McKinney advances over spring

By Miranda Jaimes, Community Impact Newspaper

Aided by reduced traffic during March, April and May, construction crews have made progress on work on the Sam Rayburn Tollway and its intersections.

The North Texas Tollway Authority's Sam Rayburn Tollway widening project began in January 2019 and will add a fourth lane in both directions from Denton Tap Road in Coppell to US 75 in McKinney with a \$200 million expansion. The project also calls for ramp improvements in Frisco between the Dallas North Tollway and Preston Road.

The Sam Rayburn Tollway widening project aims to improve regional mobility, as the North Texas population is projected to exceed 11 million people in the coming decades.

The entire 26-mile corridor is under construction at once so that crews can get ahead on project progress, NTTA spokesperson Michael Rey said.

Rey said decreased traffic on the tollway due to the COVID-19 pandemic allowed construction crews to begin work sooner and to extend work later into the day.

"From March through May, NTTA traffic engineers extended the times of permissible lane and ramp closures on the [Dallas North Tollway], [President George Bush Turnpike] and [the Sam Rayburn Tollway] to advance key construction and maintenance projects while traffic counts were low," Rey said in an email. "These extended lane closure hours were discontinued in June when traffic volumes began to increase."

However, reduced traffic due to COVID-19 caused adverse effects on NTTA's toll transactions and revenue, according to a May 20 report by the toll authority. In April, NTTA saw a 56.6% decrease in toll transactions and a 47.4% decrease in total revenue as compared to April 2019.

Those toll revenues are used to finance road improvements. Toll road projects do not receive federal money, said Kevin Feldt, the program manager for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Rey said funding for the SRT expansion will not be affected by revenue dips, and the project is still on track to be completed in December 2021.

From January to April, crews excavated in the tollway's median, began asphalt and concrete paving in certain areas, worked on intersection bridges and continued building a new ramp on Parkwood Boulevard, per the report.

Part of the SRT expansion involves adding lanes to existing bridges at several intersections. This process includes demolitions and adding foundation, columns, beams and a bridge deck, Rey said.

In its spring progress report, the tollway authority also provided updates on a planned fourth lane in each direction of the Dallas North Tollway between US 380 and the Sam Rayburn Tollway. This is part of NTTA's DNT improvement projects, which extend along the 32-mile

stretch between I-35 East in Dallas and US 380 on the Frisco/Prosper border.

Between January and April, environmental engineering started, and it will continue along the Frisco section of the DNT.

“In McKinney and Allen, concrete paving for the additional east- and westbound lanes is complete,” Rey said in an email.

As businesses and residents return to work and traffic increases, Rey said NTTA’s project and traffic engineers will evaluate tollway and intersection closures on a weekly basis.

Aurora expands to Texas in bid to ramp up self-driving truck efforts

By Kirsten Korosec, TechCrunch

Aurora, the autonomous vehicle technology startup backed by Amazon, is expanding into Texas as it aims to accelerate the development of self-driving trucks.

The company said it plans to test commercial routes in the Dallas-Fort Worth Area with a mix of Fiat Chrysler Pacifica minivans and Class 8 trucks. A small fleet of Pacificas will arrive first. The trucks will be on the road in Texas by the end of the year, according to the company.

Aurora's Texas office, which will staff about two dozen people, will be mostly comprised of new hires. Aurora said it's hiring for a variety of roles, including technicians, team leads, truck drivers and vehicle operators.

Aurora is developing a full-stack solution for self-driving vehicles, which it calls the "Driver." Since it launched in 2017, the startup has said its self-driving stack — the combined suite of software and hardware that provides the brains for an AV — could be applied to any vehicle. However, Aurora's partnerships and public comments in those first two years centered on robotaxis, not logistics.

That started to change last year. In [October 2019](#), Aurora wrote a blog post prioritizing the development of autonomous trucks over cars. In recent months, the company's co-founders have talked more openly about making trucks a priority.

"While the Driver will ultimately move both people and goods, our first commercial product will be in trucking — where the market is largest today, the unit economics are best, and the level of service requirements is most accommodating," the company [wrote in a blog post](#) Monday.

While the unit economics were a driving factor, the company says its acquisition of lidar company Blackmore and the integration of that tech in its self-driving stack has made the shift to trucks possible. Aurora has said its FirstLight Lidar gives it a crucial competitive advantage in high-speed self-driving.

Self-driving trucks was once considered a niche category within the autonomous vehicle technology industry. That has changed as companies have started to better understand the difficult unit economics of robotaxis, not to mention the complexity of operations.

Self-driving trucks have their own challenges. However, the growing consensus is that the path to profitability is clearer.

DCTA awarded \$600,000 from FTA for transit-oriented development planning

This planning project will help determine if the KCS corridor can provide mobility and economic opportunity for Denton County and the North Texas region.

By Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA)

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) \$600,000 to conduct high-level preliminary planning for transit-oriented development (TOD) along a 25-mile segment of the existing Kansas City Southern (KCS) freight rail line in Denton County.

This planning project will help determine if the KCS corridor can provide mobility and economic opportunity for Denton County and the North Texas region.

The corridor study area is a separate right-of-way for freight rail and is proposed for commuter rail service that would connect to DCTA's A-train and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). The funded TOD study area begins at the University of North Texas (UNT) and continues southeast through the cities of Denton, Highland Village, Lewisville and eastern Denton County.

The planning process will include the following:

- Corridor development policies and planning strategies;
- Station development plans for up to six potential station areas;
- Financial tools to encourage TOD implementation; and
- Land development policies to encourage transit-oriented market responses.

“As Denton County continues to grow and outpace the rest of the country, how we choose to move goods, services and people across our communities is important as it’s becoming increasingly difficult to build enough highway miles to keep up with the population growth,” said Raymond Suarez, DCTA CEO. “Working with Class 1 railroads like KCS to find solutions to advance smart and efficient growth is significant for the future of mobility in North Texas.”

The [FTA awarded a total of \\$22.97 million to 23 organizations](#) around the country to support comprehensive planning projects that improve access to public transportation. The funds are from FTA's Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning, which assists communities that are developing new or expanded mass transit systems.

More Than 200K Jobs Could Be Created Through Proposed Construction Projects, Firm Says

North Texas transportation planners seek money from new sources and push for federal stimulus

By Ken Kalthoff

North Texas transportation planners are promoting new projects big and small to create jobs in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic that put thousands of people out of work.

One consulting firm lobbying the U.S. government for stimulus funding estimates 240,000 new jobs could be created in North Texas alone by moving forward with several proposed construction projects.

Transportation Director Michael Morris with the North Central Texas Council of Governments leads the Regional Transportation Council.

He was involved with local use of federal money that helped the region recover from the 2009 financial crisis. He is using that experience as the blueprint for a new effort.

“We’re getting the old band back together,” Morris said. “We’re going to try to replicate what we did in ‘09 in the financial crisis, but this time we’re going to focus not just on big projects. We’re going to focus on small projects also.”

Morris shared PowerPoint documents, one from a June 11, 2020 meeting and another to be shared with local officials on Friday. They detail possible projects big and small that could put people to work.



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<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/more-than-200k-jobs-could-be-created-through-proposed-construction-projects-firm-says/2410771/>

Mesquite receives \$3.4M to improve public transit during pandemic

By Anny Sivilay, Mesquite News

During Monday night's Mesquite City Council pre-meeting the council received an update and briefing on the city's public transportation budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21.

U.S. Senator John Cornyn announced on July 17 that the city of Mesquite was awarded a federal grant of \$3,442,401 to help transit providers continue to operate throughout the novel coronavirus outbreak. The funding, which was appropriated by Congress in March as part of the CARES Act, comes through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Kimberly Garduno, senior management analyst, went over the details with council. According to the FTA, Congress allocated \$25 billion in order to support and sustain transit operations across the country.

"The amount of money includes 100 percent federal share, meaning cities and agencies do not have to provide a financial share or match," Garduno said.

The North Central Texas Council of Government (NCTCOG) is the designated recipient for the DFW Metroplex and is tasked with allocating funding to area cities and agencies on behalf of FTA. Garduno stated that the funding Mesquite is receiving is called the Urbanized Area (UZA) Formula Funds.

NCTCOG is receiving \$318,629,129, and Mesquite's allocation is \$3,442,401.

She noted that STAR Transit, which Mesquite subcontracts for public transportation, is a sub-recipient of NCTCOG and is receiving money through this as well.

Mesquite is currently utilizing three service models – Demand Response, which is a scheduled service; STARNow, which is an on-demand service; and COMPASS 201, which is an express route to DART.

The FY 2020 budget total was \$1,323,675. That breakdown was \$1,065,473 from federal/state subsidies, and \$281,931 being the city portion.

Fiscal Year 2021's budget total is \$1,266,469, with \$1,266,469 from federal/state subsidies and \$0 for the city portion.

"The operating cost for fiscal (year) 2021 is a little bit lower than last year and the reason for that is STAR actually provided us a rebate for the reduction of the effects of COVID-19. This rebate was about \$145,000 that they provided to the city," said Garduno.

She added that STAR's hourly service went down slightly as well.

"With this CARES funding, we anticipate our public transportation cost will be fully covered for the next three years," said Garduno.

She said that when staff wrote the grant application, they also included money for Mobility Management in the amount of \$500,000.

“That Mobility Management will pay for a full-time transportation coordinator. That will not cost the city anything as well,” she said. “I think that’s important because that person can work full-time with our agencies, NCTCOG, STAR, TxDOT, and they can also analyze transit data to improve our service throughout the city.”

Garduno said the grant doesn’t cover service expansion and proposed that they use the TxDOT grant, which is an annual state grant (Urban Public Transportation). The FY 2021 amount is \$142,455, which will be received by mid-September. This grant will fund to extend transit service hours.

According to the presentation, beginning Oct. 1 the expanded service model will extend Monday-Friday service for Demand Response and STARNow to 8 p.m. and add Saturday – 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Where Texas Stadium once stood, Irving envisions huge mixed-use development to go with a ‘Signature Bridge’

The 500-foot bridge is on track to be finished by the end of the year, and construction starts this fall on a major highway project in the area.

By Sarah Bahari, Dallas Morning News

For nearly 40 years, Texas Stadium loomed in Irving as the home of the Dallas Cowboys. Now, city officials believe the site where the stadium once stood is poised to become the next — and possibly one of the last — large master-planned developments in a city that’s running out of open and available land.

But first, the nearby roads will require a major \$355 million overhaul.

Work on that major highway construction project — called the “diamond interchange,” where State Highway 114, State Highway 183 and Loop 12 meet — will begin in October, according to the Texas Department of Transportation. Completion is expected in 2024.

“We’ve had significant interest in the property over the years, but to market the land, the highways need to be upgraded,” Irving Mayor Rick Stopfer [said in a news release on the city’s website](#). “Once completed, this will be a signature development for the city of Irving.” At the same site, construction of a 500-foot “Signature Bridge” spanning SH 114 is expected to be finished by the end of the year, according to the news release. The bridge, which will include a pedestrian pathway as well as car traffic, will connect the former stadium site to a new DART light rail station and, to the north, nearly 1,000 acres of open land that the city sees as ready for development.

City officials expect the site to eventually include a mixture of single and multi-family homes, offices and green space.

“This project will stand as the gateway into Irving from Dallas,” Stopfer said. “There is not a lot of developable land left, and we envision a keystone work-live-play setting in the center of North Texas.”

The area has sat largely vacant since 2010 when Texas Stadium was demolished.

Texas Stadium served as home field for the Cowboys from 1971 until 2009, when the team moved to AT&T Stadium in Arlington. The Irving stadium was demolished in 2010.

Dallas Lobbies FIFA to Host 2026 World Cup Matches

The most watched sporting event in the world could mean a \$400 million+ economic boost and 3,000 new jobs for the region.

By Ben Swanger, D Magazine

Officials with the Dallas Sports Commission, FC Dallas, and the Dallas Cowboys met virtually with FIFA World Cup representatives in Zurich this morning to pitch the idea of bringing the largest sporting event in the world to North Texas.

Among those participating were Dan Hunt, president of FC Dallas and chair of the Dallas 2026 Host Committee; Cowboys owner Jerry Jones and Chad Estis, executive vice president of the Cowboys' Legends Hospitality Management; Dallas Sports Commission Executive Director Monica Paul, Michael Morris, director of transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments; and more.

"When I was thinking about building AT&T Stadium, I knew we wanted a great place for 100,000 people to have a unique experience," Jones said. "We're ready to do what we can to make this World Cup the most special of them all. I was a close, personal friend of Lamar Hunt. I'm aware of his vision for soccer in the U.S., and I'm proud to be a partner with his family on this bid to host the World Cup."

Following the call, Estis, Hunt, and Paul talked with *D CEO* and other media to recap results. If North Texas wins the opportunity to host the cup, it would mean a significant economic boost for the region.

"Our initial calculations were done about two years ago and estimated about \$400 million in economic impact and 3,000 jobs," Paul said. "But that's a little bit of a moving target or sliding scale. ... As we get a little bit clearer picture from FIFA, we'll be able to tighten up that number and provide some good analysis. But right now, we're definitely anticipating over \$400 million in economic impact."

Dallas is one of 17 potential U.S. host cities, stretching from Los Angeles to New York. The region offers two distinct advantages, according to Hunt.

"Part of our presentation [to FIFA] was the ethnic diversity in Dallas," he said. "We have a very rich culture in soccer history and passionate fans for the global game. Another sales point is the affordability in this market. FIFA wants as many fans to have this experience as possible.

Tickets are expensive, but you have to be able to stay in hotels, rent cars, have public transportation, and these are all things that we as a committee are prepared to do to make it accessible so that all fans can enjoy the beautiful game."

In 1994, Dallas hosted six FIFA World Cup matches at the Cotton Bowl at Fair Park. The six matches were the most successful to date in terms of fan attendance, with a combined 3.5 million people packing the stand—an average of nearly 69,000 per match.

"The '94 World Cup was so critical for launching Major League Soccer, providing jobs for people in this community, growing youth soccer, but we think 2026 is going to be even bigger," Hunt said.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be the largest cup to date, featuring 48 national teams and 80 matches—60 in the United States, 10 in Canada, and 10 in Mexico. FIFA will visit each of the 17 potential U.S. host cities before making a final decision in mid to late 2021.

“Sports in Dallas are woven into the fabric of our culture,” Paul said. “By hosting the World Cup, we have an opportunity to showcase North Texas to an international audience and generate a huge economic engine for our region.”

Creating COVID-19 Jobs Through Small Transportation Projects Endorsed

Work in four North Texas Counties advances

By Ken Kalthoff

A panel of 80 North Texas transportation engineers Friday unanimously endorsed a plan to create jobs by fast-tracking projects.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments Surface Transportation Technical Committee received the plan and sent it forward for approval of the Regional Transportation Council without comment or objections.

Projects in four different North Texas counties are on the list with money transferred from a 5th county to help make the deals work.

In Downtown Fort Worth, pedestrian crossings around the Tarrant County Courthouse are hazardous. Fort Worth's Heritage Park is across a busy street from the Courthouse. Downtown worker Dee Gaucin said improvements are in order.

"That is a problem with people running lights, and not paying attention," she said. "People get run over a lot, just crossing."

The North Central Texas Council of Governments plan lines up more than \$9 million from several sources to improve sidewalks for people on foot, on bicycles and in wheelchairs.

NCTCOG Transportation Director Michael Morris said the new effort is a twist in the approach that was used after the 2009 financial crisis to create jobs and boost the economy with big transportation construction projects.

Planners are working to find the money for needed work on the drawing boards that would have been done eventually but could be done sooner.

"Can we do 100 little projects that may add up to something big? So, this time we're going to advance small projects and we're going to advance real big ones," Morris said.

[NBC 5 reported Tuesday on some of the bigger jobs.](#) The smaller ones were brought forward for the first time Friday.

In Dallas County, Dallas Design District apartment buildings and businesses are blocked by the I-35E Stemmons Freeway from DART's Victory light rail station and the American Airlines Center.

The NCTCOG lined up more than \$3 million to design and build a walkway through a freeway overpass to connect the two sides.

Bachman Lake Park in Dallas is popular but has no sidewalks to connect with the crowded apartment complexes in the Love Field neighborhood around the park. A \$1 million study of pedestrian links for the area is in the plan.

In Parker County, two schools will open the next two years in Aledo but roads to serve the schools are lacking. A developer will chip in \$2 million for almost \$15 million in Aledo road work in Friday's plan.

A funding category swap with Denton County will help expedite the Aledo work and keep money available for Denton County, work as well.

In the Kaufman County City of Terrell, FM 429 is to be realigned across US 80 and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Around \$10 million in Friday's plan will adjust the railroad tracks and rebuild the highway and railroad crossings to keep trains and vehicles moving.

Back in Fort Worth, Dee Gaucin is looking forward to the changes.

"It would be a good thing because we work here many years," she said.

The Regional Transportation Council must still approve the plan that was endorsed by the Committee Friday and then individual cities must officially receive the money, hire contractors and start the work.

"We're working hard to expedite, find money and develop innovative relationships," Morris said. The Transportation Director said it is a faster arrangement than there might have been otherwise for these jobs.



COVID-19-INFRASTRUCTURE-PROGRAM

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/creating-covid-19-jobs-through-small-transportation-projects-endorsed/2412834/>

More Autonomous Semi-Trucks Hitting North Texas Roads

By Diana Zoga, NBCDFW

They don't get distracted and they don't get tired behind the wheel – that's the idea behind autonomous semi-trucks. Aurora, the latest tech company to announce it is testing autonomous vehicles in North Texas, said it will first launch with a fleet of minivans to test commercial routes. Then, it will add big rigs.

It's unclear which roads Aurora plans to take and when. A press contact for Aurora tells NBC 5 by email the company is not yet sharing additional details beyond [this announcement](#) earlier this month.

Aurora isn't the first to expand its developing and testing to Texas. Companies like Waymo and Kodiak Robotics have also worked to stake a claim in the Lone Star State.

"A huge amount of all of the goods across the United States come through Texas. It just makes sense to have companies here in the state working towards these solutions," said Bob Brydia, a Senior Research Scientist with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

Tech companies are racing to corner the market – especially in Texas, where a 2017 law paved the way for automated vehicles on Texas roads. The vehicles have to follow the traffic and vehicle registration laws that apply to other drivers, but there aren't additional regulations for autonomous vehicles.

"There is driver shortage of commercial vehicle drivers. Being able to deploy a fleet of autonomous vehicles that do not rely on drivers in the future, you'll be able to have more trucks on the road, more trucks on the road can mean more goods delivered in a shorter time," said Brydia.

Before that can happen, autonomous vehicles would have to show they are safer. Brydia said public acceptance will be a challenge if autonomous vehicles can't demonstrate a perfect safety record. Current testing happens with a human safety driver in the cab.

"If you look at the vehicles that are being tested today, they're level four which means they have a safety driver in them at all times. The safety driver is poised to take over the vehicle if the vehicle is operating outside of the parameters for which it was currently designed for," explained Brydia.

Dr. Gopal Gupta, co-director of UT-Dallas' Center for Applied AI and Machine Learning believes trucking may be the first to go fully autonomous – much sooner than passenger cars. "Autonomous trucks can work today," said Dr. Gupta. "But for cars, it's a different story."

Gupta explains semis can travel a fixed route on a highway where it shouldn't encounter pedestrians, traffic lights or other challenges associated with city driving.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we see these trucks making deliveries in the next maybe two, three years," said Gupta.

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/traffic/more-autonomous-semi-trucks-hitting-north-texas-roads/2417169/>

'Texas Central should end its project' absent significant investment soon, researcher says

By Evan Hoopfer, Dallas Business Journal

A transportation researcher blasted Texas Central's proposed high-speed rail line between Dallas and Houston because of ballooning costs, while at the same time debate over the project heats up at the political level.

[Baruch Feigenbaum](#), senior managing director of transportation policy at the Reason Foundation, a Libertarian think tank, was initially optimistic about the idea when he started following the project years ago because the company planned to use private financing.

However, after Texas Central Chairman [Drayton McLane, Jr.](#) recently told a state lawmaker the company [hopes to receive money](#) from President Trump's infrastructure stimulus package, Feigenbaum's view of the project has soured.

"Absent significant, near-term financial support from the private sector, Texas Central should end its project," Feigenbaum wrote in a 24-page policy brief published earlier this week, which can be [read in full here](#). "If Texas Central chooses to march onward, lawmakers and taxpayers must ensure it does not receive stimulus funding or an RRIF loan."

A Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing loan is a federal government loan vehicle originally designed for shortline railroads, Feigenbaum said, but now provides loans to passenger rail networks as well. He said RRIF loans have weak taxpayer protection, and many loans end up acting as grants.

In explaining his criticism, Feigenbaum pointed to the project's growing costs. Up until recently, Texas Central's website said the project would cost \$12 billion to build. However, McLane's letter said the project now costs \$30 billion. The growing price tag combined with what Feigenbaum says are unrealistic ridership projections worry him about the project's financial future and its ability to operate as a viable business.

"My concern is that this project is going to be partially built and abandoned, or partially built and then have to be completely taken over with government funds, which means there are going to be less transportation funds available for other priorities in Texas," Feigenbaum said in an interview.

Texas Central has raised \$450 million for the project so far. The company did not respond to multiple requests for comment on Reason Foundation's research. Dallas-based Texas Central has [previously disputed](#) the firm's research.

Politicians across the state are making their preferences known as to whether Texas Central should receive stimulus funding. Politicians' stances depend on where their districts lie.

U.S. Reps. [Colin Allred](#) and [Eddie Bernice Johnson](#) of Dallas have both expressed support for the project. Allred's office recently said he led the effort in Congress to support the high-speed rail project via a RRIF loan.

U.S. Rep. [Kevin Brady](#), who represents a district outside Houston, has been one of the most vocal opponents of the project and said earlier this month he "strongly disagreed" with the Surface Transportation Board's decision to take jurisdiction over the project.

[The STB decision](#) was a major regulatory hurdle Texas Central cleared earlier this month.

Texas Central wanted the STB to take jurisdiction because while high-speed rail is uncommon in the U.S., the STB does have experience overseeing rail construction. If the STB declined to take jurisdiction, the permitting process would have likely been kicked to the state which has far less experience in these matters.

The STB also denied Texas Central's petition for exemption — which would have fast-tracked construction of the project. Now, Texas Central must go through the full application process.

It's unclear how long the application process will take and when Texas Central can begin construction.

Texas Central has ticked some other key boxes this summer, including the Federal Railroad Administration issuing a [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) and the Texas court system granting the company [eminent domain authority](#). The court ruling is being appealed to the Texas Supreme Court by project opponents.

Traveling 200 mph in a pandemic. Which would be safer: High-speed rail or Hyperloop?

By Gordon Dickson, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/fort-worth/article244598847.html>

Hyperloop and high-speed rail technology, which are both being pursued in North Texas, could be permanently changed by the COVID pandemic.

If you can imagine a time years from now when either Hyperloop or high-speed rail could be running in the Dallas-Fort Worth region — whipping riders across the land at 200 mph or more — which form of futuristic transportation would be better for social distancing?

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is looking into both technologies for proposed passenger services connecting Dallas to Houston, and Dallas to Arlington, Fort Worth and beyond. Both systems, if approved by federal and state regulators, would take years to build and operate — and hopefully by then the current COVID pandemic will be a distant memory.

“You don’t build a Hyperloop or high-speed rail for 10, 20 or 30 years. You’re building it for 50 to 100 years, and over that time frame our position is the science of (disease) prevention will supersede the science of the pandemic,” said Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

But it’s not a stretch to think that the way mass transportation systems are designed in the future could be permanently changed based on what we are learning today about socially distancing in public spaces such as train cars and stations. At airports, for example, those Plexiglass barriers recently installed at ticket counters across the world likely will remain years after the COVID-19 virus is defeated.

And if the pandemic has lasting effects on mass transit, Hyperloop supporters say their technology is superior to high-speed rail.

High-speed rail proponents disagree, of course.

‘A VERY FLEXIBLE SYSTEM’

Hyperloop is an experimental technology that works similar to a pneumatic tube at a drive-through bank, but on a much larger scale. Riders would step into pods, which would then travel inside a giant tube at hundreds of miles per hour.

The system uses electric propulsion and magnetic levitation in near-vacuum conditions inside the tube, making it possible for the pods to travel at hundreds of miles per hour with extraordinarily high energy efficiency.

“One of the benefits of the Hyperloop system is you have smaller pods that can fit fewer people than a train would,” Diana Zhou, director of project strategy for Virgin Hyperloop, said in a phone interview. Virgin Hyperloop is one of several companies developing the technology.

“With a train, you could have hundreds of people, maybe thousands, but with Hyperloop you could have only 10 to 30 people per pod. It’s a very flexible system,” Zhou said. “Given the restraints on social distancing, you could configure a system to have fewer or more pods.”

Recent research by Virgin Hyperloop shows that pods could launch within seconds of each other, and still operate safely within the Hyperloop tubes. As a result, Hyperloop would make it easier for people to travel in smaller groups without causing long lines or other delays.

Hyperloop technology also got a boost recently, when the U.S. Department of Transportation published guidelines for states to follow when seeking federal approval for projects. That move also cleared the way for [Hyperloop projects to qualify for federal grants and loans](#) that are already available for high-speed rail.

The guidelines were created by the federal agency and the Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology Council, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said in a news conference announcing the break-through.

“This guidance bridges the gap between innovator and regulator, prioritizes safety during development without hampering innovation and promotes mutual awareness between industry and government,” Chao said.

MORE SPACE FOR TEXAS TRAVELERS

But supporters of high-speed rail in North Texas say their technology is superior.

[Carlos Aguilar, president and chief executive officer of Texas Central](#), the company proposing to build the Dallas-Houston high-speed rail route, says the rail cars that would be used on the route offer plenty of space for distancing.

For example, he said, the trains would be much wider than what passengers are accustomed to on airplanes.

The aisles will be wide enough for a person to use their own wheelchair — unlike on many aircraft, which require wheelchair users to transfer to a specially-made narrow wheelchair.

“We have committed to enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance in everything we do,” Aguilar said in a phone interview. “We are designing our trains to be much less dense than they would be otherwise. We’re not going to have any middle seats. We will have 16 doors instead of one, which is what you have on an airport or a pod.”

The Dallas-Houston service, Aguilar added, will operate with eight rail cars holding up to about 50 people each, for a capacity of about 400 riders. That’s about half the number of cars and less than a third the number of people who take train trips in Japan, where rail cars favored by Texas Central Railway are already being used.

The Dallas-Houston line would use trains similar to those on the [Shinkansen lines that are part of the Central Japan Railway](#).

“It makes access and egress incredibly fast,” he said. “All of this is to ensure that these distances are kept.”

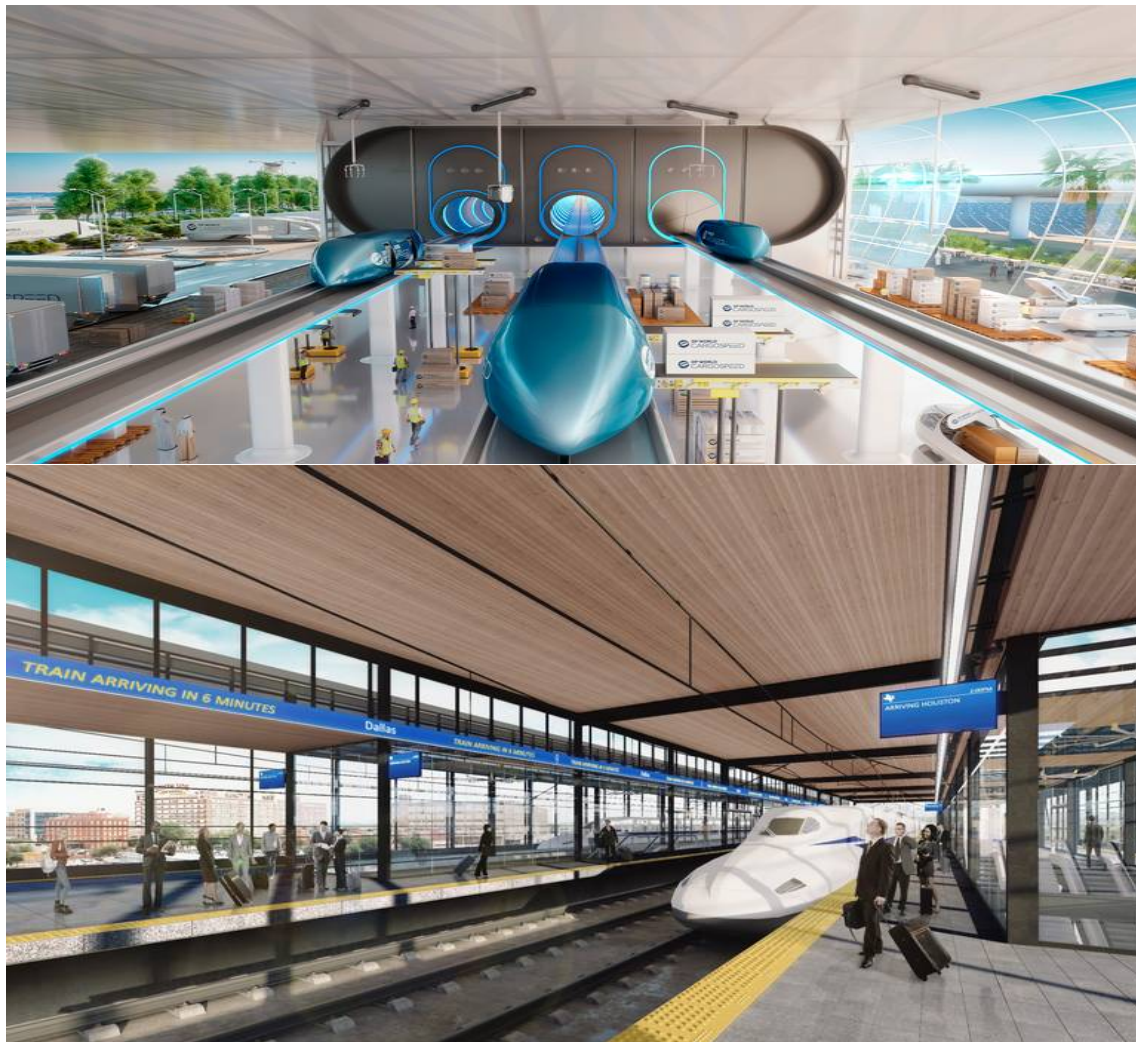
Aguilar said Texas Central is expecting to receive a record of decision from the federal government allowing the construction of the Dallas-Houston route in the next six to eight weeks.

Texas Central hopes to open the Dallas-Houston line to the public in six years.

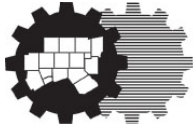
The company got a boost recently when the Surface Transportation Board, which regulates railroads, pipelines, trucking company and other industries, determined that [Texas Central should be considered part of the interstate rail network](#). That designation indicates that Texas Central has a right to survey property, which is an important power since the company needs private property to build its exclusive-use railroad tracks from Dallas to near the Gulf Coast.

Aguilar said that the ample room on Texas Central cars was part of the design before the COVID crisis caused a global economic crisis. “When you have situations like these, they are not permanent,” Aguilar said of the pandemic.

“But if they do happen, you have the operational flexibility to accommodate the need. Is it a bit of luck that it was a commitment by us to have less density in our cars? I would say yes. That was the best design we could deploy.”



Artist rendering of proposed high-speed rail platform in Dallas. PHOTO COURTESY OF TEXAS CENTRAL



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Clean Air Action Day to Embrace Social Distancing Aug. 5

Telecommuting among ways residents can pursue clean air during pandemic

July 30, 2020 (Arlington, Texas) — The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has recalibrated many priorities in North Texas and beyond. However, there are many ways residents can adapt and grow in the face of change. Clean Air Action Day (CAAD), the annual celebration of environmental awareness put on by Air North Texas, will look a little different when it commences Aug. 5. For one thing, big in-person gatherings will not be held. Instead, North Texans are encouraged to observe social distancing protocols while aiming to improve air quality.

Many social distancing strategies, such as working from home, can double as clean air strategies in the fight against COVID-19. CAAD is an opportunity for Air North Texas to encourage residents to pledge to do simple things in their everyday lives to positively impact air quality. Clean air actions should not be limited to Aug. 5. It is important to work toward better air quality every day, especially in Dallas-Fort Worth, which remains in nonattainment for ozone pollution.

CAAD has helped people determine what they can do to improve air quality while both staying in and getting out. While the COVID-19 pandemic has many people working from home, there are many ways residents can contribute. They can plan the most fuel-efficient route and combine trips when they have to drive. Other examples include bicycling or walking to the store, packing lunch in a reusable bag, and buying locally grown foods.

A good first step to better air quality is signing up for air pollution alerts at www.airnorthtexas.org/signup. Individuals will be notified when ozone levels are predicted to be unhealthy so they can take extra precautions and limit actions that affect air quality on those days.

Visit www.airnorthtexas.org/howto for resources and information on programs that can help improve air quality each day. These resources include how to find ways to work from home efficiently, reduce idling, report smoking vehicles, conserve water and electricity, and much more. Ultimately, Air North Texas could help Dallas-Fort Worth reach the attainment of the federal government's ozone regulations.

Check out www.airnorthtexas.org/socialdistancing and select the actions that can make a difference in improving air quality. Then, show us examples of what you have done by posting on social media, using #CAAD2020, and tagging @NCTCOGtrans.

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

NCTCOG is a voluntary association of local governments established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG's purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions.

NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered in the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently, NCTCOG has 238 member governments including 16 counties, 169 cities, 22 school districts and 31 special districts. For more information on the NCTCOG Transportation Department, visit www.nctcog.org/trans.

About Air North Texas:

Air North Texas is a regional air quality partnership and general public outreach effort. Air North Texas leverages existing resources and program strengths to offer the public a comprehensive resource for air quality information. Collaborative efforts focus on reducing harmful emissions, protecting public health and welfare, motivating residents to make choices that improve air quality and preserving the economic vitality of the region. Learn more at www.airnorthtexas.org.

#



North Central Texas
Council of Governments



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Brian Wilson
(817) 704-2511
bwilson@nctcog.org

Avery Palmer
(202) 302-2765
apalmer@solarfound.org

NCTCOG Receives Regional SolSmart Designation for Solar Energy Advances in the DFW Region

National organization recognizes NCTCOG for solar achievements

July 14, 2020 (Arlington, Texas) – The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has received a Bronze designation from the national SolSmart program for helping local governments across the Dallas-Fort Worth area make it faster, easier and more affordable to go solar.

“We congratulate NCTCOG as the first regional organization in Texas to achieve SolSmart designation,” said Andrea Luecke, President and Executive Director at The Solar Foundation. “This designation recognizes the superb leadership from NCTCOG in leading a collaborative effort to encourage solar and other renewable energy growth in the Lone Star State. Other Texas communities that are interested in going solar should take advantage of the resources that NCTCOG has to offer.”

The SolSmart designation recognizes NCTCOG for helping area communities remove obstacles to solar energy development. NCTCOG has provided guidance to local governments through solar energy training sessions and educational resources available on the Go Solar Texas website, www.gosolartexas.org.

NCTCOG launched the website as a comprehensive guide to increasing solar deployment across Texas. It includes steps for homeowners to go solar, best management practices for local governments, an extensive resource library, training for a variety of audiences, including real estate professionals and fire and code officials, and much more.

“NCTCOG is honored and excited to receive the Bronze SolSmart designation,” NCTCOG Executive Director Mike Eastland said. “Our agency has worked with our member governments over the past few years to develop resources and provide training, to increase deployment of solar energy systems in North Central Texas.”

NCTCOG has also hosted trainings throughout the state for fire and emergency medical professionals on safely responding to house fires where solar panels are installed.

The SolSmart designation recognizes both recent accomplishments and years of leadership from NCTCOG in advancing solar energy growth in Texas. Beginning in

2017, NCTCOG served as a SolSmart advisor, providing technical assistance on solar energy to area communities.

To date, six Dallas-Fort Worth communities have achieved SolSmart designation. Cedar Hill and Corinth were designated SolSmart Gold; Kennedale was designated SolSmart Silver; and Denton, Lewisville, and Plano were designated SolSmart Bronze.

These communities achieved the designation by making changes to local procedures to remove barriers and encourage solar development. For example, Cedar Hill, Corinth, and Kennedale now recognize solar as by-right in their zoning codes, which avoids requirements for special permits or hearings to install solar panels.

NCTCOG plans to expand its outreach to help more North Texas communities achieve SolSmart designation. Municipalities or counties interested in technical assistance on solar energy can contact energy@nctcog.org.

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

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NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered on the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently, NCTCOG has 238 member governments including 16 counties, 169 cities, 22 school districts and 31 special districts.

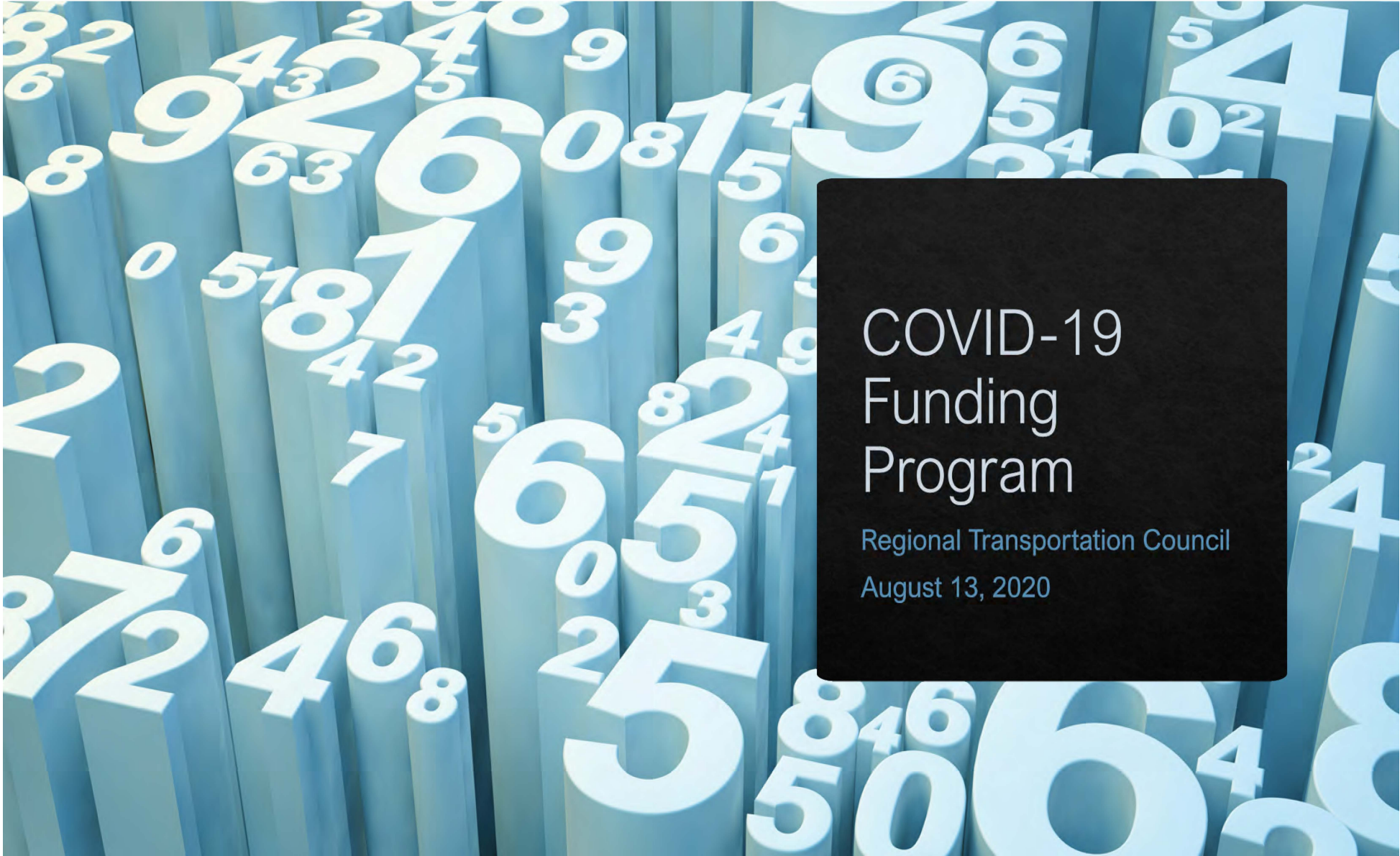
About SolSmart

SolSmart is a national designation and technical assistance program that recognizes leading solar communities and empowers additional communities to expand their local solar markets. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office, SolSmart strives to cut red tape, drive greater solar deployment, and make it possible for even more American homes and businesses to access solar energy to meet their electricity needs. More than 370 local governments in 41 states and the District of Columbia have achieved SolSmart designation, representing 84 million Americans. SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association. Learn more at www.SolSmart.org.

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program
Draft Funding Recommendations

COVID-19 ID#	Implementing Agency	City	Project/Facility	Limits	Project Scope	Fiscal Year	Phase	Proposed Funding							Comments	
								Federal CMAQ (CAT 5)	Federal STBG (CAT 7)	Regional Toll Revenue (RTR)	RTC/Local	State	Local	Private		Total Proposed Funding
#005	Aledo ISD	Annetta	"Drive A" (Stub-out)	From FM 5 to the new elementary school	Construct stub-out road to allow access to new elementary school	2021	C	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$2,500,000	Aledo ISD paying local match and donating ROW; RTR Regional West Set Aside Account
Subtotal								\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$0	\$2,500,000	
#006	Parker County	Fort Worth Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (FW ETJ)	Old Weatherford Road	From FM 3325 to E of Coder Dr.	Realign 2 lane to 2 lane (ultimate 4 lanes) including turn lanes at intersections and pedestrian side path	2020	E	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	Morning Star Development has committed \$3.5 million (\$1.1M for design and \$2.4M for construction to be repaid in approximately 4 years); RTR Regional West Set Aside Account
						2021	R	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	
						2022	C	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	
Subtotal								\$0	\$0	\$10,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$12,500,000	
#007	TxDOT-Fort Worth or Fort Worth	Fort Worth	Heritage Park Improvements on Main Street	On Main Street (Bus 287) from the Trinity River to Weatherford St.	Traffic calming and curb extensions (crosswalk bulb outs) to reduce traffic lanes; adjust turning radius of Main St; and eliminate bail out lane	2021	E	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$775,000	\$775,000	Tarrant County contributing \$1M; Downtown Fort Worth Inc. (DFWI) to contribute \$775,000; Includes 5 years of inflation for construction; Intend to request RTC to fund related bike/ped facility in the future contingent on private sector commitments begin realized
						2024	C	\$4,000,000	\$2,640,000	\$0	\$0	\$660,000	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$8,300,000	
Subtotal								\$4,000,000	\$2,640,000	\$0	\$0	\$660,000	\$1,000,000	\$775,000	\$9,075,000	
#008	TxDOT Dallas or Dallas	Dallas	IH 35E Pedestrian Crossing	From the Dallas Design District to the DART Victory Station	Construct pedestrian walkway under IH 35E including lighting, crosswalks, traffic signal, and landscaping	2021	E	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$350,000	\$0	\$0	\$350,000	Includes 2 years of inflation for construction; Dallas County RTR funds
						2022	C	\$0	\$0	\$2,800,000	\$0	\$0	\$400,000	\$300,000	\$3,500,000	
Subtotal								\$0	\$0	\$2,800,000	\$0	\$350,000	\$400,000	\$300,000	\$3,850,000	
#009	NCTCOG Dallas	Dallas	Bachman Lake Area Planning Study	Bounded by Mockingbird Lane to the South, IH 35E to the West, Inwood Road to the East, and Royal Lane to the North	Conduct planning study to identify safe pedestrian access/facilities along major roadways to create connections to nearby trails and the DART Bachman Station, and evaluate Love Field access; project will involve NCTCOG staff time and consultant assistance	2021	E	\$0	\$800,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	May need to utilize TDCs in lieu of local match if RTC/Local is needed to kick off study before federal funding is available
Subtotal								\$0	\$800,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	
#010	TxDOT Dallas or Terrell	Terrell	FM 429	From North of US 80 to approximately 1 mile south of US 80	Realign FM 429 with at-grade crossing in order to construct UPRR siding track nearby and to remove offset intersection of US 80 and FM 429	2023	C	\$0	\$8,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	
Subtotal								\$0	\$8,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$10,000,000	
Grand Total								\$4,000,000	\$11,440,000	\$14,300,000	\$200,000	\$3,010,000	\$2,900,000	\$3,075,000	\$38,925,000	

Bold or strike through text represents changes made since the Surface Transportation Technical Committee approval.



COVID-19
Funding
Program

Regional Transportation Council
August 13, 2020

BACKGROUND

- ◆ Due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak, the economy has suffered large setbacks and there is an urgency to stimulate the economy.
- ◆ As was done in 2009, the idea is to inject much needed cash into the local and state economy using infrastructure investment.
- ◆ North Central Texas Council of Governments staff recommends funding projects that would benefit from expedited action.
- ◆ These projects should meet one or several of the RTC policies outlined in Mobility 2045.
- ◆ This particular round of investments target better school integration, improved freight connections, implementation of new regional bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improved air quality, and improved safety.

PROPOSED FUNDING FOR ALEDO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ISD) PARTNERSHIP

- ◇ Aledo ISD has requested assistance to provide access to a new elementary school scheduled to open in August 2021.
 - ◇ Limits: “Drive A” (Stub-out road) from FM 5 to new elementary school
 - ◇ Funding:
 - ◇ Right-of-way is being donated by Aledo ISD
 - ◇ \$1 million Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) funding for construction
 - ◇ \$1.5 million Aledo ISD (which includes \$500,000 match to RTR funds) for construction
- ◇ TxDOT has already funded a \$4.7 million roadway improvement along FM 5
- ◇ Scope: Construct stub-out road to allow access to new elementary school
- ◇ Source of RTR Funds: Regional West Set Aside Account (to be discussed further on upcoming slide)
- ◇ RTC Policy Addressed: Better integration with schools (avoid major roadways)



PROPOSED FUNDING FOR ALEDO ISD PARTNERSHIP

- ◇ The Aledo ISD has requested assistance with improvements at the site of a new middle school needed by 2022.
 - ◇ Limits: Old Weatherford Road from FM 3325 to East of Coder Drive
 - ◇ Funding:
 - ◇ \$2 million provided by developer for design
 - ◇ \$0.5 million RTR proposed for right-of-way
 - ◇ \$10 million RTR funding proposed for construction
 - ◇ Developer will pay an additional \$2.4 million in approximately 4 years (after construction is completed), which partially repays the RTC's commitment.
 - ◇ Scope: Realign 2 lane to 2 lane roadway (ultimate 4 lanes) including turn lanes at intersections and pedestrian side path
 - ◇ Source of RTR Funds: Regional West Set Aside Account
 - ◇ RTC Policy Addressed: Better school integration with schools



INTERSECTIONS BY HERITAGE PARK AND TARRANT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

- ◇ City of Fort Worth has requested assistance for both intersection and bicycle/pedestrian improvements in the Heritage Park area
- ◇ Staff proposes to fund the intersection improvements now and consider the bicycle/pedestrian facility in the future, contingent on private sector commitments being realized



INTERSECTIONS BY HERITAGE PARK AND TARRANT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

- ◇ Limits: Main Street (Bus 287) from the Trinity River to Weatherford Street
- ◇ Funding:
 - ◇ \$775,000 for design committed by Downtown Fort Worth Inc.
 - ◇ \$1 million committed by Tarrant County for construction
 - ◇ \$660,000 State match requested for on-system work
 - ◇ \$4 million Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
 - ◇ \$2.64 million Surface Transportation Block Grant
- ◇ Scope: Traffic calming and curb extensions (crosswalk bulb outs) to reduce traffic lanes, adjust turning radius of Main Street, and eliminate bail out lane
- ◇ RTC Policy Addressed: Air Quality, Bicycle/Pedestrian Implementation, Safety, ADA Compliance

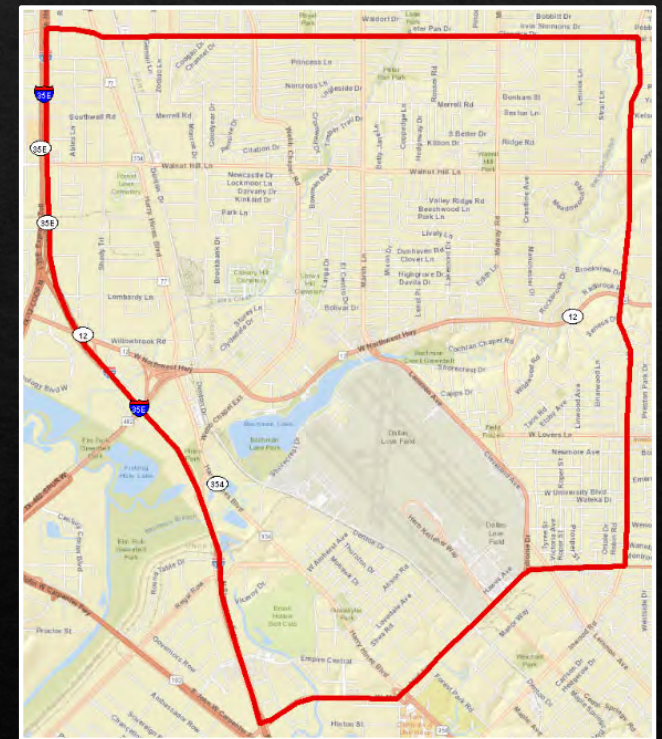
IH 35E PEDESTRIAN CROSSING NEAR VICTORY STATION



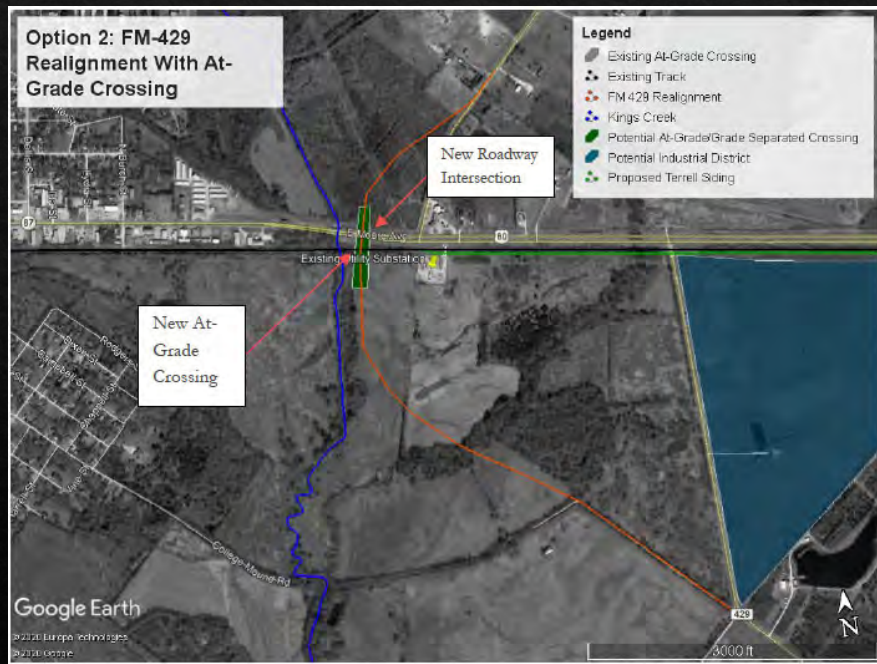
- ◆ City of Dallas has requested assistance for a pedestrian crossing at IH 35E from the Dallas Design District to the DART Victory Station
 - ◆ Funding:
 - ◆ \$350,000 State Funds for Design
 - ◆ \$2.8 million Dallas County RTR Funds for construction
 - ◆ \$400,000 local match plus \$300,000+ for amenities from the private sector/TIF districts
 - ◆ Scope: Construct pedestrian walkway under IH 35E including lighting, crosswalks, traffic signal, and landscaping
 - ◆ RTC Policy Addressed: Bicycle/pedestrian, air quality, safety

BACHMAN LAKE AREA PLANNING STUDY

- ◆ City of Dallas has requested assistance for a review of needed improvements in the Bachman Lake area of Dallas
 - ◆ Limits: District bounded by Mockingbird Lane to the South, IH 35E to the West, Inwood Road to the East, and Royal Lane to the North
 - ◆ Funding:
 - ◆ \$800,000 STBG funds (federal)
 - ◆ \$200,000 RTC Local funds
 - ◆ May need to utilize TDCs in lieu of local match if RTC/Local is needed to kick off study before federal funding is available
 - ◆ Scope: Conduct planning study to identify safe pedestrian access/facilities along major roadways to create connections to nearby trails, DART Bachman Station, and study Love Field access
 - ◆ RTC Policy Addressed: Bicycle/pedestrian, safety, air quality



FM 429 REALIGNMENT IN TERRELL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNION PACIFIC RAIL LINE



- ◆ Roadway and Freight partnership involving TxDOT, NCTCOG/RTC, and Union Pacific:
 - ◆ Limits: FM 429 from North of US 80 to approximately 1 mile south of US 80
 - ◆ Funding:
 - ◆ \$8 million of STBG
 - ◆ \$2 million State match
 - ◆ Scope: Realign FM 429 with at-grade crossing in order to construct UPRR siding track nearby and to remove offset intersection of US 80 and FM 429
 - ◆ RTC Policy Addressed: Freight, safety

FEDERAL/RTR SWAP WITH DENTON COUNTY

- ◆ Implementation timeframes for certain projects (school projects in Aledo ISD) would be greatly accelerated by using non-federal funds.
- ◆ The Western Subregion has limited RTR funds.
- ◆ Denton County has an RTR funding balance coming back from IH 35E.
- ◆ Staff proposes to fund a currently unfunded project in Denton County with STBG funds and move the same amount of RTR funds from the Denton County account to the Western Subregion to cover the projects in this partnership program, plus leave a balance for future non-federal needs in the West.
- ◆ Proposal:
 - ◆ Fund a Denton County project, to be determined after the Texas Transportation Commission Unified Transportation Program action this summer, with \$30 million of STBG funds (plus Category 2 funds, if needed, to fully fund it)
 - ◆ Move \$30 million RTR from Denton County to Western Subregion Set Aside Account

ACTION REQUESTED

- ◆ Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of:
 - ◆ The funded projects outlined in this presentation and the cost-revenue matrix in the mail out
 - ◆ The exchange of \$30 million STBG funding for \$30 million RTR funding with Denton County
 - ◆ Administratively amending the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and other administrative/planning documents, as needed

QUESTIONS?

Christie J. Gotti
Senior Program Manager
Ph: (817) 608-2338
cgotti@nctcog.org

Brian Dell
Senior Transportation Planner
Ph: (817) 704-5694
bdell@nctcog.org



Aug. 3, 2020

Dear Texas HCC Team:

On behalf of the Virgin Hyperloop HCC team, we hope this letter finds you and your colleagues doing well and staying safe and healthy.

We would like to thank you once again for the many hours of hard work that the Texas/NCTCOG HCC team has spent developing your proposal and responding to our questions and requests for clarifications for the Hyperloop Certification Center program. We appreciate your efforts to respond to our requirements and to maintain flexibility and transparency throughout the process.

As you know, we received a number of proposals from states and regions around the country for partnering in development of the HCC. As we have advanced with our evaluation and due diligence process, we have determined that the Texas proposal, while incorporating a number of beneficial elements, nonetheless presents several notable risks that we feel may be difficult to mitigate effectively within the time frame of our HCC project development process. Thus, we have determined to move into the final due diligence phase with several of the other regional teams who have submitted proposals with less inherent risk.

Although VH is presently focusing on several other sites for the potential placement of the HCC, we consider the Texas HCC team and NCTCOG to be one of our long-term and valued partners. Therefore, we want to emphasize that Virgin Hyperloop is dedicated to our core vision of transforming ground transportation, and we would like to continue to share that vision with the Texas team.

Notably, the development of the HCC is simply the first step in our overarching mission to develop and certify hyperloop technology and implement the system in key corridors, certainly including opportunities in Texas. Regardless of where the test facility may eventually be sited, we wish to continue our beneficial relationship with the Texas Hyperloop Team, with the objective of developing a commercial hyperloop application in the near future in a beneficial location.



Thus, we would aim to continue working with the NCTCOG team and the larger region to bring hyperloop to reality. Specifically, while we advance the technology and obtain certifications for passenger and freight transport, we would like to simultaneously advance the potential Fort Worth to Laredo hyperloop corridor planning program, recognizing the long lead time necessary for implementation of any new transportation system. We would propose that Virgin Hyperloop work with you to establish a formalized process to facilitate this objective and look forward to putting this strategy in motion in the next few months.

Again, we would like to thank you for your ongoing involvement in the HCC development program and your dedication to working with Virgin Hyperloop. We look forward to a sustainable and long-term partnership as we work together to make hyperloop a commercial reality in the United States and around the world.

Best regards,

The Virgin Hyperloop HCC Team

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Schneider".

Michael Schneider
Vice President – Project Development



The Transportation Policy Body for the North Central Texas Council of Governments
(Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth Region)

June 26, 2020

Mr. James Bass
Executive Director
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mr. Bass:

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Transportation Department staff, with the assistance of AECOM, recently completed a Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study. The study is a follow-up effort to the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study (TOPRS) conducted by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and analyzes high-speed transportation technologies and corridors not previously analyzed in the study area.

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) and NCTCOG are requesting an opportunity to discuss the study findings with TxDOT regarding next steps. The study recommendations indicate further analysis in a National Environmental Policy Act Project Level (Tier II) environmental study in the Fort Worth to Laredo corridor is warranted. The executive summary of the study is attached.

This effort was an initiative of six Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) representing Waco, Temple/Killeen, Capital Area, Alamo Area, and Laredo, along with Dallas-Fort Worth. The MPOs are prepared to appear before the Texas Transportation Commission to request the Tier II environmental study of the corridor.

Please provide the contacts for a conference call to brainstorm ways to best move forward with this project. I look forward to speaking with you or your representative and can be reached at mmorris@nctcog.org or (817) 695-9241.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Morris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Michael Morris, P.E.
Director of Transportation

RH:al
Attachment

cc: The Honorable Roger Harmon, Chair, Regional Transportation Council, County Judge,
Johnson County
Mr. Marc Williams, P.E., Deputy Executive Director, TxDOT
Mr. Bill Hale, P.E., Chief Engineer, TxDOT
Mr. Steven Duong, AICP, Associate Vice President, Design and Planning, AECOM

Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study

Introduction

The Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation study was conducted through a partnership of six Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). The primary study goal was to identify appropriate high-speed transportation technologies within the corridor. Secondary goals included refining corridor alignments and station locations as identified in the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study (TOPRS). Study results will be used as input into further study within the corridor

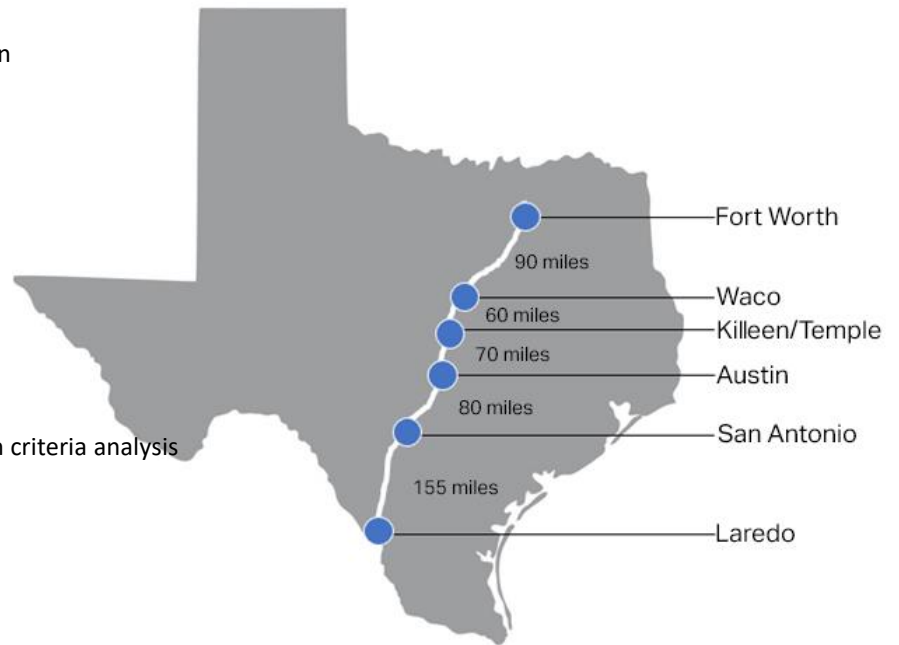
The six MPO participants include:

- North Central Texas Council of Govern
- Waco MPO
- Killen/Temple MPO
- Capital Area MPO
- Alamo Area MPO
- Laredo MPO

Study Approach

The study included four major tasks:

1. High-speed technology and design criteria analysis
2. Previous studies review
3. Develop and screen alternatives
4. Solicit stakeholder input



Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders from each region were identified by the respective MPO. Typically, the stakeholders included local and regional transportation agencies and elected officials.

Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Series 1

- Study Path
- Study Goals
- Anticipated Outcomes
- Stakeholder Input
 - Environmental sensitivity
 - Station location options
 - Appropriate technology

Series 2

- Alternatives analysis
- Preliminary findings
- Stakeholder Input
 - Design impacts
 - Operational Impacts
 - Implementation schedule
 - Funding availability

Technology and Design Criteria Review

Basic design criteria were analyzed for each transportation technology. The technology review effort provided a potential transportation technologies list to be evaluated. This evaluation included

- Brief history of each technology,
- Identification of key design criteria,
- Potential infrastructure integration solutions, and
- Potential regulatory and financing feasibility.

Six Transportation Technologies Reviewed

● Guaranteed Transit



● Conventional Rail



● Higher-Speed Rail (Up to 150 mph)



● High-Speed Rail (Over 150 mph)



● Maglev Train



● Hyperloop



Alternatives Analysis

The Alternatives Analysis builds upon and utilizes information identified in prior tasks to evaluate high-speed transportation options broadly along the IH-35 corridor.

The analysis was conducted in three levels, beginning by assessing broad aspects of the study area and narrowing to evaluate alternatives against specific criteria. The methodology used in each level of alternative analysis is summarized in the Alternatives Analysis Memorandum.

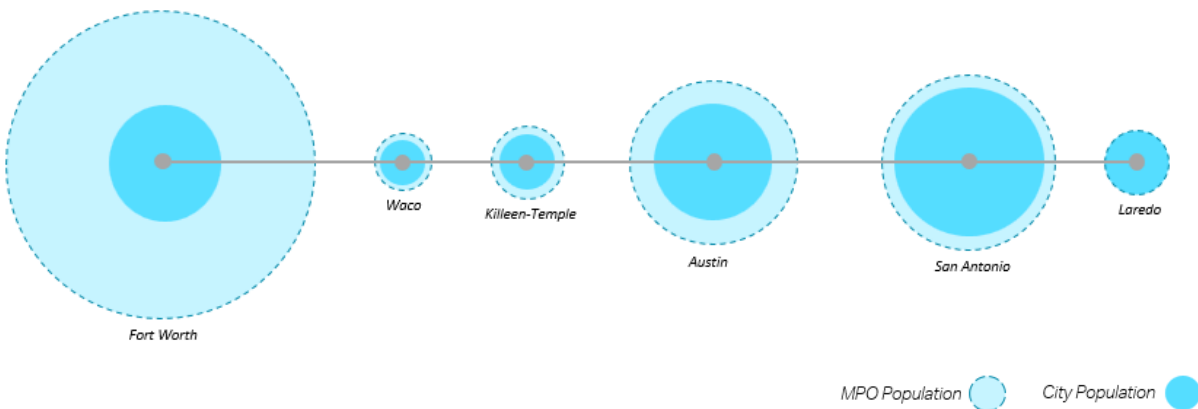
Level	Evaluation Criteria
Level 1: City Pair + Technology Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimal station distances • Operating speeds • Design requirements
Level 2: Corridor & Technology Compatibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to construct • Required right-of-way • Passenger capacity • Reduction in travel time • Natural resource sensitivity (e.g., high development, wetlands, water, pasture and crop lands, national and state historic places, parks and open space)
Level 3: Other Factors to Consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station location benefits • Operational characteristics • Interoperability • Regulatory factors • Convenience • Safety and resilience

City Pairs and Population

The analysis established definitions and categories for technology modes and identified optimal city pair stopping patterns to be utilized when defining end-to-end (Fort Worth to Laredo) alternatives.

Each city and MPO in the study area, its relative population, and service area population were analyzed. Fort Worth, Austin, and San Antonio have the highest populations and therefore have the highest opportunity for use, should a high-speed transportation system be developed.

Study Area City and MPO Region Population Estimates



City	Fort Worth	Waco	Killeen/Temple	Austin	San Antonio	Laredo
City Population* (2019 rounded)	850,000	140,000	150,000/75,000	975,000	1.5 million	270,000

MPO/Agency	NCTCOG	Waco MPO	KTMPO	CAMPO	AAMPO	Laredo MPO
MPO Population**	7.4 million (2018)	250,000 (2017)	380,000 (2015)	2.2 million (2018)	2.2 million (2015)	275,000 (2017)

Source: *Texas Demographic Center, The University of Texas at San Antonio. *Estimates of the Total Populations of Counties and Places in Texas for July 1, 2019 and January 1, 2019*. October 2019. Accessed March 2020:

https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/TPEPP/Estimates/2018/2018_txpopest_place.pdf

**Task 3 Previous Studies Review Memorandum, AECOM, 2020

Optimal station distances were based on ideal operating scenarios in which technologies can reach maximum operating speeds. Effective station distances were based on existing and operating transit systems. Existing examples of technology modes, such as maglev and high-speed rail, can vary greatly in the station distances. For hyperloop, there are still many unknowns regarding station distances and operational scenarios utilizing bypass tubes.

Study Assumptions and Limitations

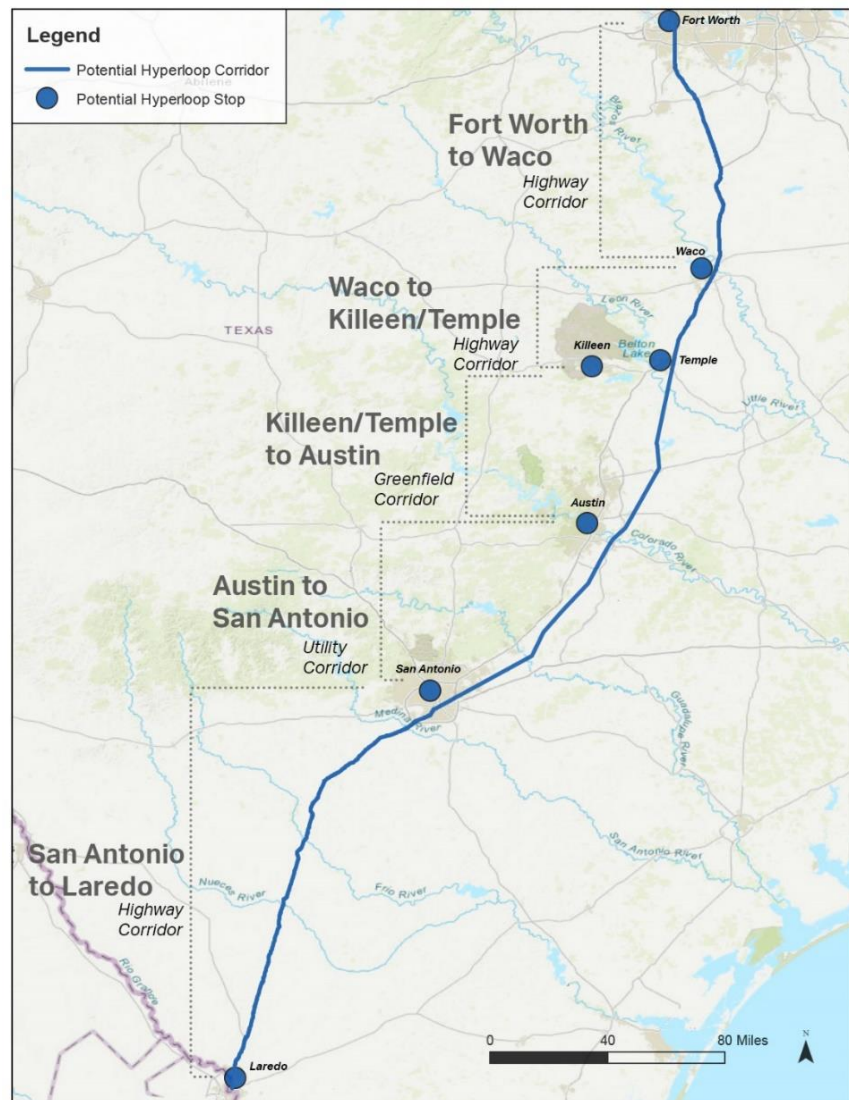
The alternatives analysis relied on publicly available information. The project team was able to identify many design and operating aspects of potential technology modes; however, certain aspects of technologies, particularly hyperloop, are unknown or still under development. Additionally, some aspects of existing technologies, such as maglev, have few operating examples and may have unreliable cost ranges. The project team has attempted to mitigate unknowns by conducting thorough research and by valuing analysis criteria equally.

Findings

The highest-ranking technology/corridor combination utilized hyperloop and a highway/greenfield/utility corridor combination.

The corridor generally follows the I-35 corridor from Fort Worth to Killeen/Temple. South of Killeen/Temple, the corridor continues toward Austin following a greenfield corridor before transitioning to a utility corridor from Austin to San Antonio. From San Antonio to Laredo, the alternative would generally follow the I-35 corridor once again.

While hyperloop was the highest-ranking technology, the study findings suggest that a corridor utilizing hyperloop, maglev, or high-speed rail is feasible and a viable solution for transportation issues throughout the State of Texas and particularly in the rapidly growing I-35 corridor.



Next Steps

The Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study conducted a planning level analysis of transportation technologies to evaluate and identify high-scoring possibilities for transportation between Fort Worth and Laredo. The study was intended to serve as a tool to build consensus on the consideration and future study of implementing high-speed transportation technologies from Fort Worth to Laredo.

This study has taken a first step in assessing new and emerging transportation technology feasibility throughout Texas. The preliminary findings suggest that a corridor utilizing a hyperloop, maglev, or high-speed rail is feasible and should be further studied, through a National Environmental Policy Act process.

For Additional Information

Contact:

Website:

Technical Reports:



125 EAST 11TH STREET, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | 512.463.8588 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

July 3, 2020

Michael Morris, P.E.
Director of Transportation
Regional Transportation Council
North Central Texas Council of Governments
P.O. Box 5888
Arlington Texas 76005-5888

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for your letter dated June 26, 2020 regarding a Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study completed by The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and AECOM.

I appreciate your offer to brief us on the study; and look forward to hearing about the findings and your anticipated next steps.

To schedule a meeting, please contact Cassandra Mata at (512) 305-9515 or via email at Cassandra.mata@txdot.gov.

Sincerely,

James M. Bass
Executive Director

cc: Marc D. Williams, P.E., Deputy Executive Director, TxDOT
William L. Hale, P. E., Chief Engineer, TxDOT
Mary Anne Griss, Chief of Staff, TxDOT

Policy Bundle Funding Recommendations						
Entity	Policies Adopted				Recommended 2020 TDCs	
	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Cities: Eligibility Requires Adoption of 10 Policies						
City of Arlington	12	13	--	16	1,875,000	
City of Coppell	--	11	11	--	-	
City of Corinth*	--	--	--	13	1,125,000	
City of Dallas	15	17	17	19	3,000,000	
City of Denton	--	--	15	16	1,125,000	
City of Duncanville	8 ^x	12	--	15	1,125,000	
City of Farmers Branch	--	12	--	11	1,125,000	
City of Fort Worth	14	16	17	17	3,000,000	
City of Frisco*	--	--	--	14	1,125,000	
City of Garland	--	14	16	15	1,875,000	
City of Grand Prairie*	--	--	--	9 ^x	-	
City of Grapevine	12	16	16	17	1,125,000	
City of Irving	--	--	12	15	1,875,000	
City of Lewisville	10	13	15	15	1,125,000	
City of McKinney	15	16	16	14	1,125,000	
City of Mesquite	11	13	15	13	1,125,000	
City of North Richland Hills	8 ^x	--	12	15	1,125,000	
City of Plano	13	16	--	17	1,875,000	
City of Richardson	12	13	14	13	1,125,000	
City of Terrell*	--	--	--	13	1,125,000	
Transit: Eligibility Requires Adoption of 5 Policies						
DCTA	8	10	11	10	1,875,000	
Trinity Metro	5	9	9	9	3,000,000	
Total					31,875,000	

Legend

-- Did not apply

^x Applied, but did not meet requirements

* New applicant for 2020

CHANGING MOBILITY

DATA, INSIGHTS, AND DELIVERING
INNOVATIVE PROJECTS DURING COVID
RECOVERY

Regional Transportation Council
August 13, 2020

Michael Morris, PE
Director of Transportation



POLICY METRICS: CHANGING MOBILITY

METRIC 1: Travel behavior response to COVID-19

METRIC 2: Financial implications to traditional revenue sources

METRIC 3: Benefits of travel behavior responses to areas of RTC responsibility

METRIC 4: Prioritization of infrastructure improvements that offset unemployment increases

METRIC 1:
TRAVEL BEHAVIOR RESPONSE
TO COVID-19

TRAVEL BEHAVIOR BY MODE



Bicycle/Pedestrian (+22%, June)



Freeway Volumes (-6%, June)

Toll Road Transactions (-41%, May)



Transit Ridership (-54%, June)

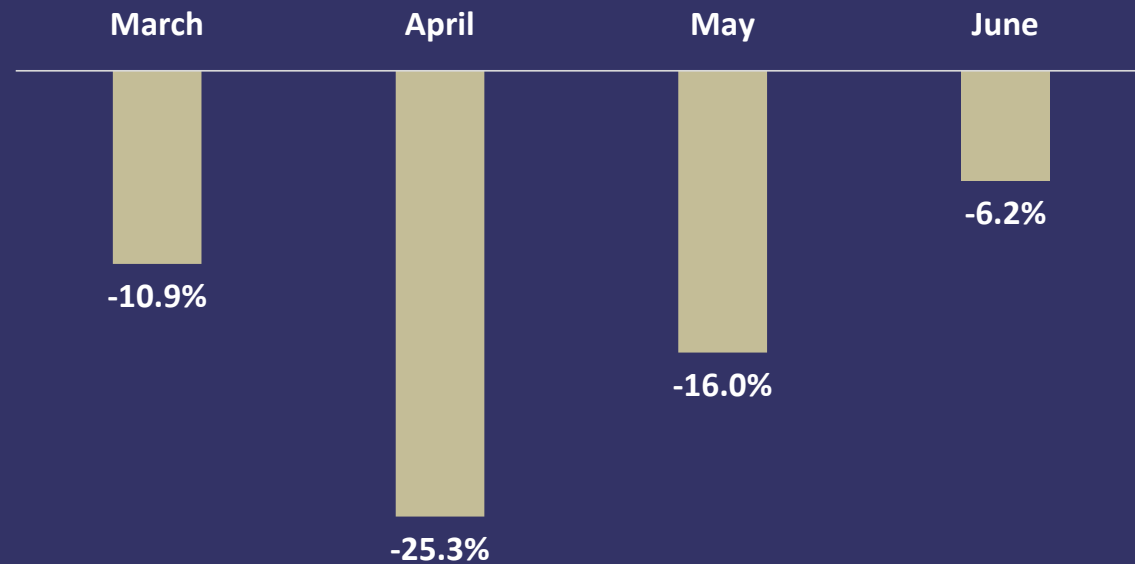
Airport Passengers (-80%, May)

ROADWAY

TRENDS

Weekly Freeway
Volumes

Traffic Decrease vs February 2020



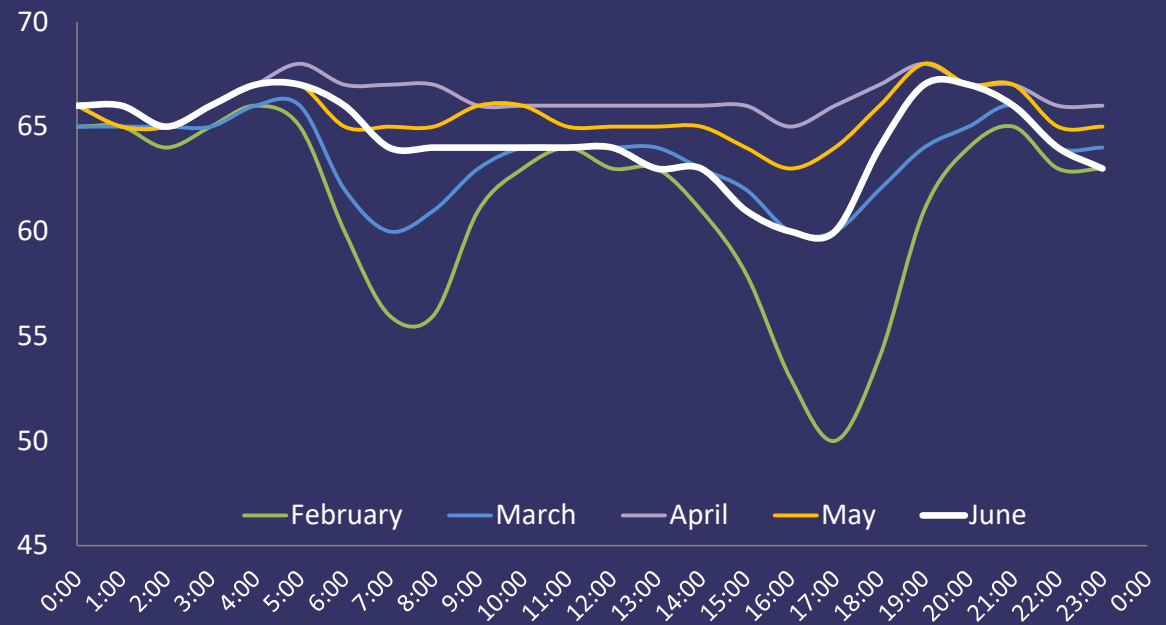
Source: TxDOT Dallas/TxDOT Fort Worth Radar Traffic Counters

ROADWAY

TRENDS

Regional Average
Freeway Speeds

Average Weekday Speeds, Weighted by Traffic Volume

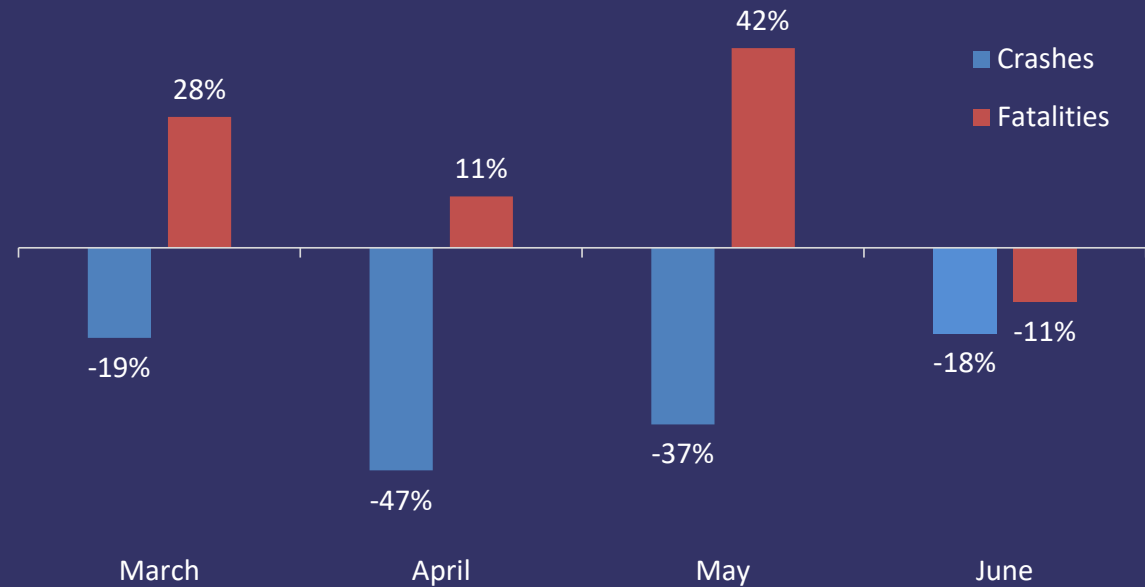


Source: TxDOT Sidewire Devices

CRASH TRENDS

Changes in Crashes and Fatalities

Crashes and Fatalities: 2019 vs 2020

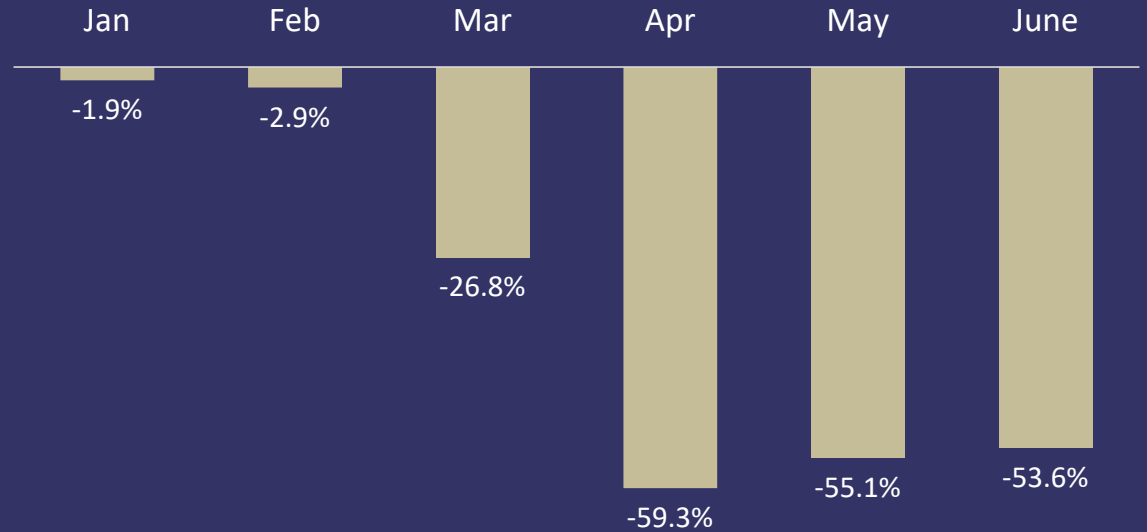


Source: TxDOT Crash Records Information System
Crash data is accurate as of July 15, 2020.
Traffic enforcement was significantly reduced during the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders.

TRANSIT IMPACTS

Ridership

Passenger Decrease : 2019 vs 2020

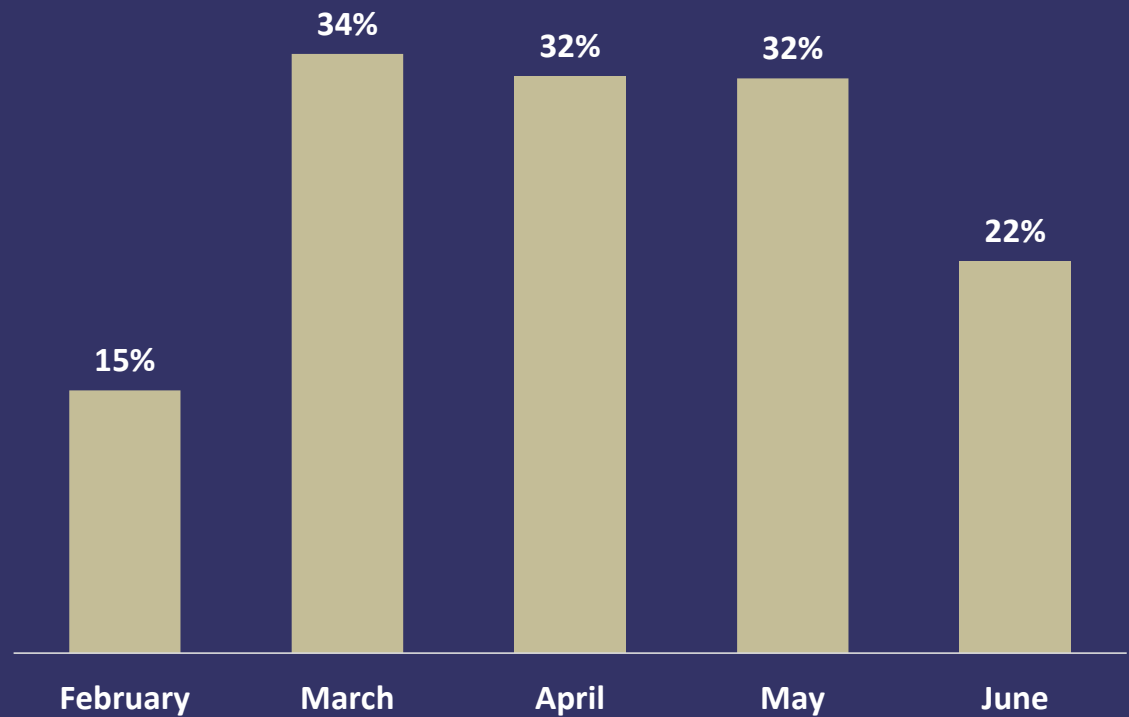


Source: DART, DCTA, and Trinity Metro

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN IMPACTS

Trail Counts

Increase in Trail Usage: 2019 vs 2020

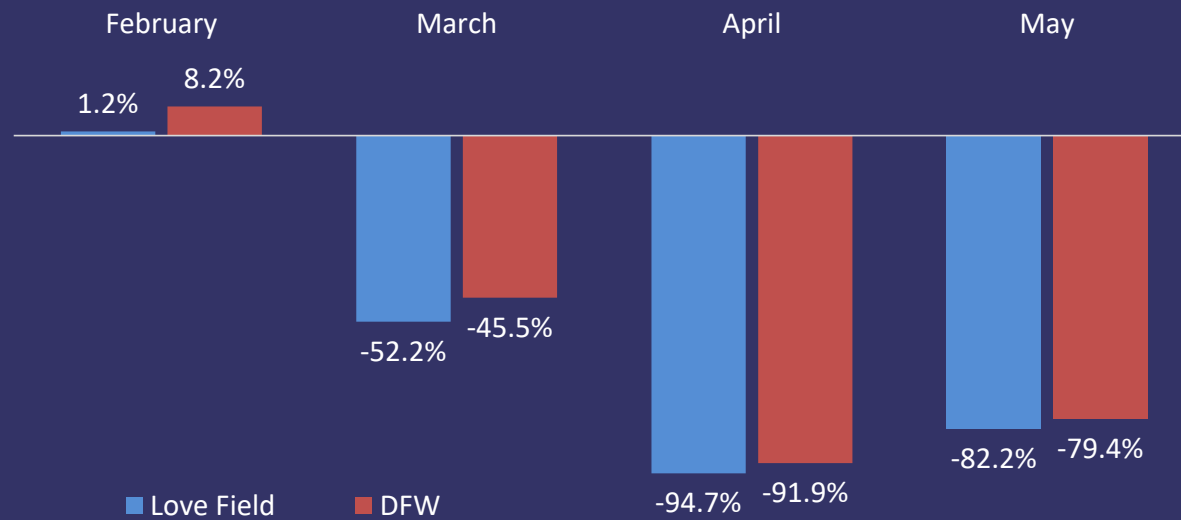


Source: NCTCOG, collected at Chisholm Trail in Plano, Denton Branch Rail Trail in Denton, Katy Trail in Dallas and Trinity Trails in Fort Worth.
Note: No adjustments for weather were applied.

AIRPORT TRENDS

Passengers

Change in Airport Passengers: 2019 vs 2020



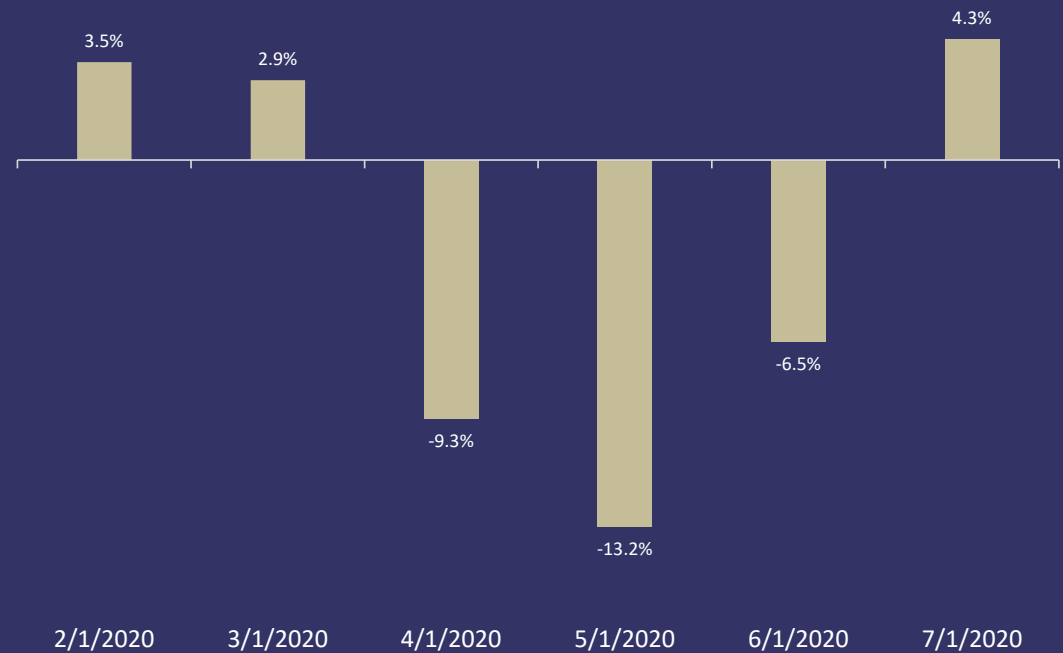
Source: Dallas Love Field Website and DFWIA data

METRIC 2:
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS TO
TRADITIONAL TRANSPORTATION
REVENUE

FUNDING IMPACT

Sales Tax Decrease
(Component of
Proposition 7¹)

Sales Tax Change: 2019 vs 2020

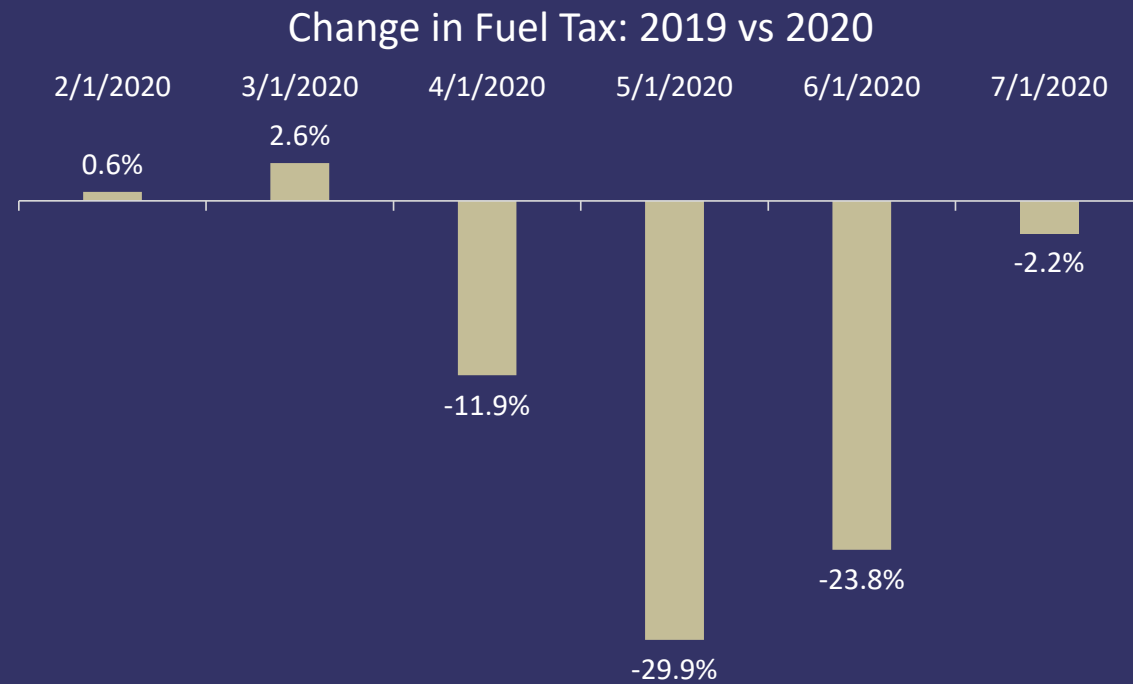


Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

¹ Proposition 7 includes General State Sales Tax and Motor Vehicle Sales Tax

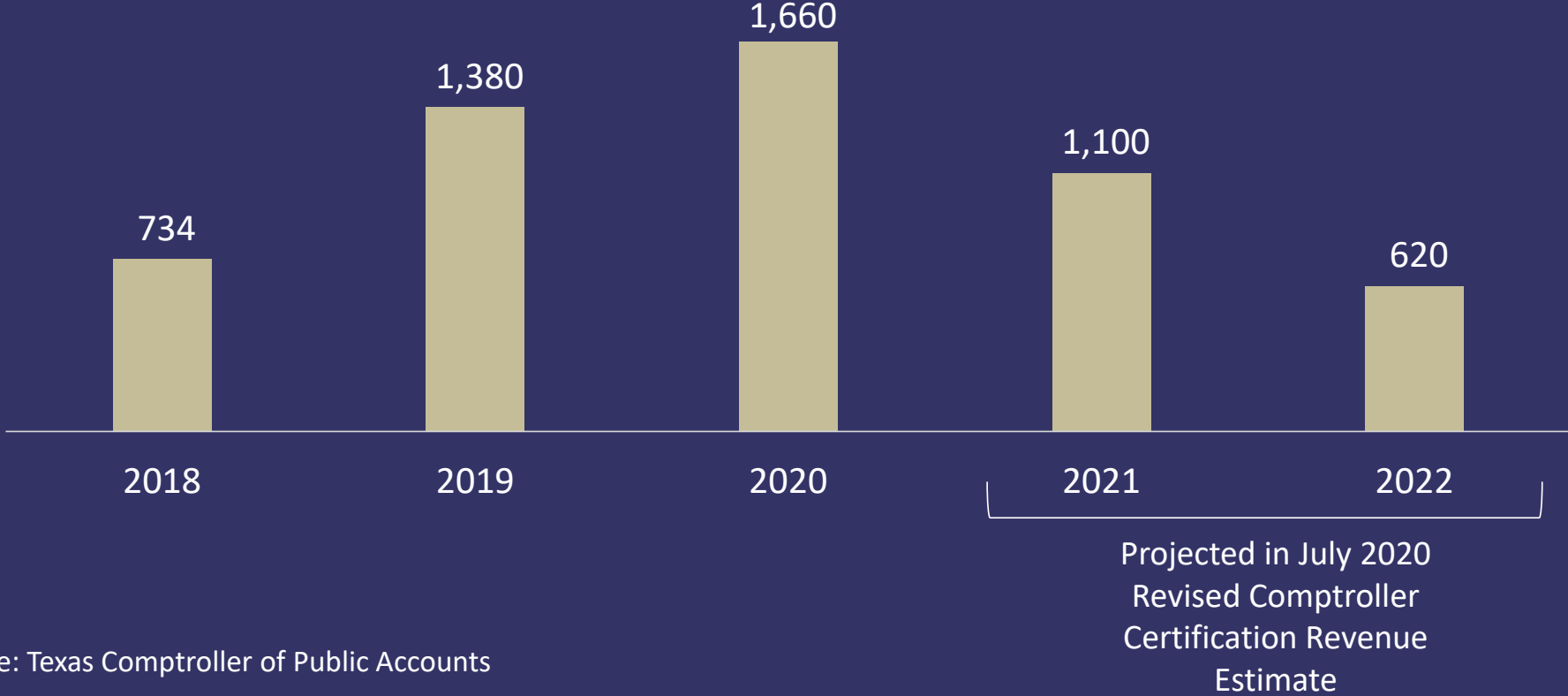
FUNDING IMPACT

Motor Fuel Tax
Decrease



Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

PROPOSITION 1 (OIL & GAS SEVERANCE TAX) TRANSFERS TO THE STATE HIGHWAY FUND, MILLIONS

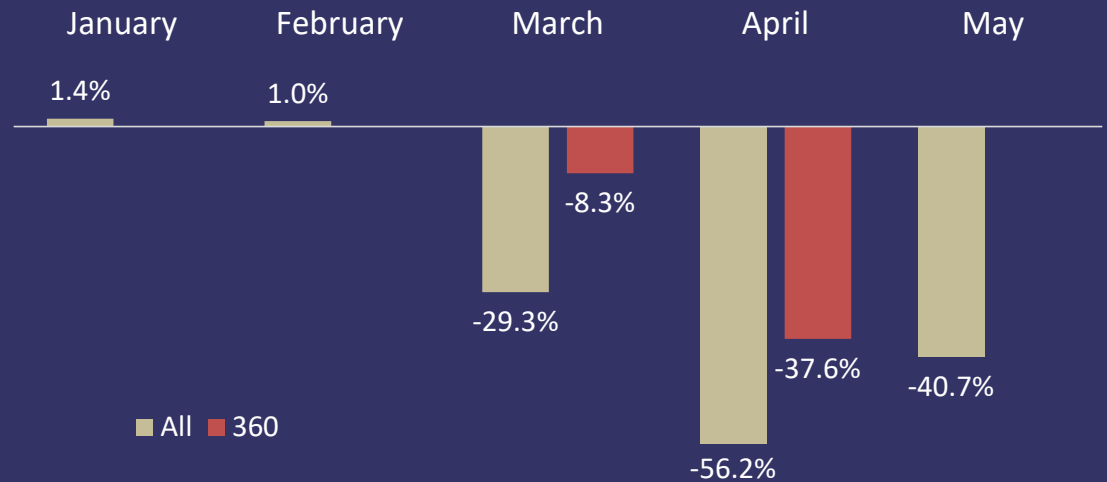


Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

FUNDING IMPACT

NTTA Transactions,
Including SH 360

Change in Tollway Transactions: 2019 vs 2020



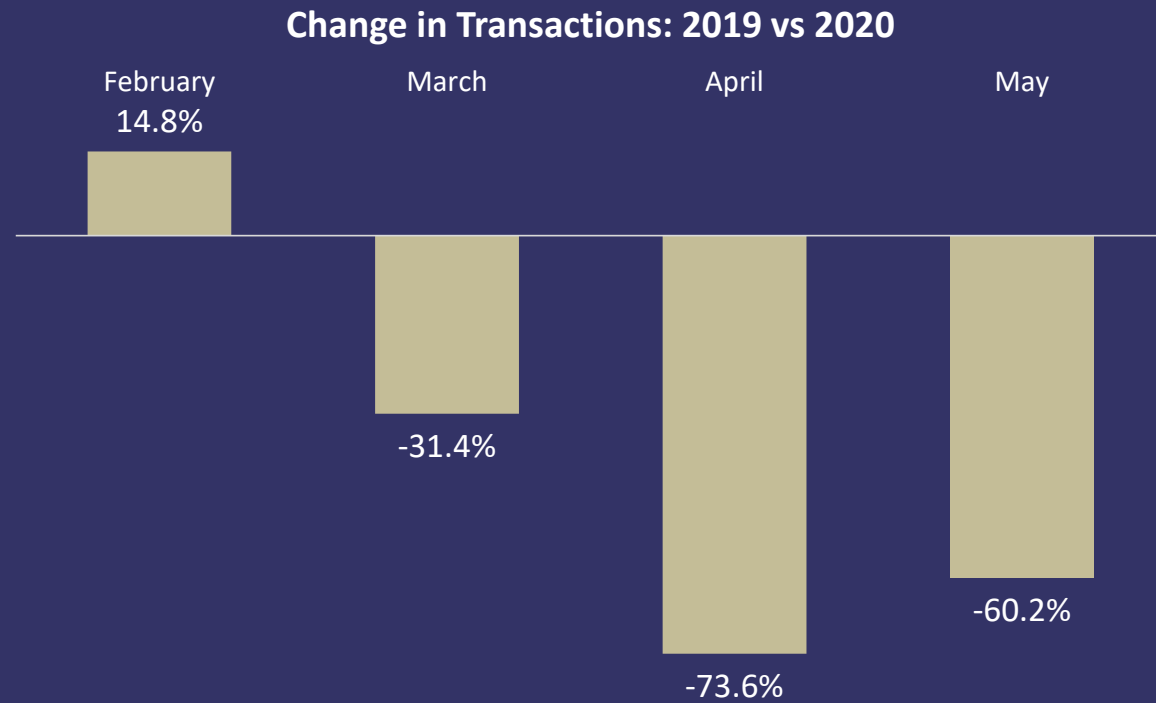
Source: NTTA

Note: Change for NTTA includes 360 Tollway

Additional Note: Despite decline in transactions, the revenues are sufficient to meet debt service for SH 360. No current impact to RTC backstop expected.

FUNDING IMPACT

I-35E TEXpress Lane
Transactions



Source: TxDOT

Note: TIFIA loan not impacted at this time as interest only payment period does not begin until May 2022

METRIC 3:

BENEFITS OF TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

RESPONSES TO AREAS OF RTC

RESPONSIBILITY

REGIONAL AIR QUALITY IMPACTS DURING COVID-19

Reduced Vehicle Emissions

Lowest Frequency of High-Level, Unhealthy Ozone Exposure Days
(prior to exceedances on August 3, 2020)

Ozone levels influenced by meteorological conditions: high temperatures, low winds, high UV index, limited rain, and little cloud coverage

Cleaner Air = Blue(r) Skies

Positive Health Impacts? (Under Review)

How Can We Sustain Impacts? (To be Determined)

Electric and Fuel Cell Vehicles

Travel Demand Management (Telecommuting)

Exceedances influenced by high background levels

Real world analysis on local contributions suggest multi-state SIP's to reduce background



DESPITE DECREASED TRAVEL, DFW IS THE BUSIEST AIRPORT IN THE WORLD

No employees furloughed

Over 90% of restaurants in operation

Received \$300M from the CARES ACT

Construction projects accelerated

Source: Wall Street Journal

TRANSIT: HELPING COMMUNITIES IN TIME OF NEED

Partnering with nonprofits and local governments to deliver essential supplies to those in need

- Catholic Charities (transportation program) provided door-to-door meal deliveries to homebound clients
- DCTA provided personal protective equipment to Denton County nonprofits
- DART delivered weekly meals to Dallas ISD and Garland ISD students



Source: DART



Source: CCFW



Source: DCTA

METRIC 4:

**PRIORITIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS THAT OFFSET
UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASES**

\$1 billion in transportation investment = ~12,000-15,000 jobs

No conclusive evidence of different types of construction projects generating more/fewer jobs

For a long-term unemployment event, need near-term and long-term transportation investment for maximum benefit

TRANSPORTATION IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

CANDIDATE PROJECTS

High Speed Rail: Dallas to Houston

High Speed Rail: Dallas to Fort Worth

Autonomous Transit (Tarrant, Midtown)

Technology (Freeway Induction Loops)

State Highway 183 (Section 2E+)

Y Connector (IH820/IH20)

COVID-19 #00X Program



Federal Highway Administration Measure Target Re-affirmation or Revisions

Regional Transportation Council
August 13, 2020

Chris Klaus



What Is Performance Measurement?

Framework for relating observed performance of the transportation system to:

Regional goals and priorities

Planning processes and documents

Project selection and Policies

Recent Federal transportation legislation (MAP-21/FAST Act)

Long history of performance measurement at NCTCOG

Setting targets is only beginning of the story!

Performance Measurement Activities

COVID-19: Changing Mobility

Local: Progress North Texas

Federal:

Later: Safety (PM1) = 5

Later: Transit Asset Management (TAM) = 4

Later: Transit Safety (PTASP) = 4

Later: Pavement and Bridge (PM2) = 6

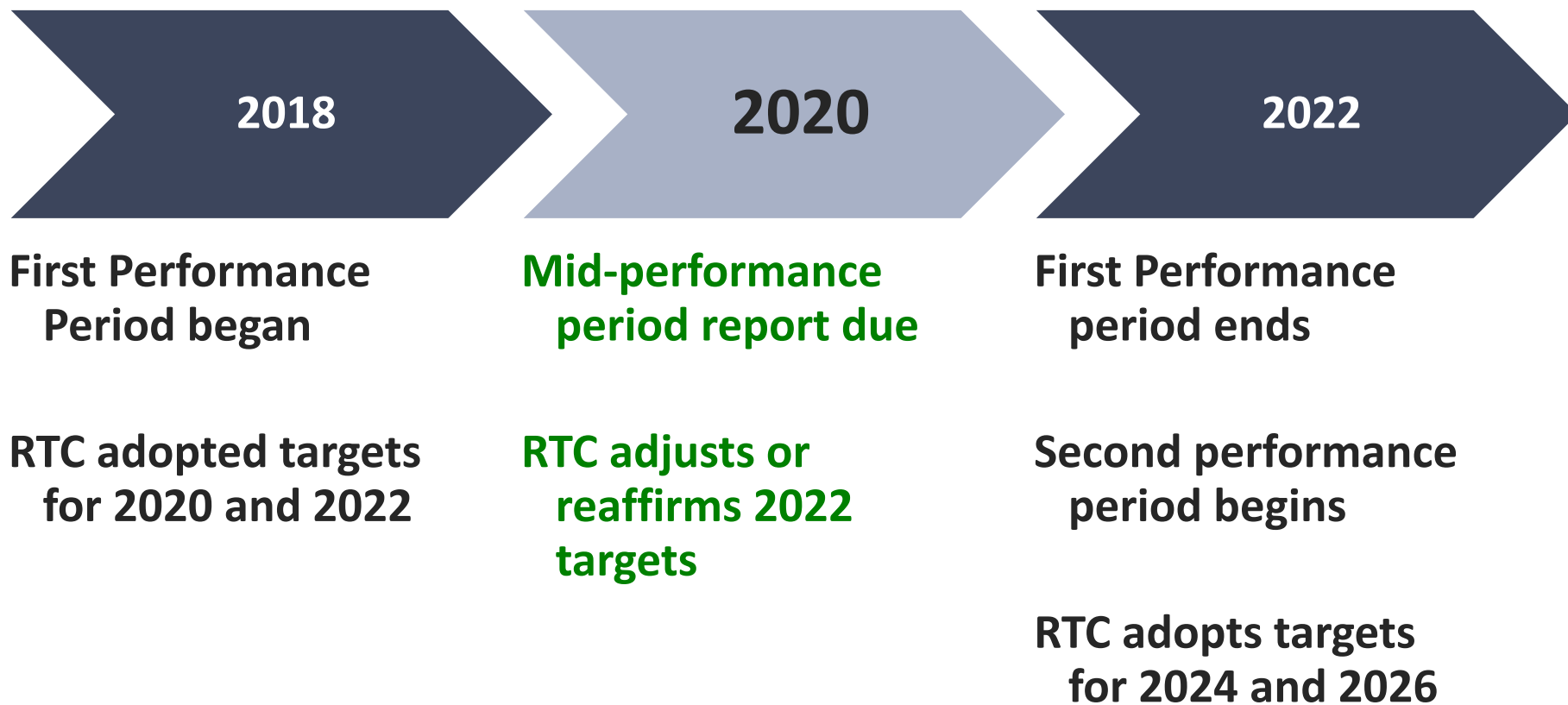
Now: System Performance (PM3) = 7



Progress North Texas 2020

Additional Examples:
www.nctcog.org/pm

Upcoming PM2/PM3 Action



PM3: System Performance, Freight, and CMAQ

7 Measures related to various aspects of the transportation system

Reliability, Congestion, Mode Choice, Emissions

November 8, 2018: RTC Adopted quantitative 2020 and 2022 regional targets

Updated targets due to FHWA via TxDOT October 1st

COVID-19 Impacts yet to be determined

PM3: DRAFT Recommendations

Measure	Desired Trend Indicating Improvement	Original Targets (as of 2018)		Updated Forecast/Trend		2022 Target Recommendation
		2020	2022	2020	2022	
Interstate Reliability	↗	78.6%	79.5%	78.4%	79.5%	Re-affirm 79.5%
Non-Interstate Reliability	↗	N/A	71.1%	74.4%	76.1%	Re-affirm 71.1%
Truck Travel Time Reliability	↘	1.71	1.66	1.83	1.90	Revise 1.90* Aspirational 1.83
Peak Hour Excessive Delay	↘	N/A	15.00 hrs.	13.25 hrs.	12.51 hrs.	Re-affirm 15.00 hrs.
Non-SOV Travel	↗	19.9%	20.2%	19.8%	20.0%	Re-affirm 20.2%
Total Emissions Reductions – NOx	↗	2,892.96	5,062.68	5,884.42	7,403.95	Revise 7,403.95
Total Emissions Reductions - VOC	↗	599.67	1,079.40	1,418.56	1,814.02	Revise 1,814.02

*Accept revised target resulting in development of work plan with focus to improve freight movement

PM3: Related Policies, Programs, Projects

Actively address worsening freight reliability with programs, policies, and projects to support freight movement

Existing Examples:

Incident Detection and Response (tow truck staging)
Techniques Encouraging Trucks from Peak Periods

Supporting Alternative Transportation Options

Assessing COVID-19 impacts on measures

Addressing measures in planning processes

Ongoing Congestion Management Process update
Upcoming Mobility plans
UTP/10-Year Plan
2021-2024 TIP

Schedule



July 24	STTC Information
August 10	Online Public Input Opportunity
August 13	RTC Information (PM3)
August 28	STTC Action (PM3)
September 10	RTC Action (PM3)
October 1	Revised PM3 Targets Due to FHWA via TxDOT
November 2020- Early 2021	Possible RTC Action on PM2 Targets (Depending on TxDOT)
Early 2021	Anticipated RTC Action on PM1/TAM/PTASP Targets

Questions, Comments, Contacts

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<https://www.nctcog.org/pm/fed>



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

Regional Transportation Council Attendance Roster
July 2019 - July 2020

RTC MEMBER	Entity	7/11/19	9/12/19	10/10/19	11/14/19	12/12/19	1/9/20	2/27/20	3/12/20	4/9/20	5/14/20	6/11/20	7/9/20
Tennell Atkins (09/17)	Dallas	A	P	A	P	E	E(R)	P	E	P	A	P	P
Richard E. Aubin (06/18)	Garland	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P
Mohamed Bur (06/18)	TxDOT, Dallas	E(R)	E(R)	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P
Loyl Bussell (05/17)	TxDOT, FW	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P
Dianne Costa (10/19)	DCTA	--	--	P	P	P	E(R)	E	P	P	P	P	P
Theresa Daniel (11/18)	Dallas Cnty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Jeff Davis (11/19)	Trinity Metro	--	--	--	P	P	E(R)	E(R)	A	P	P	P	P
Pat Deen (08/19)	Parker County	--	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P
Rudy Durham (7/07)	Lewisville	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P
Andy Eads (1/09)	Denton Cnty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Kevin Falconer (07/17)	Carrollton	P	P	A	P	P	E(R)	A	A	P	P	P	P
Gary Fickes (12/10)	Tarrant Cnty	P	P	E	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	E	P	P
George Fuller (07/17)	McKinney	E	E(R)	P	P	E	A	P	P	P	P	P	P
Rick Grady (09/18)	Plano	P	E(R)	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lane Grayson (01/19)	Ellis Cnty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Mojoy Haddad (10/14)	NTTA	A	P	A	P	A	A	P	E	P	P	E	P
Roger Harmon (1/02)	Johnson Cnty	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Ivan Hughes (09/19)	Addison	--	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Clay Lewis Jenkins (04/11)	Dallas Cnty	E(R)	P	P	A	E(R)	P	P	E	E(R)	E(R)	P	P
Ron Jensen (06/13)	Grand Prairie	P	P	A	P	P	P	E(R)	E(R)	P	P	P	P
Jungus Jordan (4/07)	Fort Worth	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
John Keating (12/19)	Frisco	--	--	--	--	P	P	E(R)	E(R)	P	P	E(R)	E(R)
Mike Leyman (09/19)	Mansfield	--	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
David Magness (06/13)	Rockwall Cnty	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Curtistene McCowan (06/19)	DeSoto	E(R)	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
B. Adam McGough (07/20)	Dallas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P
William Meadows (02/17)	DFW Airport	P	E	A	P	E	P	P	E(R)	A	A	P	P
Cara Mendelsohn (07/20)	Dalals	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P
Robert Miklos (12/19)	Mesquite	--	--	--	--	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P
Cary Moon (06/15)	Fort Worth	E	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Barbara Odom-Wesley (07/19)	Arlington	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P
Philip J. Ritter (07/20)	Dallas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P
John Ryan (05/18)	Denton	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P
Chris Schulmeister (07/20)	Allen	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P
Casey Thomas II (07/20)	Dallas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	A
Jeremy Tompkins (10/19)	Euless	--	--	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
T. Oscar Trevino Jr. (6/02)	Nrth Rch Hills	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

P= Present

A= Absent

R=Represented by Alternate

--= Not yet appointed

E= Excused Absence (personal illness, family emergency,
jury duty, business necessity, or fulfillment
of obligation arising out of elected service)

**Regional Transportation Council Attendance Roster
July 2019 - July 2020**

RTC MEMBER	Entity	7/11/19	9/12/19	10/10/19	11/14/19	12/12/19	1/9/20	2/27/20	3/12/20	4/9/20	5/14/20	6/11/20	7/9/20
William Tsao (3/17)	Dallas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Paul Wageman (10/19)	DART	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Dennis Webb (8/18)	Irving	P	P	A	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Duncan Webb (6/11)	Collin Cnty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
B. Glen Whitley (2/97)	Tarrant Cnty	E	E	E(R)	E(R)	E(R)	E	P	P	P	P	P	P
W. Jeff Williams (10/15)	Arlington	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P
Ann Zadeh (06/17)	Fort Worth	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Note: Date in parenthesis indicates when member was 1st eligible to attend RTC meetings

P= Present
A= Absent
R=Represented by Alternate
--= Not yet appointed

E= Excused Absence (personal illness, family emergency,
jury duty, business necessity, or fulfillment
of obligation arising out of elected service)

Surface Transportation Technical Committee Attendance Roster
April 2019 - June 2020

STTC MEMBERS	Entity	4/26/19	5/24/19	6/28/19	8/23/19	10/4/19	10/25/19	12/6/19	1/24/20	2/28/20	3/27/20	4/24/20	5/22/20	6/26/20
Onyinye Akujuo	Trinity Metro	--	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Joe Atwood	Hood County	P	A	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	*	*	*	*
Melissa Baker	Irving	E	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	*	*	*	*
Micah Baker	Dallas County	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Bryan Beck	Grapevine	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Katherine Beck	Fort Worth	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Marc Bentley	Farmers Branch	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
David Boski	Mansfield	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Keith Brooks	Arlington	A	A	A	A	P	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Shon Brooks	Waxahachie	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Tanya Brooks	Fort Worth	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	E	*	*	*	*
Ceason Clemens	TxDOT Dallas	P	P	A	A	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Robert Cohen	Southlake	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Kent Collins	Coppell	A	A	A	A	P	A	P	A	A	*	*	*	*
John Cordary, Jr.	TxDOT FW	P	P	A	P	A	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Rick Cortez	Mesquite	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Hal Cranor	Eules	P	P	A	A	P	P	P	A(R)	P	*	*	*	*
Clarence Daugherty	Collin County	P	P	P	P	P	A(R)	P	P	A(R)	*	*	*	*
Chad Davis	Wise County	P	A	A	P	A	A	A	P	A	*	*	*	*
Inga Dedow	NTTA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*
Arturo Del Castillo	Dallas	--	--	A(R)	A(R)	P	P	A(R)	P	P	*	*	*	*
Pritam Deshmukh	Denton	P	P	A	A(R)	P	P	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Caryl DeVries	Grand Prairie	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*
Greg Dickens	Hurst	A(R)	A	A(R)	P	A(R)	A(R)	A(R)	A(R)	A(R)	*	*	*	*
David Disheroon	Johnson County	A	A	P	A	P	P	A	P	A	*	*	*	*
Phil Dupler	FWTA	P	P	P	P	P	A(R)	P	A(R)	P	*	*	*	*
Chad Edwards	Fort Worth	P	P	P	A	P	E	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Claud Elsom	Rockwall County	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Eric Fladager	Fort Worth	A(R)	P	A(R)	A(R)	A(R)	A	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Chris Flanigan	Allen	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Ann Foss	Arlington	P	P	P	P	A	P	A(R)	P	P	*	*	*	*
Mike Galizio	Tarrant County	--	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Ricardo Gonzalez	TxDOT FW	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Gary Graham	McKinney	P	A	P	A(R)	A(R)	E(R)	A(R)	P	P	*	*	*	*
Tom Hammons	Carrollton	P	P	A(R)	P	P	A	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Ron Hartline	The Colony	A(R)	A(R)	A	A(R)	A(R)	A(R)	P	P	A(R)	*	*	*	*
Matthew Hotelling	Flower Mound	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
John Hudspeth	TxDOT Dallas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P	*	*	*	*
Terry Hughes	Weatherford	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Thuan Huynh	McKinney	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*
Tony Irvin	DeSoto	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Kelly Johnson	NTTA	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*

P=Present A=Absent R=Represented E=Excused (personal illness, family emergency, jury duty, business necessity)
-- =Not yet eligible to attend *Meeting held by WebEx/Audio Conference. Individual attendance not taken.

Surface Transportation Technical Committee Attendance Roster
April 2019 - June 2020

STTC MEMBERS	Entity	4/26/19	5/24/19	6/28/19	8/23/19	10/4/19	10/25/19	12/6/19	1/24/20	2/28/20	3/27/20	4/24/20	5/22/20	6/26/20
Gus Khankarli	Dallas	--	--	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Paul Knippel	Frisco	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Chiamin Korngiebel	Dallas	A	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Alonzo Liñán	Keller	P	A	A	P	P	P	A	A(R)	E(R)	*	*	*	*
Eron Linn	DART	--	--	--	--	P	P	A	P	A	*	*	*	*
Clay Lipscomb	Plano	P	P	A	P	A(R)	A	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Paul Luedtke	Garland	P	A(R)	P	P	P	A(R)	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Stanford Lynch	Hunt County	A	A	P	P	A	P	A(R)	P	P	*	*	*	*
Alberto Mares	Ellis County	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	*	*	*	*
Wes McClure	Mesquite	A(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Brian Moen	Frisco	P	P	A	P	A	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Mark Nelson	Richardson	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	*	*	*	*
Jim O'Connor	Irving	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Kenneth Overstreet	Bedford	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Kevin Overton	Dallas	E	P	P	E(R)	P	P	A	A	P	*	*	*	*
Tim Palermo	DCTA	--	--	--	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Dipak Patel	Lancaster	P	A(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Todd Plesko	DART	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Shawn Poe	Richardson	E(R)	E	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
John Polster	Denton County	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Tim Porter	Wylie	A	P	P	P	A(R)	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Bryan G. Ramey II	Duncanville	A(R)	A(R)	P	P	P	P	A	A	A(R)	*	*	*	*
Greg Royster	DFW Int. Airport	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Kathryn Rush	Dallas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*	*	*
Moosa Saghian	Kaufman County	P	P	A	A	P	A	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
David Salmon	Lewisville	A(R)	P	P	A	P	P	P	A(R)	P	*	*	*	*
Brian Shewski	Plano	P	P	P	A(R)	A(R)	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Walter Shumac, III	Grand Prairie	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Ray Silva-Reyes	Colleyville	A	A	P	P	A	P	P	A	P	*	*	*	*
Randy Skinner	Tarrant County	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Cheryl Taylor	Cleburne	P	P	A	P	P	P	A	P	P	*	*	*	*
Caleb Thornhill	Plano	A	P	A	A	A	P	P	A	A	*	*	*	*
Dave Timbrell	Garland	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*
Press Tompkins	Greenville	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P	P	*	*	*	*
Gregory Van Nieuwenhuize	Haltom City	A(R)	P	P	A	A(R)	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Daniel Vedral	Irving	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Caroline Waggoner	North Richland Hills	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	*	*
Robert Woodbury	Cedar Hill	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	*	*	*	*
Jamie Zech	TCEQ	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	*	*	*	*

P=Present A=Absent R=Represented E=Excused (personal illness, family emergency, jury duty, business necessity)
-- =Not yet eligible to attend *Meeting held by WebEx/Audio Conference. Individual attendance not taken.

MINUTES

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE June 26, 2020

The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) held a meeting on Friday, June 26, 2020, at 1:30 pm, by videoconference. The Regional Transportation Council Bylaws establish that the Technical Committee approved membership in attendance at a meeting shall constitute a quorum for action to be taken, therefore individual attendance was not taken for committee members or other attendees.

1. **Approval of May 22, 2020, Minutes:** The minutes of the May 22, 2020, meeting were approved as submitted in Electronic Item 1. Daniel Vedral (M); Alonzo Liñán (S). The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Consent Agenda:** The following item was included on the Consent Agenda.

- 2.1. **FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program Modifications:** A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of modifications to the FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program, provided in Electronic Item 2.1.1, including the addition of \$3 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds with Transportation Development Credits as a match to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Integrated Planning for Regional Transportation, Urban Development, and Stormwater Management project. Action also included a recommendation that the RTC direct staff to administratively amend the TIP and other administrative/planning documents, as appropriate, to reflect the approved modifications. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 2.1.2.

A motion was made to approve the item on the Consent Agenda. Chad Edwards (M); Tim Palermo (S). The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Effect of COVID-19 Restrictions on Transportation and Endorsement of Economic Opportunities:** Michael Morris provided an update on the effects of COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, he discussed economic opportunities in the region and requested endorsement of a financial backstop approved at the June 9, 2020, Regional Transportation Council (RTC) meeting. He noted North Central Texas Council of Governments staff is continuing efforts to develop an information system of COVID-19 impacts on transportation. The region no longer has the luxury to do what it wants but must do what is needed. In response to the existing funding constraints, the region should return to the efforts of the financial crisis response from 2009 and take advantage of lower construction costs. Other options to implement projects include a potential federal infrastructure bill, public-private partnerships as part of the RTC Legislative Program, taking advantage of low interest rate, new technologies, and formula allocations. He highlighted four policy metrics being tracked by staff. The first metric is related to travel behavior in response to COVID-19. Staff is monitoring freeway volumes, transit ridership, and airport travel and monitoring changes resulting from COVID-19. The second policy metric is the financial implications to traditional revenue sources. Reductions in vehicles sales tax, motor vehicles sales and use, and motor fuel tax were highlighted, all of which have experienced significant reductions. Policy metric three is the benefits of travel behavior responses. Staff continues to gather data on crash rates and fatalities, as well as air quality impacts. Despite a 30-40 percent reduction in emission levels due to lower vehicle miles traveled, ozone exceedance days continue to be

experienced in the region. This indicates there is an issue with the boundary/boundary conditions and the thought that implementing intensive air quality initiatives in the core counties will allow the region to come into compliance of the ozone standard is no longer the correct assumption. He discussed potential options to reduce single occupant vehicle travel from larger employers to help continue the reduction in emissions seen because of COVID-19 travel behaviors, as well as other options to maintain air quality benefits. The final metric is the implementation of innovative transportation projects that may provide economic opportunities in the COVID-19 environment, including the approximate \$20 billion private-sector, high-speed rail investment between Dallas and Houston and the advancement of the environmental document for high-speed technology between Dallas and Fort Worth. Other candidate projects include the next phase of the Hyperloop Certification Center, autonomous transit, freeway induction loops, SH 183 improvements by the private sector, and the Y Connector. He noted that staff has been working to advance smaller projects that will be documented through the COVID-19 #00X Program to track how the region moved forward with projects through innovation. Mr. Morris also presented a funding backstop for Committee endorsement. Cintra is the private-sector provider for the North Tarrant Express/SH 183 project south of the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Approximately \$162 million in capacity improvements from Cintra for SH 183 are anticipated. The improvements will create a lane imbalance near the DFW Airport, and Cintra has proposed an additional \$860 million to fund Section 2E to balance lanes between SH 121 and SH 161. This project is similar to IH 35W 3C that was grandfathered in and able to be built. In addition, \$270 million is proposed for payment to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for lane balance improvements east of SH 161 for a total of \$1.3 billion in private sector funds to the region. Staff proposed a \$3 million financial backstop to give confidence to Cintra to begin engineering on Section 2E of the project. It is anticipated that the funding will be repaid to the RTC once TxDOT formally requests Cintra to begin the design of the project. Mr. Morris noted that he believed there is minimal risk to the financial backstop. In addition, he highlighted projects to be included in the COVID-19 inventory:

1) Loop 9 cost overrun, 2) IH 35E at Frankford Road, 3) IH 45 at Dowdy Ferry Road, and 4) Tripp Road. He also discussed a recent proposal to support and provide a financial commitment of \$750,000 to offset the transportation costs as part of a bid to host the National Hockey League Hub City Tournament in the region. A copy of the commitment letter was provided in Electronic Item 3.1. Staff has learned that the region was not selected to host the event, so Committee endorsement of the proposal is not needed. However, he noted staff will be working to develop guidelines for instances in which staff actions are needed in the interim and RTC ratification will be requested. Additional details of the items presented were provided in Electronic Item 3.2. John Polster discussed air quality impacts during COVID-19 and noted he did not believe there is a boundary issue. When there is a 40 percent reduction in human activity and minimal changes to vehicle emissions, there is a significant background level of ozone and nitrogen oxide emission that contribute to the air quality. He added the region has reached a point of diminishing returns on air quality improvements. In addition, he recommended approval of the item, but requested additional information be presented at a later time to the Committee related to background levels versus boundary changes. Mr. Morris noted the medical community sets the level in order to preserve the health effects on the population. Mr. Polster discussed what is referred to from a medical standpoint, as a bright line difference between the impacts of levels and suggested that staff review that argument. Committee Chair Bryan Beck discussed the \$3 million financial backstop and asked if ownership of the design plans if the \$3 million backstop if needed, is part of the agreement. Mr. Morris noted that if the backstop is needed, this could be included as part of the agreement. A motion was made to endorse Regional Transportation Council approval of a \$3 million financial backstop to advance the

next phase of the North Tarrant Express/SH 183 project in Tarrant and Dallas Counties. John Polster (M); Walter Shumac III (S). The motion passed unanimously.

4. **2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects-Updated Recommendations:** Camille Fountain presented updated staff recommendations for the 2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects, originally approved at the May 22, 2020, Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) meeting. Since that time, the following updates have been made to the recommended projects: 1) Town of Flower Mound funding was moved from western subregion recommendations to the eastern subregion recommendations, 2) Opticom System and drone project recommendations were removed from the final recommendations list due to eligibility requirements, and 3) project recommendations were reranked based on the changes. Ms. Fountain noted that all other previously recommended projects remained funded. In addition, staff is requesting to allocate Regional Toll Revenue funds to implement the Incident Management Blocking Equipment Pilot Project. An overview of the 2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects was provided, including eligible recipients and activities, as well as ineligible activities. Approximately \$1.5 million was available and a total of 21 applications totaling approximately \$2.67 million were received. Of the 21 applications, 6 were ineligible. It was noted that 3 applications were received requesting blocking equipment, which will be funded using a local funding source as part of the Incident Management Equipment Blocking Pilot Project. Details of the applications received in each subregion, as well as the scoring criteria and methodology were provided in Electronic Item 4.2. Projects recommendations for the eastern subregion total \$939,140 and \$303,802 in the western subregion for a total funding recommendation of \$1,242,942. Ms. Fountain noted that where appropriate, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) may lead procurement activities for some of the smaller equipment purchases and procure in bulk through consolidated purchases or through cooperative purchase organizations. Ineligible projects were also highlighted. In the eastern subregion, these include: City of Frisco, drones (due to federal restrictions on drones made in China); City of Lucas, emergency traffic incident management vehicle (due to Buy America Compliancy); Flower Mound, two GPS Opticom System upgrades and Richardson, Opticom System upgrade (due to CMAQ funding requirements); and Prosper, drones (due to federal restrictions on drones made in China). Western subregion ineligible projects include four City of Fort Worth projects for a portable traffic signal, advanced traffic signal detector, battery back-up unit (should be submitted in Regional Traffic Signal Program), and a camera equipment project for which funding was reduced due to system redundancy. Ms. Fountain noted project recommendation tables were provided in Electronic Item 4.1. The schedule for this effort was reviewed. Regional Transportation Council (RTC) action is anticipated in July, followed by action of the Executive Board. Interlocal agreement coordination activities are also expected to begin in July. As part of the call for projects, requests for blocking equipment to protect first responders at crash sites were received. Staff proposed to fund the equipment using Regional Toll Revenue funds, if approved by the RTC. Projects were submitted by the Cities of Mesquite, Grand Prairie, and Flower Mound totaling \$132,000. Matthew Hotelling discussed the Opticom System projects that were considered ineligible and noted that it seemed efforts that would aid in responders arriving to the scene quickly to clear accidents would be ranked well, but noted that he understood slower traffic flow likely was an air quality issue. Ms. Fountain noted that he was correct, impacts to traffic signal synchronization are an air quality issue. Michael Morris discussed the incremental benefits of emergency vehicles being able to proceed through a traffic signal using Opticom software, which negatively impacts traffic signal progression, versus the use of sirens and lights. He suggested a review of systems that maximize safety benefits without negatively impacting the air quality benefits, what types of technologies are implemented by

agencies in the region, and how to mature the region with consistent technologies. Chris Klaus noted that the Texas Department of Transportation is currently soliciting ideas for its annual Research Program and that staff could develop a research proposal on the GPS technologies discussed. Mr. Morris noted that if unsuccessful, a project could be proposed for the Unified Planning Work Program to create a subcommittee of STTC members interested in advancing the equity of technologies in the region. A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council approval of the updated project recommendations for the 2020 incident management Equipment Purchase Call for projects, and staff to administratively switch out Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds with Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds for projects that are not eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funding, and allocation of \$132,000 in Regional Toll Revenue funding to implement the incident management blocking equipment pilot project. John Polster (M); Katherine Beck (S). The motion passed unanimously.

5. **Endorsement of Action Approving \$300,000 in Temporary Interim Funding for Air Quality Initiatives:** Michael Morris noted that selected North Central Texas Council of Governments air quality staff are funded through the Management and Operations Program. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) previously approved \$4 million for air quality initiatives. However, the transition between the multiyear agreements with the Texas Department of Transportation was not completed in time. NCTCOG staff proposed \$300,000 in RTC Local funds be temporarily programmed as an interim measure in advance of the anticipated formal funding agreement to support air quality initiatives. It is anticipated the multiyear agreement will be completed by September 2, 2020. The RTC will be asked to ratify staff's action at its July 9, 2020, meeting. Details were provided in Electronic Item 5. A motion was made to endorse North Central Texas Council of Governments staff action to utilize \$300,000 in Regional Transportation Council Local funds as interim funding to support air quality initiatives. John Polster (M); Daniel Vedral (S). The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Interstate Highway 45 Zero-Emissions Vehicle Corridor Plan Update:** Bethany Hyatt provided an update on the IH 45 Zero-Emission Vehicle Deployment Plan. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that departments of transportation designate alternative fuel corridors as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. These alternative fuels include electric, hydrogen, compressed natural gas (CNG), liquified natural gas (LNG), and propane and help familiarize consumers with alternative fuels by signage placement and create reliability among these developing technologies. This effort is in response to an FHWA solicitation for an Alternative Fuels Corridor Deployment plan in August 2019 with a goal to strategically place electric and hydrogen fuel stations along IH 45 focused on freight vehicles. IH 45 is a 290-mile corridor from Dallas to the Galveston Port. Nearly half of the truck freight in Texas is moved through this corridor which is about 10,000 ton-miles of cargo. The corridor currently has a 111-mile gap between Ennis and Madisonville deeming it pending instead of ready for electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE). For the corridor to be classified as ready, a station must be placed every 50 miles within 5 miles of IH 45. Focusing in on this section, there are four possible focus areas for additional sites which include Corsicana, Fairfield, buffalo, and Centerville Texas. These areas are the more traveled cities of the corridor and warrant potential development. Building electric vehicle infrastructure in two-to-three of these possible locations will transition this corridor from pending to ready for EVSE. Regarding hydrogen, Texas currently has no publicly available stations. To transition to ready, around three-to-four hydrogen stations will need to be built within 100 miles of each other within 5 miles of IH 45. Through the IH 45 Zero-Emission Vehicle Deployment Plan, NCTCOG will identify best

technologies for end user groups, identify best market development opportunities, develop and convene stakeholder groups, and solicit infrastructure needs from industries. In May 2021, NCTCOG will have developed a robust list of stakeholders, convened at least 10 stakeholder meetings, held 1-2 corridor workshops, developed 1-2 case studies, and the infrastructure deployment plan will be finalized. In order to accomplish this, staff is seeking support on both battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell initiatives. Stakeholders will be divided into four subgroups: 1) infrastructure deployment, 2) vehicle availability, 3) customer identification, and 4) policy/incentives. Members interested in providing assistance through one of the stakeholder groups was asked to submit a stakeholder survey, provided through a link on page 9 of Electronic Item 6.

7. **Local Government Energy Reporting Update:** Bailey Muller presented information on North Central Texas Council of Governments efforts to increase the rate of local government energy reporting submitted to the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO). She highlighted the emissions impacts from electricity generation to the region, as well as the emissions attributed from building and facility energy use and efforts to mitigate potential emissions impacts. The Energy Management project is a collaborative partnership with the Air Quality staff of the Transportation Department and Environment and Development Department staff to expand local government staff capabilities in energy management topics, increase compliance with the state mandated energy reporting requirements, and improve accuracy of emissions reduction data associated with reduced energy use. Ultimately, the goals of this project will demonstrate the value added of increasing this efficiency education and accessing the impact of the regional outreach into the State. The Texas Health and Safety Code §388.005(c), originally passed in 2001, was established to aid efforts to attain federal air quality standards by reducing demand for electricity generation. It requires each political subdivision, institute or higher education, and state agency in a non-attainment area or an affected county to establish a goal to reduce electric consumption by at least five percent each calendar years and to submit an annual report to SECO. In 2019, the requirements were extended for another seven years. One of the main issues of energy report efforts is the lack of awareness and inconsistency in reporting year-to-year. Ms. Muller provided an overview of the reporting requirement, cities and counties who submitted reports in previous years, as well as staff efforts to increase compliance with and awareness of the requirement. Staff is also working to develop resources, training, and technical assistance to help increase local government efforts to implement the actions to meet energy goals. A local government energy toolkit has been created and available at www.conservenorthtexas.org. Additionally, free individualized assistance to entities interested in learning more about the local government energy reporting requirements is available. A working group of interested stakeholders has also been created to help staff identify barriers in preventing compliance so it is able determine the best resources for those in the region. Members interested in being part of the working group were asked to contact staff. Also highlighted were recent workshops and training available online, as well as a webinar on Procurement Strategies for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy scheduled for July 16, 2020. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 7.
8. **Surface Transportation Technical Committee Officers and Announcement of New Regional Transportation Council Officers:** Dan Kessler noted the Surface Transportation Technical Committee officers for the 2020-2021 term were approved at the North Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Board's June 25, 2020, meeting: Chair Brian Moen, Assistant Director of Transportation, City of Frisco; Vice Chair Tanya Brooks, Assistant Director, Traffic Management Division, Transportation and Public Works, City of Fort Worth; and Secretary Ceason Clemens, P.E., Deputy District Engineer, TxDOT Dallas. In addition, Mr. Kessler noted Regional Transportation Council (RTC) officers approved at

the June 11, 2020, RTC meeting: Chair Roger Harmon, County Judge, Johnson County; Vice Chair Theresa Daniel, Ph.D., Commissioner, Dallas County; and Secretary Ann Zadeh, Councilmember, City of Fort Worth.

9. **Fast Facts:** Staff presentations were not given. Information was provided to members electronically for the following items.
 1. Auto Occupancy/High-Occupancy Vehicle Quarterly Subsidy Report (Electronic Item 9.1)
 2. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Policy Bundle Round 4 (Electronic Item 9.2)
 3. Regional Safety Advisory Committee New Member Appointments (Electronic Item 9.3)
 4. Air Quality Funding Opportunities for Vehicles (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/funding-and-resources/fundingvehicle>)
 5. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Upcoming Events (<https://www.dfwcleancities.org/dfw-clean-cities-meetings>)
 6. Status Report on Ozone (Electronic Item 9.4)
 7. North Central Texas Council of Governments as SmartWay Affiliate in Action (<https://www.epa.gov/smartway/smartway-affiliates-action>)
 8. Progress North Texas (www.nctcog.org/ourregion)
 9. May Online Input Opportunity Minutes (Electronic Item 9.5)
 10. Public Comments Report (Electronic Item 9.6)
 11. Written Progress Reports:
 - Local Motion (Electronic Item 9.7)
 - Partner Progress Reports (Electronic Item 9.8)
10. **Other Business (Old and New):** There was no discussion on this item.
11. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Surface Transportation Technical Committee is scheduled for 1:30 pm on July 24, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.



A monthly update on activities of the Regional Transportation Council and the North Central Texas Council of Governments Transportation Department

August 2020

SolSmart recognizes NCTCOG's solar achievements

INSIDE

Make clean air choices every day

Air North Texas' annual clean air celebration is set for August 5. But the opportunity for people to have an impact on air quality continues.

Residents who made commitments to help improve air quality as part of Clean Air Action Day are encouraged to tell their friends by posting about the changes they chose on social media. With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, many changes were made to this year's annual event. Instead of participating in large gatherings, North Texans were encouraged to observe social distancing protocols while aiming to improve air quality. Read more on page 2.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments has received a Bronze designation from the national SolSmart program for helping local governments across the Dallas-Fort Worth area make it faster, easier and more affordable to go solar.

The SolSmart designation recognizes NCTCOG for helping communities remove obstacles to solar energy development. NCTCOG has guided local governments through solar energy training sessions and made educational resources available on the Go Solar Texas website, www.gosolartexas.org. NCTCOG launched the website as a comprehensive guide to increasing solar deployment across Texas. It includes steps for homeowners to go solar, best management practices for local governments, an extensive resource library, and training for a variety of audiences, including real estate professionals and fire and code officials.

NCTCOG has also hosted training sessions for fire and emergency medical professionals on safely responding to house fires where solar panels are installed.

The SolSmart designation recognizes both recent accomplishments and years of leadership from NCTCOG in advancing solar energy growth in Texas. Beginning in 2017, NCTCOG served as a SolSmart advisor, providing technical assistance on solar energy to communities.

To date, six Dallas-Fort Worth communities have achieved the SolSmart designation. Cedar Hill and Corinth were designated SolSmart Gold; Kennedale was designated SolSmart Silver; and Denton, Lewisville, and Plano were designated SolSmart Bronze. NCTCOG plans to expand its outreach to help more North Texas communities achieve SolSmart designation.

Municipalities and counties interested in technical assistance on solar energy can contact energy@nctcog.org.



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

For more information about Local Motion topics, contact Brian Wilson at 817-704-2511 or bwilson@nctcog.org. Visit www.nctcog.org/trans for more information on the department.

North Texans one step closer to high-speed transportation



North Texans are one step closer to a new form of transportation, as the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study begins its first phase of public meetings. The study is evaluating high-speed transportation alternatives (both alignments and technology) to modernize and enhance mobility between Dallas and Fort Worth. This would accommodate growth and provide residents with the safe, reliable and efficient travel they expect.

NCTCOG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Mobility 2045, includes high-speed transportation between Dallas and Fort Worth as a future transportation choice, to accommodate an expected population exceeding 11 million by 2045. NCTCOG, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Transit Administration, is studying this high-speed connection that would link the planned Dallas-to-Houston high-speed rail service to a potential future high-speed service between Fort Worth and South Texas.

Currently, the study is reviewing high-speed transportation options in the Dallas-Arlington-Fort Worth corridor by analyzing potential routes, transportation modes, operations/service planning, and preparing preliminary engineering and environmental documentation for high-speed passenger service. The study area includes Dallas and Tarrant counties and the cities of Dallas, Irving, Cockrell Hill, Grand Prairie, Arlington, Pantego, Dalworthington Gardens, Hurst, Euless, Bedford, Richland Hills, North Richland Hills, Haltom City and Fort Worth. The study team is in the first phase of engaging and informing agencies, the public and stakeholders. The project will identify a viable alternative that enhances the regional transportation system.

Look beyond Aug. 5 to make clean air choices every day

Residents who made commitments to help improve air quality as part of Clean Air Action Day are encouraged to tell their friends by posting about the changes they chose on social media. With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, many changes were made to this annual celebration, held this year on August 5. Instead of participating in large gatherings, North Texans were encouraged to observe social distancing protocols while aiming to improve air quality.

Many social distancing strategies, such as working from home, can double as clean air strategies in the fight against COVID-19. They can also be continued long after CAAD and be incorporated into people's normal routines. It is important to work toward better air quality every day, especially in Dallas-Fort Worth, which remains in nonattainment for ozone pollution.

There are several ways residents can contribute to clean air throughout the year. They can plan the most fuel-efficient route and combine trips when they have to drive. Other examples include bicycling or walking to the store, packing lunch in a reusable bag, and buying locally grown foods. A good first step to better air quality is signing up for air pollution alerts at www.airnorthtexas.org/signup. Individuals will be notified when ozone levels are predicted to be unhealthy so they can take extra precautions and limit actions that affect air quality on those days. Visit www.airnorthtexas.org/howto for resources and information on programs that can help improve air quality each day.

FACT SHEET

Document explains funding shortfall in transportation

Dallas-Fort Worth's population of more than 7.5 million makes it the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the nation. The 12-county area grew by 1.2 million people between 2010 and 2020. It is expected to continue its rapid expansion through 2045, when its population could exceed 11.2 million.

Traditional transportation revenue sources are not keeping up with the expanding region's needs. But planners and policymakers continue to search for solutions that will help residents move throughout the region reliably. NCTCOG has published a fact sheet to explain how transportation needs can be met well into the future.

Even with billions of dollars of improvements planned through 2045, there is still a shortfall anticipated. Identifying additional transportation revenue is key to reducing congestion across North Texas. The Regional Transportation Council has embraced innovation in an effort to complete major projects.

The RTC works collaboratively with local, State and federal partners to direct funding to projects that improve efficiency. The region's continued growth has made it a crucial part of the statewide economy.

To learn more about how NCTCOG is working to address the region's funding needs, visit www.nctcog.org/factsheets

REGIONALNews

TTI seeks input on region's express lanes

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute is conducting research on express lane users in Dallas-Fort Worth and other metropolitan areas across the country through a driver survey.

The focus of the survey, also being conducted in Miami, Los Angeles and Washington, DC, is to determine how satisfied users are with the express lanes and if the lanes meet their objectives.

TEXpress Lanes have been operating as an additional mobility choice in select corridors throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area since 2014.

In corridors such as LBJ Express and North Tarrant Express, motorists have the option of using tax-supported lanes for no toll or paying for a smoother ride in the TEXpress Lanes. The lanes are dynamically priced to provide more-reliable travel times, even during peak periods.

To participate in the survey, which takes just a few minutes, visit https://tamu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0Bs6Md5YF46etA9. It focuses on questions about travel before the COVID-19 pandemic, but also seeks information on how driving has changed.

Task force to study continued AQ improvement

NCTCOG is working on a project to better understand health-related air quality impacts attributed to the transportation sector.

As part of this project, NCTCOG has convened a task force of government representatives, health officials, academic representatives and air quality experts to evaluate regional data that may indicate where additional air quality improvement is needed.

The task force will also seek to address concerns over localized air pollution, with a focus on transportation sources.

Through this task force, NCTCOG hopes to facilitate peer exchange and evaluate where more work associated with the health implications of traffic-related air pollution is needed.

For more information regarding this project and to join the next task force meeting, please contact Dorothy Gilliam at dgilliam@nctcog.org.

The next meeting is scheduled for 9:30-11:30 a.m. August 21.

Transportation Resources

Facebook

Facebook.com/nctcogtrans

Twitter

Twitter.com/nctcogtrans

YouTube

YouTube.com/nctcogtrans

Instagram

Instagram.com/nctcogtrans

Publications

NCTCOG.org/trans/outreach/publications.asp

Partners

Dallas Area Rapid Transit
DART.org

**Denton County
Transportation Authority**
DCTA.net

North Texas Tollway Authority
NTTA.org

**Texas Department
of Transportation**
TxDOT.gov

Trinity Metro
RideTrinityMetro.org

By the Numbers

11.2 million

The population size Dallas-Fort Worth area is expected to exceed by 2045.

PUBLIC *Involvement*

N. Texans invited to provide transportation input

Beginning August 10, North Texans are invited to comment online on several current transportation planning initiatives, including the effects of COVID-19 on regional transportation, emissions-reduction plans, potential funding awards and federal performance measures. Comments will be accepted through September 9.

To help the public better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the transportation system, NCTCOG staff will provide an update on several performance metrics. These policy metrics address financial implications of the pandemic, travel behavior responses and benefits, and offsetting unemployment increases.

Staff will also provide the public with updates on several project initiatives. In 2019, the Federal Highway Administration awarded funding to NCTCOG to develop the Interstate Highway 45 Zero Emission Corridor Plan to support both battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles along IH 45 from Dallas to Houston. Staff is seeking stakeholder involvement from fuel providers, fleets, infrastructure developers, fuel associations, government agencies, utilities and interest groups. An update on planning progress will be provided as part of this online input opportunity.

Additionally, staff will present recommended projects to receive funding as part of the 2020 Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects.

Finally, staff will discuss recent federal transportation rules that require metropolitan planning organizations to monitor and set targets for a specific set of performance measures. Observed trends, project implementation and the effects of COVID-19 will help determine whether target adjustments will be recommended.

The department's new interactive map tool, the Regional Smoking Vehicle Program, vehicle incentive opportunities and administrative revisions to Mobility 2045, the region's long-term transportation plan, will also be highlighted.

An audio recording of the presentations will be posted at www.nctcog.org/input.

Prepared in cooperation with the US Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration) and the Texas Department of Transportation. The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the opinions, findings and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration or the Texas Department of Transportation.