

## **MINUTES**

### **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE** **December 8, 2023**

The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) met on Friday, December 8, 2023, at 1:30 pm, in the Transportation Council Room of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). The following STTC members or representatives were present: Melissa Baker, David Boski, Shon Brooks, Tanya Brooks, Daniel Burnham, Travis Campbell, John Cordary, Jr., Chad Davis, Don Raines (representing Arturo Del Castillo), Pritam Deshmukh, Caryl DeVries, Greg Dickens, Phil Dupler, Jana Pimental (representing Chad Edwards), Chris Flanigan, Ricardo Gonzalez, Gary Graham, Tom Hammons, Barry Heard, Matthew Hotelling, John D. Hudspeth, Jeremy Hutt, Thuan Huynh, Joseph Jackson, William Janney, Kelly Johnson, Major Jones, Gus Khankarli, Eron Linn, Alan Hendrix (representing Stanford Lynch), Chad Marbut, Alberto Mares, Wes McClure, Brian Moen, Mark Nelson, Jim O'Connor, Tim Palermo, Dipak Patel, Kelly Porter, Tim Porter, Elizabeth Reynolds, Jahor Roy, Greg Royster, Jeff Kelly (representing David Salmon), Shane Davis (representing James Ryan Sartor), Brian Shewski, Randy Skinner, Cheryl Taylor, Jennifer VanderLaan, Gregory Van Nieuwenhuize, Daniel Vedral, Jana Wentzel, and Robert Woodbury.

Others present at the meeting were: Vickie Alexander, Berrien Barks, Nathan Benditz, Taylor Benjamin, Natalie Bettger, Jesse Brown, Farhan Butt, Jackie Castillo, Lori Clark, Brian Dell, Cody Derrick, Amber Ellis, Ann Foss, Rebekah Gongora, Christie Gotti, Duane Hengst, Ernest Huffman, Brian Jahn, Amy Johnson, Zachary Joseph, Wilson Kakembo, Dan Kessler, Chris Klaus, Kevin Kokes, Matt Leppla, Michael Morris, Chandra Murwanandhan, Dylan Niles, Donald Parker, Trey Pope, Vercie Pruitt-Jenkins, Maggie Quinn, Minesha Reese, Sarah Rogers, Connor Sadro, Robert Saylor, Aliyah Shaikh, Samuel Simmons, Toni Stehling, Cheryl Taylor, Dallas Teston, Daniela Tower, Brendon Wheeler, and Amanda Wilson.

1. **Approval of October 27, 2023, Minutes:** The minutes of the October 27, 2023, meeting were approved as submitted in Electronic Item 1. Daniel Vedral (M); Jim O'Connor (S). The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Consent Agenda:** The following items were included on the Consent Agenda:

- 2.1. **Modifications to the Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 Unified Planning Work Program:** Vickie Alexander requested a recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of modifications to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), along with direction for staff to also amend the Transportation Improvement Program and other administrative/planning documents administratively, as appropriate, to reflect the approved modifications was sought. The Unified Planning Work Program is required by federal and State transportation planning regulations and provides a summary of the transportation and related air quality planning tasks to be conducted by Metropolitan Planning Organization staff. The FY2024 and FY2025 UPWP was approved by the Regional Transportation Council and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Executive Board in July 2023 and identifies the activities to be carried out between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2025. Amendments to this document were proposed to reflect new initiatives, project updates, and funding adjustments. The proposed amendments were provided in Electronic Item 2.1.1 and posted on the NCTCOG website for public

review and comment as part of the November 2023 online public outreach opportunity. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 2.1.2.

2.2. **Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Rail Additional Funding for National Environmental Policy Act Consultant:** Brendon Wheeler requested a recommendation for Regional Transportation Council approval for additional funding (as a “not to exceed” amount) for a consultant contract to complete preliminary engineering and environmental documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Additional funding provision requested not to exceed 10 percent of original contract budget; Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program funds were requested for this purpose. In April 2020, North Central Texas Council of Governments staff began work on the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study with consultant assistance. The project is divided into two phases, the first being an alternatives analysis of high-speed modes and corridors, which was completed in late 2022. The second phase included conceptual and preliminary engineering and a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) effort resulting in a federal government action identifying the project’s next steps; this phase is expected to be complete in late 2024. Public and stakeholder input as well as constraints resulting from conceptual engineering analysis required development of additional alignment alternatives than originally anticipated and inclusion of tunneling expertise for preferred alignment in the NEPA process. Additional reference material was provided in Electronic Item 2.2.

2.3. **Regional Transportation Council Local Funds for North Texas Innovation Alliance Urban Resilience Fellowship Program:** Ernest Huffman requested a recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of \$18,000 in RTC Local funds to support three problem statements submitted through the North Texas Innovation Alliance (NTXIA) Urban Resilience Fellowship Program. During the summer of 2023, NTXIA initiated the Urban Resilience Fellowship Program. This program connects teams of students from higher education institutions across Dallas-Fort Worth with a community partner from local governments or industry to develop innovative solutions to pressing local issues. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Transportation staff submitted the following three problem statements: Municipal Broadband Deployment Related to the Enhancement of Roadway and Residential Connectivity, Development of an Integrated Network Design and Demand Estimation of Advanced Air Mobility, Evaluating the Change to an Electric Aircraft Fleets, Developing Strategies, Benchmarking and Modeling the Market for Electric Aircraft Costs. NCTCOG has partnered with the University of Texas at Arlington to address these problem statements. The program will begin in the 2024 Spring semester and will start with introductions of the community partner and student teams, along with the development of a baseline understanding of the problems and a path forward towards solutions. Then, students move into a four-week sprint of prototyping and development, with a final close out of project outcomes and presentations. Each problem statement cost \$6,000, for a total not to exceed \$18,000. Staff requested a recommendation for RTC approval of \$18,000 in RTC Local funds to participate in this program.

A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council approval of Items 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 on the Consent Agenda. Daniel Vedral (M); Mark Nelson (S). The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Additional Professional Services for the Cotton Belt Trail:** Kevin Kokes requested a recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC's) approval of funds for additional design services associated with the Cotton Belt Trail. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Silver Line rail project is coordinating a parallel regionally significant Cotton Belt Regional Veloweb Trail that provides pedestrian and bicycle access to the rail stations in seven cities across three counties. The Trail corridor has been in the Mobility plan for the past three decades, originally in the Mobility 2010 in the early 1990's which led to RTC's approved funding in 2018 for engineering design of the entire trail corridor (\$8.2 million) and construction of several "critical" trail sections. In 2020, RTC approved additional funding for design (increased total to \$14.9 million), and a notice to proceed was issued by DART for the trail design services. In 2023, phase 1 construction of 5 critical bridges was initiated, and also the United States Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure With Sustainability and Equity (USDOT RAISE) Grant Award of \$25 million, and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Transportation Alternatives Award of \$25 million were received for construction of the phase 2 portion of the Trail. Kevin provided an overview of a map of the phase 2 construction area anticipated to begin by the fall 2024 and identified the constraints that have impacted the final design plans. An overview of the proposed funding request was contained in Electronic Item 3

A motion was made to recommend and concur with Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of up to \$4 million of federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds with 800,000 Regional Transportation Development Credits for additional professional services, and administratively amend the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), along with other planning/administrative documents to incorporate these changes. Mark Nelson (M); Kelly Porter (S). The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Safety Program Implementation of Innovative Ideas to Reduce Youth Fatalities Due to Motor Vehicle Crashes:** Natalie Bettger requested a recommendation for the Regional Transportation Council (RTC's) approval of an additional \$4 million in Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) funds for the implementation of innovative ideas that are generated through a Call for Partners, to reduce youth fatalities due to motor vehicle crashes. Natalie briefly highlighted that \$50 million was previously approved for the RTC Safety Program for the Dallas-Fort Worth Region for Fiscal Year 2024-2026. In learning more about safety statistics, 12 percent of Licensed Drivers under 25 and account for 19 percent of fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in Texas. Due to the disproportionate of fatalities, innovative ideas for the Call for Partners include colleges, universities and school districts, mental health experts, law enforcement, driver education curriculum developers, social media, and the gaming industry. Additional information regarding this item was provided in Electronic Item 4.

A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval to allocate \$4 million in Regional Toll Revenue to focus on ways to reduce the youth fatality rate associated with motor vehicle crashes in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region, to amend the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and update any administrative and/or planning documents as needed to incorporate the project funding. Melissa Baker (M); Tanya Brooks (S). The motion passed unanimously.

5. **Director of Transportation Report on Selected Items:** Michael Morris highlighted the approval of the reallocation of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Executive Board item on Advertising and Introduction of Risk Analysis. Michael mentioned

that he doesn't have any next steps for the status of Texas Department of Transportation Rule Making for Metropolitan Planning Organization-Selected Funding. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 5.1. He hopes NCTCOG will know in January the position of the Commission on whether they will adjust, proceed, modify, and/or correct the particular items that were submitted. Michael noted the meeting with the local elected officials and Texas Department of Transportation Commissioners was well attended and continues to work critical items. He presented Electronic Item 5.2 for more detailed information. Michael announced an update on the Transportation Development Credits and the Executive Board approved the Regional Transportation Council RTC Local funds of \$60 million were approved last month. Michael mentioned the approval of the Transportation Authority 2.0 along with gaining some momentum as part of that particular initiative. Lastly, Michael concluded with the approval of the Texas Corridor ID from Fort Worth to Houston, and the Amtrak from Fort Worth to Atlanta, Georgia, was funded, and we have record of High-Speed Rail from Fort Worth to Houston sitting at the Federal Railroad Administration.

6. **Texas Department of Transportation State Infrastructure Bank Loan Opportunities:** Dallas Teston, with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) briefed the Committee on the availability of State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loan opportunities available to local governments. The SIB is a low-cost Transportation borrowing program, a federal revolving loan fund managed by TxDOT for roadway projects, such as a local contribution or local match, utility relocation, or even local road projects. Dallas highlighted some changes made to the interest rate. The rate set at the time of application is a fixed rate through the life of the loan, Municipal Market Data index (MMD), 2 main factors are credit rating and term of the loan. Eligible under federal highway programs, must be functionally classified above a rural minor collector, must be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), on or off-system roadways can be eligible, generally, projects eligible under Title 23, and with local match Transportation Alternative. Dallas outlined the SIB program requirements, eligibility, and application process as presented in Electronic Item 6.
7. **End of Ozone Season Recap:** Chris Klaus provided a summary of the 2023 ozone season activity along with other air quality updates for the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) region. The ozone season began on March 1 and concluded November 30. Preliminary ozone season monitor value = 81 parts per billion (ppb). The region continues to work towards compliance for both the 2008 and 2015 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Chris highlighted that the regions ozone design value has been trending higher, going in the wrong direction. He presented the two ozone standards that region currently is in noncompliance: the 2008 Standard  $\leq$  75 ppb (Severe by 2027 based on 2024-2026 monitor data) and the 2015 Standard  $\leq$  70 ppb (Moderate by 2024 based on 2021-2023 monitor data). Per EPA rules, both standards currently apply until the region can ultimately reach attainment to a standard. Specifically for the 2008 standard, if attainment is not reached by 2027, the region would then be subject to Section 185 fees applied to regional industry operations. Specifically for the 2015 standard, the Governor submitted voluntary reclassification to EPA on October 12, 2023, and the Texas Commission and Environmental Quality (TCEQ) indicated assistance need for emission reduction strategies. Chris highlighted a disconnect between photochemical air modeling against observed emissions recorded at each monitor. For example, the monitor at Pilot Point has the regions highest 2023 ozone design value at 81 ppb, as compared to 71 ppb that the State Air Quality Model is suggesting in 2023. Air Quality 2.0 is a renewed path forward focusing on several areas, with diesel engines being the largest contribution to NOx in the region. More information provided in Electronic Item 7.

8. **Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation Program:** Natalie Bettger provided an overview of the grant and possible project opportunities for a regional application for the 2023-2024 Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovative (ATTAIN) Program. This is a continuation of Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) program that has been around for several years with funding of \$120 million (\$60 million for Fiscal Year 2023 and \$60 million for Fiscal Year 2024); with a rural set-aside of 20 percent with 5 to 10 awards with a maximum of up to \$12 million apiece with a 20 percent local match required. A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was issued on November 24, 2023, with applications due on February 02 ,2024. Natalie highlighted the technologies that are eligible to improve emergency evacuation and responses, integrated corridor management systems, electronic pricing, toll collection, and payment systems, technology for High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) toll lanes, congestion pricing, integration of transportation service payment systems, advanced mobility access, like shared-use mobility applications and systems to support services for elderly and disabled individuals, retrofitting dedicated short-range communications (DSRC) as part of pilot programs to cellular vehicle-to-everything (C-V2X) technology, integration of Intelligent Transportation System with Smart Grid or other charging systems. There are three areas of focus in the grant application when reviewed. She mentioned some of ATTAIN's program goals are to reduce fatalities, injuries, traffic delays, emissions, optimize multimodal system performance, improve access to transportation alternative, and integration of payment systems. Administration's priorities are safety, climate change and sustainability, equity, workforce development, job quality, wealth creation and United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) focus areas that she briefly highlighted such as state of good repair, integration of intelligent transportation system with Smart Grid, to name a few. Natalie mentioned to prepare for the funding opportunity that the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) staff did release a request for Partners on November 6, 2023, with applications that were due on December 8, 2023. The timeline for ATTAIN program will request action at the January 11, 2024, Regional Transportation Council meeting, the January 25, 2024, Executive Board meeting, and the January 26, 2024, Surface Transportation Technology Committee meeting. NCTCOG letters of support requests were due January 22, 2024, to Nicholas Allen at [nallen@nctcoq.org](mailto:nallen@nctcoq.org). The link to the NOFO that details the grant program for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, as well as the application requirements are located at: [grants.gov/search-results-detail/351055](https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/351055).

9. **Fast Facts:** The following fast facts were provided by NCTCOG staff:

Aliyah Shaikh highlighted that the deadline for submittals for the May 2024 Transportation Improvement Program Modification Cycle was December 8, 2023.

Dylan Niles noted that the Transportation Development Credit (TDC) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023 was submitted to Texas Department of Transportation on November 29, 2023, fulfilling our State requirement with approximately 49.5 million TDCs were awarded with approximately 675 million remaining for future programing. More detailed information was provided in Electronic Item 9.1.

Daniel Snyder provided an update on the Transportation Alternatives Call for Projects Obligations Notice was authorized under Section 1122 of MAP – 21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century and reauthorized under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to provide funding for programs and projects. Currently, there is a carry-over balance of

approximately \$40 million in the region that needs to be obligated to avoid a lapse. Electronic Item 9.2 provided additional details.

Connor Sadro provided an update on Broadband as a Transportation Service. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allocated \$3.3 billion to the state of Texas for Broadband Infrastructure, additionally the State with a passing proposition eight is allowed to create a \$1.5 billion Broadband Infrastructure fund. North Central Texas Council of Governments Municipal Broadband Investment Roundtable Agenda Public Sector Stakeholders met to strategically guide on how to challenge the State for a share of the funding. Additional details in Electronic Item 9.3.

Jesse Brown reported on the Toll Managed Lane policy, in particular the High Occupancy Vehicle subsidy amount that Regional Transportation Council is responsible for, \$8.9 million, as of September 2023. More details provided in the High Occupancy Vehicle Subsidy Report in Electronic Item 9.4.

Trey Pope briefed the Committee on a particular project, the Hirschbach Motor Lines, in the Local Clean Air Project Spotlight provided in Electronic Item 9.5. Awarded one all-electric class 8-yard terminal tractor that replaced a one class 8 diesel short haul single unit tractor for the Dallas area, implemented in August of 2023. The awarded amount of \$179,778 with a total cost of \$415,388 funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Maggie Quinn highlighted for the Air Quality Funding Opportunities for Vehicles, a current available grant opportunity, Texas Commission of Environmental Quality, Texas Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Program All-Electric Grant Program, a replacement or repower of eligible heavy-duty diesel vehicles or equipment or installation of refueling infrastructure. The program is open until the end of August of 2025 with currently 600 million available in Dallas-Fort Worth. It is a first-come, first-serve with up to 100% of the incremental cost of the project for government entities, and up to 75% for nongovernmental entities. The Texas Hydrogen Infrastructure, Vehicle, and Equipment Grant Program, a replacement or repower of heavy-duty vehicles and equipment with hydrogen models or installation of refueling infrastructure with the deadline to apply is February 27, 2024. More details provided at [www.nctcog.org/aqfunding](http://www.nctcog.org/aqfunding). Maggie mentioned a few upcoming events, the Drafting Fuels Webinar, January 8, 2024, via zoom. The Regional Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Working Group EVSE Expo event was hosted, Wednesday, January 17, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, in the Transportation Council Room. More information, including registration for the upcoming Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities events available at: <https://www.dfwcleancities.org/events>.

Jackie Castillo announced the December Online Input Opportunity Notice with comment period ending on January 9, 2024, details provided in Electronic Item 9.6. Jackie also mentioned a public meeting was held on October 9, 2023, with details provided in the October Public Meeting Minutes provided in Electronic Item 9.7.

Taylor Benjamin noted that the Public Comments Report, which contained general public comments received from September 20, 2023, through October 19, 2023, was provided in Electronic Item 9.8.

Toni Stehling announced the 2024 Surface Transportation Technical Committee and Regional Transportation Council Meeting schedules provided in Electronic Item 9.9.

Written Progress Reports were provided in Electronic Item 9.10.

10. **Other Business (Old or 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 February 23, 2024.

Meeting adjourned at 3:01 PM.