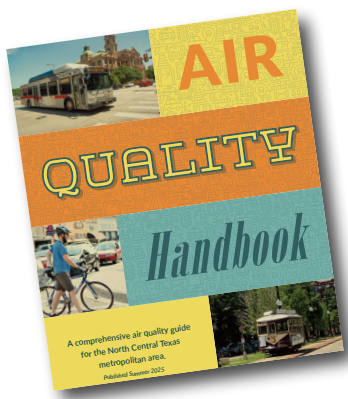


MOBILITY MATTERS

Air Quality Handbook Provides Accessible Resource for North Texans

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has published the latest edition of the Air Quality Handbook, offering a comprehensive overview of air quality issues and ongoing regional initiatives in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Developed in partnership with federal, state and local stakeholders, the handbook is a key resource for understanding North Texas' air quality challenges and planning opportunities, particularly as 10 counties in the region remain in nonattainment for ozone pollution.



More AIR QUALITY on back page



Mobility 2050 is the North Central Texas Council of Governments' long-range transportation plan, guiding how we'll improve and expand our multimodal transportation network through the year 2050. Covering 12 counties, the plan outlines strategies to enhance access to jobs, education, healthcare and healthy food, while also improving safety and air quality. Shaped by public input, Mobility 2050 supports policies and projects that promote livable, connected communities. It's a roadmap for a more efficient, inclusive and sustainable transportation future.

Regional Transportation Council Keeps Heartland Flyer Moving Full Speed Ahead

Amtrak's Heartland Flyer will keep chugging along for another year – and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is taking steps to keep it moving. In July, the RTC approved \$3.5 million in emergency funding to sustain the popular passenger train, which connects Fort Worth and Oklahoma City. The Texas Transportation Commission ratified the use of regional funds after the Texas Legislature failed to match Oklahoma's contribution. Without the stopgap funding, the 206-mile route might have been forced to shut down.

The temporary fix allowed the Heartland Flyer to continue for another year, providing additional time for its future to be shored up. The timing is especially important with the 2026 FIFA World Cup approaching, when the line is expected to carry thousands of visitors across North Texas. To help drive ridership growth, the RTC will soon launch an awareness campaign aimed at promoting the train and encouraging more North Texans to use it to explore Oklahoma City, which over the past few years has undergone a citywide transformation. Staff members from the North Central Texas Council of Governments communications team traveled to Oklahoma City recently to film videos and develop other promotional materials highlighting the city's many attractions, from world-class museums to award-winning restaurants to new family friendly parks.

Launched in 1999, the Heartland Flyer has become both a tourism draw and an economic engine. Last year, the rail line served more than 80,000 passengers, generating \$2.2 million in ticket sales,

according to Amtrak. Travelers admire its comfortable seats, panoramic views on the second level and charming café car, which serves a variety of food and beverages. The train has also become a reliable option for football fans traveling to and from North Texas for the Texas-OU matchups at the Cotton Bowl each October.

Although the Heartland Flyer's future remains uncertain, the RTC is dedicated to helping it stay right on track.

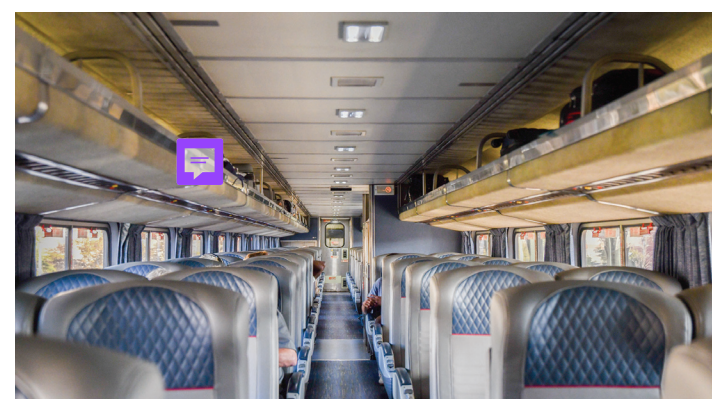
Heartland Flyer at a glance

Length: 206 miles

Ridership (FY 2024) 80,000

Stations: 7 – Fort Worth; Gainesville; Ardmore, Oklahoma; Pauls Valley, Oklahoma; Purcell, Oklahoma; Norman, Oklahoma; Oklahoma City

Book a trip: www.amtrak.com/heartland-flyer-train



A Message From Michael Morris, P.E.

Director of Transportation

Transit 2.0 Presents Opportunities for Collaborative Approach to Public Transportation



We have long recognized in the world of transportation planning that roads will only carry a region so far. The roadway

network is the cornerstone of Dallas-Fort Worth's transportation system, recognized by Mobility 2050, the \$217 billion long-range plan for the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth area. Approved in June 2025 by the Regional Transportation Council, Mobility 2050 projects \$97.5 billion will be spent on the region's roadway system over the next 25 years.

Our roadway system performs very well for a region our size. Despite having the nation's fourth-largest population, North Texas consistently ranks significantly better when it comes to congestion. According to the TomTom Traffic Index, the metropolitan area falls outside the top 50 in the nation for time spent in traffic. Still, with such an influx of people moving to North Texas, traffic congestion will continue costing us more – both in terms of real dollars and time.

We are a fast-growing region of 8.6 million people expected to add some 4 million additional residents by 2050. As we imagine how our transportation system must mature over the next 25 years to accommodate this rapid expansion, a multimodal approach that includes a strong, flexible public transportation system is undoubtedly part of the equation. The question is, what will it look like?

The Dallas-Fort Worth area is served by three existing public transportation providers, an approach that has worked well for decades. Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) and Fort Worth's Trinity Metro have all built strong public transportation networks that have mixed tradition (bus and rail) with the innovation offered by on-demand micro-transit.

Since DART and Trinity Metro were created in the early 1980s, the Dallas-Fort Worth area has added over 5 million residents. Their location has a growing share outside the current authority boundaries.

However, the footprint of each

of these transit authorities has not grown accordingly.

Thirteen cities pay a one-cent sales tax to belong to DART. The cities of Denton, Highland Village and Lewisville pay a half-cent sales tax to support DCTA, which was created in the early 2000s. Trinity Metro has two member cities – Fort Worth and Blue Mound – that pay a half-cent sales tax. Grapevine pays three-eighths of a cent to support TEXRail commuter rail service. North Richland Hills pays an equivalent share. Much of the future population surge is expected to occur outside existing transit authority service areas.

The region's 10 fastest-growing cities by percentage in 2024 had one thing in common: They were not members of a transit authority. The top two grew at a staggering clip. Lavon expanded by approximately 40%, while Celina's population surged 35%.

Tomorrow's transit system should focus on an expanded footprint that allows cities like Lavon and Celina to join an authority, while allowing communities the flexibility to offer the service that best meets their residents' needs. Rail service won't work in every

corridor. While bus service might be a good supplement in some communities, buses are not the answer everywhere, either. In areas like Celina and Lavon, on-demand micro-transit, allowing residents to conveniently schedule rides to medical appointments or even work, may be best.

The region asked private-sector consultants to help transportation planners develop a next-generation transit system for the region through the initiation of Regional Transit 2.0. Final reports prepared as part of the project are available at www.nctcog.org/transit2.0.

With the reports complete, we are now concentrating on turning the vision into reality. It is likely that there will be a need for the Texas Legislature to assist with policy changes. Most proposals to enhance revenue for transit and rail require legislative action. Additionally, future legislation could authorize the creation of additional transit areas to provide service in jurisdictions unable to dedicate the required sales tax to existing authorities. But first, there is work to be done at home.

More MORRIS on back page



Regional Transportation Council

From Stage to City Hall: Jill Jester Brings Collaboration to Denton's Future

Member Profile

Jill Jester, Denton City Councilmember

For Jill Jester, no two days ever look the same – and that's just the way she likes it.

Between her career as an attorney, her role as a Denton City Councilmember and her community involvement, she's constantly in motion. "My day might include client meetings, court hearings, phone calls with citizens," she says. "Every day is different."

The proud Denton native recently embarked on a new journey: chairing the Regional Transportation Council Transit Vision Subcommittee, which comprises 19 regional leaders from 12 counties who evaluate long-term public transportation proposals impacting funding through 2050.

"The Transit 2.0 report has so many recommendations that the subcommittee has broken the tasks into two: looking at the big picture and creating a regional transportation plan we all want," she says. "And then looking at the recommendations that can garner wide support to begin implementation sooner than later. It is a fascinating prospect."

Before Jester began her career in public service and law, the Denton native spent years in the world of theater, the arts and live performance – experience that prepared her more than she ever expected for politics.

"Studying and performing sketch and improvisational comedy helped my confidence and taught me how to read a room," she says.

"Thinking on your feet is helpful in politics and in the courtroom."

Her love of theater began in London, where she tagged along with some friends after she graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a B.A. in history and political science.

"I worked at a toy store in Picadilly Circus and tried to see and experience all I could there," she said.

Her newfound passion for theater eventually led her back to Texas, where she enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin. A move to Chicago followed. There, she studied at the Second City Conservatory, rubbing shoulders with future household names.

"I was lucky to be in the comedy

scene with people such as Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Chris Farley, Ike Barinholtz and others," she says. Jester's interests then gravitated toward behind-the-scenes, in which she did freelance production work for Universal and Disney, among other high-profile companies.

Her time in Chicago deepened her appreciation for the arts and the people who work in that industry. Whether performing or producing, she found herself drawn to roles that put human connection at the center.

"Studying, directing and acting in theater confirmed what I already thought – life is about people," Jester said. "Luckily, I have always loved people, meeting people and learning about their stories."

DART Silver Line Provides New Way to Travel Through Region

The sleek new silver and yellow train pulled away from the station in downtown Carrollton just before 8:30 a.m., headed for Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Some of the passengers who had boarded Dallas Area Rapid Transit's Silver Line regional rail were bound for the airport, luggage in tow. An additional rail option to one of the world's busiest airports is a significant step forward to a more connected North Texas.

But the newly minted Silver Line offers more than airport service: It carves a 26-mile path through North Texas, serving 10 stations in seven cities. Costing an estimated \$2.1 billion, the Silver Line provides access to housing, education, employment and recreation on the eastern side of the region. The line connects the cities of Dallas, Plano, Richardson, Addison, Carrollton, Coppell and Grapevine with DFW Airport and myriad points of interest along the way.

The opening of the Silver Line provides a new way for business and leisure travelers living in many of the northern suburbs to reach DFW Airport. It is the third rail line that brings flyers and employees alike directly to the airport, joining Trinity Metro's TEXRail, which connects with the Silver Line at Terminal B, and DART's Orange Line light rail service at Terminal A.

But passengers can ride the Silver Line to many other destinations closer to home.

Beginning from the eastern terminus, they can board at Shiloh Road Station and take a short ride to 12th Street Station, where they can shop in downtown Plano, or continue to the CityLine/Bush Station, home to large employers such as State Farm and Raytheon, as well as connections to DART's light rail system.

For those who continue the trip on the Silver Line, the University of Texas at Dallas is next, followed by Knoll Trail, Addison, downtown Carrollton, Cypress Waters and finally, two stops at DFW Airport. Some of the station areas – Addison and downtown Carrollton among them – have benefited from years of development. Housing is adjacent to many stations along the way, while plenty of opportunities for future development exist in the corridor.

Built by Salt Lake City, Utah-based railroad manufacturer Stadler U.S., the Silver Line's new fleet of state-of-the-art electric diesel multiple units is powered by engines that meet the strict EPA air quality standards. When they board, passengers can enjoy clean, comfortable cars with a combination of fixed, flip-up and multidirectional seating. Once settled into their seats, passengers can make the trip as productive or relaxing as they choose.

To celebrate the introduction of the Silver Line, DART offered free rides across its network on Opening Day and complimentary rides on the Silver Line for the first two weeks of service. There are several ways to purchase tickets for the Silver Line, including the GoPass app, station kiosks and system passes.

The Silver Line offers residents in seven North Texas cities a new

way to stay connected to the region. With new stations, cutting edge vehicles and seamless transfers to other rail lines throughout the region, the Silver Line is poised to transform the way residents travel for work, school and entertainment throughout one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. As the train made its way to the end of the line, more people climbed aboard to enjoy the smooth, stress-free ride. For many, it's a trip they are not used to making. Before the new regional rail service was introduced, residents in many corners of the area had no choice but to drive. The Silver Line gives them a choice. They can get behind the wheel and deal with the stress of driving (and parking) in one of the largest regions in the country. Or they can relax in a modern train car. Maybe they'll check their email. Perhaps they'll take out a book. Or sit back in their comfortable seat and enjoy knowing someone else is doing the driving.

For more information, visit DART.org.

Silver Line Details:

Cost: \$2.1 billion

Stations: 10

Length: 26 miles

Western Terminus: DFW Airport Terminal B

Eastern Terminus: Shiloh Road Station, Plano



Your Travel Habits Could Help Shape the Future of North Texas Transportation

Whether you travel by car or train, bus or bike, every trip you take tells part of the story of how North Texans get around.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in conjunction with the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), is inviting you to share your transit stories firsthand through a series of travel surveys designed to shape the future of transportation in the Dallas–Fort Worth region.

These studies aim to provide a better understanding of how, when and why people travel, so future transportation projects can be designed to meet real community needs.

Residents are invited to take part in the Texas Travel Survey through an easy-to-use mobile app or online form that tracks everyday travel patterns. Every response helps planners make smarter decisions about roads, transit and other mobility improvements.

Learn more or sign up at NCTCOG.org/householdsurvey.

Employers can also join in by participating in the Workplace Travel Survey, which focuses on commuting habits and vehicle activity at business sites. This employer-based effort helps build a clearer picture of regional traffic trends and workday travel. Details can be found [here](#).

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AIR QUALITY (continued from Page 1)

The latest edition of the handbook clearly explains air quality terminology, the implications of nonattainment status and how these factors influence transportation planning and public health in North Texas. It also outlines current strategies and programs being implemented

to improve air quality, and identifies opportunities for engagement by individuals, businesses and local governments.

Notable features of the publication include its user-friendly format, a dedicated

activity booklet to enhance engagement and multilingual availability. The handbook is available online in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Professionals, community leaders and residents throughout the region are encouraged to review

the handbook to better understand their role in supporting cleaner air.

The electronic version of the handbook is available at [NCTCOG.org/Trans/Quality/Air](https://www.nctcog.org/Trans/Quality/Air).



MORRIS (continued from Page 2)

The RTC transit vision subcommittee began meeting this summer and will work together to identify strategies to implement ideas that came out of the study.

One of the tasks handled as part of Transit 2.0 was development of strategies to increase transit authority membership.

If Lavon, Celina or any of the region's other growth hotspots

offered alternatives to driving, it would be easier to get to work, school or daycare during the day and to our region's terrific restaurants and entertainment venues at night. We realize not everyone will want or be able to take the train. But public transportation should be available to those who would prefer it.

Beyond a larger transit footprint, there are opportunities for

collaboration between the existing transit authorities, to seek increased infill development and to review fare-collection strategies. Building the transit system best suited for the next quarter-century is a significant task that will require close coordination across multiple transportation providers.

With its initial investment in Transit 2.0 and its history of

embracing big ideas, the Regional Transportation Council stands ready to begin implementation of this grand transit vision. Together with our public transportation providers, we can usher in the kind of generational change that will make Regional Transit 2.0 a blueprint for regions across the nation. After all ... mobility matters.

JESTER (continued from Page 2)

After returning to Denton to join her father, the late Tom Jester, in his law practice, Jill Jester found her calling not only in law but also in civic leadership. Inspired by her father's own service as mayor and as a member of the Denton City Council, she stepped into local government with a mission to build collaboration and reduce friction, she said. Since earning her Place 6 seat on the City Council in 2024, Jill has embraced the steep learning curve with enthusiasm.

"The way I was raised, I knew for democracy to work, we need

participants," she said. "I was always interested in government and parliamentary procedure in high school and college and noticed I was regularly asked to chair the groups I volunteered with. I have chaired the TWU Board of Regents, the Denton Chamber of Commerce, the City of Denton's Economic Development Partnership Board and the Chief of Police Advisory Board. I found I had a knack for working with others and leading, and thought we needed more collaboration and less friction in our local government."

She's especially proud of the time she has spent serving on the Denton City Council.

"As divided as many are in politics, I am proud of finding middle ground our council has agreed on and by being respectful to all, swaying the opinions of those on both sides of the aisle," she said.

Her commitment to chairing the Transit Vision Subcommittee reflects the same people-first mindset that guided her career in the arts.

"A regional transportation solution to the continued rise in population in our North Texas area must be of the upmost importance for economic growth to sustain us," she said. "The challenges are daunting, and yet we live in an innovative time regarding transportation. Utilizing digital and analytical projects such as GIS mapping, intelligent traffic management simulations, autonomous vehicles, drones and performance analysis are transforming transportation as we speak. I love the opportunity to work on this project and expand my horizons."

Imagery provided by NCTCOG, the City of Arlington, Irving ISD and Getty Images.



For a list of upcoming Transportation Department events, visit nctcog.org/publicinput/#events

mobilitymatters

Semiannual Newsletter of the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area

This publication can be made available in alternate formats upon request

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