



September 2026

TxDOT Funding Transfer Clears Way for Heartland Flyer to Continue



Tre Heartland Flyer will continue rolling between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City after a TxDOT funding transfer.

The Heartland Flyer will remain on the tracks following a \$4.2 million funding transfer by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to cover operations for the next year.

The decision, which Amtrak announced in August, allows the popular passenger train between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City to continue while the Texas Legislature works on a long-term solution. The Legislature reconvenes in January, when it will deliberate a two-year state budget.

Last year, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approved a \$3.5 million emergency expenditure to keep the train moving after funding for the service was left out of the final state budget. The route has been growing in popularity, setting a ridership record of 80,767 in Fiscal Year 2025, according to Amtrak.

Last year, a contingent of staff members from the NCTCOG Transportation Department rode the train from Fort Worth to Oklahoma City, producing a series of videos and other content to illustrate the value of the Heartland Flyer, which has provided daily service since 1999. The video of the trip to Oklahoma City is available at [YouTube.com/nctcogtrans](https://www.youtube.com/nctcogtrans).

Amtrak leaders thanked Texas officials for providing the funding necessary to keep the train moving.

“Leadership by Gov. Greg Abbott and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Executive Director Marc Williams will keep this important service operating and connecting to local transit and the Amtrak National Network in Fort Worth,” Amtrak Executive Vice President Jennifer Mitchell said in a press release. “We will work with TxDOT, our partners in Oklahoma and the rest of the region to continue to provide the Heartland Flyer service.”

\$15M Approved for Nolan River Road Expansion Project to Relieve Chisholm Trail Parkway Traffic Woes



The RTC approved \$15 million for the expansion of Nolan River Road at U.S. 67 in Cleburne to accommodate the area's growth, which is driven in part by Chisholm Trail Parkway.

A \$15 million project to ease congestion on Nolan River Road at U.S. 67 in Cleburne is moving forward after approval of a joint funding partnership by the Regional Transportation Council.

The project addresses critical congestion where southbound afternoon traffic on the Chisholm Trail Parkway reaches 1,752 vehicles per hour – virtually hitting the 1,800-vehicle-per-hour threshold for single-lane roadways. The heavy demand regularly causes traffic bound for U.S. 67 to back up into upstream lanes.

With the Chisholm Trail Parkway scheduled to finish its own widening project in 2028, an effort to prevent gridlock from intensifying became imperative.

Nolan River Road and its existing two-lane bridge will be reconstructed, expanding from two to four lanes. The project will also add dedicated turn lanes and upgraded traffic signals.

The approved plan uses \$12 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement and Surface Transportation Block Grant funds awarded by the RTC, with TxDOT providing a \$3 million state match. TxDOT has already spent \$1.2 million to

advance engineering work and utility relocations. Construction is expected to begin next summer.

Topic of the Month

AN EYE ON: Electric Vehicles



For years, electric vehicles were somewhat of a rarity on North Texas roads. Today, they are becoming an increasingly familiar part of the region's transportation landscape.

The latest data from NCTCOG's Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition shows just how quickly that transformation is occurring.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region ended 2025 with 166,349 registered electric vehicles, according to data compiled by DFW Clean Cities. That's up from 120,798 at the end of 2024 - an increase of 45,551 EVs, or 38%, in just one year.

The growth is part of a broader statewide trend. Texas had 451,175 registered EVs at the end of 2025, compared with 331,292 a year earlier, a 36% increase. Today, there are more than 500,000 on Texas roads.

For September's Topic of the Month, we're taking a closer look at the growing role electric vehicles are playing in the region's transportation future. The timing also coincides with National Drive Electric Month, a nationwide celebration designed to raise awareness about electric vehicles and give people an opportunity to learn more about technology.

As EV ownership continues to grow across North Texas, NCTCOG is helping support the transition through initiatives ranging from public outreach and special events to investments in the charging infrastructure drivers need to travel with confidence. Read more about the Topic of the Month [here](#).

NCTCOG Honored for Supporting Employees Who Serve



Lt. Chris Nelson, a senior planner in NCTCOG's Transportation Department, who helps communities across North Texas plan for safer roads and transportation systems, recently returned to active duty in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. NCTCOG was recently recognized for the support it gives active-duty military personnel.

One employee's dedication to both public service and military service recently led to special recognition for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Lt. Chris Nelson, a senior planner in NCTCOG's Transportation Department, helps communities across North Texas plan for safer roads and transportation systems. Outside of his role at NCTCOG, he serves in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and recently returned to active duty.

In recognition of the support he has received from his workplace, Nelson nominated NCTCOG and two employees through the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a U.S. Department of Defense program that recognizes employers who go above and beyond in supporting employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

That nomination resulted in three significant honors for NCTCOG. The organization received the Above and Beyond Award, while Transportation Department supervisor Kevin Kokes and Chief Human Resource Officer Carmen Morones were each presented with the Patriot Award for their outstanding support of employees balancing civilian careers with military service.

As part of the recognition, NCTCOG also signed ESGR's Statement of Support, reaffirming the organization's commitment to providing a supportive workplace for employees who serve in the military. Congratulations to Lt. Nelson, Kokes and Morones on this well-deserved recognition, and thank you to all NCTCOG employees - past and present - who have served our country.

RTC, Executive Board Approve Settlement in Governance Dispute

The Regional Transportation Council approved a settlement agreement on Aug. 13 resolving litigation involving the North Central Texas Council of Governments over a governance dispute, clearing the way for both entities to focus on their respective planning responsibilities as the region continues to grow.

In addition to the settlement of *County of Denton, Texas v. Victoria Johnson, In Her Official Capacity, et al.*, the RTC voted to approve a new operating agreement with NCTCOG and a three-party Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement (involving the RTC, NCTCOG and the Texas Department of Transportation), as well as a letter signed by members of the RTC and Executive Board requesting Gov. Greg Abbott's support of the new TxDOT agreement. The NCTCOG Executive Board had approved the settlement agreement earlier in August. The proposed agreement would clarify the roles of the entities by identifying the RTC as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth area and NCTCOG as fiscal agent.

"Today's decision and the vote by the North Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Board are important acknowledgments that we are stronger together," said Mason, who serves as Cedar Hill Mayor in addition to chair of the RTC. "The new Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement brings clarity to the roles and responsibilities of two entities that for more than 50 years have been focused on working harmoniously with their partners across the region, state and nation to prepare for growth. We look forward to a future where we can pursue our shared vision of making North Texas a premier region."

The Metropolitan Planning Organization Agreement will now be sent to TxDOT. Once signed by all three parties, the agreement goes into effect. For more information on the RTC, visit [NCTCOG.org/RTC](https://nctcog.org/RTC).

Trinity Metro Breaks Ground on Key Double-Tracking Project



Trinity Metro has broken ground on an important TRE double-tracking project that will add capacity for both freight and passenger rail.

Trinity Metro has begun a rail improvement project expected to give the Trinity Railway Express flexibility to handle existing and future demand. The transit authority celebrated the beginning of a 2.5-mile double-tracking project during a groundbreaking in August.

When complete, the project will add capacity for freight and passenger rail between Fort Worth Central Station and Trinity Lakes Station. Additionally, enhancements to bridges are expected along what Trinity Metro called one of the busiest single-track segments of the 34-mile TRE, a regional rail line jointly owned and operated by Trinity Metro and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART).

Supported through federal and regional funding, this partnership with the Regional Transportation Council reflects a shared commitment to improving passenger rail service and expanding mobility options across North Texas, Trinity Metro said in a press release. For more on the double-tracking project, click [here](#).

**NCTCOG Invites Public Input on Zero-Emission Vehicles, Transportation Updates
Sept. 14**



NCTCOG invites the public to provide input on zero emissions vehicles, transportation updates and funding initiatives during a hybrid public meeting at noon Monday, Sept. 14.

The meeting will be held at the NCTCOG offices, 616 Six Flags Drive in Arlington. Those unable to attend in person can view the meeting online at PublicInput.com/nctcogSept26. North Texans can also participate by calling 855-925-2801 and entering code 10576. Public comments will be accepted through Tuesday, Oct. 13.

Students Urged to Seek Active Trips to School



Celebrate Walk & Roll to School Day on Oct. 7.

As the new school year gets underway, North Central Texas schools and communities are invited to step, pedal, and roll into action for **Walk & Roll to School Day on Oct. 7**. This is a national event where students, families and community members walk, bicycle, or use another form of active transportation to commute to school together on the same day.

To help schools make the most of the day and encourage more students to participate, NCTCOG is offering a variety of resources and giveaways. School administrators who submit NCTCOG's Walk & Roll to School Day Participation Pledge by September 18 will automatically be entered into drawings for safety-themed giveaways to hand out to students. Students at registered schools submitting a safety pledge will also be entered into a second drawing for a scooter and helmet. NCTCOG also provides support every step of the way with ready-to-use planning and promotional resources.

This annual celebration thrives on broad community support, with active participation encouraged from students, families, educators, public safety partners, city staff and local leaders.

Whether you plan to lead a walking group, coordinate safety support or rally your neighborhood, signing the pledge by Sept. 18 is the first step toward holding exciting events that will help build safer school trips for everyone. For more information and to register, visit NCTCOG.org/walkbikeroll.

North Texas Cycling and Driving Safety Tips



Regardless of the heat, many North Texans are still hitting the road by foot, bike, or car to get to daily destinations like work and school, or to make important connections to transit. This month, Look Out Texans encourages bicyclists and drivers to look out for one another and stay alert while traveling. Responsibility and respect are shared among all modes of transportation, and it's up to all of us to make sure everyone gets home safe.

Tip #13: Be Alert and Position Yourself Safely at Intersections

Approximately 75% of bicycle crashes in North Texas occur at intersections, making these areas especially important for both bicyclists and drivers to navigate with care.

For bicyclists, proper lane positioning and clear communication can significantly improve safety and visibility. As you approach an intersection, scan your surroundings, watch for turning vehicles and signal your intentions whenever possible.

Keep these tips in mind:

- Generally, ride in the rightmost lane in the direction you're traveling and position yourself far enough from the curb (approximately 1.5 feet) to avoid debris, drainage grates and other hazards.
- In some situations, riding in the center of the lane is the safest option for bicyclists, such as when the lane is too narrow to safely share with a vehicle, when preparing for a left turn or when traveling straight through an intersection with multiple turning movements.
- If bicycling directly through an intersection from a lane that allows both through and right-turn movements, position yourself in the center of the lane. This helps discourage drivers turning right from crossing your path and can reduce the risk of a common crash type known as a "right hook."
- If an intersection feels difficult or unsafe to navigate by bicycle, it's OK to dismount and use the crosswalk as a pedestrian. For example, when making a left turn, ride straight through the intersection, stop at the far corner, reposition your bicycle in the new direction, and walk it across the crosswalk when it is safe to do so.

Why It Matters

Whether you're driving, biking, or walking, looking out for one another helps create safer streets for everyone. For more tips on walking, bicycling and driving safely, visit LookOutTexans.org.

Local Motion is a monthly email newsletter from the North Central Texas Council of Governments Transportation Department. For more information about topics, contact Brian Wilson at 817-704-2511 or bwilson@nctcog.org. Visit www.nctcog.org/trans for more information on the department.

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