

Meeting Minutes

Subject	Regional School Coordination Task Force	Date	Tuesday – April 26, 2016
Facilitator	NCTCOG	Time	1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Location	NCTCOG – Regional Forum Room	Recorded by	Kathryn Rush
Attendees	Sam Adamie (Tarrant County Public Health), Orlando Alameda (Dallas ISD), Susan Au (Tarrant County Community Development), Bahman Bahramnejad (Dallas), Nathan Benditz (Irving), Tim Collins (Arlington ISD), Mary Elliott (Fort Worth), Javier Fernandez (Arlington ISD), Aureliano Flores (TxDOT), Curtis Hanan (TxDOT), Kelly Horn (Arlington ISD), Trey Ingram (NCTCOG), Susan Kenney (SGK Planning), Chandra Muruganandham (Fort Worth), Sef Okoth (Dallas), Robyn Root (McKinney), Kathryn Rush (NCTCOG), Javier Salinas (TxDOT), Karla Weaver (NCTCOG).		

Meeting Purpose	The purpose of the Regional School Coordination Task Force is to provide a venue for improved interagency coordination, and discussion of NCTCOG school-related initiatives. This meeting was focused on findings from the regional interviews conducted by NCTCOG staff with cities and Independent School Districts (ISDs), and ways to promote better interagency coordination.
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Discussion Items	
<p>Welcome and introductions were made by NCTCOG staff, including a brief introduction to the Community Schools and Transportation Program, which is funded through a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant the agency received in 2014. The primary goals of the program are to: (1) encourage interagency coordination, (2) advance long-term planning for school siting, (3) improve transportation safety near schools, and (4) promote multimodal transportation options to schools.</p>	
<p>1. Presentation: Findings from Regional Interviews and Preliminary Research</p> <p>NCTCOG staff provided a summary of the findings from interviews conducted with staff from five cities and five school districts, and three consultants that work with school districts in the region. The interviews and findings were related to interagency coordination efforts; school siting; charter and magnet schools; and transportation issues including student busing, traffic congestion, and walking and bicycling to school. The findings from these interviews are intended to provide a baseline for future Task Force discussions and the development of resources as part of the Community Schools and Transportation Program.</p>	
<p>2. Presentation: Improving Interagency Coordination: Ideas and Brainstorming</p> <p>NCTCOG staff provided an overview of the Policy Bundles that were created as part of Mobility 2040 – The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for North Central Texas. The Policy Bundles are a voluntary list of policies and actions that local governments, transportation agencies, and ISDs can choose to adopt in order to potentially receive an offset of a portion of the required local funding match for federally funded transportation projects. There are two school-related policies, both of which are intended to improve coordination between school districts and other levels of government: School Siting Coordination, and Safe Access to Schools. NCTCOG intends to send out an annual survey to local governments and ISDs through which they can provide proof of policy adoption or implementation. NCTCOG staff are in the process of creating templates that local governments and ISDs may use to provide this proof.</p>	

3. Breakout Exercise: What Does This Coordination Look Like?

To guide NCTCOG staff in developing the language for these proof examples, and in developing a sample interagency coordination process that could be used in tandem with the School Siting Coordination Policy, attendees were divided into smaller groups and asked to answer several questions related to local government-school district coordination. These questions included (1) why should we coordinate, (2) who should be involved, (3) how often should we meet, (4) where should we meet, (5) what topics should we meet on, and (6) what actions should be taken before and after the meetings.

Attendees reported that school districts and local governments should coordinate to reduce costs and improve resource efficiency, avoid conflicting policies, clarify agency roles and responsibilities, meet community needs, build trust with the public, and increase safety. Attendees proposed meeting at least two times a year with additional meetings as needed; and having information and an agenda of topics disseminated each month to determine whether a meeting is warranted.

Attendees agreed that who should be at the meetings would depend on the topics being discussed, but may include transportation engineers, land use planners, school principals, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), home owners associations (HOAs), developers, and elected officials. Local government representatives in attendance discussed the challenge of engaging charter schools outside of the permitting process for a new school. Local ISD representatives discussed the challenge of knowing who the appropriate staff are to contact at cities and counties. To ensure the appropriate people are reached at the ISD, they recommended sending information and meeting notices through the ISD Communications Department. NCTCOG staff referred attendees to the Regional Directory (<http://www.nctcog.org/rd/>): an up-to-date database of contact information for all local government and school district staff and elected officials in the region.

The coordination of city and ISD capital improvement plans and projects was a proposed meeting topic. Attendees identified several locations where the meetings could occur, schools, at the location of the problem being discussed, or rotating locations. Before the meeting occur, attendees suggested that there be ad-hoc reporting to allow groups to focus on specific problems. After the meetings it was recommended that any research and supportive documentation be distributed to the relevant parties, perhaps by posting these materials on a webpage.

To conclude the exercise, NCTCOG staff reaffirmed that they would use the attendee's feedback to draft templates for the Policy Bundle proof. These templates would be emailed out to the attendees for review.

4. Presentation: EPA Smart School Siting Tool

NCTCOG introduced another tool to help foster and facilitate interagency coordination: the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Smart School Siting Tool. The EPA is currently conducting pilot case studies of the tool in Ohio, and are planning on conducting additional pilots in the North Texas region. EPA staff are also looking to provide a webinar or training opportunity on the tool that is tailored to the unique challenges faced in the North Texas region and across the state. NCTCOG will be providing additional information on these initiatives at future Task Force meetings.

5. Presentation: Announcements

NCTCOG staff provided an overview of upcoming events and training opportunities in the region related to school facilities and student transportation.

NCTCOG staff indicated that the presentation materials would be posted on the NCTCOG's website (nctcog.org/schools).

Action Item(s)			
	Item	Responsibility	Target Completion Date
1	NCTCOG to post meeting materials on website	NCTCOG	May/June
2	NCTCOG to send out the School Siting Coordination Policy proof template for attendee review	NCTCOG	June

Next Meeting

Date: July 26th, 2016

Time: 1 - 2:30 pm (pre-meeting webinar from 12 - 1 pm)

Location: NCTCOG