

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: INNOVATION

As North Texas' population continues to grow, so do advances in technology that could revolutionize the way we live, work and play. This month, we introduce a new feature examining issues important to transportation and their effect on Dallas-Fort Worth residents. This month, we look at three innovations that have made technological leaps and bounds over the past few years – and may someday be a part of our everyday lives.

High-speed rail

High-speed rail has been a hot topic in Dallas-Fort Worth transportation circles for years. Last March marked a crucial step in turning those conversations into bona fide plans.

That month, NCTCOG announced the project that would link Fort Worth and Dallas by high-speed rail had officially entered the federal environmental analysis phase. The Federal Transit Administration granted a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Class of Action Determination to the project, enabling the environmental assessment to begin.

NCTCOG initiated the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study in 2020 and has been planning for the North Texas line to run along Interstate Highway 30 from Fort Worth to Dallas, with a stop in Arlington, and connect to a planned Dallas-to-Houston high-speed rail project.

Once the corridor is environmentally cleared, it could be opened to future private investment. Combined with the planned high-speed rail line from Dallas to Houston, the North Texas project would lay the groundwork for a system of high-speed trains that could seamlessly connect passengers to other metropolitan areas throughout the state and nation.

Arlington robot delivery

Robots delivering packages may have once seemed like a far-fetched idea – something dreamed up by *The Jetsons*. But it's quickly becoming reality. This past fall, nearly 150 homes in east Arlington and near the University of Texas at Arlington received scheduled at-home grocery deliveries with the help of small electric ground and air robots.

The deliveries, made up of boxes of nonperishable pantry items donated by the Tarrant Area Food Bank, were made to participating households as part of the City of Arlington's innovative Multimodal Delivery pilot program. The deliveries were made by Aerialoop's ALT6-4 VTOL aircraft, a 6-foot-long, battery-powered aircraft that can carry nearly nine pounds, and Clevon's autonomous delivery robot, CLEVON 1, equipped with a cargo bay that users can unlock with a code.

The project, funded by a nearly \$780,000 Department of Energy grant and additional funds from partners, is meant to help test the viability of autonomous delivery of essentials like food on a large scale. The city is partnering with NCTCOG and the Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition, Tarrant Area Food Bank, UTA, Airspace Link, Aerialoop, and Clevon on the program.

A second delivery demonstration to another 150 households is planned for spring 2025. Read more [here](#).

First and Last Mile Transit Connection

Five North Texas cities – Arlington, Dallas, Plano, Frisco and DeSoto – have submitted proposed sites, through the Certification of Emerging and Reliable Transportation Technology Program, for an autonomous micro transit system that would allow riders to hail aerial cable cars on demand. The concept comes from Swyft Cities, a Google-born project that spun off into an independent business aimed at innovating transit. Swyft Cities is working with NCTCOG to identify potential locations for its first installations in the U.S.

Similar to buses, these vehicles would have predetermined stops on the ground. But unlike trains or buses, their on-demand capacity means they would take riders directly to their designated stops. Since they're elevated, they would also bypass, not add to, road traffic, helping alleviate congestion.

Swyft Cities is currently evaluating the proposed sites to determine which of the five cities will be the first to move forward with a pilot system.