



Charting the Future

Your Guide to Transportation Planning in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area

North Central Texas Council of Governments



Photo: City of Fort Worth

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The Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan area is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country, adding about 1 million people every 10 years. This guide is intended to help residents learn more about transportation and air quality so they can actively participate in the planning process.

Dallas-Fort Worth's transportation system is made up of a complementary network of road, rail and bike-pedestrian facilities. It is depended on to move people and goods to ensure the region remains a desirable place to live, work, play and go to school. As the population continues to grow and businesses expand, more people will rely on all these facilities, necessitating improvements. And the continued population boom over time will place an increased emphasis on efficient operations.

NCTCOG works with its transportation partners at all levels of government to ensure traffic congestion is addressed and transportation choices such as passenger rail and bicycle-pedestrian facilities are part of the solution. **Residents and businesses that use the system every day play a significant role in the development of any project or program.** With their help, planners are able to propose improvements that will effectively address congestion, air quality and quality-of-life concerns.



Planning our Transportation Future

The North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Regional Transportation Council are responsible for transportation planning in the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan planning area. This consists of Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise counties. Together, these counties make up one of the nation's largest planning areas. Already fourth in the US in population, with more than 6.7 million residents, D-FW is expected to grow to nearly 10 million people by 2035. The planning area includes land expected to become urbanized in the next 20 years.

The RTC, the metropolitan planning organization's 44-member transportation policymaking body, oversees the metropolitan transportation planning process, developing projects, policies, plans, programs, performance goals and partnerships to address the needs of the Dallas-Fort Worth region. The RTC consists primarily of local elected officials and representatives from the region's transportation providers. It is supported by committees and advisory groups that lend their expertise to the many challenges the MPO faces as it plans for a future with 3 million more residents.

The NCTCOG Transportation Department provides staff support to the RTC, while residents of the region are involved in every step of the planning process, from concept to completion. Major transportation projects involve the use of taxpayer funds, making transparency an essential part of the planning process. RTC meetings are recorded and available online within 24 hours of each session. The agenda is indexed, allowing viewers to easily navigate to a specific point in the meeting. By making the RTC's business meetings available at the click of a mouse or tap of a screen, this service helps open the planning process to more of the public.

Responsibilities of the RTC

- Guide the development of transportation plans and programs
- Allocate federal and state funding
- Select projects
- Ensure transportation services are efficiently coordinated
- Certify state and federal air quality laws are followed

What the MPO Does

As part of their role as the Dallas-Fort Worth area's MPO, the RTC and NCTCOG Transportation Department must prepare a series of planning documents in accordance with federal law. Each is developed after close coordination with partnering agencies and input from the public.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for a multimodal transportation system and services intended to meet the needs of the metropolitan area over 20-25 years. Projects, programs and policies are proposed as recommendations to improve mobility, air quality and quality of life. The MTP focuses on multiple strategies involving roads, passenger rail and enhancements such as bicycle-pedestrian lanes and off-street paths. The MTP is limited to reasonably available financial resources, meaning it may only include projects that can be afforded.

Transportation Improvement Program, a federally and state-mandated list of funded projects with committed funding for construction or implementation within a four-year period. The TIP includes project information and details about funds allocated from federal, state and local sources. Every two to three years, NCTCOG develops a new TIP document with the help of the Texas Department of Transportation, local governments

and transportation agencies. Projects listed in the TIP represent the region's commitment to mobility and air quality.

Congestion Management Process outlines effective management of transportation facilities and systems to maximize the benefit of available resources. A transportation system as large as Dallas-Fort Worth's needs more than just capital improvements to run smoothly. The CMP develops lower-cost operational management and travel-demand-reduction strategies that complement costly infrastructure improvements. It is required for metropolitan areas with populations exceeding 200,000 people.

Unified Planning Work Program, a federally required document prepared every two years by NCTCOG in cooperation with transportation providers and local governments in an effort to coordinate and outline transportation and air quality planning in the region. The UPWP guides planning activities to be conducted by NCTCOG over the course of specified fiscal years. The document includes detailed descriptions of transportation and related air quality planning tasks and a summary of the amount and source of funds needed to conduct them.



Graphic: Dallas Area Rapid Transit

Transportation: More Than Just Cars

Historically a vehicle-centric region, D-FW has seen advances in passenger rail and bicycle-pedestrian facilities, as well as roadways, in recent years. With the Trinity Railway Express providing access between Dallas and Fort Worth, and an ambitious expansion by Dallas Area Rapid Transit and the Denton County Transportation Authority's A-train, the region has developed its rail network into one of the most expansive in the nation. And more is planned.

DART's rail network has grown substantially since debuting in 1996 from just a few miles to 90 miles (with the 2014 opening of the DFW Airport Station), providing access to Dallas and many of its suburbs. Residents of both sides of the region will be able to board passenger trains to the airport. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T) is pursuing rail service along the TEX Rail corridor, which would link Fort Worth to DFW Airport. TEX Rail is the western part of the 62-mile Cotton Belt corridor, which would run from Fort Worth to the Plano/Richardson area.

NCTCOG relies on strong relationships with its partners to help meet the transportation needs of today and the next generation.

Identifying the right tools to improve mobility and the delivery of goods is important as population and congestion increase. Traditional freeways and tollways offer increased capacity through additional lanes and bottleneck improvements. High-occupancy vehicle and tolled, managed TEXpress Lanes impact travel behavior and increase efficiency. Passenger rail is an alternative that reduces the number of vehicles on the roadways. The region also has an expanding system of bicycle-pedestrian facilities, which provide residents an active mobility option that improves air quality.

Improving Reliability Through Safety

While increasing the capacity of the transportation system is crucial to enhanced mobility, safety has an important role to play. The metropolitan planning organization seeks to improve traffic safety throughout the region. The Freeway Incident Management Training Course enhances safety for emergency responders and the driving public by promoting a common and coordinated response to traffic incidents, in turn, helping to reduce secondary crashes and improving the efficiency of the transportation system. Additionally, NCTCOG is working with its partners to alleviate wrong-way driving incidents, which have led to fatalities and serious injuries across the region.

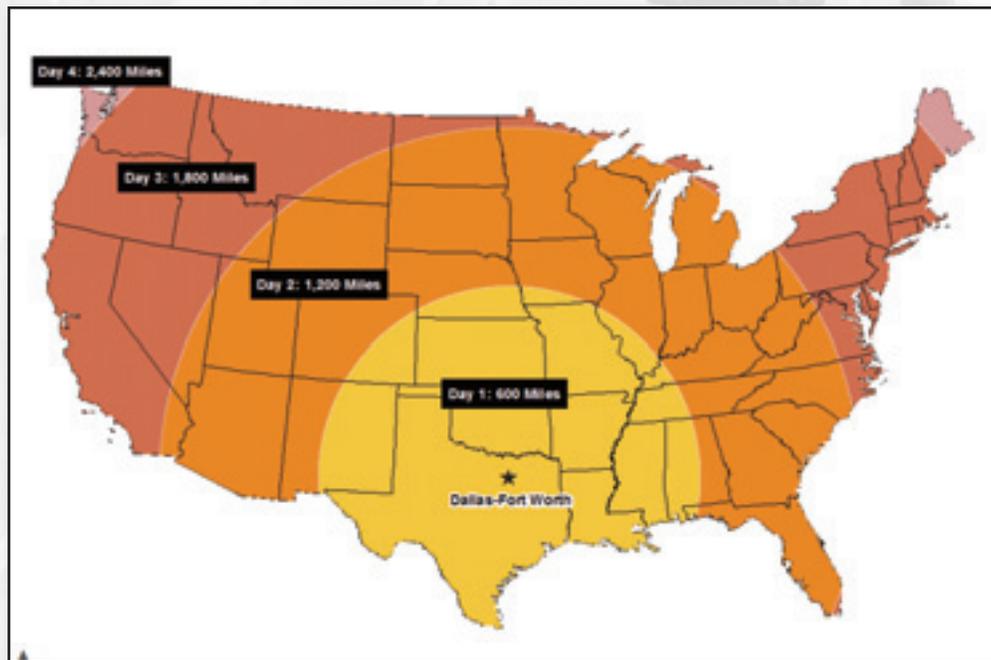
Light rail service to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport will allow more travelers to leave the driving to someone else.

Moving Goods to Market

North Texas is the largest metropolitan area without direct access to a seaport, making the aviation, trucking and railroad industries crucial to goods movement. The region uses a mix of commercial and general aviation to transport cargo through the air. With three Class I Railroads (BNSF Railway, Kansas City Southern and Union Pacific Railroad)

serving the region, rail is also an important economic driver. The convergence of major interstate highways in Dallas-Fort Worth means trucks are also heavily relied on to move goods to their destinations. The map below shows how quickly goods can be transported by truck from Dallas-Fort Worth to other parts of the country.

National Travel Times from NCTCOG Region



Graphic: NCTCOG

D-FW's central location means most of the nation is easily accessible by highway. This map shows estimated travel distances by truck across the contiguous 48 states.



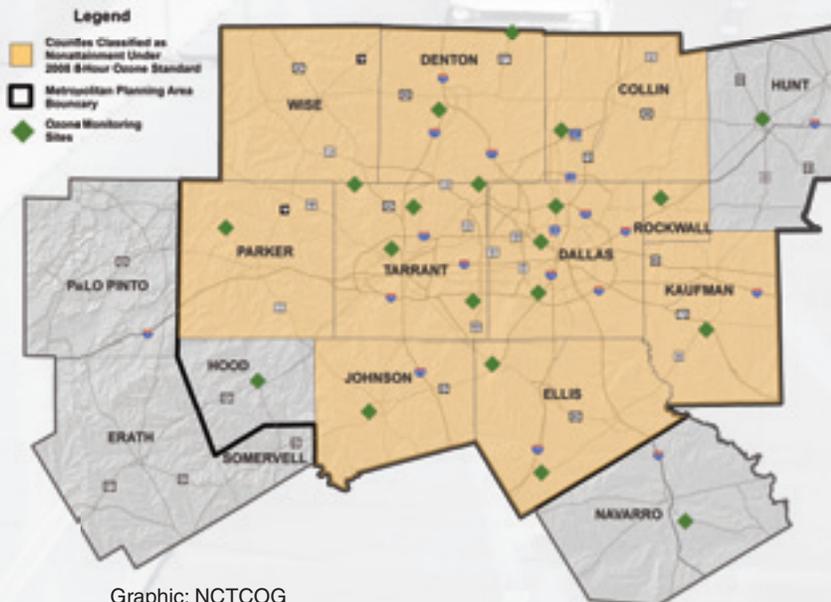
Considering Air Quality

In Dallas-Fort Worth, transportation is about more than moving people and goods. When planning any improvement, NCTCOG and its partners must consider the impact on the environment. Ten counties are in nonattainment for ozone, meaning they do not meet the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for the pollutant. The nonattainment area currently consists of Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise counties. Because Dallas-Fort Worth is an ozone nonattainment area, transportation projects must be completed without hurting the region's air quality.

The Dallas-Fort Worth area is working to improve air quality through a number of programs, including Air North Texas. This partnership challenges businesses, local governments and individuals to help air quality by committing to specific actions they can work into their daily routines. In addition to moving the region closer to attainment of the ozone standard, this could help ensure the continued economic success of the region.

Everyone's help is needed, but cleaning up the air does not always require major sacrifices.

Dallas-Fort Worth 8-Hour Ozone Nonattainment Area



Graphic: NCTCOG

NCTCOG and its partners are committed to making the changes necessary to help the region breathe easy. With the involvement of everyone in the region, Dallas-Fort Worth can reach ozone attainment.

14 Simple Ways to Be Air Aware When Ozone Levels are High

1. Carpool
2. Avoid unnecessary trips
3. Use mass transit
4. Bike or walk
5. Reschedule off-site meetings
6. Reduce idling
7. Drive your most fuel-efficient vehicle
8. Maintain consistent speed
9. Conserve water to conserve electricity
10. Postpone mowing
11. Limit use of recreational vehicles
12. Avoid outdoor burning
13. Conserve electricity
14. Work from home

Learn more at www.airnorthtexas.org

Enhancing Reliability with Innovation

North Texas has relied on toll projects to contribute to improved mobility because of state and federal transportation funding shortfalls. Tolls not only pay for much-needed roads, including ongoing maintenance, but they can also strengthen the transportation system by producing additional revenue to be used on future priorities.

Another capacity-improving option is being used successfully in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. TxDOT and the North Texas Tollway Authority have been granted limited authority to enter into public-private partnerships for the development of new roads and redevelopment of existing ones.

Public agencies maintain ownership of the roads, while the private sector brings additional funding and resources for construction and maintenance. With limited state and federal funds available, this approach is important to mobility because it allows additional revenue to be leveraged to improve the corridors over time.

In addition to toll projects and PPPs, design-build is used to efficiently deliver transportation improvements to North Texas. The DFW Connector, a multi-highway improvement project north of DFW Airport, has employed this approach. Both PPPs and design-build allow one company to be retained for the design and construction phases.

Where needs have been identified and projects are under way, NCTCOG has a resource to help people track progress. NCTCOG's Transportation Improvement Program Information System (TIPINS), provides residents project information, including cost, project type and year of implementation. The program is searchable by location, implementing agency or project type. A map is also available for people who prefer to see where projects are located throughout the region.

For information on ongoing projects where you live, work or play, visit the Transportation Improvement Program Information System, www.nctcog.org/trans/tip/tipins/.



Turning an Idea into a Project

- 1. The financially constrained Metropolitan Transportation Plan is drafted.** This contains plans, projects, programs and policies that improve mobility and demonstrate conformity with federal air quality goals.
- 2. A draft MTP** is presented to the public for review and comment.
- 3. The Regional Transportation Council adopts** the final MTP.
- 4. Major capital improvements go through federally required review.** Projects are evaluated for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program.
- 5. The TIP is evaluated** to ensure it meets local and federal air quality goals and financial constraint.
- 6. The Draft TIP** is presented to the public for review and comment.
- 7. The Regional Transportation Council adopts** the final TIP.
- 8. The TIP is combined with others around Texas** to form the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which is approved by the Texas Transportation Commission and reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.
- 9. Project sponsors work with the Texas Department of Transportation** to design projects and acquire right of way.
- 10. Construction begins.**

Talk to Us

NCTCOG works closely with the public on any project, whether planning a system for the next 25 years or a single roadway improvement that will relieve congestion and enhance air quality. NCTCOG's efforts are guided by a Public Participation Plan that emphasizes personal interaction with the region's residents. NCTCOG staff members conduct regular public meetings to discuss projects and programs with the public and seek their input.

Projects are not final when presented at public meetings, even though they have been through many other steps of the process. Changes can be made throughout the process, and public meetings may result in modifications that improve a project.

If you think your city or county, or the region as a whole, could use a new project, let your voice be heard.



Transportation Department staff members also attend community festivals and other public events to discuss transportation and air quality issues with residents of the region. This gives the department a chance to explain projects and programs to people face to face and answer transportation questions they may have.

An ongoing conversation about transportation is important as NCTCOG pursues improvements that meet the needs of the entire region. To make sure everyone has a chance to interact with planners, the department uses a mix of traditional and interactive techniques. North Texans are encouraged to contact the department by phone, email or through the website.

The department is also engaged in social media. Through these channels, individuals, businesses and governments are invited to ask questions, discuss projects or programs important to them and keep up to date with what is happening with transportation and air quality in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

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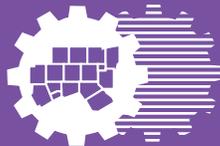
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