

## MINUTES

### **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE March 27, 2020**

The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) held a meeting on Friday, March 27, 2020, at 1:30 pm, by WebEx/audio conference. The Regional Transportation Council Bylaws establish that the Technical Committee approved membership in attendance at a meeting shall constitute a quorum for action to be taken, therefore individual attendance was not taken for committee members or other participants.

1. **Approval of February 28, 2020, Minutes:** The minutes of the February 28, 2020, meeting were approved as submitted in Reference Item 1. Daniel Vedral (M); John Polster (S). The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Consent Agenda:** The following items were included on the Consent Agenda.
  - 2.1. **Transportation Improvement Program Modifications:** A recommendation for Regional Transportation Council approval of revisions to the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), provided in Electronic Item 2.1, along with the ability to amend the Unified Planning Work Program and other planning documents with TIP-related changes, was requested.
  - 2.2. **Western Extrusions Transit Pilot Funding:** A recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval to utilize existing Regional Toll Revenue funds previously authorized by the RTC for transit projects in an amount not to exceed \$325,000 to provide funding to Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) to enhance connectivity between Western Extrusions and DART service areas, was requested.

A motion was made to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. John Polster (M); Onyinye Akujuo (S). The motion passed unanimously.

3. **2021 Unified Transportation Program and Regional 10-Year Plan Update:** Michael Morris provided an update regarding the 2020 and 2021 Unified Transportation Program (UTP). Members were provided a letter from the Texas Legislature to the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) in Electronic Item 3.1 and a copy of the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) resolution approved at the March 12, 2020, meeting regarding comments to the 2020 UTP proposed update in Electronic Item 3.2. He noted that staff was preparing a transmittal to the members of the North Texas legislative delegation, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the State of Texas, private-sector leadership groups, and other interested stakeholders encouraging participation in the Texas Department of Transportation public involvement process for the 2020 UTP proposed update. As presented at previous meetings, the TTC has proposed to build IH 35 in Austin without a tolled component using revenues from across the state. The RTC does not agree with the TTC plan and has proposed an alternative. Regarding the 2021 UTP, there is not enough funding to advance projects; however, the RTC has instructed staff to continue with the inclusion of project commitments as negotiations proceed. The TTC is expected to take action on the 2021 UTP in the summer. Mr. Morris discussed the current impact of oil prices and the anticipated revenue from Proposition 1 and Proposition 7, as well as potentially reduced fuel tax revenue and the impact this may have on available funding. He noted that

staff will continue to work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) as instructed on the 2021 UTP project listings and continue to communicate the RTC's position on the 2020 UTP proposed update. Mr. also provided updated information on the public involvement period. The public comment period for the project was originally March 13-April 13, 2020, but has been extended to April 24, 2020. In addition, the public hearing scheduled for April 7, 2020, has been postponed until April 24, 2002, at 10 am. Members will be provided the RTC's position and associated information by email following the meeting.

4. **Letters to the Texas Department of Transportation on High-Speed Rail:** Michael Morris discussed proposed letters to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) regarding high-speed rail. For the Fort Worth to Laredo High-Speed Transportation Study, staff will request the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approve a letter addressing the path forward to conduct the Tier II environmental document. The letter will document the enthusiasm of the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) within the corridor for the opportunity to have intercity connections and formally transmit the positions of those stakeholders to the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC). The final report for the corridor is expected in April 2020. Mr. Morris also discussed the Virgin Hyperloop Once Hyperloop Certification Center and noted that a letter of support has not been received from the TxDOT to date. The RTC will also be asked to take action on a letter formally requesting TxDOT support of the region's proposal for a Hyperloop Certification Center in the SH 360 corridor right-of-way. A third letter will be requested regarding the Tier II environmental document that the North Central Texas Council of Governments is conducting between Dallas and Fort Worth. Negotiations are ongoing with the preferred engineering firm for consultant assistance on environmental clearance of the corridor. Additional funding may be needed depending on the monetary value of the environmental work previously conducted by TxDOT. A funding amount has not been published in order to not undermine current negotiations.
5. **Start of 2020 Ozone Season: A New Day:** Jenny Narvaez provided an update on the region's 2020 ozone season, which began on March 1. At the end of the 2019 ozone season, the region's design value was 77 parts per billion (ppb). The region remains in nonattainment for both the 2015 and 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone. Ozone values for 2020 are significant because the results will be averaged with results from the 2018 and 2019 seasons and used to determine if the region comes into attainment under both the 2015 and 2008 standards. Ms. Narvaez noted that along with air quality monitoring, staff will be extending its monitoring to vehicle miles traveled for heavy-duty, medium-duty, and light-duty vehicles, as well as gasoline sales, diesel sales, transit ridership and congestion. In addition, staff has coordinated with the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport to monitor various airport data. For example, NASA satellite imagery has shown that since COVID-19 restrictions have impacted daily behaviors, a reduction of NOx in early-impacted cities has been seen. A snapshot of China on January 1, 2020, and February 10-15, 2020, was shown, as well as snapshots of Italy on February 24 and March 8, 2020. Both show significant decreases in NOx emissions. Images are also expected from various cities around the United States such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Ms Narvaez noted that staff will continue to provide monthly updates throughout the 2020 ozone season.
6. **Completion of Transit-Oriented Development Parking Study:** Travis Liska presented information on the findings of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) parking utilization and management study that was completed in 2019. Funding was made available for the study through a Federal Transit Administration grant to advance TOD planning. Planning

funds were tied to 28 Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Red and Blue Line stations receiving capital funding for platform extensions. It was noted that work under this grant included parking, the focus of the presentation, but also included other TOD elements that will be presented in the future. Parking is an important element of Transit Oriented Development because if not done appropriately and not considered with care, it can undermine TOD goals. To help better plan for parking so it does not undermine TOD, staff identified the need to do a study to generate data and information that leads to better parking policies for the public sector. Staff approached 16 private developments who agreed for staff to conduct onsite observations for a continuous 72 hours to understand parking utilization at each of the developments, all of which were within walking distance and with good pedestrian connections to DART stations. Staff found that overall, most sites used less parking than what was supplied by the developer/required by cities. Key findings of the study indicated the site/garage parking is not reaching optimal utilization, with approximately 4,500 spaces unused over the three-day period. In addition, findings indicated that significantly less parking is utilized at workforce affordable housing developments compared to higher-end multifamily housing in the same corridor. This is important because construction of parking spaces is costly, making it more expensive to build affordable workforce housing. In addition, previously conducted onboard transit surveys indicate that most transit ridership comes from low to moderate income households. This is a significant finding to consider and continue to study as strategies to increase ridership are determined. Another key point from the study for consideration is the private sector influence to build beyond the minimum number of parking spaces required by cities. In speaking with developers and others, the influence of lenders, brokers, and tenants in determining the supply of parking is an important consideration and communication with these stakeholders is crucial to achieve public goals. To help advance the conversation for both the public and private sector, a toolbox has been created where agencies can find the study and relevant data, as well as a list of 15 parking management strategies. The strategies focus on efficient use of existing parking spaces through shared parking and public parking incentives, as well as smarter development codes that refine requirements to focus more on data and market forces and leveraging technology to help connect drivers with spaces and achieve optimal utilization. He noted that additional details of the study were available online at [www.parkingtoolboxntx.org](http://www.parkingtoolboxntx.org).

7. **Auto Occupancy/High-Occupancy Vehicle Quarterly Report:** Natalie Bettger presented the most recent managed lane subsidy performance report. A map of the managed lane facilities within the region in which the high-occupancy discount is applied was highlighted. As of January 2020, the current subsidy paid by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is approximately \$5.5 million. In addition, approximately \$12,000 in requests for reimbursements from vanpool users have been received. At this time, staff proposed that the RTC keep the HOV policy at 2+ users and will continue to provide quarterly updates. She also noted there have been no additional North Texas Tollway Authority customer service needs to date and the speeds on the tolled managed lane facilities have not dropped below 35 miles per hour at the fault of the developer. A table outlining the subsidy by corridor was highlighted. Ms. Bettger also provided an update on the GoCarma application that went live on January 24, 2020. The application automatically detects the number of passengers in a user's vehicle and applies the discounted toll rate for HOV users. Since the launch, over 61,000 visits have been made to the website and over 29,000 have registered for the application. In addition, over 5,500 occupant passes have been requested. Also highlighted was HOV discount data, including total transactions for corridors operated by both LBJ/NTE Partners and the Texas Department of Transportation from January 24-March 20, 2020. Of the over 394,000 Carma transactions, approximately 40 percent of the

users are actual HOVs. Unique user data by roadway operator is also available. Ms. Bettger also provided a high-level overview of the violation identification process. An initial 90-day grace period has been established, which begins once a user activates the vehicle pass. The violation process begins with a notification of general information, notifying the violator of the proper use for the equipment. The process then escalates over a series of three notifications, followed by a 30-day suspension period if the user behavior remains unchanged. She noted that this notification process addresses concerns by RTC and Committee members that there would be those who attempt to circumvent the system. In closing, Ms. Bettger presented future data items that would be provided as part of the quarterly report including total and HOV transactions by corridor, average speed on managed lanes by corridor, and average speeds on general purpose lanes by corridor. This will allow staff to bring back general performance metrics for each of the corridors. In addition, she noted that staff was open to other ideas/requests from members.

8. **Fiscal Year 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Discretionary Grant Program:** Jeff Neal briefed the Committee on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant Program. Approximately \$1 billion is available for FY2020 and details for the grant program, including application requirements, were provided in [https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2020-02/BUILD%202020%20NOFO\\_0.pdf](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2020-02/BUILD%202020%20NOFO_0.pdf). He noted that many items such as award requests, distribution, and deadlines fall in line with previous calls for projects and that to date, no announcements of COVID-19 impacts to the schedule have been released. Applications are due May 18, 2020. Of note is a recent directive that if an entity is submitting on-system projects on the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) behalf where TxDOT will ultimately act as the grant recipient or implementing agency Texas Transportation Commission approval is needed advance of the application submittal. Knowing how complex this process could potentially be, North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) staff has worked during this round to identify project candidates that are not on-system. For that reason, NCTCOG will likely submit one project on the region's rail system and two roadway projects, one for each subregion. Staff proposed to advance another iteration of the North Texas MOVES Program that includes improvements along the Trinity Railway Express corridor in partnership with Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), and Trinity Metro. NCTCOG believes this continues to be an attractive project submittal because of the partnership aspect and improvements for both freight and passenger rail. For the eastern subregion roadway project, staff proposed mobility enhancements in the area surrounding the IIPOD facility in partnership with Dallas County. This will include various thoroughfare improvements to accommodate advanced transit connectivity to help transfer employees between transit and employment centers. For the western subregion roadway project, staff proposed submittal of the East-West Connector known as the extension of Harwood Road east of SH 360 to connect with Rental Car Drive that will create a direct link between Euless and Irving. This project is in partnership with the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport and the Federal Aviation Administration. Staff efforts to determine project funding sources, amounts, and what the specific BUILD grant request will include are being finalized. Additional candidate recommendations were welcomed through Friday, April 3, 2020. All candidate projects must be consistent with Mobility 2045 recommendations. He added that staff is available to provide additional technical assistance to entities if requests are received in a timely manner. Agencies interested in receiving a letter of support from the Regional Transportation Council must submit requests to Rebekah Hernandez by Friday, May 1, 2020. Committee action on the proposed project applications is expected at the April 24, 2020, meeting. Michael Morris discussed the IIPOD Enhanced Mobility Project and the

importance of proposing a project that will seem attractive to Washington in a post COVID-19 environment, compared to a traditional thoroughfare street project. The IIPOD Enhanced Mobility Project will include a no-cost transit proposal that will be important to allow employees in the southern sector an opportunity to have access to employment centers, considering the potential large unemployment rate from COVID-19 impacts. Efforts could include subsidized transit fares, improvements to thoroughfare streets in the southern sector, and the potential to use underutilized transit vehicles as part of the project. Alberta Blair, Dallas County, thanked staff for their efforts and discussed ongoing discussions with Commissioner John Wiley Price. Mr. Morris noted he spoke with Commissioner Price earlier in the day and noted his passion about another east/west thoroughfare street in Dallas County. He added that staff will continue with efforts to fund transportation in the region through traditional ways, but that in this case staff believes the IIPOD Enhanced Mobility Project may be more competitive. Erin Linn, DART, asked for additional details about no-cost transit. Mr. Morris provided brief details but noted that additional details of the project are in the development stage. As DART comes out of the spring, into the summer it will hopefully have the backbone of a rail system but may not necessarily the number of desired users so the proposed project would subsidize users of the rail system, especially those headed south. This will help with DART's ridership gain in the southern sector headed to the rail station just south of the University of North Texas. Since all of the fixed-route buses may not be back to work, the proposed project could enable the purchase of new, smaller, and alternative-fuel-based buses, as well compensate the otherwise unpaid bus drivers, at our cost to circulate employees to warehouse employers on variable routes as part of the TMA related to the IIPOD. These are low to middle income, traditional transit users that may be financially desperate because of the current high unemployment rates. Staff's goal is to lay out a full turnkey package that includes subsidized transit fares, payment for new vehicles and their operating expenses, and intersection improvements. The project would produce a win-win situation for both thoroughfare street improvements and transit. People can get back to work and have means to use better transit in the process. He noted this is not a permanent solution because it may impact areas that are not part of the current DART transit service. Alberta Blair asked if a letter of support is needed from the TMA. Mr. Morris noted that a letter of support would be helpful, but that the group should not be brought together just for the purpose of providing a letter of support.

9. **Fast Facts:** Staff presentations were not given. Information was provided to members electronically for the following items.
  1. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Policy Bundle Round 4 (Electronic Item 9.1)
  2. Traffic Incident Management Executive Level Course Announcement (Electronic Item 9.2)
  3. Dallas-Fort Worth Area High Occupancy Vehicle Transportation Control Measure Substitution (Electronic Item 9.3)
  4. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Events (<https://www.dfwcleancities.org/dfw-clean-cities-meetings>)
  5. Air Quality Funding Opportunities for Vehicles (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/funding-and-resources/fundingvehicle>)
  6. Mobility Matters (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/about/publications/mm/mobility-matters-winter-2020>)
  7. Public Comments Report (Electronic Item 9.4)
  8. Written Progress Reports:
    - Local Motion (Electronic Item 9.5)
    - Transportation Partner Progress Reports (Electronic Item 9.6)

10. **Other Business (Old and New):** John Polster requested that North Central Texas Council of Governments staff provide the Committee with data or information related to ramp metering as the region considers data related to how managed lanes improve travel times on the managed lanes themselves and also on general purpose lanes. He noted it was important to remove the argument that ramp metering should be used versus tolled managed lanes. Mr. Morris noted that the suggestion has been made that citizens should not be tolled but that ramp metering be used to manage the transportation system. He discussed various options for ramp metering and limitations related to many of the existing ramps because of their design. He noted that the Committee should work with the Texas Department of Transportation districts within the region to develop a short paper, previous to the legislative session, regarding whether there are existing ramps in the region on which ramp metering could be demonstrated to provide data to show that it is not a viable solution to manage the transportation system.
11. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Surface Transportation Technical Committee is scheduled for 1:30 pm on April 24, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.