

Investing in Sustainability

Transportation Planning

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) conduct long-range transportation planning in urbanized areas with populations that exceed 50,000. In the Dallas-Fort Worth region, the MPO is composed of a policy board of local elected officials and the Transportation Department at the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG).

MPOs coordinate with the public, local governments, and other transportation agencies to build a consensus on the region's transportation needs. NCTCOG develops a long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which identifies roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects that will meet the region's needs and for which funding can be expected to be available. A short-range plan is then created that identifies projects that are immediate priorities. The Texas Department of Transportation includes those priority projects in its own short-range plan.

Regional Transportation Council

The RTC sets transportation policy for NCTCOG. The 43-member board consists primarily of local elected officials.

Promoting Sustainability in the Denton Greenbelt

Sustainability and environmental stewardship efforts such as the project being launched in the Denton Greenbelt are in step with the region's transportation planning goals. The Dallas-Fort Worth region's long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan addresses federally required goals for transportation planning that include environmental sustainability. The plan also addresses local goals, including promoting active lifestyles and preserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The transportation planning process requires input from the public and from stakeholders affected by transportation plans. The North Central Texas Council of Governments is engaging stakeholders from non-profit groups, natural resource agencies, and municipalities to integrate their feedback into plans for a roadway that will cross the Denton Greenbelt.

Plans for this possible roadway also will include best management practices for sustainability. These practices will be identified using an online tool developed by the Federal Highway Administration. The tool, called INVEST, provides a means for agencies that plan or build transportation projects to evaluate the sustainability of new projects across all phases, from planning to construction to maintenance.

Transportation partners will consider the sustainability best management practices as they engineer and construct the roadway. They will work to avoid and minimize impacts to the environment, will identify strategies to mitigate impacts that occur, and may consider context-sensitive solutions that preserve the aesthetic and environmental qualities of the Denton Greenbelt.



Photo: Getty Images

Integrating Environmental Considerations into Transportation Planning

The natural environment has been a factor in planning at the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) since 2011, when the agency developed its Regional Ecosystem Framework (REF). This mapping tool, developed in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency and other organizations, functions as an early screening tool to identify ecosystem priorities at the scale of the subwatershed. The REF focuses on three ecosystem-related categories:

- Water considerations
- Ecosystem value
- Green infrastructure

The tool is based on the Federal Highway Administration's "Eco-Logical: An Ecosystem Approach to Developing Infrastructure Projects" and was developed with funding from that agency. An ecosystem approach calls for infrastructure and environmental agencies to work with each other and the public to integrate the agencies' plans and to identify environmental priority areas.

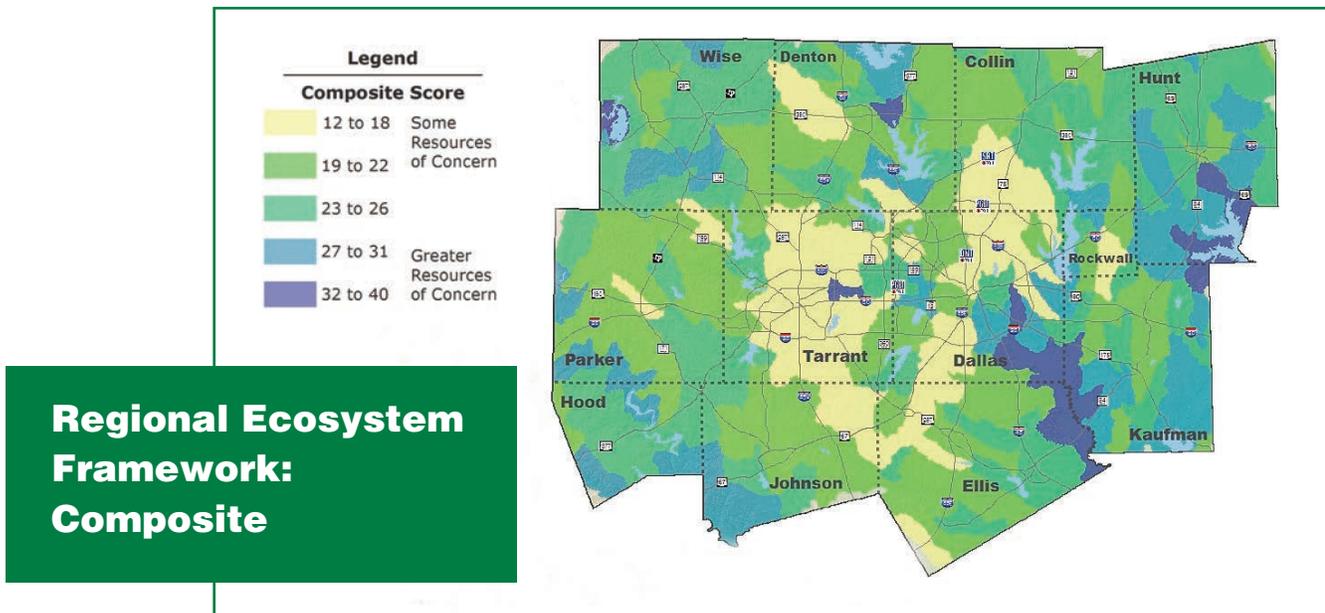
The REF was used to identify potential conservation, preservation, and mitigation sites in the planned Loop 9

corridor in southern Dallas County. The tool also was used to conduct a comprehensive environmental analysis of alternative locations for Loop 9.

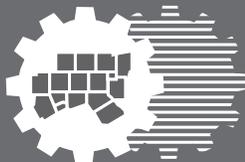
In addition, a REF website is publicly available and has been used by consultants to screen for potential environmental impacts. The website includes the Regional Ecosystem Framework and 40 additional layers of data related to the environment and historic properties.

Also, during the transportation planning process, NCTCOG consults with agencies that manage and regulate environmental resources. For example, in another past project, a stakeholder group of representatives from these agencies helped NCTCOG identify potential stream restoration sites, emphasizing sites where restoration would provide the greatest benefit to the environment. These sites could then be used to compensate for the impacts on streams created by future transportation projects.

For more information on these projects, please see www.nctcog.org/REF.



Regional Ecosystem Framework: Composite



North Central Texas Council of Governments

Phone: 817-695-9240 Fax: 817-640-3028
Email: transinfo@nctcog.org
NCTCOG.org/trans
[Facebook.com/nctcogtrans](https://www.facebook.com/nctcogtrans)

[Twitter.com/nctcogtrans](https://twitter.com/nctcogtrans)
[YouTube.com/nctcogtrans](https://www.youtube.com/nctcogtrans)
[Instagram.com/nctcogtrans](https://www.instagram.com/nctcogtrans)
[Vimeo.com/nctcogtrans](https://www.vimeo.com/nctcogtrans)