Regional Mobility Initiatives

Vol. XIV, No. 1 February 2012

*The North Central Texas Council of Governments serves as the **metropolitan planning organization** for the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.*

The Dallas-Fort Worth area is one of the largest regions in the nation, boasting a diverse collection of small and big cities that together make up a dynamic, prosperous metropolitan area. The complex makeup of North Texas requires a coordinated effort to plan and administer programs that will ensure the quality of life residents expect will not only be preserved but will improve as the area continues to develop.

Federal law requires a metropolitan area with 50,000 or more people to have a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). In 1974, five years after the creation of the Transportation Department, Governor Dolph Briscoe designated the department as the region's metropolitan planning organization. NCTCOG's Regional Transportation Council serves as the transportation policy body for the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth area. As laws have changed over the years, NCTCOG has adapted and expanded its role in the planning process. The MPO works closely with regional, state and federal partners to plan and recommend transportation projects that will improve mobility and encourage more efficient land use.

With 6.5 million residents, the region must have a comprehensive transportation system to ensure efficient, reliable movement throughout the area. A complex system of roadways is not enough. It needs to be complemented with mass transit and other options such as bicycle and pedestrian paths, and system management.

When planning for the current and future transportation needs of the region, NCTCOG must carefully consider every project's impact on air quality. Nine Dallas-Fort Worth area counties – Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall and Tarrant – are in nonattainment for the 8-hour ozone standard. This means transportation improvements must not worsen air quality. In a region as large as North Texas, the public and private sectors must work together closely to ensure progress occurs at the same time air quality improves. In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency announced its intension to expand the nonattainment area to 11 counties by adding Hood and Wise.

Snapshot of the Region

- 6.5 million residents
- Larger than 38 states in population
- Larger than nine states by land area
- Represents 34 percent of the Texas economy
- Expected to grow to 10 million residents by 2035

***Regional Mobility Initiatives** is a report on the transportation planning activities and air quality programs of the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Regional Transportation Council – together serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area since 1974.*

Regional Transportation Council

The 43-member Regional Transportation Council (RTC) sets transportation policy for North Texas, developing policies, plans and programs that address the complex needs of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. The policymaking body consists primarily of local elected officials and representatives of North Texas transportation providers.

The RTC oversees the metropolitan transportation planning process. Its responsibilities include the following:

- Guide the development of multimodal transportation plans and programs.
- Allocate federal and state transportation funds.
- Select transportation projects.
- Ensure transportation providers coordinate services.
- Ensure the metropolitan area complies with state and federal laws and regulations regarding transportation and air quality.

While the RTC provides policy direction to the transportation planning process, the federal and state government in recent years have given MPOs more authority. Metropolitan planning organizations are responsible for selecting projects funded by the Surface Transportation Program – Metropolitan Mobility and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, federal funds allocated for surface transportation and air quality improvements. In North Texas, transportation leaders and policymakers work with state and federal officials to ensure air quality continues to improve while transportation facilities are enhanced to serve the needs of the public.

Committees and Advisory Groups

The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) is one of several committees advising the RTC. Composed mainly of staff members of area government bodies and transportation providers, STTC provides recommendations for the RTC. STTC and other transportation and air quality committees work with the RTC to provide members with the information needed to make decisions and develop sound transportation and related air quality policies and programs.

NCTCOG also has subcommittees and advisory groups handling aviation, congestion, air quality and other issues important to the region's future. These groups review all aspects of projects and programs before they reach the implementation stage. Improvements made to the region's transportation systems also undergo exhaustive reviews by stakeholders and members of the general public before the RTC decides whether to pursue them.

Key players in NCTCOG's organizational structure:

The Executive Board is the policymaking body for the council of governments, overseeing the activities of NCTCOG, including the disbursement of federal funds.

The Regional Transportation Council, as the MPO, determines funding for transportation and air quality projects in the 12-county metropolitan area.

RTC Subcommittees provide direction to policymakers about transportation and air quality projects.

NCTCOG's Transportation Department offers staff expertise to assist the RTC and technical committees with transportation-related matters.

Residents participate in the discussion through public meetingsand other events seeking input from those affected by the MPO's decisions.

Regional Transportation Council Membership

City of Arlington	2
Cities of Carrollton and Farmers Branch	1
Cities of Dallas, Highland Park and University Park	6
Cities of Denton, Sanger, Corinth, Little Elm, Highland Village and Lake Dallas (urbanized area)	1
Cities of Duncanville, DeSoto, Lancaster, Cedar Hill and Glenn Heights	1
City of Fort Worth	3
Cities of Garland and Rowlett	1
City of Grand Prairie	1
Cities of Hurst, Euless, Bedford, Colleyville, Grapevine and Southlake	1
Cities of Irving and Coppell	1
Cities of Lewisville, Flower Mound, The Colony, Trophy Club and Roanoke (urbanized area)	1
Cities of Mansfield, Benbrook, Forest Hill, White Settlement, Crowley, River Oaks, Everman and Kennedale	1
Cities of Mesquite, Balch Springs and Seagoville	1
Cities of North Richland Hills, Haltom City, Watauga, Keller, Saginaw and Richland Hills	1
Cities of McKinney, Fairview, Anna and Princeton (urbanized area)	1
City of Plano	1
Cities of Richardson, Addison, Wylie, Sachse and Murphy	1
Cities of Frisco, Allen, Prosper and Lucas	1
Collin County	1
Dallas County	2
Denton County	1
Ellis County and the Cities of Waxahachie, Midlothian, Ennis and Red Oak and Kaufman County and the Cities of Forney, Terrell and Kaufman	1
Johnson County and the Cities of Burleson, Cleburne and Keene and Hood County and the City of Granbury	1
Rockwall County and the Cities of Rockwall, Heath and Royse City and Hunt County and the Cities of Greenville and Commerce	1
Parker County and the Cities of Weatherford and Azle and Wise County and the Cities of Decatur and Bridgeport	1
Tarrant County	2
District Engineer, Dallas District, TxDOT	1
District Engineer, Fort Worth District, TxDOT	1
Policy Representative, Dallas Area Rapid Transit	1
Policy Representative, Fort Worth Transportation Authority	1
Policy Representative, Denton County Transportation Authority	1
Policy Representative, North Texas Tollway Authority	1
Policy Representative, Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport	1
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	43

Core NCTCOG Functions

NCTCOG, like all other MPOs across the nation, has five core responsibilities. NCTCOG is not limited to these responsibilities, but must perform them.

1. Establish a fair and impartial process to promote effective regional decision-making.
2. Identify and evaluate alternatives to traditional transportation options.
3. Prepare and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which outlines long-term improvements to be made over 20-25 years.
4. Develop a Transportation Improvement Program, an inventory of short-term projects that seeks to achieve the region's transportation goals.
5. Involve the public in these planning functions. This ensures the region's transportation system will address the needs of the people who use it most.

The council of governments does much more to promote regionalism across the Dallas-Fort Worth area, which consists of 12 counties – Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise.

The metropolitan planning area, or MPA, was expanded from nine to 12 counties in 2009 to reflect the growth expected to the area over the next 20 years. A variety of factors, including commuting patterns, were considered during the expansion process. All counties were part of the 16-county NCTCOG service area.

Transportation Choices

North Texas residents rely on a comprehensive network of roadways and rail lines to move throughout the metropolitan area. Both modes have undergone tremendous expansions to keep up with the demands placed on them by the growing population. Transportation planners continue to examine how the current transportation system can be improved to more adequately meet the needs of residents today and in the future.

Traditional freeways, toll roads and surface streets are all essential to mobility. But the region's HOV/managed lanes, which during rush hour offer more predictable commutes than adjacent lanes, are playing a more significant role than in the past. The long-range transportation plan calls for congestion pricing on these facilities, with the price increasing during peak traffic periods. This provides drivers with free and tolled options in congested corridors with HOV/managed lanes. The goal is to reduce the congestion levels in the corridor.

The North Texas rail network has grown substantially since the first trains were introduced in 1996. Rail transit has surged in popularity in recent years, and the Regional Transportation Council has a plan to expand it to the outer suburbs, giving many people who must currently rely on roadways the option of riding light rail or commuter trains.

continued on next page

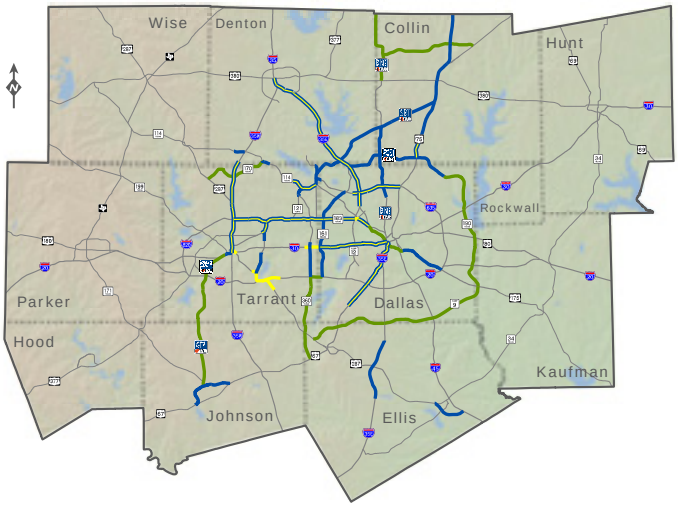
Funded Roadway Recommendations

Mobility 2035

Legend

Recommendations

- Additional Capacity to Existing Roads
- Improvements to Existing Freeway and HOV/Managed Lanes
- HOV/Managed Lanes
- New Toll Roads



Transportation Choices (continued)

Dallas Area Rapid Transit photo

The Lake June Station is one of 24 that serve passengers on Dallas Area Rapid Transit's 28-mile Green Line. The Green Line runs from pleasant Grove to north Carrollton.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority and the Denton County Transportation Authority are also increasing their reach by opening or planning new rail lines. It is expected that further regional rail expansion can be handled by the existing providers, eliminating the need for a fourth agency. In addition to the increased availability of rail in North Texas, inter-city, high-speed rail is growing in popularity. Plans are under way in Dallas-Fort Worth and across the country to make this a reality. As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, North Texas received almost $11 million for construction improvements along federally approved high-speed rail corridors. In addition, Texas received $15 million in high speed rail funding for project-level engineering and environmental for the corridor between Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston.

Bicycle and pedestrian solutions are also considered. The region plans an aggressive expansion of its Veloweb, a network of trails that will link cities throughout the area.

Transportation Planning

NCTCOG develops both short- and long-range plans for transportation improvements in the region. Projects given federal money must be in the long-range plan, which includes projected needs 20-25 years into the future. The long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan is financially constrained, meaning the projects it includes are expected to receive funding. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a list of short-range projects funded by state, federal and local sources. Before being placed in the TIP, projects are reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and air quality conformity determination. Transportation planners work closely with members of the public and transportation partners at all levels of government to determine what improvements are necessary. And these improvements are not limited to typical transportation infrastructure. Land use plays an important role, especially with a growing population and increasing traffic concerns. In recent years, the region has put a greater emphasis on sustainable development projects, which meet transportation needs while emphasizing denser neighborhoods and public transportation.

Funded Rail Recommendations

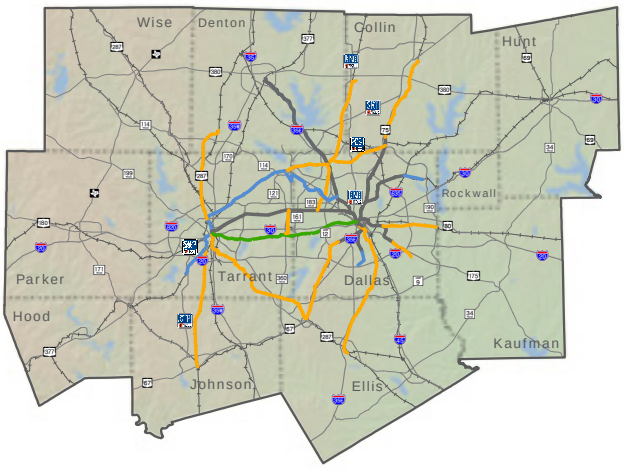
Mobility 2035

Legend

Funding Sources

- Public
- Public and Private
- HSR/Regional Rail Integrated Corridor
- Completed Projects

- Rail Lines



Transportation Funding

NCTCOG receives its funding from a variety of sources. The Federal Highway and Federal Transit administrations provide much of it. The Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy offer funding for technologies that improve air quality. Planners carefully weigh the effects on the environment from transportation projects so the region can continue reducing its ozone concentration. The Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the State Energy Conservation Office provide funding for air quality and transportation improvements. Cooperation among all levels of government and the private sector helps the region develop transportation solutions.

North Texas faces a multibillion-dollar shortfall through 2035 and must meet the needs of a surging population while maintaining the infrastructure residents already use. Regional leaders continue to search for ways to fund the infrastructure that will drive the economy toward further growth. Whether with federal, state or local funding, North Texas will continue working to meet its needs.

The popularity of more fuel-efficient vehicles is among the trends that could make it even tougher in the future to fund transportation improvements. Less gas consumed means a drop in the gas tax receipts that traditionally have paid for a high percentage of the improvements. NCTCOG uses the various funding mechanisms provided by the state and federal governments to meet the transportation needs of the 12-county area. The Dallas-Fort Worth area received additional help from the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) when it was awarded the rights to build and maintain State Highway 121 (now the Sam Rayburn Tollway) through Collin, Dallas and Denton counties. NTTA paid $3.2 billion, which is being used to advance projects that would have remained unaddressed for years.

Federal legislation keeps the surface transportation system running, but building and maintaining a multimodal system that will accommodate Dallas-Fort Worth requires not only funding, but a willingness to examine issues with an eye toward innovation.

Cost of Transportation

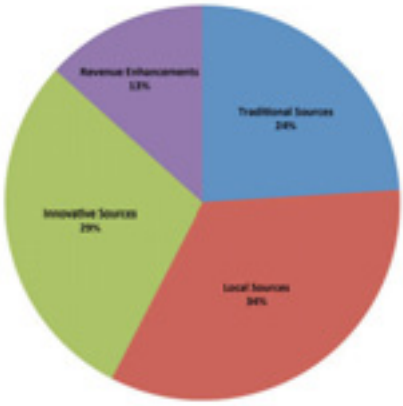
- Additional capacity (freeway/tollway): **$4.2 - $5.3 million per lane mile**
- Additional capacity (arterial road): **$1.0 - $1.5 million per lane mile**
- Light rail: **$50 - $60 million per mile**
- Regional/commuter rail: **$12 - $20 million per mile**
- Rail station: **$3 - $10 million**
- Park-and-ride lot: **$4,000 - $6,000 per space**
- Off-street bicycle/pedestrian route (Veloweb): **$1.4 million per mile**
- On-street bicycle route: **$18,000 per mile**
- Sidewalk: **$15,000 per mile**

Source: Mobility 2035

Along with its reliance on innovation, NCTCOG has made a concerted effort to continue to operate transparently. One way it has demonstrated this is with the Revenue and Project Tracking System, or RAPTS. This was developed to provide real-time public access to the same project and funding information used by planners.

In 2009, the state and region received an additional boost, with the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The bill was designed to help the nation climb out of recession by, among other things, providing funding toward the completion of projects that would immediately create jobs and improve aging infrastructure. The region received more than $862 million for multimodal transportation and air quality projects.

Many projects benefitted from ARRA funding. Among the most visible projects is the DFW Connector, the multi-highway renovation north of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport that received $250 million in ARRA funding.



Funding the Transportation System

This chart shows where North Texas anticipates the funding for its multimodal transportation system will come from between now and 2035.

Source: Mobility 2035

The federally required Unified Planning Work Program outlines the budget for the NCTCOG Transportation Department's programs. NCTCOG prepares the UPWP every two years with the help of residents, transportation providers and local governments. As with everything the council of governments does, the opinions of its partners and people living in the region figure prominently in the development of the UPWP.

Public Involvement: A Cornerstone

Stay involved:

Your opinions are important to the long-term viability of the Dallas-Fort Worth area's multimodal transportation system. Here are some ways to participate in the discussion:

Public Meetings

Workshops

Community Outreach Events

None of the improvements required to meet the region's long-term needs would be possible without extensive input from residents. NCTCOG's public outreach strategy seeks to inform and educate residents, enabling them to play a key role in the formation of transportation policies and infrastructure improvements that will affect the region for generations.

Public Input. Not everyone in a region as diverse as Dallas-Fort Worth will agree on priorities. But it is important to take the steps necessary to keep residents informed of the progress and goals of the metropolitan planning organization. And after visiting with the public, transportation leaders are better equipped to address the problems with mobility and air quality. They depend on the public to help build transportation facilities that will make a difference. It is important to note that when NCTCOG brings issues to the public, they are simply proposals and are influenced by the ideas, questions and concerns of residents.

Fairness. The public participation process also includes efforts to avoid discrimination. NCTCOG has a detailed environmental justice program, which seeks to ensure that transportation projects do not disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations. NCTCOG must also work to prevent discrimination in federally funded programs, as directed by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The goal of NCTCOG's efforts is to improve the decision-making process by ensuring every willing participant is able to have his or her voice heard.

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Air North Texas asks residents throughout the region to commit to doing at least one extra thing each July 7, to improve air quality. Clean Air Action Day is an opportunity for residents to witness the power of combining efforts to accomplish a goal.

# of Sound Transportation Planning

Tranparency. In 2010, the Texas Transportation Commission approved rules aimed at making the planning process more transparent. TxDOT wanted a better-defined process that is more understandable to the general public. NCTCOG is committed to a continuous, open dialogue with people who live and work in the metropolitan area. Public participation is encouraged as NCTCOG and its partners plan, select and build projects. To make it easier for residents to express their opinions about projects, the Regional Transportation Council conducts regular public meetings throughout the 12-county Dallas-Fort Worth area. It is important to the RTC that residents in the affected areas and other parts of the region have a chance to comment on plans because transportation improvements have an impact on the entire region.

Stay Connected. The Transportation Department also offers an extensive list of publications, from technical reports to newsletters and how-to guides. With the emergence of online tools making communication more immediate and interactive, the department is able to reach more people than ever before through its homepage and other websites. The Transportation Department has added social media to its communication plan as it seeks to enhance its interaction with the public. The latest news and events are shared on the department's social media pages, and input from users is encouraged.

The department continues to evaluate new technologies in search of better ways to communicate its message. Visit **www.nctcog.org/trans** to read the department's publications and learn about new technologies that are changing communication with the public. And the department encourages residents to share their opinions on key transportation and air quality issues the region faces.

The Transportation Department homepage is used to educate the public about mobility and air quality. As part of its outreach strategy, the department is embracing new technologies aimed at making communication easier.

Interact With Us

Phone: 817-695-9240

Email: transinfo@nctcog.org

Web: www.nctcog.org/trans

Social media:
Facebook.com/nctcogtrans
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YouTube.com/nctcogtrans

A variety of print and online publications help NCTCOG keep the public updated on the activities of the MPO.

Safety

Improving Transportation Safety

The following are examples of enhancements offered in an effort to reduce congestion and keep the region's 6.5 million residents safe.

- **Freeway Incident Management Training**
- **Photogrammetry Training**
- **Mobility Assistance Patrols**
- **Regional Safety Working Group**
- **Work Zone Safety Improvements Table**

Safety plays a key role in the mobility of the region and the well-being of residents. NCTCOG's Transportation Safety program area focuses on improving traffic safety through the collection and analysis of crash data and the implementation of educational projects and programs.

The Freeway Incident Management (FIM) and Photogrammetry training courses are two examples of safety education that help NCTCOG fulfill its mission. FIM training is offered to emergency responders and executives and encourages the effective handling of crashes, builds partnerships and enhances safety for emergency personnel. It also improves the efficiency of the transportation system. Photogrammetry training complements FIM training by offering instruction in accident reconstruction through the use of an image-based 3-D system that calculates measurements from photographs and digital camera images.

The Mobility Assistance Patrol Program (MAPP) is an essential element to the region's incident management operations. The MAPP helps alleviate congestion and improves safety on congested highways in Dallas and Tarrant counties, as well as portions of Collin and Denton counties. The program helps stranded motorists move disabled vehicles or gets them running.

Regional road safety benefits from the collection and analysis of data. The data assists in the development of county-level and regional crash rates for freeways and tollways. And this information will be the backbone of the Regional Safety Information System that NCTCOG continues to develop. The information system will be used to identify regional high-crash locations and will allow users to access region-specific crash data online. The system will incorporate crash data from the Texas Department of Transportation Crash Records Information System and other data sources. NCTCOG continues to implement the Crash Location and Hazardous Materials Incident Mapping Project, which uses crash, fatality and hazardous-materials data to analyze, map and report regional crashes and fatalities.

Transportation Fact:

Initiating and coordinating safety education and training courses for regional stakeholders and increasing public awareness about safety issues is important to promoting safety in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

NCTCOG continues to assist in the promotion of the Teens in the Driver Seat educational program, which strives to improve safety among teen drivers. Other safety initiatives include the Work Zone Safety Improvements Table, which was developed in conjunction with the Work Zone Safety Working Group; and the Regional Safety Working Group, which assists in the development of regional safety policies, programs, procedures, projects and activities that will help improve traffic safety throughout the region.

NCTCOG photo

Mobility Assistance Patrols help keep North Texas roads clear and traffic moving. They are part of the region's comprehensive strategy to meet the transportation needs of more than 6.5 million people.

Needs of the Region

Transportation planning in North Texas is directed by the federal law authorizing the transportation system. On the regional level, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan serves as the blueprint for improvements to be made. All projects funded by the Regional Transportation Council must be in the plan.

The region's long-range transportation plan includes a mix of options that have worked effectively for years. But with continued growth, toll roads, HOV/managed lanes, passenger rail and tools such as public-private partnerships and local-option taxes are expected to be increasingly used in the future. No single mode will adequately solve the traffic congestion problem.

Even when money is tight, North Texas has tools to help it meet the demands of the increasing population. NCTCOG is laying the groundwork for the formation of a multi-state mega-region by signing cooperative agreements with councils of governments in Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. It has reached agreements with Metroplan in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments, North Delta Planning and Development District, East Texas Council of Governments and Heart of Texas Council of Governments.

As Dallas-Fort Worth and other metropolitan areas continue to welcome new residents and create jobs, relationships with neighboring metropolitan areas will be more important. These agreements have set North Texas up to be a leader far into the future, regardless of the transportation mode being considered.

Transportation Fact:

Dallas-Fort Worth will use a mix of transportation options to meet its needs as it continues to grow.

Managing Congestion

NCTCOG photo

The DalTrans operations center keeps traffic moving in the eastern portion of the region. Workers rely on cameras placed throughout the area to respond to problems when necessary.

The Dallas-Fort Worth area must have a congestion management process (CMP) because its population exceeds 200,000. The CMP seeks to maximize resources through sound management of regional assets. Dallas-Fort Worth has an impressive mix of transportation assets. Major capital improvements are needed for the region to maintain its quality of life. But the solution to congestion involves more than building massive projects. Technology plays an important role. The CMP results in lower-cost strategies that complement these large investments and enable the region to make the most of its transportation system. This transportation system is closely monitored to provide an overview of the severity of congestion. NCTCOG uses a variety of strategies, including system management, demand management and intelligent transportation systems, to ensure people are moved as efficiently as possible. NCTCOG also focuses intently on ensuring the roads are safe and that accidents are cleared quickly so they don't add considerable time to existing delays.

One of the many programs NCTCOG has implemented to improve congestion is TryParkingIt.com, which allows North Texans to record their alternatives to driving alone. Carpooling, telecommuting, transit and more active options such as bicycling or walking are choices commuters have for leaving their cars at home. In 2010, TryparkingIt.com debuted a regional ridematching program enabling commuters to find carpool and vanpool options more easily. It uses the resources of the region's public transportation agencies to provide commuters information that will help them find rides to work or drive others to their jobs.

Air Quality

Air quality is a primary focus of the MPO. NCTCOG works tirelessly with public- and private-sector partners throughout the region to improve the environment. This will ultimately enhance quality of life and ensure future transportation improvements remain on track. Because much of the metropolitan area is in nonattainment for ozone, all planning activities must consider the impact of transportation projects on air quality. The air is getting cleaner thanks to the work of NCTCOG, its partners and the public.

Air quality in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has steadily improved over the past several years thanks in part to policies and programs implemented by NCTCOG and the cooperation of residents, who are more conscious about how their decisions affect the environment.

The nine counties of Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall and Tarrant missed the attainment deadline in 2010 and have been reclassified as "serious" from the "moderate" level. The change brought with it a new deadline of 2013 to meet the ozone standard.

The MPO is actively trying to reduce the ozone levels through a combination of educational and policy initiatives. This will proceed with an emphasis on cooperation. With the help of the public and private sectors, as well as the region's residents, North Texas' air quality will continue to improve.

Recent changes to the federal air quality regulations mean more work is ahead for North Texas. It is important to have in place policies that will lead to cleaner air, but the cooperation of the public is essential to realizing lasting success.

NCTCOG has developed programs to encourage the public to take an active role in the improvement of the environment. One of them is Air North Texas, which has tried to involve the entire region. NCTCOG also regularly provides the public and private sectors opportunities to compete for funding to help boost the efficiency of their fleets and improve air quality.

Thinkstock photo

NCTCOG introduced a ridematching feature in 2010 on TryParkingIt.com, its commuter tracking site. This gave the region a comprehensive and centralized source to find car- and vanpool information. Carpooling is one of the activities Air North Texas promotes as part of its campaign to make the air easier to breathe.

Transportation of Tomorrow

Rapid growth and declining revenues have made it increasingly difficult to meet the transportation needs in the region. But NCTCOG has used a variety of innovative tools to make sure necessary infrastructure improvements are made and quality of life is preserved. Although new transportation infrastructure is needed, the region can improve the reliability of the existing system by retiming signal lights, clearing traffic accidents more quickly and eventually implementing congestion pricing on some area roadways. The region will likely continue facing the challenges associated with rapid growth, with its population expected to near 10 million by 2035.

The NCTCOG Transportation Department helps local governments and transportation authorities implement programs intended to reduce congestion and improve air quality. To attract good jobs and maintain livable communities, it is important to continue improving the transportation system and adapting to changes in development patterns.

The North Texas of the future will feature a more mature transportation system that encourages higher density development and greater access to transit. With more transit-oriented development and less room to build, a greater emphasis will be placed on land-use decisions. But these will simply be components of a much more comprehensive system that seeks to meet the needs of a dynamic region.

Reliance on roadways will always be strong, especially in an area that has for so long been dependent on automobiles. But the improved rail options and emphasis on walkable communities have the potential to transform the region.

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What Is NCTCOG?

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of local governments within the 16-county North Central Texas region. The agency was established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. North Central Texas is a 16-county region with a population of 6.6 million and an area of approximately 12,800 square miles. NCTCOG has 242 member governments, including all 16 counties, 170 cities, 24 independent school districts and 32 special districts.

Since 1974, NCTCOG has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is the policy body for the MPO. The RTC consists of 43 members, predominantly local elected officials, overseeing the regional transportation planning process. NCTCOG's Transportation Department is responsible for support and staff assistance to the RTC and its technical committees, which comprise the MPO policy-making structure.

We would like your comments. . .

If you have questions or comments regarding the transportation and air quality programs of the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Regional Transportation Council or need additional information, please contact the NCTCOG Transportation Department at **817-695-9240**, by **fax** at **817-640-3028,** via email: **transinfo@nctcog.org,** or visit our website at **www.nctcog.org/trans.**

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