

AGENDA

Regional Transportation Council Thursday, January 11, 2024 North Central Texas Council of Governments

**1:00 pm Full RTC Business Agenda
(NCTCOG Guest Secured Wireless Connection Password: rangers!)**

Pledge to the United States and Texas Flags

- 1:00 – 1:10** 1. **Opportunity for Public Comment on Today’s Agenda**
☒ Information Minutes: 10
Item Summary: Members of the public may comment on any item(s) on today’s agenda at this time. If speaking, please complete a Speaker Request Card, available at the meeting, and provide it to the North Central Texas Council of Governments designated staff person. A maximum of three (3) minutes is permitted per speaker. At the conclusion of this item, no further opportunities for public comment will be provided for the duration of the meeting.
Background: N/A
- 1:10 – 1:15** 2. **Approval of December 14, 2023, Minutes**
☒ Action ☐ Possible Action ☐ Information Minutes: 5
Presenter: Gyna Bivens, RTC Chair
Item Summary: Approval of the December 14, 2023, meeting minutes contained in [Electronic Item 2](#) will be requested.
Background: N/A
- 1:15 – 1:20** 3. **Consent Agenda**
☒ Action ☐ Possible Action ☐ Information Minutes: 5
- 3.1. **Emergency Funding: Backstop Funding for Agile Curriculum Development Program**
Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG
Item Summary: Staff will request ratification of emergency funding authorization in the amount of \$200,000 for the Agile Curriculum Development Program to backstop federal funding and avoid project implementation delays.
Background: In September 2021, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) accepted a grant award from the Department of Defense (DOD) for the Agile Curriculum Development Program, in the amount of \$880,000 (\$800,000 federal funds and \$80,000 local match provided through RTC Local funds). The grant terminated on November 30, 2023, and NCTCOG has been working with DOD to document project success and justification for continuation of the project. It is anticipated that DOD will grant an extension in the next few months. In the interim, DOD has

communicated their desire to avoid project implementation delays and has requested that NCTCOG and subrecipient partners continue project activities. Staff requests ratification of emergency funding authorization for RTC Local funds in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 as a backstop to fund staff and subrecipient efforts as the grant amendment is being processed or in the event DOD does not approve an extension. RTC Local funds will be returned upon a DOD grant time extension.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed: Administrative

1:20 – 1:35

4. Orientation to Agenda/Director of Transportation Report

☐ Action ☐ Possible Action ☒ Information Minutes: 15
Presenter: Michael Morris, NCTCOG

1. Status of TxDOT Rule Making
2. 2024 Theme Relating to TxDOT Partnership
3. Analysis of Dallas High-Speed Rail Tunnel Request and Other Options
4. Status of Consultants for Transit 2.0
5. Broadband as a Transportation Service: Four Proposed Elements
6. Air Quality Funding Opportunities
www.nctcog.org/aqfunding
7. Upcoming Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Events
<https://www.dfwcleancities.org/events>
8. January Online Input Opportunity Notice ([Electronic Item 4.1](#))
9. December Online Input Opportunity Minutes ([Electronic Item 4.2](#))
10. Public Comments Report ([Electronic Item 4.3](#))
11. Recent News Articles ([Electronic Item 4.4](#))
12. Recent Press Releases ([Electronic Item 4.5](#))

1:35 – 1:50

5. Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation Program

☒ Action ☐ Possible Action ☐ Information Minutes: 15
Presenter: Natalie Bettger, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will request Regional Transportation Council approval of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) submission of a 2023 Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovative (ATTAIN) Program application.

Background: In November 2023, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an announcement for the ATTAIN program proposals that deploy, install, and operate advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, system performance, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure return on

investment. USDOT will provide funding of up to \$12 million per project with a required 20 percent non-federal match. [grants.gov/search-results-detail/351055](https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/351055) is a copy of the Notice of Funding Opportunity that details the grant program for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, as well as the application requirements. Applications are due to the USDOT by February 2, 2024. Staff will provide a summary grant and provide an overview of the application. More information is available in [Electronic Item 5](#).

Performance Measure(s) Addressed: Safety, Roadway

1:50 – 2:05

6. **Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant Program**

☐ Action ☐ Possible Action ☒ Information Minutes: 15

Presenter: Jeff Neal, NCTCOG

Item Summary: Staff will brief the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant Program. Staff will provide details highlighting grant requirements and potential candidate projects.

Background: In November 2023, the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) announced availability of \$1.5 billion toward the solicitation of project applications for the FY 2024 RAISE Discretionary Grant Program, targeting strategic capital investments for surface transportation projects that will have significant local or regional impacts. As a supplement to specific program details provided by staff, additional information like the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), application requirements, analysis tools, and other relevant data can be accessed at <https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants>. Applications are due to the US DOT by February 28, 2024. For regional agencies planning to submit their own candidate projects, please be aware you must complete the www.grants.gov registration process, usually requiring two-four weeks for completion, prior to submitting applications. Assuming the projected timing for application development, agency requests to receive a letter of support from the RTC should be submitted to Nicholas Allen by Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at nallen@nctcog.org.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed: Roadway, Bike/Ped

2:05 – 3:05

7.

Air Quality Workshop

☐ Action ☐ Possible Action ☒ Information Minutes: 60

Presenter: Chris Klaus, Vivek Thimmavajjhala, and Savana Nance, NCTCOG

Item Summary: An air quality workshop will be held tying critical transportation and air quality initiatives together.

Background: There are five components to the workshop. They are listed below.

State Implementation Plan Updates (TCEQ has lead):

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has proposed the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) Severe Area State Implementation Plan (SIP) Revision for the 2008 Eight-Hour Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The attainment date for severe areas is July 20, 2027, with a 2026 attainment year. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) staff is reviewing and preparing comments, which will be highlighted for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) members at the workshop. Public comments close on January 16, 2024.

Update on Particulate Matter Standard:

On January 27, 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published proposed rules regarding reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter (PM). Anticipating final rules in the future, NCTCOG staff will highlight proposed rule changes, possible impacts to the region, and efforts to remain in attainment with the PM standard.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory Results:

NCTCOG staff will provide the Council with a summary of the North Central Texas 12-County Metropolitan Planning Area 2019 Inventory of Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and an overview of the inventory expansion. This Greenhouse Gas Inventory adds to the Ozone precursors and criteria pollutant inventories. It helps and supports the multipollutant comprehensive approach within the 12-county region to mitigate regional pollutants that pose substantial risks to the future health and well-being of the area.

Dallas Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan:

NCTCOG is leading a collaboration with local governments across the region to develop a Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan, which will outline measures to reduce emissions of ozone-forming pollutants, fine particulate matter, and greenhouse gases (GHG) in all 16 counties of the NCTCOG planning area. The first major deliverable due to EPA under the CPRG is a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), which must be submitted by March 1, 2024. This plan must include a GHG emissions inventory and a quantified list of measures that can be implemented to improve air quality. Upon plan submittal, NCTCOG intends to coordinate a regional grant proposal requesting funding from the EPA CPRG Implementation Grants program, which can be used to help pay for implementation of measures included in the PCAP. The Implementation Grants application is due by April 1, 2024. A preliminary list of measures for inclusion in the PCAP will be presented, along with information on how measures are being prioritized, for review and feedback.

Federal Highway Greenhouse Gas Performance Measures:

On November 22, 2023, the Federal Highway Administration released its final rule establishing for the measurement and reporting of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with transportation. Similar to already existing federal performance measures on safety, transit, roadway reliability, etc., it requires State departments of transportation (TxDOT) and metropolitan planning organizations (the RTC) to establish declining carbon dioxide (CO₂) targets for the GHG measure and report on progress toward the achievement of those targets. NCTCOG staff will provide a summary on the rule and upcoming schedule.

Performance Measure(s) Addressed: Air Quality

8. Progress Reports

☐ Action ☐ Possible Action ☒ Information

Item Summary: Progress Reports are provided in the items below.

- RTC Attendance ([Electronic Item 8](#))

9. **Other Business (Old or New)**: This item provides an opportunity for members to bring items of interest before the group.
10. **Future Agenda Items**: This item provides an opportunity for members to bring items of future interest before the Council.
11. **Next Meeting**: The next meeting of the Regional Transportation Council is scheduled for **1:00 pm, Thursday, February 8, 2024, in the Transportation Council Room.**

MINUTES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL December 14, 2023

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) met on Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 1:00 pm in the Transportation Council Room of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). The following members or representatives were present: Daniel Alemán, Bruce Arfsten, Steve Babick, Rick Bailey, Adam Bazaldua, Elizabeth M. Beck, Gyna Bivens, Alan Blaylock, Joel Burns (representing Raj Narayanan), J.D. Clark, Ceason Clemens, Michael D. Crain, Theresa Daniel, Jeff Davis, Andy Eads, Michael Evans, Gary Fickes, TJ Gilmore, Raul H. Gonzalez, Barry L. Gordon, Ron Jensen, Brandon Jones, Brad LaMorgese, Cara Mendelsohn John B. Muns, Matthew Porter (representing Chris Schulmeister), Manny Ramirez, Jim R. Ross, David Salazar, Gary Slagel, Andy Sommerman (representing Clay Jenkins), Jeremy Tompkins, Scott Turnage (representing Oscar Trevino), William Tsao, Chad West, and Cheryl Williams (representing Duncan Webb).

Others present at the meeting were: Jason Abair, Angela Alcedo, Vickie Alexander, Matthew Amend, Micah Baker, Natalie Bettger, Lauren Betz, Brandi Bird, Alberta Blair, Molly Carroll, Don Carroll, Angie Carson, Curt Cassidy, Lori Clark, Dina Colarosa, Jeff Coulter, Dawn Dalrymple, Caryl DeVries, Elijah Dorminy, Mike Eastland, Chad Edwards, Colby Frantz, David Fruth, Eve Gersh, Donzell Gipson, Rebekah Gongora, Christie Gotti, Iris Gutierrez, Heather Harrington, Tony Hartzel, Joel James, Amy Johnson, Devia Joshi, Maya Joyner, Dan Kessler, Gus Khankarli, Ken Kirkpatrick, Chris Klaus, Dan Lamers, Bradley LeCureaux, Eron Linn, Stanford Lynch, Dillon Marony, Frances Mascarenas, Gabriel Medina, Erin Moore, Michael Morris, Jenny Narvaez, Jeff Neal, Mark Nelson, Donald Parker, Michael Peters, John Polster, James Powell, Vercie Pruitt-Jenkins, Andrei Radu, Randy Richardson, Sarah Rogers, Kelly Rouse, Connor Sadro, Toni Stehling, David Tidwell, Jonathan Toffer, Glen Whitley, Kylie Wieden, Amanda Wilson, Brian Wilson, Karla Windsor, Glennis Woolridge, and Susan Young.

1. **Opportunity for Public Comment on Today's Agenda:** This item allows members of the public an opportunity to comment on agenda items. Regional Transportation Council Chair Gyna Bivens asked if there were any public comments. No members of the public chose to speak at the meeting or provide written comments.
2. **Approval of November 9, 2023, Minutes:** The minutes of the November 9, 2023, meeting were approved as submitted in Electronic Item 2. Cara Mendelsohn (M); Adam Bazaldua (S). The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Consent Agenda:** The following items were included on the Consent Agenda.
 - 3.1. **Modifications to the Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 Unified Planning Work Program**
A recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of modifications to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 and FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) was requested. Direction for staff to administratively amend the Transportation Improvement Program and other administrative/planning documents, as appropriate, to reflect the approved modifications was also sought.

3.2. Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Rail Additional Funding for National Environmental Policy Act Consultant

3.3 Regional Transportation Council Local Funds for North Texas Innovation Alliance Urban Resilience Fellowship Program

Staff requested a recommendation for Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of \$18,000 in RTC Local funds to support three problem statements submitted through the North Texas Innovation Alliance (NTXIA) Urban Resilience Fellowship Program.

Michael Morris pulled Consent Agenda Item 3.2 at the request of Councilmember Mendelsohn and a motion was made to approve Items 3.1 and 3.3 as provided in the packet. Jeremy Tompkins. (M); Theresa Daniel (S). The motion passed unanimously.

Dan Lamers of NCTCOG presented Item 3.2, Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Rail Additional Funding for National Environmental Policy Act Consultant. Dan noted that staff was requesting approval from the Regional Transportation Council to adjust the scope and budget on the consultant contract for the high-speed rail connection study between Dallas, Fort Worth and Arlington. The adjustment would allow staff flexibility throughout the process to respond as needed regarding various refinement and alignment alternatives as it pursues a finding of No Significant Impact through the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process. The study is entering phase 2 of the NEPA process. Once the formal process for Phase 2 begins, staff will have 12 months to complete the phase and it will be necessary to respond quickly when issues arise. Dan requested Regional Transportation Council approval for additional funding (not to exceed 10 percent of current contract or \$1,099,657 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds) for a consultant contract to complete preliminary engineering and environmental documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The request also included direction for staff to administratively amend other planning documents as necessary. Cara Mendelsohn expressed concern regarding the depiction of the high-speed rail project in the presentation being shown as elevated in the city of Dallas, but below grade in the cities of Fort Worth and Arlington. She noted that Dallas wants the project to be below grade in Dallas and that the area planned for the project is in an area of significant investment with the planned new convention center costing several billion dollars. She added that the area must be walkable and Dallas will not accept trains running through the area. She explained that she asked for the item to be pulled from the consent agenda because she feels that if over \$1.1 million is needed for engineering to determine below grade for Dallas, it is unnecessary. Councilmember Mendelsohn stated that she would be happy to amend the agreement if more money is needed because it is a very complicated area with utilities and other transit, and tunneling expertise is needed. She reiterated that the project must be below ground, and it is unacceptable for it to be at grade. Regarding the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) line which already connects Fort Worth and Dallas, Councilmember Mendelsohn noted that previously an amendment was made by a former Dallas Councilmember and RTC member that would not permit a stop in Arlington on the TRE unless Arlington has a significant transit investment as a member of a transit agency and to date that has not happened. She asked how it could be called high speed rail when it's not possible for a train to get to a high speed between Dallas and Arlington, and the next segment from Arlington to Fort Worth, when there are not enough miles to get to a high speed. Michael Morris suggested that the discussion stay on the agenda topic. He noted that Dallas seems to be interested in a tunnel option. He noted that he has asked the Hunts several times over the last four to six months for a formal request regarding a tunnel option but has yet to receive it. Michael noted that under State law the most the

contract could be amended would be is 10 percent, anything above would be in violation of State law. Because Councilmember Mendelsohn's request is asking staff to get tunnel experts to answer the question of can and how to get a tunnel beneath the Trinity River, Michael noted that if staff's request is approved and a request is received, staff will be able to pursue an answer regarding a tunnel. The votes of the Regional Transportation Council require a one-seat ride between Fort Worth and Dallas. For a one-seat ride, the City of Dallas by definition, has a high-speed rail station to Houston that is seven stories off the ground. Also, it was recently stated that the Amtrak Hub will come into Union Station and NCTCOG staff has been instructed to get people from the high-speed rail station to the Union Station to interface with a new Amtrak line to Atlanta. With approval of staff's request and a request regarding a tunnel option, the monies will be available to get the tunnel experts to determine the viability of a tunnel beneath the river. Michael explained that all other questions have previously been answered at least once and suggested that staff bring back a comprehensive presentation that will update everyone regarding the history of the project, including a recent presentation to the City of Arlington on this topic. Councilmember Mendelsohn requested that the project line on the first page of the presentation (Electronic Item 3.2) that indicates an elevated station in blue between Grand Prairie and Dallas be changed to red so that there is an understanding of what the City of Dallas is requesting. Michael explained that the color cannot be changed because that was not the topic on the day's agenda. He added that the color would change in 12 to 13 months when the Environmental Impact Study is completed but the study has not started yet. Following much discussion, a motion was made to approve \$1,099,657 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds (as a "not to exceed" amount) and Transportation Development Credits to increase the consultant budget (not to exceed 10 percent of original contract budget) for the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study to complete preliminary engineering and environmental documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The action included direction for staff to administratively amend other planning documents as well.

Elizabeth Beck (M); Jim Ross (S). Motion passed unanimously.

4. **Orientation to Agenda/Director of Transportation Report:** Michael Morris highlighted items in the Director of Transportation Report. Michael Morris announced that NCTCOG won \$500,000 in Planning funds in the Corridor ID program and recognized Dan Lamers and Brendon Wheeler for their efforts. He recognized NCTCOG staff members Jeff Neal and Karla Windsor, and City of Dallas staff members Gus Khankarli and Molly Carroll for their work on East Lancaster and Martin Luther King Blvd. Michael referenced other items on the Director's report. The October 2024 RTC meeting may be rescheduled due to the Texas Municipal League conference. He asked the Council members to send Toni Stehling suggested dates, preferable Thursdays which are best. Regarding the letter Chair Bivens sent to TxDOT on its rulemaking for metropolitan planning organizations, no follow up has been received. Councilmember Cara Mendelsohn asked if transportation dollars normally set for bridges and roads would be offset for broadband initiatives. Michael Morris mentioned that the fear of technical people is money is going to rural and not urban.
5. **Safety Program Implementation of Innovative Ideas to Reduce Youth Fatalities Due to Motor Vehicle Crashes:** Natalie Bettger requested Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval for \$4 million in Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) funds to be added to the RTC Safety Program for the implementation of innovative ideas to reduce youth fatalities due to motor vehicle crashes. In 2021, only 12 percent of licensed drivers within the State of Texas are under the age of 25 years old and account for nearly 19 percent of fatalities

in motor vehicle crashes. This disproportionate risk can be explained by several causes including inexperience, critical errors in driving decisions, distracted driving, speeding, as well as substance abuse. NCTCOG would like to partner with industry experts to implement innovative ideas to reduce youth fatalities associated with motor vehicle crashes. These funds will be utilized to implement ideas that are generated through a Call for Partners. Elizabeth Beck asked if drag racing and burnouts would be addressed. Rick Bailey commented that because of the lack of Departments of Public Safety in our cities, the cities are struggling. Michael Morris noted that \$7 million has been identified for speed enforcement and \$2 million for speed education, therefore combining education and enforcement.

Elizabeth Beck. (M); Theresa Daniel (S). The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Additional Professional Services for the Cotton Belt Trail:** Karla Windsor requested approval of funds for additional design services associated with the Cotton Belt Trail. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Silver Line rail project is coordinating an approximate 26-mile parallel regionally significant Cotton Belt Regional Veloweb Trail that will provide pedestrian and bicycle access to rail stations in seven cities across three counties. Construction of the Cotton Belt Trail is being managed by DART and will occur in phases as funding is available. Engineering design for the Trail initiated in January 2021. Additional design services, which were not anticipated with the initial negotiated consultant scope of work, are required to integrate the trail with the Silver Line Rail project and to adequately complete the plans that will be issued for construction. Staff requested \$4 million of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds with 800,000 Regional Transportation Development Credits for contingency funding of additional professional design services. The design process identified additional unanticipated constraints and alternatives needed. Additional engineering design is needed to adequately complete the plans that will be issued for construction. Local governments will coordinate directly with DART and the North Central Texas Council of Governments concerning any changes related to design and ensure there are no unauthorized changes impacting the project budget or timeframe for project implementation. Karla Windsor provided the history and timeline of the project. Cara Mendelsohn will send a letter regarding design concerns on the trail.

Cara Mendelsohn (M); Theresa Daniel (S). The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Update on Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Program:** Lori Clark provided an update on NCTCOG's efforts to develop a Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan, including the status of a regional greenhouse gas emission inventory and stakeholder engagement to identify and prioritize regional strategies. NCTCOG received a \$1 million planning grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program, which was created by the Inflation Reduction Act. CPRG planning grants support development and implementation of plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution of local concern. NCTCOG is using this funding to develop a Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan that will outline strategies to reduce emissions of ozone-forming pollutants, fine particulate matter, and greenhouse gases across all 16 counties of the NCTCOG planning area. Work is being done collaboratively between NCTCOG's Transportation, Environment and Development, and Workforce Solutions departments. The first major deliverable due to EPA under this grant is a Priority Climate Action Plan, which must be submitted by March 1, 2024. This plan must include a greenhouse gas emission inventory and a quantified list of strategies that will

be implemented to improve air quality throughout the NCTCOG region. NCTCOG is currently seeking input on potential strategies from stakeholders across the region through two surveys, one for organizations who would be in a role to implement projects, and one for residents to convey areas of greatest interest and concern. This feedback will assist staff in prioritizing strategies for quantification and inclusion in the plan submitted to EPA. A series of “open house” style public meetings is underway. Upon plan submittal, NCTCOG intends to begin drafting a grant proposal to seek funding from the EPA CPRG Implementation Grants program, which can be used to help pay for implementation of strategies included in the Priority Climate Action Plan. The Implementation Grants application is due by April 1, 2024. Lori provided the anticipated schedule for this project. Flyers were distributed to the RTC at the meeting, and are also available in English and Spanish. Chair Bivens asked the question that if we had this earlier, would it have helped with the West Dallas smelter. Michael Morris responded that it would have helped with the West Dallas smelter issue. Rick Bailey commented that projects like biosolids farming should be moved further away from here.

8. **Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation Program:** Natalie Bettger provided an overview of the grant and possible project opportunities for a regional application for the 2023-2024 Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovative (ATTAIN) Program. In November 2023, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an announcement for the ATTAIN program proposals that deploy, install, and operate advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, system performance, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure return on investment. The USDOT will provide funding of up to \$12 million per grant. A 20 percent local match is required. Applications are due to the USDOT by February 2, 2024. Natalie provided a summary and a brief overview of possible regional project opportunities. Natalie provided ATTAIN technologies, Program Goals, Administrations Priorities, DOT Focus Areas, Opportunity Request for Partners, and a Schedule. Staff anticipates bringing a project for action in January. STTC action will also be requested in January.
9. **End of Ozone Season Recap:** Chris Klaus provided a summary of the 2023 ozone season activity and other air quality updates for the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) region. The ozone season is from March 1 to November 30. The end of November concluded another ozone season for the DFW region. The region continues to work towards compliance for both the 2008 and 2015 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Staff has been tracking the exceedance days at each monitor and will provide a summary of the 2023 ozone season data for the North Central Texas 9- and 10-county nonattainment areas, compare against previous ozone seasons and what the state has modeled. a letter from Governor Greg Abbott to the Environmental Protection Agency, dated October 12, 2023, requesting a voluntary reclassification from moderate to serious nonattainment for the 2015 ozone standard. Likely a result of the regions 2023 design value landing significantly higher than the required 70 parts per billion. A letter was referenced from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) announcing a public hearing and comment period on the proposed DFW State Implementation Plan revisions for severe nonattainment and a 2026 attainment year to be at or below 75 parts per billion. Chris Klaus provided exceedance trends; Ozone design value trends – preliminary; NOx and VOC emissions apportionment; Monitor locations with associated fourth highest value; timeline and milestones – 2015 ozone standard; 2008 ozone standard, and air quality 2.0 – path forward. Rick Bailey commented that the Johnson County location referred to is a TCEQ permitted human waste field. Steve Babick requested we look at other regions to compare.

10. **Progress Reports:** Regional Transportation Council attendance was provided in Electronic Item 10.1.
11. **Other Business (Old or New):** There was no discussion on this item.
12. **Future Agenda Items:** There was no discussion on this item.
13. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Regional Transportation Council is scheduled for Thursday, January 11, 2024, 1:00 pm, at the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The meeting adjourned at 2:41 pm.

TRANSPORTATION

ONLINE PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY

MONDAY, JAN. 8 - TUESDAY, FEB. 6, 2024

WHAT DO YOU THINK? TELL US.

Learn about transportation in the region and help set future priorities. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) and North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), together serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth area, are seeking public input. Information will be posted online at publicinput.com/nctcogJan24 for public review and comment **Monday, Jan. 8 - Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024.**

2024 Regional Transportation Funding Program

Over the past few months, NCTCOG staff has been evaluating funding requests from agencies in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. The 2024 Regional Transportation Funding Program is a culmination of those efforts and proposes to award federal and regional funding to projects across the region. Details of the program will be posted online for review and comment.

Funding to Support Special Events in Dallas-Fort Worth

The RTC recently took action to support transportation planning efforts related to several regional events. Information on the "Wings Over Cowtown Air Show", which will be held in April 2024 at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB), as well as information on the 2024 Major League Baseball All-Star Game and the 2026 FIFA World Cup, will be posted online for review and comment.

Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan

Local governments are collaborating with NCTCOG to develop the Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan (DFW AQIP), a regional plan to improve air quality, protect public health and address extreme weather events. The development of this plan is supported through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. Details of the plan will be posted online for review and comment.

For special accommodations due to a disability or for language interpretation, contact Jackie Castillo at 817-695-9255 or jcastillo@nctcog.org at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. Reasonable accommodations will be made.

SUBMIT COMMENTS & QUESTIONS TO NCTCOG:

nctcogJan24@publicinput.com
publicinput.com/nctcogJan24
 Phone: 855-925-2801 (code: 2205)
 Fax: 817-640-3028
 P.O. Box 5888, Arlington, TX,
 76005-5888

To request printed copies of the information, call 817-695-9255 or email jcastillo@nctcog.org.



RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Interactive Public Input: Map Your Experience:
nctcog.org/mapyourexperience

Regional Smoking Vehicle Program (RSVP):
smokingvehicle.net

Vehicle Incentive & Funding Opportunities:
nctcog.org/aqfunding

Try Parking It:
tryparkingit.com

MINUTES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL ONLINE PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITY

End of 2023 Ozone Season

Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Fleet Recognition Awards and Annual Survey Results

National Drive Electric Week Recap

Online Public Input Opportunity Dates

Monday, Dec. 11, 2023 - Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024 – The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) posted information at www.publicinput.com/nctcogDec23 for public review and comment.

Purpose and Topics

The online public input opportunity was provided in accordance with the NCTCOG Transportation Department Public Participation Plan, which became effective June 1, 1994, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and amended on November 8, 2018. Staff posted information regarding:

1. End of 2023 Ozone Season
2. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Fleet Recognition Awards and Annual Survey Results
3. National Drive Electric Week Recap

The NCTCOG online public input opportunity was provided to inform and seek comments from the public. Comments and questions were submitted by email at nctcogDec23@publicinput.com, online at www.publicinput.com/nctcogDec23, by mail at PO Box 5888, Arlington, TX 76005 and by fax at 817-640-3028. Printed copies of the online materials were also made available by calling 817-695-9255 or emailing jcastillo@nctcog.org.

Summary of Presentations

End of 2023 Ozone Season presentation: <https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/80eb1881-0b85-4e4b-8868-00f980857fbe/End-of-2023-Ozone-Season.pdf>

Ozone is a gas composed of three atoms of oxygen and occurs both in the Earth's upper atmosphere and at ground level. Ground-level ozone is commonly referred to as "bad ozone" and forms when emission sources emit nitrogen oxides and/or volatile organic compounds that react in the presence of sunlight. Ozone can make it more difficult to breathe, aggravate lung diseases, and inflame and damage the airway.

North Texas is currently under two ozone standards, one for 2008 and one for 2015. Because the region did not meet attainment for either standard, NCTCOG staff is preparing for the region to be reclassified from marginal to moderate under the 2015 standard and from serious to severe under the 2008 standard.

Staff expects the attainment deadline for the new classifications to be no later than July 20, 2027 for the 2008 standard and no later than August 3, 2024 for the 2015 standard.

For more information on regional air quality, visit <https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/ozone>.

Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Fleet Recognition Awards and Annual Survey Results presentation: <https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/58763cc1-c92d-4e9e-84de-3b58ba836269/DFWCC-2023-Fleet-Recognition-Survey-Results.pdf>

NCTCOG is the host organization for Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities (DFWCC), a U.S. Department of Energy initiative to reduce total energy impacts in the transportation sector. As part of these efforts, DFWCC surveys local fleets each year about alternative fuel use and other fuel-saving activities.

Fifty-two fleets participated in the 2022 Annual Survey and assisted in reducing approximately 27 tons of ozone-forming nitrogen oxides and approximately 176,226 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. Staff also recognized winners of the 2023 Fleet Challenge Goals, Greatest Progress in NOX Reduction, Alternative Fuel Champions and Greatest Showcase of Efficiency Strategies. Winners included the City of Addison, City of Grand Prairie, City of Southlake, Tarrant County, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and DFW International Airport.

To view the 2022 Annual Report and for more information on the 2023 Annual Survey, visit www.dfwcleancities.org.

National Drive Electric Week Recap presentation: <https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/e5c6a329-1892-4443-9fee-f2176206cf21/National-Drive-Electric-Week-Recap.pdf>

This year's National Drive Electric Week (NDEW) event provided an array of free activities that helped educate the public on electric vehicles (EV). The event featured opportunities for attendees to engage with current EV owners, explore EV displays, participate in ride-and-drives and witness EV charging demonstrations. The event's location at the Tanger Outlets in Fort Worth drew more attendees than in previous years.

The exhibition showcased 20 exhibitors and more than 70 ride-and-drives were provided by Pedego Electric Bikes and Autobahn Fort Worth. Attendee feedback also highlighted an appreciation for the range of EVs available for exploration as well as the opportunity to interact one-on-one with the owners.

To learn more about NDEW and EVs, visit www.driveelectricdfw.org.

**COMMENTS SUBMITTED DURING THE COMMENT PERIOD VIA WEBSITE,
EMAIL, SOCIAL MEDIA, PHONE, AND MAIL**

PUBLIC COMMENTS REPORT

WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY WEBSITE, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA

Purpose

The public comments report is in accordance with the NCTCOG Transportation Department Public Participation Plan, which became effective June 1, 1994, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and amended on Nov. 10, 2022.

This report is a compilation of general public comments submitted by members of the public from Monday, Nov. 20 through Tuesday, Dec. 19. Comments and questions are submitted for the record and can be submitted via Facebook, Twitter, fax, email, online and in person at the monthly RTC meeting.

This month, public comments were received on a number of topics across social media platforms and via email. Comments related to safety were in the majority.

In addition, comments can be submitted through Map Your Experience, the Transportation Department's online mapping tool. The tool allows users to drop a pin on a location in the region and leave a detailed comment. The tool received 5 new comments related to bicycle and pedestrian conditions. You can view these new comments as well as past comments by visiting <http://nctcoggis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CrowdsourceReporter/index.html?appid=b014e6d39b604b3ca329d9094ed1e9e2>.

Air Quality

Twitter –

1. NCTCOG is collaborating with local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Air Quality Improvement Plan. The plan will create a roadmap to improve air quality & protect public health. Please provide feedback at <http://publicinput.com/dfwAQIP> or in person on December 4th. — Dallas Climate Action (@DallasClimate)



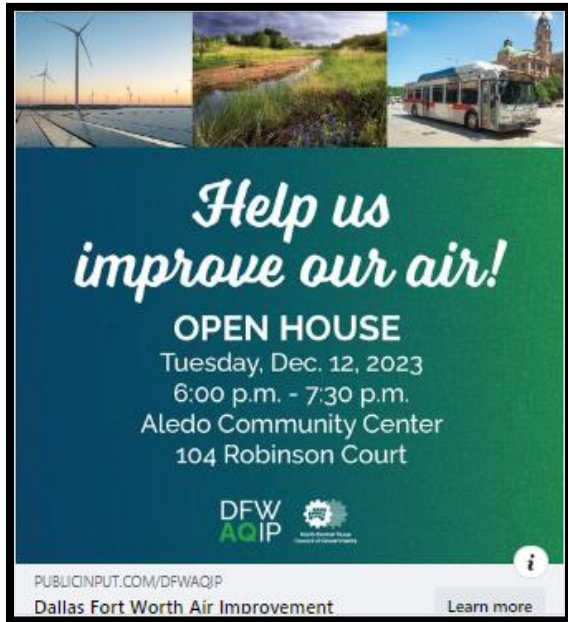
2. @DallasCountyTx is seeking your input on ways to improve air quality, protect public health, & address extreme weather events! This feedback will help our DFW Air Quality Improvement Plan, a regional plan developed by @NCTCOGtrans.

Provide feedback-> <http://publicinput.com/dfwAQIP-survey> — Clay Lewis Jenkins (@JudgeClayJ)



Facebook –

1. We want your feedback on ways to improve regional air quality! — NCTCOG Transportation Department

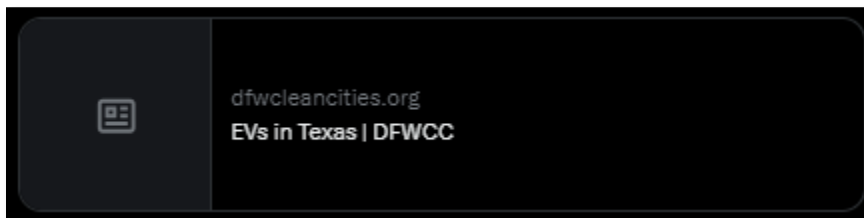


Ban outdoor smoking. — Marty King

Alternative Fuel Vehicles

Twitter –

1. Data from @NCTCOGtrans — Luke Metzger (@Lukemetzger)



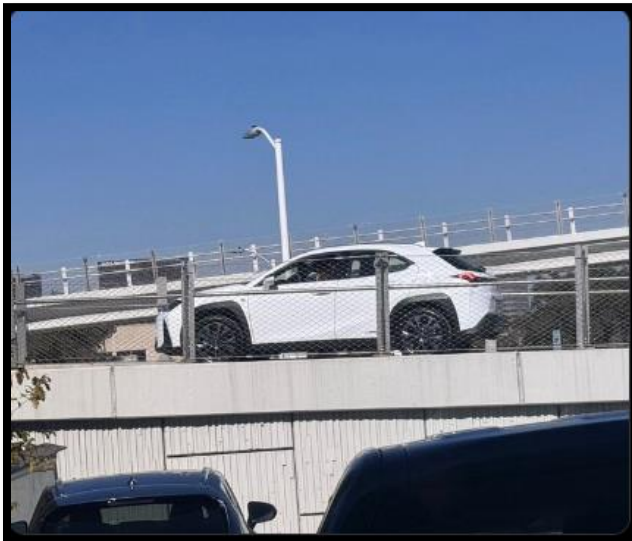
Bicycle/Pedestrian/Sustainable Development

Twitter –

1. Great morning to get outside👍 We dedicated @NorthavenTrail bridge over 75 today. You can now take northhaven trail to cottonwood, white rock lake,santa fe trail, downtown + several others! Thanks to our partners @NCTCOGtrans @CityOfDallas @TxDOT @DallasCoTrails @DallasCountyTx — Clay Lewis Jenkins (@JudgeClayJ)



Didn't Clay get his Tesla stuck on the bridge a few weeks ago? Clay it is pedestrian only bridge! That includes EVs! — Nate Weymouth (@NateWeymouth)



Lay tagged 2 dormant county twitter accounts @DallasCoTrails @DallasCountyTx pretending the county has a social media presence — Cynic1234 (@cdsheetr)

Clay, did you drive across the trail in your Tesla or do donuts on a motorcycle? — Cynic1234 (@cdsheetr)

2. What a beautiful morning to officially open the @NorthavenTrail bridge! Thanks to @TxDOTDallas, @CityOfDallas, @DallasParkRec, Dallas County, @NCTCOGtrans, FoNHT, and all the agencies who collaborated to make this a reality. The bridge is awesome! #DallasParks #DallasTrails — Jeff Kitner (@JeffKitner)



3. Celebrating the completion of the new Northaven Trail Bridge, a 201-foot-long pedestrian bridge that connects the @NorthavenTrail to the White Rock Creek Trail and Cottonwood Creek Trail. — Senator Nathan Johnson (@NathanForTexas)



Thank you to the @CityOfDallas, Dallas County, @DallasParkRec, @NCTCOG_Official, @TxDOT, and Friends of @NorthavenTrail for providing a safe recreational area for pedestrians, cyclists, and joggers to enjoy. #TXLege#SD16 — Senator Nathan Johnson (@NathanForTexas)



4. Updates on @NorthavenTrail bridge surrounding infrastructure:

- Trash cans/dog waste stations installed by @DallasParkRec

- More “No Motor Vehicles” signage from @TxDOTDallas

Still to come:

- Improved road/bike lane barrier

- Better road/bike lane deviation signs from

@CityOfDallas — Jeff Kitner (@JeffKitner)



High-Speed Transportation

Twitter –

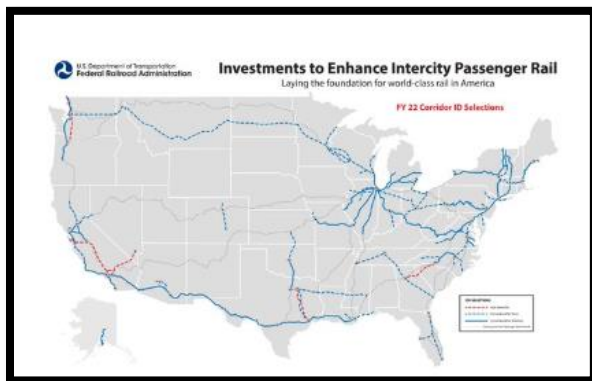
1. U.S. House rail committee hears from Austin Mayor @KirkPWatson on need for intercity passenger rail in Texas Triangle. DFW-Austin-San Antonio pax rail corridor is "low hanging fruit". <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/austin-mayor-kirk-watson-on-us-house-transpo-pax-rail-hearing-texas-needs-intercity-passenger-rail-corridors> @TxDOT @TxDOTCommission @AndyBrownATX @NCTCOGtrans — Peter J LeCody (@railadvo)



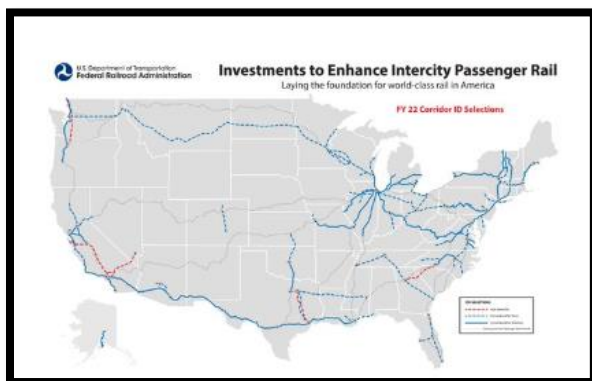
2. U.S. House rail committee hears from Austin Mayor @KirkPWatson on need for intercity passenger rail in Texas Triangle. DFW-Austin-San Antonio pax rail corridor is "low hanging fruit". <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/austin-mayor-kirk-watson-on-us-house-transpo-pax-rail-hearing-texas-needs-intercity-passenger-rail-corridors> @TxDOT @TxDOTCommission @AndyBrownATX @NCTCOGtrans — Texas Rail Advocates (@TXRailAdvocates)



3. Federal Corridor ID Rail Grants awarded to @TxDOT, @Amtrak, @NCTCOGtrans to develop passenger rail plans. Details: <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/texas-scores-in-federal-passenger-rail-corridor-grants> — Peter J LeCody (@railadvo)



4. Federal Corridor ID Rail Grants awarded to @TxDOT, @Amtrak, @NCTCOGtrans to develop passenger rail plans. Now let's Connect Texas. Details: <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/texas-scores-in-federal-passenger-rail-corridor-grants> — Texas Rail Advocates (@TXRailAdvocates)



5. Is Brightline Texas on the horizon? <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/after-brightline-florida-and-soon-brightline-west-could-there-be-brightline-texas> @GoBrightline @TravisCoJudge @KirkPWatson @TxDOT @NCTCOGtrans — Peter J LeCody (@railadvo)



6. Is Brightline Texas on the horizon? <https://texasrailadvocates.org/post/after-brightline-florida-and-soon-brightline-west-could-there-be-brightline-texas> @GoBrightline @TravisCoJudge @KirkPWatson @TxDOT @NCTCOGtrans — Texas Rail Advocates (@TXRailAdvocates)



Let's hope so! — Clayton Meeker (@Clm1403)

Rideshare/Carpool

Twitter –

1. Irony: The prize for signing up for a carpool-vanpool-public transit sharing site is 2 tickets to the transit-deprived Dallas Cowboys @clarencehilljr — Bud Kennedy / #ReadLocal (@BudKennedy)



Roadways

Email –

1. John Donaghey, AIA-E

Dear NCTCOG, You are aware of the impossible traffic during the rush hours and how it is being impacted by the new construction of road improvements. An obvious aid for this situation is one used in Oregon. Limiting the number of new county residents would place a governor on the ever increasing strain on our infrastructure. Success is strangling the County. I thank my lucky stars everyday that I am retired and not required to participate in the rush hour traffic jams. Here is Oregon's solution to urban sprawl. Some open space would be desirable over covering every spare area of land. Good for the air quality too.

<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2016/05/16/urban-sprawl-portland> Thank you for the opportunity to add my two cents. John Donaghey AIA

Response by NCTCOG Transportation Staff:

Mr. Donaghey, Thank you for contacting the NCTCOG Transportation Department. Your comments will be provided to the Regional Transportation Council and have been shared with our roadway planning team for their consideration. Thank you.

Safety

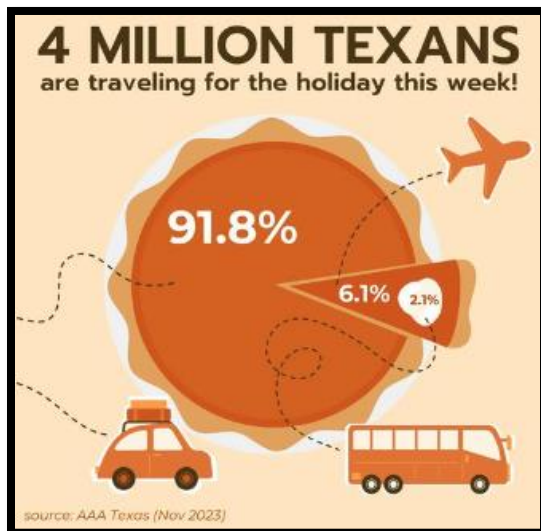
Twitter –

1. Congrats to @CityOfDallas, Dept of Transportation & @NCTCOGtrans for securing this grant which will have a major impact on safety. I believe we should prioritize fixing our most dangerous streets based on safety data, not district #. — Cara Mendelsohn(@caraathome)



Facebook –

1. Traveling for Thanksgiving? AAA predicts this will be one of the busiest years for holiday travel across the US! 3.7 million Texans are expected to be on the roads this week, so stay safe and #DriveAware! For driving tips and resources, visit driveawarentx.org — NCTCOG Transportation Department



Somebody take me with you! — Tim Norton

2. From 2018-2022, more than 80,000 crashes in North Texas were the result of distracted driving. It's not worth your life. — NCTCOG Transportation Department



As a truck driver I see plenty of people swerving and then when I am passing them there is a phone in their hand, especially those who try to hide it at their crotch (those are the most dangerous). This is not just car drivers but truck drivers as well. A Window Mount might cost \$20 and it will help you with the GPS functions when you need it. There are a few applications where you can do hands free texting, phone calls, or making your map program work for you. — Michael Harrington

so true — Edward Dent

ITS MY CAR AND I WILL TEXT AND LOOK AT FACEBOOK WHILE I DRIVE IT IF I WANT! CUZ I BELIEVE FREEDOM! — Pichael Mack

3. From 2018-2022, more than 80,000 crashes in North Texas were the result of distracted driving. It's not worth your life. — NCTCOG Transportation Department



But its worth that DoorDash tip — Shang Frazier

4. This week is Older Driver Safety Awareness Week. #DidYouKnow that in 2021, older drivers (age 65+) made up 21% of all licensed drivers in the United States? How to drive safely is a lifelong conversation and is especially important for aging adults. Begin talking about safe driving in general long before you notice difficulties. Remember: It is a person's driving performance, not age, that determines fitness to drive. Learn more: [NHTSA.gov/OlderDrivers](https://www.nhtsa.gov/OlderDrivers) #ODSAW — NCTCOG Transportation Department



How about the people coming over the border no driver's license or insurance just good old paper plates..... And you are worried about senior s..... — Jere Tucker

5. From 2018-2022, more than 80,000 crashes in North Texas were the result of distracted driving. It's not worth your life. — NCTCOG Transportation Department



Make it illegal for cops to use cell phones and laptops while driving if it is as dangerous as you claim. — Cooper Gatewood

There is only one way to know where you are going. And that is to look at your GPS. Smh. This ad is pointless — Chase Albright

Then stop making such great content. Can't help but comment on this while I drive — Samuel Smith

6. From 2018-2022, more than 80,000 crashes in North Texas were the result of distracted driving. It's not worth your life. — NCTCOG Transportation Department



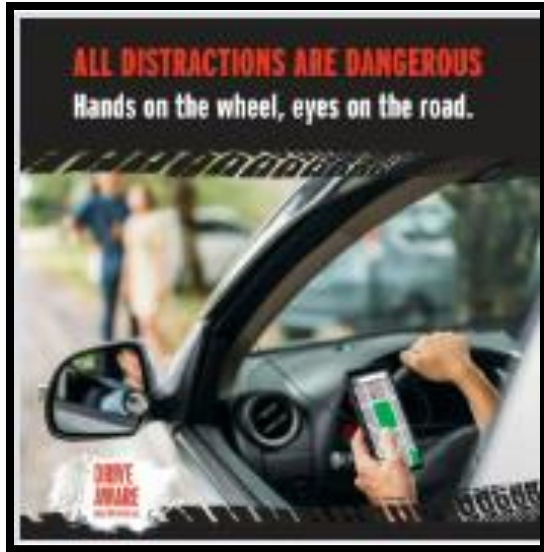
if we arent meant to eat while driving, why are there cup holders and drive thrus? im not eating no cold fries lol — Jorge A. Valentin

Would really like to see drivers have to requalify for the privilege to operate on the roads. It hasnt been long on the road for me but god, seeing someone merge onto the freeway at 35mph is just insane. — Joshua Olesiak

Eating a burger has never killed someone else. Let's replace that with women taking selfies while driving, people in general texting while driving. Never heard of a hit and run burger eater — Tony Porter

Instagram –

1. From 2018-2022, more than 80,000 crashes in North Texas were the result of distracted driving. It's not worth your life. — NCTCOG Transportation (@nctcogtrans)



I'm going to play Clash Royale™ and drive — rouxsauced (@rouxsauced)

2. How to drive safely is a lifelong conversation and is especially important for aging adults. Begin talking about safe driving in general long before you notice difficulties. Remember: It is a person's driving performance, not age, that determines fitness to drive. Learn more: [NHTSA.gov/OlderDrivers](https://www.nhtsa.gov/OlderDrivers) #ODSAW — NCTCOG Transportation (@nctcogtrans)



NCT MENTIONED!?! 🧠🧠!!🔥 — twnnitus (@twnnitus)

Transit

Email –

1. Phil Waigand

Have used and highlighted the TRE often as a place to show “Communities Coming Together”. For example, having the FW, Arlington & Dallas Boys & Girls Club joining up at CentrePort. So you the East & West TRE arriving at about the same time at CentrePort. So have an Arlington Boys & Girls Club representatives welcoming both East & West TREs at CentrePort. Then , have all 3 cities take a shuttle to the nearby hotel for a joint luncheon. This idea could work with churches, synagogues and other business/ civic groups. It is very doable and highlights the Metroplex & Transportation in a positive light. Thanks for listening

Response by NCTCOG Transportation Staff:

Mr. Waigand, Thank you for contacting the NCTCOG Transportation Department. Your comments will be provided to the Regional Transportation Council and have been shared with our transit team. Thank you.

Other

Facebook –

1. Wishing you safe travels and a wonderful #Thanksgiving holiday! — NCTCOG Transportation Department



This is traffic daily in Parker County! — Eric Hagre



2.

— NCTCOG Transportation Department

Lonnie Blaydes are you still donning the suit? Nice to see your Santa legacy still chugging along. 🎄👴🎄👴 — Cinde Weatherby

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

CAN TEXAS POWER GRID SURVIVE AN EL NINO WEATHER PATTERN? WHY WE'RE AT AN 'ELEVATED RISK'

By Dalia Faheid

Much of the U.S. this winter is at an “elevated risk” of having insufficient energy supply to meet electricity demand during extreme cold weather events, a November report from the [North American Electric Reliability Corporation](#) finds.

In the eastern two-thirds of North America at elevated risk, there are enough resources for normal winter peak demand. But any long-lasting, widespread cold snaps will be challenging due to generator outages and fuel vulnerability, extreme levels of electricity demand, difficulties in accurate forecasting and the risk of firm electricity transfer curtailments, according to [the NERC report](#).

In Texas, the risk of reserve shortage is greater than last winter mostly because of the robust load growth that is not being met by corresponding growth in dispatchable resources, the report says. Electricity demand in the state rises sharply as extreme cold weather adds to winter operating challenges and energy shortfall risks.

“Like other assessment areas in the Southern United States, the risk of a significant number of generator forced outages in extreme and prolonged cold temperatures continues to threaten reliability where generators and fuel supply infrastructure are not designed or retrofitted for such conditions,” the [winter reliability assessment](#) says about Texas.

Expected resources this winter in Texas will meet operating reserve requirements under normal peak-demand scenarios, the assessment says. Above-normal winter peak load and outage conditions could result in the need to employ operating mitigations (demand response and transfers) and energy emergency alerts. Load shedding is unlikely but may be necessary given widespread cold weather events.

With [the El Nino weather pattern expected](#) to firm up this month, Texas can expect more snow and colder temperatures which will surely push electricity use to peak levels.

Is ERCOT up to the task?

“ERCOT expects to have sufficient generation to meet demand this winter,” a spokesperson with The Electric Reliability Council of Texas told the Star-Telegram.

The risk of reserve shortages leading to energy emergency alerts has increased from “low” to “elevated” for the peak load hour. Electricity demand is expected to be 6% higher this year compared to last year in Texas, at 70,451 megawatts for the winter.

The [Electric Reliability Council of Texas is taking steps](#) to acquire additional capacity ahead of winter that can reduce the possibility of energy emergencies, the NERC report says. ERCOT also implemented a new firm fuel supply service that’s expected to partially offset the lost generation capacity that can happen when natural gas supplies are limited.

For the cold season, ERCOT will face reserve shortage risks during high net load hours. There is an 11.6% probability this winter that ERCOT will declare [a level one energy emergency](#)

[alert](#) during the highest-risk hour ending at 8 a.m., the NERC assessment says. In the winter, because solar generation is not available to serve peak demand, the system is made dependent on wind generation and dispatchable resource availability to meet the load.

Scarcity risks are higher than last winter mainly due to robust load growth along with insufficient new dispatchable resources to serve the higher net peak loads, NERC says. There's also been a large increase in thermal units operating under a summer-only schedule, causing an expected loss of 1,283 megawatts of winter capacity.

"ERCOT continues a reliability-first approach to grid operations and will continue to operate the grid conservatively, bringing generating resources online early to mitigate sudden changes in generation or demand," the spokesperson said.

While ERCOT does not expect any significant fuel supply issues for the winter, fuel-related outages during [Winter Storm Elliott](#) last year indicate that natural gas-fired generators experience fuel restrictions during cold weather. ERCOT's new "Firm Fuel Supply Service," which was deployed during the storm, is expected to partially offset the lost generation capacity from natural gas restrictions. ERCOT has increasing transmission congestion from South Texas to South-Central Texas that will limit transfers during the winter, the NERC assessment reports.

What will resources look like the coming months?

In December, the expected peak load is 66,200 megawatts, with the total available resources being 81,500 megawatts and 5,100 in total emergency resources. As for January, the expected peak load is 71,700 MW, with the total available resources at 87,200 and the total emergency resources at 5,200.

ERCOT's monthly outlook for resource adequacy for [December](#) and [January](#) finds that reserve shortage risks are the highest during the morning hours when daily loads are typically at their highest (8 a.m.), just before and during solar production ramp-up. There is also some elevated risk in the evening due to increasing loads with a secondary peak occurring around 9 p.m.

In December, there's a low risk of ERCOT having to declare an energy emergency alert during the 8 a.m. peak load hour (5%), but the risk increases to 18% if similar weather conditions to Winter Storm Elliott in December 2022 occur.

In January, on the other hand, there's an elevated risk of an energy emergency (8%), and the risk increases to 21% if similar weather conditions to Winter Storm Elliott occur.

Under typical grid conditions, there should be sufficient generating capacity available to serve the expected peak load during both December and January, ERCOT says. The capacity reserve margin is higher in December, at 51% for the peak load hour, compared to 44% in January.

The ratio of available dispatchable to available total capacity for the peak load hour at 8 a.m. is about 80% for both months. This helps indicate the extent that the grid relies on dispatchable resources to meet the peak load.

What does NERC recommend?

The increasing prevalence of electric heat pumps and heating systems has had a pronounced effect on system demand in the country. The growth of intermittent resources like solar

generation on the distribution system significantly increases load forecasting complexity and uncertainty, NERC says.

NERC strongly recommends that operators take the necessary steps to prepare for winter. NERC also highlights the importance of taking action on the interdependence between bulk power and natural gas systems, including the need for sufficient and reliable gas and electric infrastructure to sustain energy reliability. Along with industry stakeholders, NERC has worked on new cold weather standards aiming to ensure power plants are adequately winterized and prepared for extremely cold temperatures.

NERC's winter assessment makes several recommendations to reduce the risks of energy shortfalls this winter: grid operators, generator owners and generator operators should implement certain cold weather preparations provided by [NERC's level 3 alert](#), reliability coordinators and balancing authorities should implement fuel surveys, balancing authorities should anticipate potential for underestimating load in extreme cold and state regulators and policymakers should support reduced electricity and natural gas use.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON HWY. 183, I-820 CORRIDOR IN TARRANT COUNTY

By Colby Farr

Crews began preconstruction activities along Hwy. 183 and I-820 in November as part of the [North Tarrant Express Capacity Improvement project](#), according to a news release.

What's happening?

The project will add a free, general-purpose lane in each direction along I-820 and a toll lane in each direction along Hwy. 183. Full construction is expected to be underway by mid-2024 with completion anticipated in 2027.

[\[MAP\]](#)

Early construction activity includes installing construction barriers and striping lanes, according to the news release. Most construction activities will occur overnight to minimize disruption to drivers.

The project will cost about \$414 million and will be fully funded by toll revenues collected from [NTE TEXpress Lanes](#).

What the experts say

When the project is completed, drivers should see an immediate improvement in congestion, said [David Schrank](#), senior research scientist at the [Texas A&M Transportation Institute](#). That feeling may ebb over time as more people move to the area and economic activity increases.

"Texas has this good problem in that a lot of people are moving to Texas," he said. "So there is additional demand that will be coming that isn't in the DFW area today."

The transportation institute published a [new report](#) Nov. 28 listing the state's 100 most congested roads in 2022. The Dallas-Fort Worth area counts 39 roads, including Hwy. 183 and I-820, among that list.

Added capacity typically improves a road's reliability when it comes to travel time, Schrank said. It may also benefit the roads around the corridor because the additional capacity will invite more drivers, he said.

"Nothing happens in a vacuum," Schrank said.

The background

The project is part of a [public-private agreement](#) between the [Texas Department of Transportation](#) and NTE Mobility Partners. The agreement called for capacity improvements when traffic counts reached a certain level.

“That threshold has been met almost eight years ahead of projection,” NTE Mobility Partners CEO Jose Espinosa said in a statement. “This is an exciting project that will continue to provide mobility innovation and congestion relief to one of the fastest-growing regions in the country.”

[Webber](#) and [Ferrovia Construction](#) are leading design and build services on the project as a joint venture named North Tarrant Infrastructure.

ARLINGTON GETS \$780K GRANT TO RESEARCH DRONE & ROBOT DELIVERY FROM FOOD BANKS

With the help of the U.S. Department of Energy grant, the city of Arlington said it will conduct an innovative pilot program to test the efficiency and scalability of using autonomous, electric drone and robot delivery vehicles. The goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions while serving residents in need.

By Lance Murray

Across the nation, many people in disadvantaged communities or with mobility challenges are looking for ways to get what they need from food banks via delivery vehicles—all the necessities, including canned goods, pasta, and other critical pantry staples.

Those delivery vehicles often idle at the curb during each drop off, emitting greenhouse emissions into the environment. What can be done to lessen that impact?

With the help of a \$780,182 U.S. Department of Energy grant, the city of Arlington said it will conduct the Multimodal Delivery Project, an innovative pilot program to test the efficiency and scalability of using autonomous, electric delivery vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while serving residents in need.

The city is partnering with the Tarrant Area Food Bank, UT Arlington, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition (hosted at the NCTCOG), Airspace Link, Aerialoop, and Clevon to implement the project through 2025.

Testing the use of drones and four-wheeled robots

The city said the goal of the two-year study is to test and evaluate the use of no-emission or low-emission drones and four-wheeled robots that are smaller than cars to deliver essential food items to persons who are mobility challenged, historically disadvantaged, or lack a reliable means of transportation.

“As transportation technology advances, so does the potential to make positive changes in the way we connect people with goods and services. Using electric drones and ground delivery robots to provide ‘last-mile’ delivery services can be a more environmentally friendly alternative to traditional delivery vehicles,” Alicia Winkelblech, the city of Arlington’s transportation director, said in a statement.

“As a national leader in innovative transportation solutions, we’re honored to partner with these autonomous delivery vehicle industry experts and other community leaders to research and share whether this technology is a viable way to serve the public while reducing greenhouse gases,” Winkelblech added.

Autonomous deliveries to Tarrant Area Food Bank clients

The city said that an estimated 300 boxes of food will be delivered to Tarrant Area Food Bank clients living in East Arlington during the study.

The deliveries will be made by Aerialoop’s ALT6-4 VTOL Delivery Drone, a 6-foot-long, battery-powered drone that can carry nearly nine pounds, and Clevon’s autonomous delivery robot,

CLEVON 1, equipped with a spacious cargo bay that clients can unlock with a code to access their delivery.

Clevon, an Estonia-based global autonomous delivery innovator, moved its U.S. headquarters to Fort Worth's AllianceTexas Mobility Innovation Zone in 2022, and [made its first robot delivery in the area last December](#).

Airspace Link's AirHub Portal will be used to provide the data and digital infrastructure needed for planning, decision-making, and operations, including detailed ground and air analysis that will help drone operators determine take-off, landing, and delivery routes, the city said. Planners said that routes will be formulated to avoid flying over residential areas and high-traffic roadways, and onboard sensors will use data only for navigation purposes.

The city of Arlington said it plans to host a showcase next spring for the public to see the technology and learn more about the study before the first deliveries.

"Airspace Link is thrilled to collaborate with the city of Arlington and our project partners to pioneer cutting-edge delivery solutions and foster industry partnerships," Michael Healand, Airspace Link's co-founder and CEO, said in a statement. "Combining the expertise of a drone management provider, a drone operator, and a ground delivery robot carrier, this partnership represents a groundbreaking approach to low-emission delivery methods. This collaboration will pave the way for future innovative initiatives in the region."

"Airspace Link is honored to have the opportunity to work closely with the Tarrant Area Food Bank to showcase how community-informed planning, routing, and assessment can effectively aid those in need while reducing environmental impact," Healand added.

Efficient, eco-friendly deliveries

Clevon CEO Meelis Anton said the company's autonomous delivery robot is designed to make food distribution both efficient and eco-friendly.

"It's inspiring to see our technology help bring essential goods to those in need, while also caring for the environment. This project not only showcases innovation in logistics but also reinforces our commitment to creating solutions that support community well-being and environmental sustainability," Anton said.

Aerialoop COO and co-founder Santiago Barrera said that Aerialoop is looking forward to bringing to Arlington the experience it has gained from operating commercial, beyond visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) and autonomous network routes in multiple Latin American countries.

"With over 14,000 commercial flights and a current average of 1,000 packages delivered per week in our Quito network, we see in this project the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the efficiency and scalability of drones for middle mile logistics," Barrera added.

Study will demonstrate autonomous deliveries in underserved communities

The city said that during the first year of the study, the project team will conduct community outreach, determine the locations for the deliveries, develop a concept of operations plan, and conduct the first of two short demonstrations.

It said that each demonstration will last between two and four weeks to test drone and autonomous delivery vehicle technology and performance delivering packages to homes. In the second year of the study, the first demonstration will be analyzed, a second demonstration will be conducted, and final analysis, reporting, and sharing of lessons learned will be completed.

“The rapidly growing Dallas-Fort Worth region requires innovative mobility solutions to enhance the movement of people, goods, and critical services, while also reducing the environmental impact and energy footprint of transportation. We’re excited to collaborate with the city of Arlington and project partners to explore how autonomous air and ground vehicles can address regional challenges effectively,” Ernest Huffman, NCTCOG program manager, aviation planning and education, said in a statement.

The Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Texas at Arlington will assist in engaging potential participants and the broader public within the study area to help determine the preferred delivery modalities, the city said. Graduate students in the IUS and graduate students under the direction of Dr. Yan Wan, distinguished university professor in the Electrical Engineering Department, will conduct community outreach and gather public input to help inform travel routes, delivery areas, and other key aspects of the overall demonstration project.

They will assist the project team in reporting project outcomes, participant experiences, and implications for further efforts, the city said.

“The project is a perfect example of the institute fulfilling its mission. In particular, the interdisciplinary efforts and community engagement employed in helping underserved populations in the City of Arlington are noteworthy. I look forward to seeing the outcome and impact of the project,” Ming-Han Li, dean of UTA’s College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs, said in a statement.

The project’s potential

A key benefit to the study is that the findings could help scale similar delivery services to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve overall efficiencies in delivery and transportation systems, the city said. Lessons learned from this project in Arlington will be shared widely to help other communities seeking similar solutions.

“We worked very closely with the City of Arlington during COVID, a time we both innovated quickly to meet soaring hunger in the city,” Stephen Raeside, chief external affairs officer at Tarrant Area Food Bank, said in a statement. “Emergency distributions feeding up to 10,000 families at Arlington sports stadiums changed our distribution model, but also made us consider how we could remain nimble and agile by utilizing new technology to meet the daily needs of struggling Arlington families.”

The city of Arlington said it was one of 45 recipients nationwide selected by the Department of Energy’s Vehicle Technologies Office competitive grant program, which provides funding to advance research, development, demonstration, and deployment of projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

The project’s total cost is estimated at \$1.6 million, roughly half of which is grant funded. The city said that the required local match will come from contributions from all project partners via in-kind staff time and the use of equipment.

THE STREET

CRITICAL U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE IS BEING TARGETED BY A GROWING THREAT

It's becoming harder to protect against outside attacks in an ever-more-interconnected world.

By Tony Owusu

A robust infrastructure is often the biggest differentiator between first world countries and developing ones.

The infrastructure in the United States has been crumbling for decades as politicians struggle to get Congressional support to spend the trillions of dollars needed to modernize our electric, transportation, and sewage grids.

But first world infrastructure is facing a much scarier threat than just time and neglect. Hackers are also targeting critical infrastructure in the U.S., and in recent weeks they have been particularly busy with their attacks.

This week alone hospitals across the U.S. had to divert ambulances from their emergency rooms due to a ransomware attack; the North Texas Municipal Water District started investigating a suspected ransomware attack; real estate services company Fidelity National Financial was also hit by an attack, preventing some customers from paying their mortgages for several days.

Ransomware attack against critical infrastructure has increased in 2023, [according](#) to Axios which spoke to Allan Liska, a ransomware expert at Record Future.

There have been 317 publicly reported ransomware attacks against health care entities so far this year compared to 245 all of last year, according to Liska. School attacks have also increased, with 243 publicly reported attacks in 2023 compared to 189 total incidents last year.

"We are seeing an uptick and that is normal for this time of year," Liska said. "I think it's a bigger [post-Thanksgiving] uptick than we normally see."

Earlier this year, a high-profile cyberattack against, MGM Resorts ([MGM](#)) - [Get Free Report](#) threw the Las Vegas Strip into a state of chaos. The [ransomware attack](#) shut down everything from hotel reservation services to ATMs to slot machines at the MGM properties.

MGM says the attack negatively affected its third quarter results to the tune of about \$100 million.

Its rival, Caesars Entertainment ([CZR](#)) - [Get Free Report paid tens of millions of dollars](#) to hackers who had performed a similar attack against the company just days prior.

Signs of the growing problem were apparent earlier this year.

The number of ransomware victims in March were nearly double the number from the previous year, according to a study from Black Kite, a Boston-based third-party cyber risk intelligence company.

[The report](#) showed that hackers targeted the manufacturing industry the most, followed by the professional, scientific and technical services industry, according to a report by Black Kite that

analyzed ransomware attacks from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. Educational services received 6.1% of the attacks.

The U.S. was the number one targeted country, accounting for 43% of victim organizations, followed by the U.K. and Germany (4.4%).

NEW DETAILS ON LONG-PLANNED DALLAS TRINITY RIVER PARK TO BREAK GROUND IN 2024

More details on amenities to be released at a Monday event

By Ken Kalthoff

Planners with the Trinity Park Conservancy revealed the model Friday for the largest portion of a long-planned Dallas Trinity River Park and also a promotional video for the groundbreaking which is scheduled in 2024.

[NBC5 first reported in June that the park will not be built in between the levees](#) downtown as had been planned since voters first approved a park in 1998.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers that controls the floodway never endorsed park construction inside the levees that was approved by Dallas voters in 1998.

The latest plan for Harold Simmons Park, named for the family that donated \$50 million, is a series of parks outside the levees adjacent to the river with access to green space and trails that were constructed between the levees.

The Trinity River Conservancy released a promotional video announcing the groundbreaking of Dallas Trinity River Park which is scheduled in 2024.

The nonprofit Trinity Park Conservancy has purchased land in old industrial areas for the parks outside the levees.

"This is about having the right real estate to make sure Dallas has the park it deserves and to make sure this is a Tier One Park. And so, where we could not put brick and mortar, we were fortunate to find an industrial site right next to area that city was offering to us park land," Trinity Conservancy CEO Tony Moore said.

The model of the largest 22-acre park segment is along Commerce Street near Beckley near the existing Trinity River overlook. The park will reuse portions of an old steel company building.

The Conservancy will release more details on amenities in the park Monday and the date for a 2024 groundbreaking.

"This park has been delayed for quite a while. I will say that the park we have today is really a much better park than what we initially proposed," Moore said.

Cost for the park is now estimated at \$325 million, due to additional amenities but also because of additional real estate expenses. The land between the levees was already publicly owned.

"This will be transformational for Dallas," Moore said.

Big new apartment buildings have already sprung up around the area.

Abby Rismiller, a new resident in one of those buildings, saw the park plans Friday said she is fine with the changes instead of what was planned inside the levees.

"I think this is acceptable, yeah. I'm excited for that. I have always wondered what could be used for that land over there," she said.

Some of the businesses in the industrial area have already moved out. But tenants still operating in some others who did not want to talk on television said they thought they had years longer to stay.

“We are working with the community and the landowners and are fortunate that we have gotten to the point that we have full control of the land. However, it’s a continual conversation with the communities,” Moore said.

The Trinity Park Conservancy will be tasked with operating the new parks, somewhat like the arrangement with [Klyde Warren Park](#) over the Woodall Rodgers Freeway, which is operated by a nonprofit foundation.

Moore said conversations are ongoing with the city of Dallas on funding arrangements for what will be city assets.

Dallas City Councilmember Omar Narvaez who represents the West Dallas area of the planned park said he has seen the plans and supports the project.

Narvaez said there were many community meetings for input in the park planning process.

A tollroad was included in the 1998 Trinity River plan approved by voters but [the road was killed](#) by the Dallas City Council in 2017.

BOND PROPOSALS IN DALLAS HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMATIONAL

Our \$350 million recommendation for parks and trails is a nod to the proven return on investment of a strong park system.

By Arun Agarwal, Scott Goldstein, and Priscilla Rice

Look almost anywhere in Dallas and you will find voter-approved bond projects and their transformational impact.

As members of the [Community Bond Task Force](#) that formulated the 2024 proposal to be delivered to the City Council for discussion Wednesday, we see this bond as a historic opportunity to address both critical needs and maintain our city's competitive edge through visionary investments that spur tax base growth to build for the next generation.

Many of our city's earliest parks, playgrounds, schools, streets, water and sewer systems, hospitals, police and fire stations, libraries, arts institutions and airports were born thanks to voters who said "yes" to issuing debt to finance them.

In 2012, Klyde Warren Park opened and quickly became the gold standard for how to reconnect urban neighborhoods with greenspace over highways. The city-owned park was financed through a public-private partnership that included an initial \$20 million bond investment.

The return on that investment? An increase in assessed property values in that area of downtown and Uptown from \$2.5 billion to \$7.3 billion in one decade. That translates to an increase in tax revenue over that same period of hundreds of millions of dollars to help pay for city services and infrastructure like streets and sidewalks through our general fund.

Decades earlier, in the wake of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, then-Mayor J. Erik Jonsson successfully advocated for a \$173 million bond program — then the largest ever — broken into 14 propositions. They included Fair Park improvements, public parks, libraries, fire station upgrades, and a new regional airport known as Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, now the economic engine for one of the fastest-growing regions in the country.

That bond program also included funds for the I.M. Pei-designed City Hall, where our current City Council will deliberate Wednesday on a proposal to allocate \$1.1 billion for the 2024 bond program.

And as far back as 1927, records indicate Dallas voters authorized a nearly \$24 million bond program to implement a Trinity River flood control plan that included construction of the levees and relocation of the river to where it lies today. That project was critical to our city's growth and survival.

We are grateful to Dallas Mayor Eric L. Johnson and his City Council colleagues for following an equitable process that by all accounts resulted in more public engagement than any such program in Dallas history.

Rather than letting career bureaucrats decide behind closed doors how public dollars should be spent, they showed great deference to the people and appointed 90 community members to the bond task force and subcommittees focused on streets and transportation, flood control, parks and trails, critical facilities, and economic development, housing, and homeless solutions.

Meetings were held across the city, with English and Spanish access, to ensure we captured diverse viewpoints.

The people of Dallas do not see this bond program as a false choice between fixing faulty pipes and potholes or building shiny new buildings. The thousands of Dallas residents who showed up for public meetings or emailed and called us over the past seven months expect to vote on a bond program that delivers needed infrastructure upgrades while continuing to build a city where our children and grandchildren would choose to live.

Specifically, we heard the loudest and most consistent advocacy around the city for investments in streets and transportation, parks and trails, public safety, arts and libraries.

We agree with City Manager T.C. Broadnax and many City Council members that our most pressing infrastructure needs in this city are tied to streets and transportation. That is why we proposed the largest allocation, \$375 million, for that category. We also believe that the city must ensure bond dollars are put toward projects with a minimum 20-year lifespan. Routine street resurfacing projects do not meet that threshold, as city staff acknowledged to us, and therefore should not be included in the plan.

Our \$350 million recommendation for parks and trails is a nod to the proven return on investment of a strong park system, as well as the importance of continuing to make progress on the city's goal of ensuring every resident lives within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail. Much of the parks proposal is for neighborhood parks, playgrounds, or facilities in some of the highest equity needs areas.

[An analysis from HR&A Advisors](#) found that Dallas' park system delivered a 7-to-1 return on investment for every dollar spent on parks including a whopping 50-to-1 return on every dollar spent on trails, providing nearly \$680 million to the local economy every year and helping fund essential city services.

The parks proposition is also the only one that includes more than \$250 million in potential private and other government agency match dollars for transformative projects. That includes the Dallas Zoo's \$100 million-plus plans to activate 10-15 acres of currently inaccessible parkland and develop indoor and outdoor classrooms and a new auditorium so they can adequately serve 100,000 schoolchildren from all over the city each year. If the zoo receives the \$30 million in bond funding we proposed, it is promising at least \$70 million in private match funding.

Our proposal should be contingent on the Dallas Park & Recreation Department leadership presenting a clear operations and maintenance plan to support this historic investment. Poorly maintained parks would be worse than no new parks.

The same goes for poorly maintained city-owned arts and culture facilities, which we felt were more than worthy of a little more than 5% of overall bond funding. The \$59 million allocation will address critical maintenance at institutions including the Kalita Humphreys Theater, Winspear Opera House, Majestic Theatre, Wyly Theatre, Latino Cultural Center, Dallas Black Dance Theatre and the Dallas Museum of Art.

The arts support jobs, tourism, and economic development. Our growing arts ecosystem is one of the key differentiators between Dallas and surrounding suburbs. These dollars should also

come with assessments of existing arts institution management agreements to ensure that the city and the organizations that manage many of the entities are each doing their fair share.

None of these expenditures makes sense unless we continue to maintain a safe city. Among the most important allocations in our proposal is \$50 million for a new regional training academy for our Dallas Police Department, to be based at University of North Texas at Dallas. That is in addition to \$20 million already pledged from the state. The other \$70 million is being raised privately.

For decades, Dallas police recruits have trained at a woefully inadequate “temporary” facility.

Finalizing a bond program is among the most challenging tasks for a city council. We urge our City Council members to study the work of the Community Bond Task Force and subcommittees and to strive for a bond program that will both address pressing challenges and build a better Dallas for the future.

Arun Agarwal, Scott Goldstein and Priscilla Rice are members of the Community Bond Task Force appointed by the Dallas City Council.

HOW DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE OF A CITY

Realizing the potential of an evolving city's downtown core is vital to creating a community's thriving future, writes Joey Grisham, Anna's economic development director.

By Joey Grisham

While North Texas continues its steady growth, most of the boom isn't happening in our major cities but instead in the suburbs and, even more prominently, in the exurbs, our region's outer-ring communities, many of which still offer numerous expansion opportunities. These cities—including Anna, where I lead economic development efforts—have become the foundation for North Texas' exponential growth. In fact, the threat of urban doom in our major cities' central business districts makes developing these communities dotted throughout DFW even more critical as our region expands in all directions to support growing resident populations and thriving industrial, technology, and innovation sectors.

As outer-ring cities develop to support their evolutions and the larger communities around them, a few critical components can help set the stage for long-term success. Ensuring strong infrastructure planning and development alongside measured retail, dining, and entertainment that complements diverse housing will undoubtedly promote a city's balanced growth. However, realizing the potential of an evolving city's downtown core is also vital to creating a community's thriving future. It's why so many suburban and outer-ring towns across North Texas are focused on revitalizing their historic downtowns.

These downtowns are not only the literal heart of a community but often the economic engine for the city and a hub for community activity. Most importantly, though, outer-ring downtowns serve a purpose that major metro downtowns never will. Unlike urban central business districts, these downtowns are not relied on as traditional job centers. Instead, the economic engine comes from its function as the main social hub of the community, offering everything from restaurants and bars to professional services, breweries, shops, and libraries. And, because of the placemaking focus of these downtowns, they are designed as the central gathering space for farmers' markets and celebratory annual community events.

For example, in Anna, over the past few years, we've enacted our 2050 Comprehensive and Downtown Master Plan, which includes infrastructure to set the stage for future growth. This consists of a modern 37,000-square-foot municipal complex, home to city hall, police, and fire stations, and a forthcoming \$22 million library and \$3.5 million city plaza in the heart of downtown. We are also creating a small business ecosystem as our EDC acquires properties downtown for development, and, most recently, 3 Nations Brewing opened in a redeveloped building at the gateway to Downtown Anna, joining a variety of existing restaurants downtown. As Downtown Anna grows with new businesses and annual community events, we are planning for infrastructure, parking, public art, and green spaces that will enhance the area and support our neighbors and visitors.

However, sustained success requires more than just vision. Strategic planning, community input, involvement from key partners, and incentives to encourage development are all critical to realizing a downtown, and how it will shape the city's future growth and the value it can add for residents and surrounding cities.

Private sector partners like property owners, business owners, developers, and residents are key to fulfilling the vision of a downtown. Strong collaboration among government agencies like the North Central Texas Council of Governments, DART, state and federal transportation departments, school districts, and economic development groups ensure that the necessary funding and other resources are available to help shape the future of a downtown. Nonprofits and civic organizations, including chambers of commerce, arts and cultural organizations, and other community groups, offer an added layer of advocacy and contribution that can help take efforts over the top.

Data released by NCTCOG shared that Collin County added more people in the region than any other county this past year, with 40,000 new residents. This type of growth will undoubtedly continue as Sherman, in Grayson County, develops as a rising tech hub with the addition of semiconductor manufacturing plants from Texas Instruments and GlobiTech. Texas Instruments' plant alone is projected to create 3,000 jobs, allowing northern Collin County cities to capitalize on the growth and capture new residents and visitors.

Developing outer-ring cities' downtowns will support their current growth needs today and lay the foundation for future community development. More than anything, revitalizing a downtown positions a city to create a social hub for its residents and those from surrounding cities while driving tax revenue and business development and providing a wealth of resources and amenities for long-term future growth and success.

Joey Grisham is a long-time community and economic development professional who serves as Director of Economic Development for the City of Anna.

MCKINNEY MOVES FORWARD WITH DECK PARK PLANS

The project, now called the Lower 5 Plaza, is anticipated to be completed in 2030.

By Haeven Gibbons



Cars travel along State Highway 5 at Louisiana Street in McKinney, Texas, Wednesday, May 3, 2023. The city plans to build an inverted deck park across State Highway 5 that would connect the historic downtown with East McKinney. (Eliás Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

McKinney City Council moved forward with the [Lower 5 Plaza project](#) — previously referred to as the inverted deck park — on Tuesday, approving a [contract](#) that will use local dollars to design parts of the Plaza.

The Plaza will [create a pedestrian connection](#) across State Highway 5 at [Louisiana and Virginia streets](#) to facilitate a safe crossing, link communities east and west of the highway and enhance the downtown McKinney cultural district, according to city officials. The highway would act as a bridge with a park space underneath and provide a way for people to walk from downtown to developments — like the new City Hall, which is currently under construction — in East McKinney without getting in a car and without crossing the highway.

The project is a partnership between the city, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), anticipated to cost anywhere from \$40 million to \$45 million. Infrastructure costs covering construction, right-of-way acquisition and engineering are estimated at \$25 million to \$30 million, while park construction costs, which the city plans to assume, are estimated at \$15 million.



Highway 5 downtown pedestrian Connection Deck Park inverted deck park design.(City of McKinney)

In a 5-2 vote, City Council authorized the city manager to execute a contract in the amount of [\\$225,000](#) with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. for engineering design services for plaza park improvements, not to exceed \$250,000, and Council [approved amending](#) the fiscal year 2023-2024 budget and the 2024-2028 capital improvement program, appropriating \$250,000 from the Park Construction Fund balance to provide funds for the Lower 5 Plaza, which is a capital improvement project.

“TxDOT needs to know what the bridge is going to look like. We don’t have to design it fully, but we have to give them a better idea than the sketch that we’ve done so far,” said assistant city manager Kim Flom. “The contracts aim to do that by allowing us to have a consultant work through the bridge design to get it to a point where we can hand it to TxDOT and they can take it to the next step.”

Also, in a vote of 5-2, Council authorized the city manager to execute a [contract in the amount of \\$435,000](#) with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. for engineering design services for plaza infrastructure improvements, not to exceed \$475,000. Gary Graham, director of engineering for the city noted the city will be made whole for the contract amount through an exchange with NCTCOG.

How it will work

TxDOT is folding the project into its work on the State Highway 5 reconstruction project in which design work and right-of-way acquisition are already underway. The department has committed to designing and constructing the bridge, leading the environmental documentation process and handling right-of-way acquisition and business relocation.

Related: [McKinney deck park would displace business owners, erase legacy](#)

After that, the city would build the park. TxDOT will design the bridge with state funds, while the construction of the bridge will come from NCTCOG, which has committed to cover up to \$30 million in infrastructure costs.

“TxDOT is doing a lot of the base layer work, giving us a canvas to build the park,” Flom said, noting that NCTCOG is acting as the connector and funder.



Cars travel along State Highway 5 at Louisiana Street in McKinney, Texas, Wednesday, May 3, 2023. The city plans to build an inverted deck park across State Highway 5 that would connect the historic downtown with East McKinney. (Elías Valverde II / Staff Photographer)

The city is responsible for designing 30% of the bridge layout and designing and constructing the drainage system, the Lower 5 Plaza infrastructure and the plaza amenities.

The plaza would span about 2 acres, including the section of the park underneath the highway, which would be about 90 feet to 125 feet across and 12 feet high. The conceptual design is not final, as the project still has to undergo a formal design process. City staff will be back in front of City Council for multiple contracts, agreements and updates as the project progresses.

Annual operations and maintenance is projected to cost up to \$2.5 million, which includes city labor, park maintenance/replacement, programming, security and tunnel/bridge maintenance. However, city staff anticipate that both capital and annual costs will escalate before the project's anticipated completion in 2030.

Residents previously [raised concerns around the project delaying much needed improvements](#) at other crossings along the corridor. However, Graham said this concern has been a focus of conversations around the plaza.

“A lot of our conversations around the plaza, and with the deck park originally, is there are other areas along the entire corridor that need to have pedestrian crossings,” he said. “We’ve brought that up with TxDOT, and TxDOT understands that we may need to look at that. We don’t know exactly where those locations should be, so in the spring we’re going to do some pedestrian counts to see where crossings are most needed.”

RESIDENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS RALLY TO OPPOSE PRIVATE LANDFILL NEAR LAKE WORTH

By Harrison Mantas

Roughly a thousand Tarrant County residents packed a high school gymnasium Tuesday to oppose a recycling center they say will ruin their quality of life.

They were joined by a handful of local elected officials to demand the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [reject a permit application for the proposed facility](#) located just south of Lake Worth in northwest Tarrant County.

Houston-based BAP Kennor Landfill LLC wants to build a [6.6 acre recycle center at](#) 3411 Silver Creek Road, which would process and recycle construction and demolition waste. This includes wood, metal, concrete, yard waste and plastics.

The material will be sorted and stored on-site until there's enough to be hauled off to be used by other industries, said Frank Pugsley, a member of the architecture firm working on the project.

Hazardous material will either be rejected or loaded into separate dumpsters to be hauled off to a municipal landfill, Pugsley said.

However, these assurances were not enough to assuage residents' fears about the impact to water quality, including an underground aquifer where most of the residents get their water.

Water contamination will have generational impacts on the residents living there, said Lake Worth Mayor Pro Tem Sherrie Watkins. She asked that BAP Kennor find a site that would have less impact on nearby residents.

Some speakers also expressed fears about the company's plan to prevent fires from breaking out at the facility.

The road leading up to the site doesn't have a fire lane to allow for fire trucks to get through and isn't served by a dedicated fire station, said Katheryn Moore, who helped organize opposition to the facility,

Fires happen at recycle centers all the time, and residents are worried about being exposed to hazardous chemicals or having a fire burn out of control, she said.

Some also expressed concerns about traffic, including a pair of bridges leading up to the site that won't be able to handle the weight of industrial recycling trucks.

"If this permit is granted, we're going to be weighing every damn truck that goes across those bridges," State Rep. Charlie Geren said as the crowd erupted in applause.

The site was approved for a municipal dump in the 1980s, but the area around it has grown up since then, said Tarrant County Commissioner Manny Ramirez.

Ramirez expressed his sympathy for the company representatives, but asked them to bring forth a project that won't be opposed by thousands of residents.

‘US VS. THEM’: CAN FORT WORTH ADDRESS GENTRIFICATION BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE?

By Sandra Sadek



From left to right, panelists Mike Brennan, Joel Burns, Shawn Lassiter and Stacy Marshall speak at a Dec. 6, 2023, Fort Worth Report Candid Conversation on gentrification in Fort Worth. (Emily Wolf | Fort Worth Report)

Fort Worthians know their city is rapidly growing with some [20,000 new residents moving to the city annually](#). With growth comes the need for more affordable housing.

As more housing pops up across Fort Worth, preserving existing neighborhoods has never been more important or challenging. Four panelists discussed growth, housing and what can be done to [combat gentrification](#) during a Fort Worth Report event Dec. 6 at Texas Wesleyan University.

Adding more diverse housing is a good thing and is needed to ensure a variety of options for residents, said Mike Brennan, president of Near Southside Inc. and one of the panelists.

“It’s critical that density takes the right form depending on the location,” Brennan said. He referred to this as “density by design,” explaining that it must be of a high standard that lives up to the test of time and fits in with the surrounding neighborhood.

Density also can be a triggering word, said Shawn Lassiter, BRAVE/R Together executive director and panelist. She shared the importance of having resources built around emerging dense population pockets to allow communities to thrive.

She pointed out that ZIP code 76104, the area code BRAVE/R Together works in, is a desert of all sorts. While some affordable housing projects have come up in the Historic Southside, there are no [grocery stores](#) or [clinics](#) in the vicinity, Lassiter said.

“So when you talk about density, I think we’re up for it,” she said, “but if you’re not going to make that parallel to resources like a grocery store and healthcare, then it’s pretty dangerous.”



The BRAVE/R Together founding team stands in front of the building that once housed the Brooks Family Practice Clinic in the Historic Southside. From left to right: Lachelle Goodrich, founding ambassador; Dr. Michael Brooks, founding ambassador; Angela Rainey, founding ambassador; Shawn Lassiter, founder and executive director; and Whitnee Boyd, director of strategic initiatives and an Ed.D. in higher education/higher education administration. (David Moreno | Fort Worth Report)

To ensure the right density for the right area, planning is crucial, said panelist Stacy Marshall, president and CEO of Southeast Fort Worth Inc. Since taking over as head of the organization nine years ago, Marshall said focusing on certain parts of southeast Fort Worth has yielded better results.

More workforce housing lifts the area’s household incomes, which then attracts grocers, clinics and other amenities, Marshall said.

“We want to make sure that we’re very methodical and thinking things through,” he said.

But gentrification has already started taking its course in some neighborhoods of Fort Worth. A prime example is the growth of the Near Southside into the predominantly working-class Hispanic neighborhood of Hemphill.

Brennan said the issue is often portrayed as large developers looking to encroach on residents and small business owners. The conversation needs to be rephrased with more context, he said, considering that many of the lots are too small to accommodate such large developments.

“I think there’s a potential to sort of change that conversation from a more us versus them conversation to shared vision,” Brennan said. “It just requires that coordinated planning and open conversation.”

In other places, the rising cost of housing has changed neighborhoods and who can afford to live there.

Joel Burns, former Fort Worth City Council member and board chair of [Housing Channel](#), recalls buying his home in Ryan Place 20 years ago. Today, that same house would be unaffordable to him.

Burns said it’s important to explore non-traditional forms of housing, whether it’s missing middle housing or accessory dwelling units. Not everyone can afford, needs or wants a single-family house, he said.

Another key obstacle is educating folks on the possibilities and not being afraid to change things, he said.

“There’s a lot of NIMBY folks who will come stand on your necks and jump up and down and make your next reelection really hard if you don’t do the things that they want. And from that place of fear, a lot of our leaders operate from this place of, ‘Let’s keep things the way they are,’” Burns said.

Over the past year, Fort Worth has been exploring different ways to tackle its affordable housing crisis, including a [land bank](#), [community land trust](#) and [zoning for missing middle housing](#).

The city also created a [Neighborhood Conservation Plan and Affordable Housing Strategy](#) that provides guidance on preserving Fort Worth’s neighborhoods while ensuring housing is attainable for everyone.

“It’s been very important to not show up to a community with a plan already created,” Lassiter said. “It’s important to come (with a) blank slate and say, ‘What is it that you need?’ and not to force a particular vision on people because that is the battle of gentrification.”

ARLINGTON SELF-DRIVING SHUTTLE PROGRAM PASSES 45,000 RIDES NEARLY 3 YEARS INTO SERVICE

By Kailey Broussard

A program that lets people take a self-driving vehicle to destinations in UT Arlington and downtown has logged 45,000 rides as of late November.

The program is one of multiple on-demand services the city offers through its app, [Arlington Transit](#). Riders near campus can opt to take a self-driving van to their destination if it's in the 1-square-mile service area. Autonomous Vehicle Operators (AVOs) keep their hands just above the steering wheel and take over if needed.

Matt Fortune, site manager for the operating company May Mobility, said the program gives thousands of rides to people who use the program for their daily commute.

"My goal is to really just prove that this is a great product that can really help transform public transit for their communities," Fortune said. "Hopefully we can expand it to include more people and hopefully include all of Arlington at some point."

The nearly three-year-old program known as Arlington RAPID (Rideshare, Automation and Payment Integration Demonstration) is funded by the city, Federal Transit Administration and the North Central Texas Council of Governments and run in partnership with May Mobility, UTA and Via, the microtransit company that operates [Arlington's publicly subsidized rideshare service](#).

The goal of RAPID? To get people comfortable with autonomous vehicle technology as it becomes more available. Fortune said May Mobility operators are trained to take over the ride when necessary and if riders are uncomfortable.

"We want to prioritize safety, the customer's comfort and then, we're going to try to prioritize autonomy," he said.

Arlington RAPID has not reported any safety incidents or crashes to date.

The program is funded through spring 2025, according to Ann Foss, planning and programming manager for the city transportation department.

"We're already talking about what's going to be our next source of funding to keep it going," Foss said while presenting to a group of UTA students Friday, Dec. 1.

The RAPID program is Arlington's third stint with autonomous vehicle transportation services. The city first deployed an [autonomous shuttle called Milo](#), which transported people on walking trails throughout the entertainment district. The pilot program ended in 2018, after a year.

The same year Milo's pilot ended, Arlington launched an on-street ride program through Drive.ai, which served fixed stops near places including Texas Live! and Esports Stadium Arlington. Both rollouts marked the first time a city offered off-street and on-street autonomous transportation options, respectively.

All three autonomous vehicle programs have marked firsts for any U.S. city, including first off-street service, on-street service and integrated ride-hailing service.



FORT WORTH JOINS TRINITY RIVER WATER DISTRICT TO PRESERVE GREENSPACE

By Mark Fadden

City officials signed a memorandum of understanding with [Tarrant Regional Water District](#) in an effort to acquire, create and care for Fort Worth's green space Nov. 28.

The backstory

A city news release states that Fort Worth has more than 350 square miles of land that is "half-developed," and it is losing natural open space at a rate of 50 acres a week to development. To help preserve the city's green space, Fort Worth residents passed a \$15 million bond to buy and conserve open space in 2021.

Mayor Mattie Parker announced the Good Natured Greenspace Initiative during the [State of the City](#) address Oct. 6. The initiative—which seeks to bring public and private partners together to shape and enhance green space investment in Fort Worth for the next 100 years—has five main objectives:

- Preserving a minimum of 10,000 additional acres of open space and parkland over the next five years
- Improving the city's existing park system through additional city and community investment led by three partners: the city of Fort Worth, the Tarrant Regional Water District and a new nonprofit conservancy
- Protecting water quality
- Enhancing flood protection
- Promoting physical and mental health through recreation and opportunities to connect with the natural environment

To date, Fort Worth and TRWD officials have worked independently to promote recreation, conservation, stormwater management and water quality, the news release states. TRWD's efforts include:

- Supplying raw water to more than 2.3 million people in 11 North Texas counties
- Managing the 27-mile Fort Worth Floodway system
- Maintaining the [Trinity Trail System](#), which stretches throughout much of Fort Worth

According to the news release, the city's efforts to help protect natural spaces and at-risk ecosystems include:

- Operating nearly 300 parks and recreational areas that encompass more than 12,000 acres
- Launching the [Open Space Conservation Program](#)

- Conducting a green space preservation survey in 2022 where 96% of residents said that conserving natural areas in Fort Worth is “very important.” Nearly 99% stated that the city should establish a permanent program to conserve natural areas for future generations.

Zooming in

According to the news release, as part of the agreement, the city of Fort Worth and TRWD have each expressed their commitment to work together in furthering green space preservation efforts by exploring the creation of a private nonprofit conservancy and collaborating to implement mutually beneficial efforts. Furthermore, they have agreed to issue an annual green space report and hold at least one joint meeting of the respective governing bodies annually.

What they’re saying

“To make a truly significant impact on our preservation goals, we need strong partners like TRWD who share in the city’s commitment of preserving the open spaces and waterways for residents of today and generations to come,” Parker said.

“TRWD’s commitment and investment in this joint initiative will provide the public access to green and blue spaces,” TRWD board President Leah King said. “Together, we can build a legacy of environmental stewardship and community well-being that also helps to protect water quality, reduce flood risks and improves the quality of life for everyone we serve.”

PLANS FOR HAROLD SIMMONS PARK WEST OF DOWNTOWN DALLAS TAKE SHAPE

Planners say groundbreaking for the park between the Trinity River levees just west of downtown Dallas will happen in 2024.

By Rachel Snyder

DALLAS — After years of discussion, planners with the Trinity Park Conservancy say they have a design for the long-awaited [Harold Simmons Park](#) between the Trinity River levees just west of downtown Dallas, with a groundbreaking planned for 2024.

The 250-acre park will be located between the Margaret McDermott bridge and Ronald Kirk bridge west of downtown Dallas. Planners say they hope the park will connect West Dallas, Oak Cliff and downtown Dallas across the Trinity River.

“Most neighborhoods where I serve, they are under resourced, their infrastructure is waning – but to have something like this, that you don’t have to drive to the suburbs or drive to some other place... that the immediately surrounding communities can walk to... those kinds of things don’t happen in communities where I serve, and to have something like this within the heart of Dallas, it’s a tremendous, not only a health piece, but a psychological and emotional thing to encourage people who do live in areas that are traditionally underserved,” said Vincent Parker, Trinity River Corridor local government corporation board chair and lead pastor of Golden Gate Missionary Baptist Church.

Plans began for a then 200-acre, \$150 million park between the Trinity River levees five years ago, the *Dallas Morning News* [reported](#), with groundbreaking originally set for fall 2020. Since then, planners Monday released a new design by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc. and the price for the park rose to about \$325 million.

The proposed location was changed because the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers that controls the floodway never endorsed park construction inside the levees as approved by voters in 1998, NBC5 [reported](#).

The park, to be named for the late Dallas businessman Harold Simmons, whose family reportedly donated \$50 million, is expected to feature a two-story pavilion, play areas, a skate park, café, green space and more.

“The park we have today...has curated and developed to be a much better park. A more comprehensive park, a more contiguous park that will lend for more what we call length of stay, and it’s truly a better product,” Trinity Park Conservancy CEO Tony Moore said. “The \$325 million price tag – I want to put some things in perspective. That does include an endowment for (operations and maintenance) that also includes allocations for the green floodway so it’s not entirely a full construction budget.”

Ted Flato, founding partner of Lake Flato Architects, said architects the design for the West Overlook, the largest section and entrance to the park that extends from the levee embankment along Commerce Street into west Dallas, incorporates a 1,000-foot industrial shed. Features of the West Overlook are expected to include an event lawn, café, skate and bike park, water

features, play cove with a cable ferry, six two-story interactive towers, with bridges, slides, and other climbing features and more.

“Making the new buildings part of the park is the critical piece of the puzzle. So they are of the park, they’re influenced very much by some of the original characteristics of this place, which is – the West Overlook was an industrial site, so there’s a wonderful long shed, so that long, industrial shed starts to inform some of the things that we’re doing in the larger buildings,” said Flato.

Another section of the park calls for an expansion and reimagining of the Felix Lozada Gateway at the western edge of the Ronald Kirk Bridge that includes the bridge in the design, as well as the Continental Gateway on the eastern end. Plans for the Felix Lozada Gateway include sports courts and a roller skating rink.

STATE DROPS EMINENT DOMAIN CASE TO RECLAIM FAIRFIELD LAKE STATE PARK

A developer plans to build a luxury subdivision on the property.

By Michael Marks

The Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife has dropped its eminent domain pursuit of Fairfield Lake State Park, the [agency announced on Tuesday](#).

The future of the 5,000-acre property in Freestone County [has been in limbo](#) ever since a Dallas developer purchased the land in June. The state didn't actually own the parkland, but leased it from a power company called Vistra Corp. The developer, Todd Interests, plans to build a luxury subdivision on the property.

After Vistra sold to Todd Interests, the [state tried to re-claim control](#) of the land through eminent domain. Abandoning that effort means it will remain in private hands.

[Lana Ferguson](#), breaking news reporter for the Dallas Morning News, spoke to Texas Standard about how we got here, and what happens next. Listen to the interview above or read the transcript below.

This transcript has been edited lightly for clarity:

Texas Standard: Why the decision from the state not to pursue eminent domain anymore?

Lana Ferguson: Yeah, it's interesting. The timing makes sense.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department had a looming deadline of Dec. 11 to appeal a fair market value that was recently set on the land at \$418 million. So they had to make a decision if they were going to appeal. And I think they looked at the time, money and energy they've put into this and maybe thought that those efforts would be more fruitful somewhere else.

So originally Todd Interests purchased this property for, as I understand it, just over \$100 million. And special committee evaluated that market value, as you said, it was worth more than \$400 million. I suppose a lot of folks wonder what factors went into that sort of valuation – four fold over what Todd Interests paid for it.

So there was that special hearing in Freestone County with a few judge-appointed – they were residents, actually, of the county – and they heard two days worth of testimony from witnesses and experts, including a former park superintendent who lived on the land, an appraiser, water rights experts... Some big names like Todd Interest CEO Shawn Todd and Buc-ee's CEO Arch "Beaver" Aplin, who was the former commission chairman.

And based off those hearings, the special commissioners took a lot of things into account, like the price of the land – like you said, \$103 million – the potential value of the water in Fairfield Lake... And Todd's attorneys also argued the value of the land immediately increases when it's bought with a purpose and plan in mind. There was a little debate on that, but that seemed to play a big part in their decision.

Well, you mentioned that a lot of prominent locals took part in this. What sort of impact has this story had, more broadly speaking, in Freestone County?

It split the community. There is a large group of folks, a strong group of folks, who really supported the state's efforts to save the park by whatever means necessary and protect that land. They traveled throughout Texas, including Austin, to talk about what this park meant to them. Others were concerned about what impacts that bringing the luxury neighborhood into the area would do for people who have been there for decades.

And on the other side, you have folks who said this is a private property rights issue. "We need to stay out of private deals. The state needs to stay out of private deals." And they were also just excited about what this development could mean for the area's tax revenue. So it's a big split.

How beloved was Fairfield Lake State Park? Was it used that much?

Honestly, it's a small park compared, from my understanding, to a lot of other parks. But the people that went there for the last 50 years really did love it.

There was a lot of people who really loved fishing in the lake. So that's been a big point that people have brought up – is "we're losing that place to go, nearby us, to fish and to go and protect this land." So I think it was popular among a certain group of people and they're really sad to lose this.

And so what happens to the property going forward?

Based off a couple of reports I've seen in conversations, about 600 homes are going to be built. Looks like only about a fourth to 150 of those homes will have full time residents. But there's going to be a golf course and a country club and restaurants and shops. It's a big thing.

\$26 MILLION RAIL STATION COULD SPUR DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST FORT WORTH

By Sandra Sadek

Fort Worth resident Laura Noller has been able to cut down on the stress of getting to work at UT Southwestern in Dallas every morning by hopping on the Trinity Railway Express from the Richland Hills station.

"I drove on the first day and I was like 'absolutely not,'" she said.

But Noller, like many commuters dependent on the train, was not aware that the station will soon close. Instead, something new and modern will replace it on Fort Worth's northeast side. At least, that's what Trinity Metro and developer Ken Newell would like to see with the completion of the new Trinity Lakes Station, just east of Loop 820.

Scheduled to open on Feb. 19, 2024, the new Trinity Railway Express commuter station will sit atop an old gravel mine. The goal over time is to create a mixed-use neighborhood that spurs development in that area.

"It's a small city right now, there within the development. There's 3,400 homes out there. That's a pretty good community," said Newell, president of Newell Company and a former Trinity Metro board member. "It's going to grow, and the mixed-use is going to service the needs of not only those families but the surrounding community."

Leaving Trinity Metro and creating a new taxing plan

In February 2013, the city of Fort Worth created its 14th tax increment reinvestment zone. The goal was to encourage the redevelopment of the 1,800 acres east of Loop 820, along Trinity Boulevard and Precinct Line Road into a transit-oriented development.

According to the [project and financing plans](#), the work includes over \$50 million worth of infrastructure improvements and projects.

Transit improvements were always part of the plan, Fort Worth's economic development department said, and the [departure of Richland Hills from the Trinity Metro system](#) in 2016 launched the search for a new station.

Since voters decided to no longer be a part of Trinity Metro, the current TRE station in Richland Hills is being decommissioned. A plot of land was found for the construction of a new station and continued servicing nearby residents with a commuter train.

"We could have just turned (the station) off and not had any service at that station. We thought that wasn't a good idea because people use that station. So let's keep it open until we can relocate and build a new station to the east in the city of Fort Worth," said Chad Edwards, executive vice president of strategy, planning and development at Trinity Metro.



The Richland Hills commuter train station will be decommissioned once the new Trinity Lakes Station opens next year. The Trinity Railway Express line connects Fort Worth to Dallas. (Sandra Sadek | Fort Worth Report)

The land in question is owned by Newell, who bought the site back in 1999. Original plans for a mixed-used development did not include transit.

“At the time, we said we were rail ready but not rail dependent,” Newell said. “When (Richland Hills) decided that the transit authority wasn’t the right thing for them, we jumped on it and the city jumped on it. Trinity Metro was very eager, too, and so it’s a great location for it.”

A proposed transit-oriented development was created. The \$26 million train station will be the 1,600-acre master-planned community’s first phase and will eventually see multifamily homes, townhomes, retail shops, restaurants and maybe even a grocery store on the land around the new station.

“We’ve talked to several grocers, and I think we’re getting closer and closer. Really, to do it, it takes rooftops. It takes the economics,” Newell said. “It’s going to be an ideal place with the lakes and the amenities here.”

Want to learn more about Trinity Lakes Station?

What: Trinity Metro is hosting a public meeting for riders to learn more about the new Trinity Lakes Station and track improvements being built for TRE.

When: 6 p.m. Dec. 12

Where: Rocketship Explore Elementary School, 300 E. Loop 820, Fort Worth

Free RSVP here: <https://form.jotform.com/232366401920146>

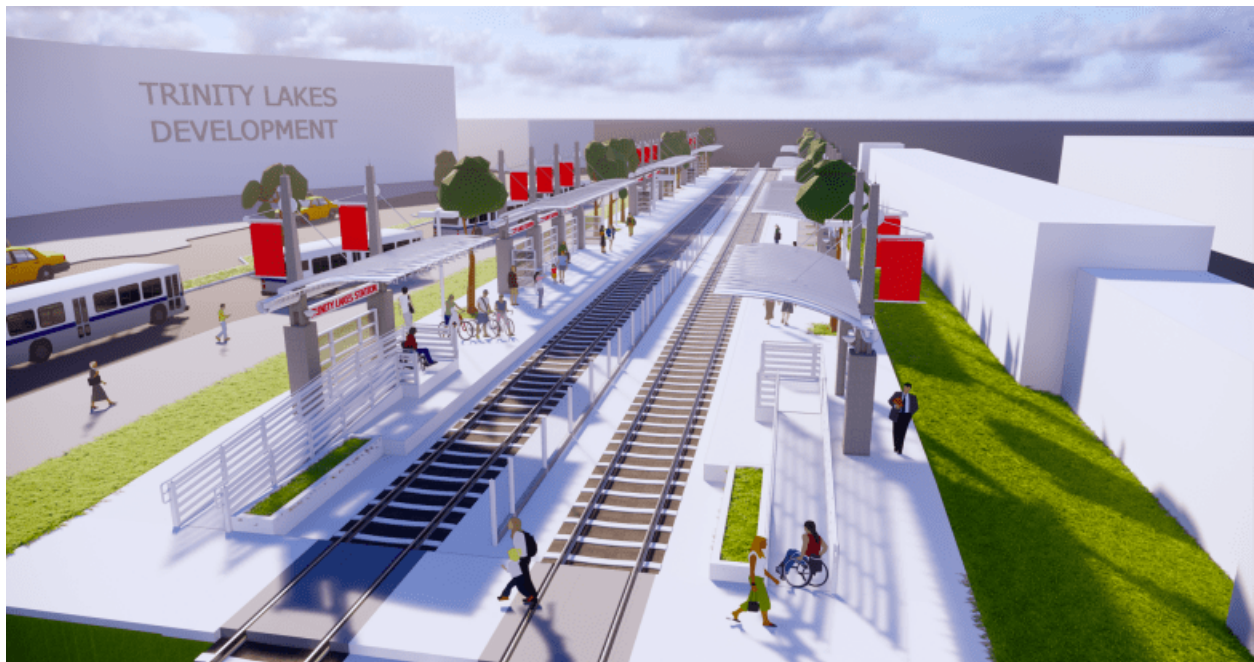
Noller said she could see herself visiting the future mixed-use development before or after taking the train to Dallas.

“Like a coffee shop — that’d be fun if it opened early in the morning, or like a little brewski,” Noller said. “It’d be so easy for people who lived over there that worked in Dallas and then just kind of hop on (the train).”

The station is 100% federally funded, Edwards said.

Edwards described the new station as a mix between Trinity Metro’s current Grapevine Main and Iron Horse stations, both on the TEXRail line. In addition to the station platform, there will be about 500 surface parking spaces. It could eventually become a garage as the area becomes denser.

“We put the T in transit-oriented development,” Edwards said. “So, without the T, you don’t have anything that’s TOD.”



A rendering of the proposed new Trinity Lakes Station, servicing the Trinity Railway Express commuter train between Fort Worth and Dallas. The station is also part of the Trinity Lakes mixed-use development. (Rendering courtesy | Trinity Metro)

To assist with the project, the Trinity Lakes tax increment financing board authorized up to \$6.2 million in reimbursements for the construction of a new access road leading to the station, as well as extending a major water line to service the site. Another \$18.5 million will go toward improvements to Trinity Boulevard and will be led by the city of Fort Worth, the economic development department said.

“The economic development department is excited by the progress being made on Trinity Lakes Station, and for the station’s long-term ability to support future development in the surrounding area,” the department said in a statement.

Trinity Boulevard historically was a four-lane road prone to flooding. As a primary connector, Trinity Boulevard improvements are a major deal, Newell said.

Renovations are expected to be completed by spring or summer 2024.

“(It) was a major linchpin for commercial mixed-use development,” Newell said. “Trinity Boulevard is going to be a beautiful road. It had to be approved before we could do the things that we’re talking about today because it was a street that flooded frequently. It wasn’t the environment to support what we envision here and what the project deserves.”

Development and generating investments

The rise of neighborhoods, the expansion of Bell Helicopter Textron Inc.’s employment center, and now the new station have encouraged the city and other private developers to invest in the area. According to the Trinity Lakes tax increment financing plan, the city expects over \$384.2 million in commercial and urban residential development investment and \$275 million in single-family residential investment to flow into the district by 2032, the end of the term for the zone.

The latest taxing district annual report shows that the Trinity Lakes district experienced its third consecutive year of double-digit growth in appraisals in 2021.

Newell said the benefit of the upcoming Trinity Lakes project can already be seen.

When Newell first started working on the project in 1999, the 1,600 acres in question were on the tax rolls for less than \$5 million, he said. Today, they are worth over \$400 million.

“We’re going to well over a billion-dollar project,” Newell said. “It’ll just continue where you build a quality project, and that’s what we’re really trying to do. It just creates lasting value and value builds on.”

Two residential projects in Trinity Lakes are already underway, too. One is an 184-unit townhome project and the second is a 327-unit apartment building.

“You should see (vertical) construction coming out of the ground on both of those projects early next year. And so it’s all really coming together at the same time with the station opening there early next year, and with Trinity Boulevard being completed in the spring,” Newell said.

As Trinity Metro continues to work on [changing the narrative](#) around transit, a different approach is also being used. [Transit-oriented developments](#) are becoming increasingly popular in large urban centers. Trinity Metro’s first transit-oriented development was Grapevine Main Station, serving the TEXRail line.

The city of Grapevine reported about a 25% increase in sales tax since 2020 citywide as a result of its TEXRail station. That’s almost a 40% growth within a five-minute walk of the station and over 30% within a 10-minute walk.

Officials are encouraged by Grapevine Main Station’s success and hopeful that it will translate to Trinity Lakes Station. Eventually, Trinity Metro would like to apply this approach to all of its TRE and TEXRail stations.

“The TEXRail stations have had city partners that have been more active in pursuing those transit-oriented development mixed-use opportunities at the stations. Whereas the cities along the TRE stations haven’t been as active,” Edwards said.

Trinity Metro says the relocation to the new Trinity Lakes station will not drastically impact scheduling, changing arrival time by just a minute or two. As for the current Richland Hills station, its final days are nearing before it is officially decommissioned.

“We’re going to pull down all the canopies. We’re going to tear out the platform that’s there, and we’ll end up realigning some of the track to make it straight,” Edwards said.

All that will remain will be the vacant parking lot.

“It’ll look mostly like there wasn’t ever a station there.”

WFAA

CARROLLTON TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY

Construction on the development, called Eviva Trinity Mills, at the southeast portion of the President George Bush Turnpike and I-35E interchange began Friday.

By Rachel Snyder

CARROLLTON, Texas — Construction of a five-story, mixed-use [development](#) at the Trinity Mills Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) station in Carrollton began Friday.

The development, called Eviva Trinity Mills, at 2525 Blanton Drive at the southeast portion of the President George Bush Turnpike and I-35E interchange is part of the 25-acre Trinity Mills Station transit-oriented development made possible through a public/private partnership with the city of Carrollton, DART, The Integral Group and Koa Partners. The development is expected to have more than 430 multi-family units, as well as restaurant and retail spaces. They broke ground on the project in July.

“We’re so excited about this public-private partnership between DART, Integral, KOA, and the City of Carrollton,” Carrollton Mayor Steve Babick said in a statement. “Bringing the Trinity Mills Station vision to reality makes this site the largest transit-oriented development project in the metroplex. This has been a long-term project and is a culmination of many years of work of prior mayors and Councilmembers, and we’re looking forward to bringing this segment across the finish line.”

Others at the launch included Integral Group Chairman Egbert Perry, DART CEO Nadine Lee, Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) CEO Paul Cristina, Koa Partners CEO Harry Lake, and emcee, Integral President of Real Estate Vicki Lundy Wilbon.

A 125,000-square foot, six-story office structure approved in April 2020 will serve as the marquee structure in the new development, and a three-acre green park esplanade that runs the length of the property approved in December is now complete.

Trinity Mills Station is served by the DART Green Line light rail service to Dallas and the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) A-Train commuter service to Denton.

FEDS AWARD \$1 MILLION TO EXPLORE HIGH SPEED RAIL CONNECTING FORT WORTH, DALLAS AND HOUSTON

Opponents say the amount is a fraction of the billions required overall and won't translate into service soon.

By Joseph Morton

WASHINGTON – Federal money will soon start flowing into the planning and development of Fort Worth-Dallas-Houston high speed rail service.

The Biden [administration on Friday announced the selection of 69 rail corridors across 44 states](#) that will each get \$500,000 for planning and development.

One of those corridors is the route between Dallas and Houston. The corridor's sponsor is Amtrak, [which announced in August it is partnering with Texas Central](#), the company behind a beleaguered proposal to run a bullet train between the two cities.

The proposed bullet train has been [in the works for years](#) as Texas Central has faced tax troubles and the departure of its CEO.

Opponents on Friday quickly noted the project's price tag has been [estimated in the tens of billions](#) and predicted large sums of additional government money would be required if it were to move forward.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments also was selected Friday to develop a high-speed rail corridor between Fort Worth and Dallas.

The awards are intended to develop "a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for preparing, completing, or documenting its service development plan."

If that sounds super-preliminary, it is.

"We're creating a pipeline for promising intercity passenger rail projects to get them ready for future investment," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told reporters. "And we'll continue working with railroads, state governments and others to bring those projects to fruition."

The planning awards came alongside [\\$8.2 billion for rail projects across the country](#). It all stems from the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law, which created the Corridor Identification and Development Program.

Federal officials described that program as benefitting projects in various early stages of development. They cited the Houston-Dallas corridor as one that has plenty of work ahead, although they noted an environmental impact analysis has already been conducted.

Rep. Colin Allred, D-Dallas, hailed the high-speed rail funding, along with the selection of a conventional passenger rail corridor along I-20 connecting Dallas to Meridian, Miss. Allred has highlighted his support for the infrastructure law and for bringing rail funding to Texas.

"Bringing home the resources and investments we need to grow our economy and create jobs will always be a priority of mine in Congress," Allred said in a statement. "These rail services will do just that as well as offer new transportation options, promote tourism and reduce traffic on already congested highways."

Allred is seeking his party's nomination to challenge Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, who [voted against the infrastructure law](#). Cruz criticized the measure at the time as too much "reckless federal spending."

While Friday's news was encouraging to [backers of the high-speed rail proposals](#), opponents sought to pour cold water on it.

Waller County Judge Trey Duhon is president of Texans Against High Speed Rail, a group of property owners, business owners and elected officials concerned about the project's use of eminent domain.

Duhon said he had assumed federal money would follow the announcement of the partnership between Amtrak and Texas Central.

His group intends to share their concerns about the project with Amtrak. For example, he said the environmental assessment that was conducted is now outdated given ongoing development and inflation has rendered any financial projections moot.

The money awarded is a pittance compared to what's required to build such a project, Duhon said.

"It doesn't mean that these corridors are going to happen," Duhon said. "They're just going to continue to look into the viability of these projects."

UNIFIED REGIONAL AGENCY DISCUSSED TO EXPAND NORTH TEXAS TRANSIT

Three existing agencies could merge with a new funding formula to serve more cities

By Ken Kalthoff

Talks are underway about a unified regional transit agency to serve all of North Texas.

It would require funding and legal changes from the state.

A transit-oriented development that broke ground in Carrollton Friday is an example of how other communities might benefit.

The Eviva development is near the intersection of I-35E and the George Bush Turnpike, adjacent to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit agency's Trinity Mills station.

A-Trains from the Denton County Transit Authority also stop at Trinity Mills.

"It really represents a focal point of regionalism where DART And DCTA come together to serve common population," DCTA Chief Executive Officer Paul Cristana said.

If a regional transit agency is created, DART and DCTA could actually merge with Tarrant County's Trinity Metro.

"I'm on board with anything that makes things more seamless for the customer," DART CEO Nadine Lee said.

More transit-oriented development would be a goal of such an arrangement to help serve a booming North Texas population.

Renderings from developers The Integral Group and Koa Partners show the mix of 436 apartments, offices, stores and restaurants. A hotel is also planned.

A 549-space parking garage is already under construction that will be surrounded by the other buildings.

"This is the epitome of a live work and play environment, that urban hub if you will, where you have the green space in the center, restaurants, that hustle and bustle," Carrollton Mayor Steve Babick said.

A park is already finished on land assembled over the years by the city and DART.

"What we don't want is a big void between the neighborhood and the transit stop because it makes for a place where nothing happens during the day and we think there's a lot better use for that land," DART CEO Nadine Lee said.

DART has been supporting apartment construction in vast parking lots at other rail stations.

One station south in Carrollton on DART's Green Line is the old Downtown Carrollton station, where a new stop is under construction for DART's new Silver Line between Plano and DFW Airport that will cross there.

New apartments have also been constructed near transit in Downtown Carrollton.

Babick said another new transit line is also planned in the future from Downtown Carrollton to Frisco and Sherman, two cities that are not involved with a transit agency now.

The three existing transit North Texas transit agencies are funded with fares and sales taxes collected in member cities.

DART cities contribute a full 1 cent of sales tax. Trinity Metro and DCTA cities contribute ½ a cent.

Other cities like Arlington and Frisco which are not members of a transit authority have committed their sales taxes to other purposes.

“That has to somewhat change, up at the state level. We have to think about new ways to fund our transit,” Babick said.

Carrollton’s mayor serves on the North Central Texas Council of Governments Regional Transportation Council which has initiated the study of regional transit consolidation and expansion.

Babick said a new formula for regional transit funding could involve state money instead.

“Why wouldn’t we be looking at funding these regional transit centers right at the top of the state budget from a sales and use tax perspective, because that’s what they’re driving. They’re driving commerce. They’re driving prosperity. And the local economy is all predicated upon that,” Babick said. “So as we sort of reimagine what a transit agency looks like to support the North Texas region, that’s what we’re talking about there.”

Transportation planners say roads alone can’t handle the millions more people expected to keep moving to North Texas.

“How do people want to travel in the future, if people don’t want to be stuck in traffic,” Lee said.

Encouraging more DFW density with transit-oriented development is a way to support more population and transportation.

“Right now, we have 8 million people. In 20 years we’re going to have 11 or 12 million people. If you think about 50% more cars than are on the road right now, people are going to get stuck in traffic,” Lee said.

Her view for transit in the future could also support package delivery to remove some of those vehicles from the road.

The Carrollton Eviva development is expected to open in 2025.

A BETTER DART BUS NETWORK ISN'T TOO FAR OFF

DART's upcoming service changes will reduce wait times.

Editorial Staff

Wouldn't it be great if you didn't have to pay exorbitant amounts on car insurance and gas knowing that you'd have a reliable and convenient way to get around the city every day?

Dallas Area Rapid Transit has a long way to get there, but it's working on making the choice easier for people in its 13 cities across the Dallas area. DART plans to expand its on-demand service in certain neighborhoods as early as next month. By next summer, the agency hopes to realign some of its high-ridership routes in Richardson, Plano and the Love Field area. The agency also plans to bump up frequency of routes network-wide.

In the last year, DART officials have [refocused their priorities](#). After building 93 miles of light-rail, one of the longest systems in the country, they are moving away from new capital projects. It's encouraging that the agency is prioritizing operations and implementing promised changes to its bus network in a timely way.

The first round of changes that would be implemented in January, subject to board approval, are [pilots](#) to expand GoLink rides between zones. Currently, the agency provides on-demand car rides to passengers in areas that don't have robust rail and bus service. To keep costs low and make sure fixed routes wouldn't suffer, DART had limited GoLink within small zones — rides were around three miles on average.

Now, DART wants to try providing rides between areas that were separate zones, for example between Rylie and Kleberg, southeast Garland and Rowlett and Preston Hollow and North Dallas. DART also plans to restore the Dixon Circle bus route in South Dallas next month, a change that riders have advocated for repeatedly in public comment at board meetings.

The next round of changes to be implemented in June include realigning DART's highest ridership bus route, the shuttle that serves the University of Texas at Dallas. There are also plans to provide a new route that would go between the campus and the Arapaho Center light rail station. The changes aim to reduce overcrowding on the bus. A new route in Plano around the Legacy area could also be added.

By September, DART plans to realign bus service in the Love Field area to provide better access to the Dallas County Elections Department and the Mexican consulate. They also envision increasing light rail frequency on weekends to match weekday service.

The transit agency has been meeting with community members in the last two weeks to get their feedback on the proposed changes. There will be a [public hearing](#) before the DART board tomorrow at 6 p.m. at the agency's headquarters at Akard station downtown.

As DART slowly grows its ridership to pre-pandemic levels, focusing on service and frequency are cost-effective ways to significantly improve its ability to attract and retain passengers.

FORT WORTH ADDS TWO COMMUNITIES TO NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, RELEASES NEW REPORT CARD SYSTEM

By Sandra Sadek



Two Fort Worth neighborhoods — Seminary and Worth Heights — are being added to the city's Neighborhood Improvement Program, thanks to an increase in the program's funding.

Neighborhoods are chosen for the program based on financial hardship, opportunities and current conditions in the area. In addition to the budget increase, city staff developed a first-of-its-kind scorecard to identify where and how money is invested in each selected neighborhood.

The city's neighborhood services department considers the program one of its most important projects. So, how well has the program done so far?

"For the most part, there's been very positive change in all those neighborhoods. There's a couple of exceptions in the categories, but I think that will change," said Victor Turner, Fort Worth's director of neighborhood services.

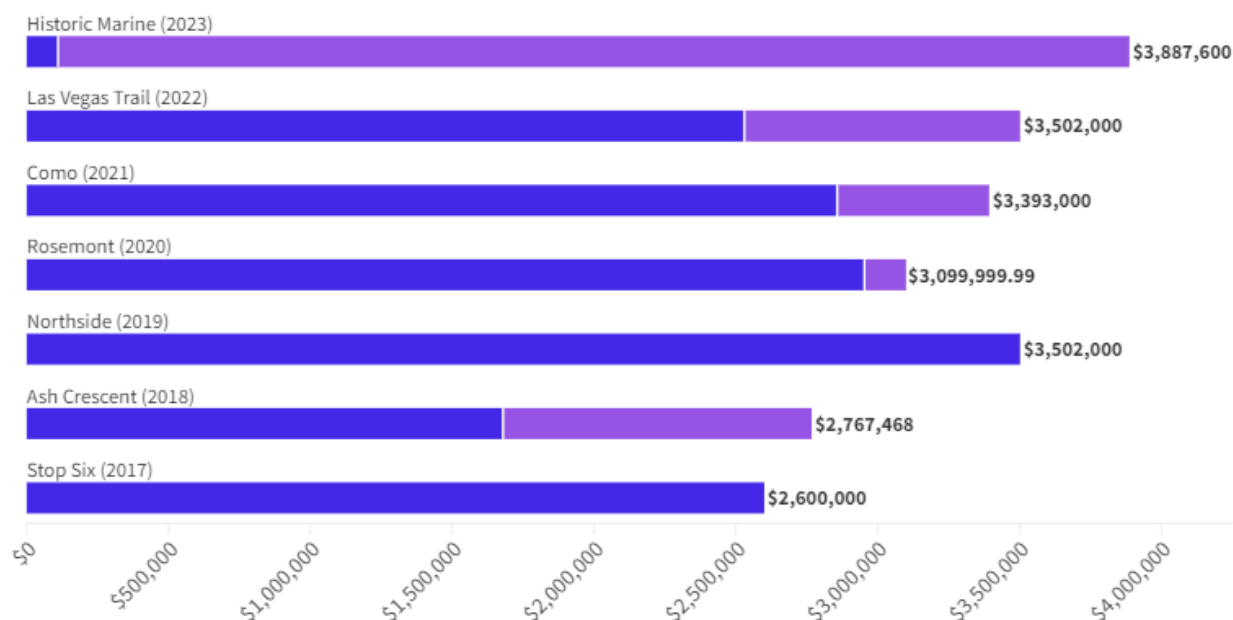
Over the years, the total number of dollars committed to each neighborhood has increased. Stop Six, the first community selected for the program, received an influx of \$2.6 million, while the latest neighborhood, Historic Marine, will have \$3.9 million to invest.

The Neighborhood Improvement Program was launched in 2017 using funds set aside by the City Council. The goal is to improve that area's vitality through capital improvements, better public safety and more affordable housing.

City funds committed to the Neighborhood Improvement Program over time

Around \$22.3 million has been put toward the Neighborhood Improvement Program since 2017.

■ Funding used up ■ Funding remaining



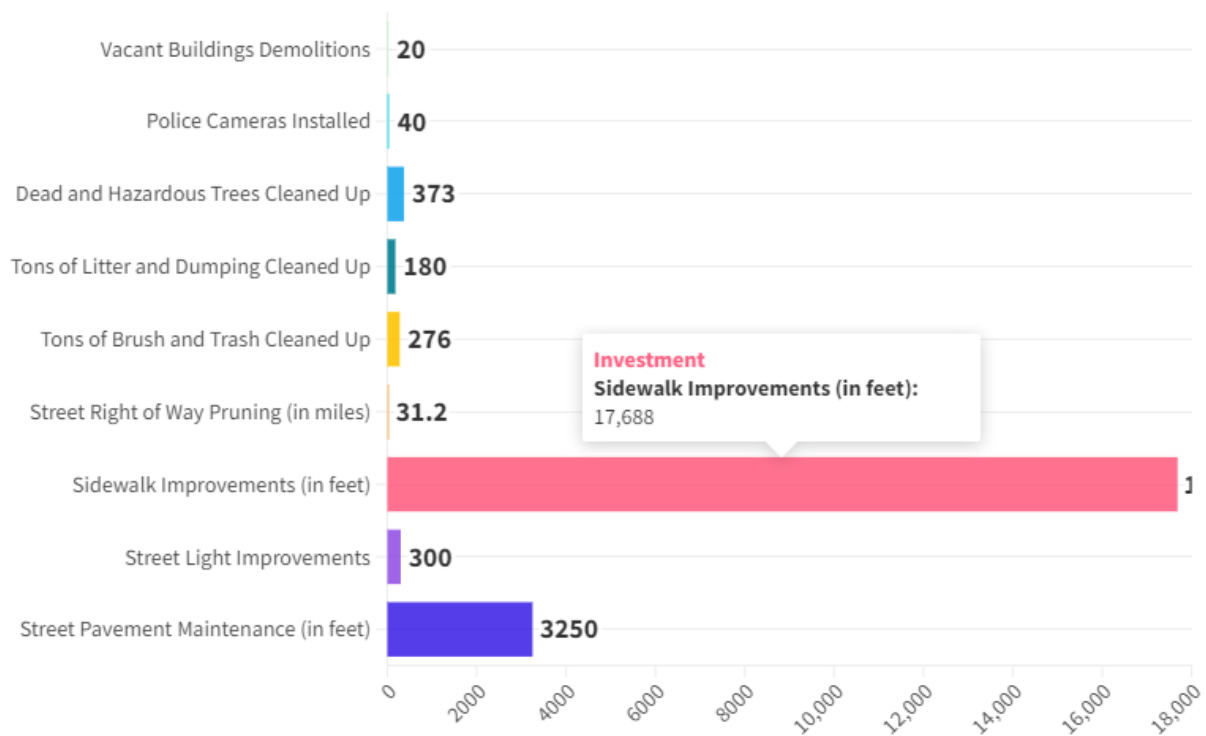
Improvements include sidewalks, streetlights and pavement work as well as updates to local parks and cleanup work. Police cameras and public art have been installed in some areas.

“If you look at the map, you see that we could go all over the city, but we’re really making sure that we’re capitalizing on any investment that is going, or has recently gone, in that neighborhood, and I think that’s a really good use of these funds,” said council member Elizabeth Beck, who represents downtown and parts of west Fort Worth.

Investments made in Rosemont since 2020 through the Neighborhood Improvement Program

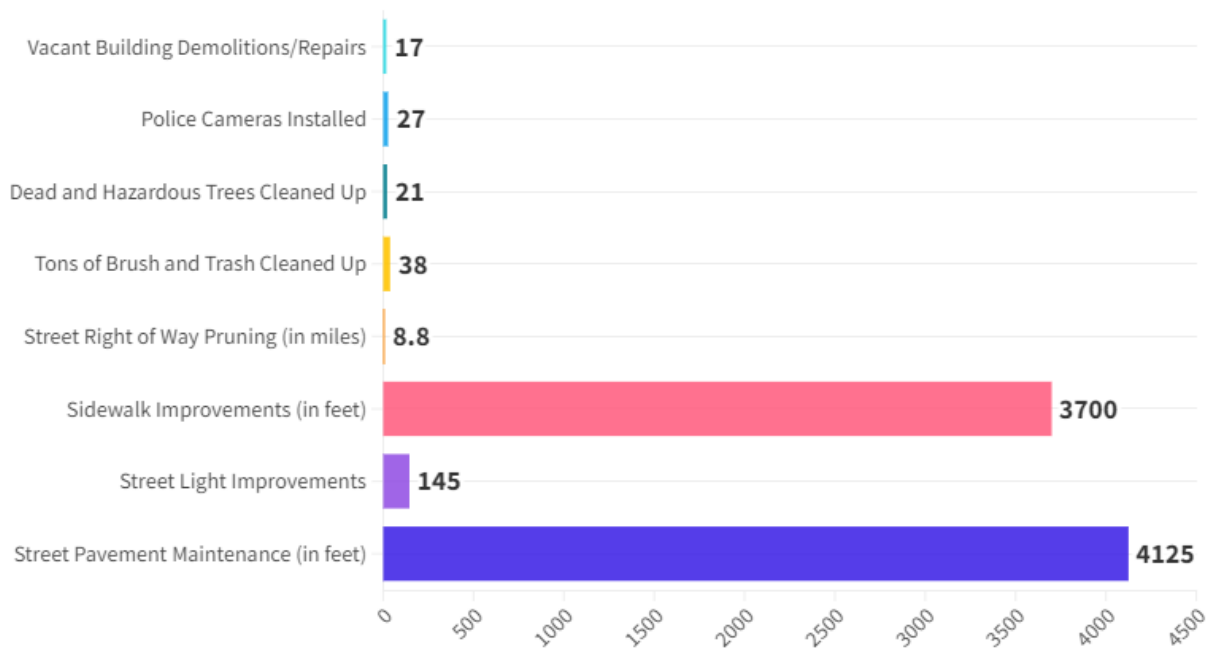
Stop Six was the first community selected for the Neighborhood Improvement Program. Two of its parks, Rosedale Plaza Park and Bunche Park, have received new equipment through the program:

Stop Six received \$2.6 million in investments, all of which has been exhausted.



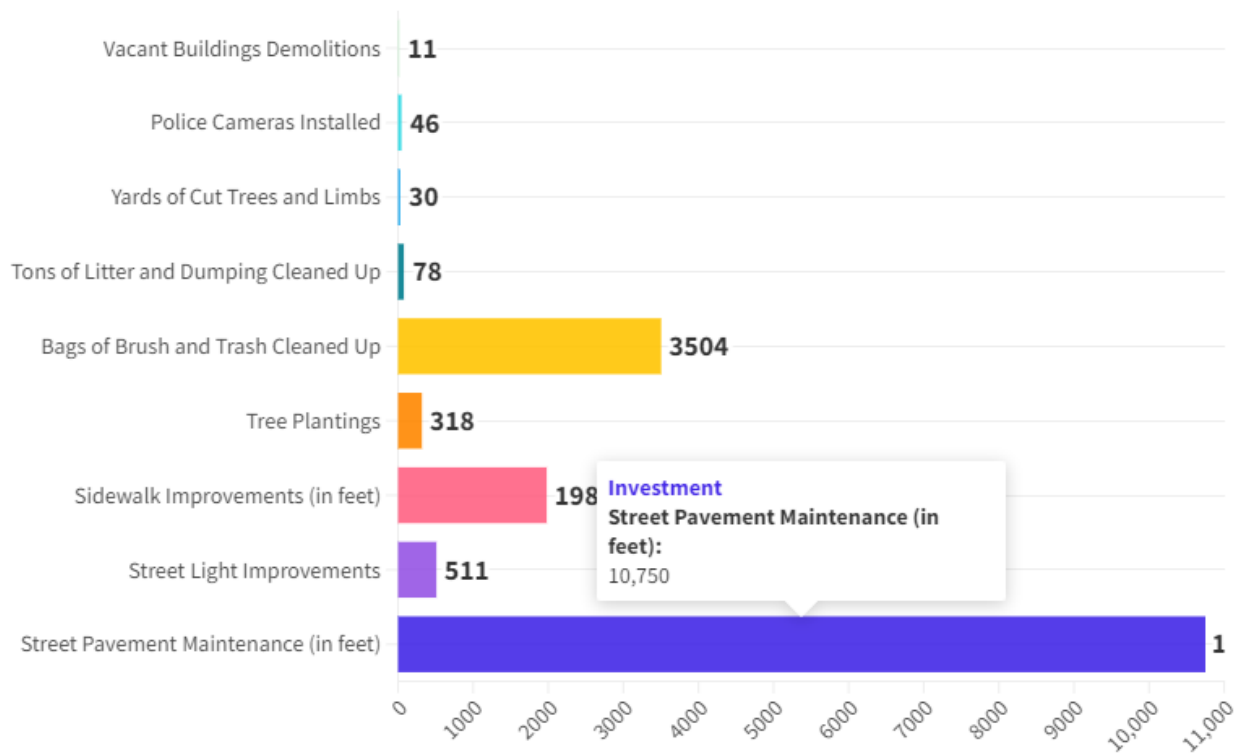
Ash Crescent will soon have a new park, Best Maid Smiley Park, as a result of the Neighborhood Improvement Program:

Around \$1.7 million has been used in Ash Crescent and another \$1 million remains.



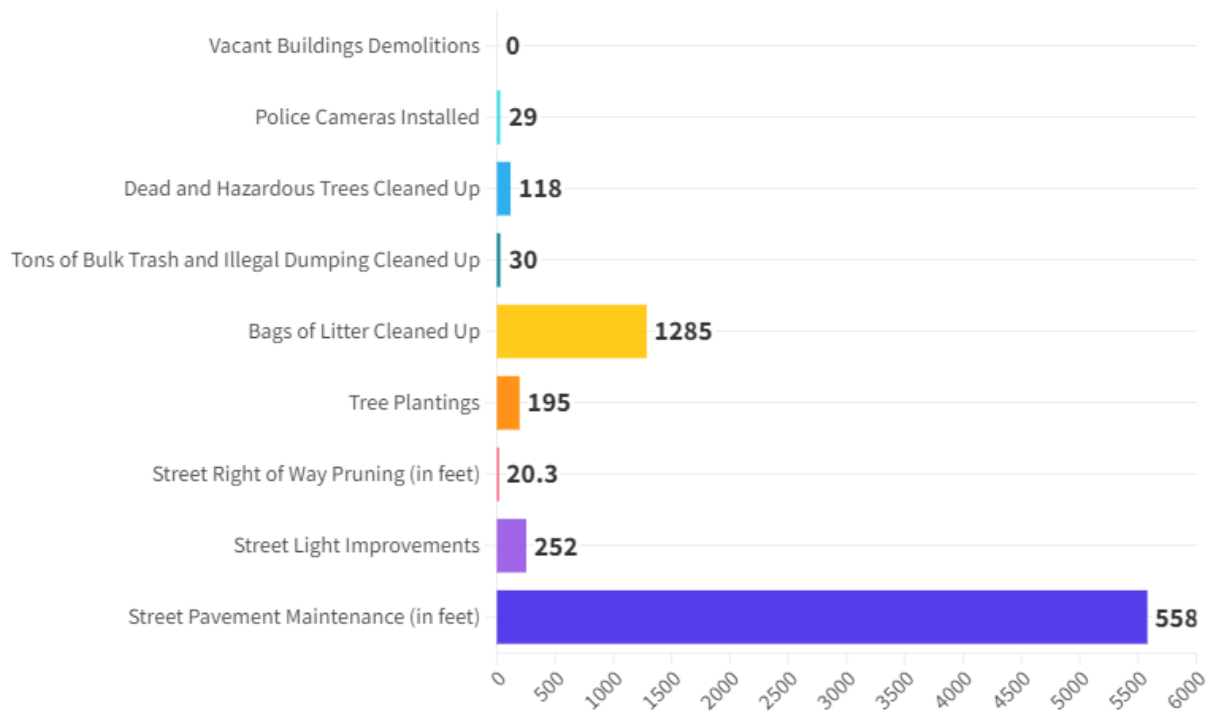
Northside saw a lot of improvements come to the area, including lighting and sidewalks at Maddox Park, more animal control efforts and the cleaning of 269 city-owned vacant lots:

Northside has exhausted the \$3.5 million of investments from the program.



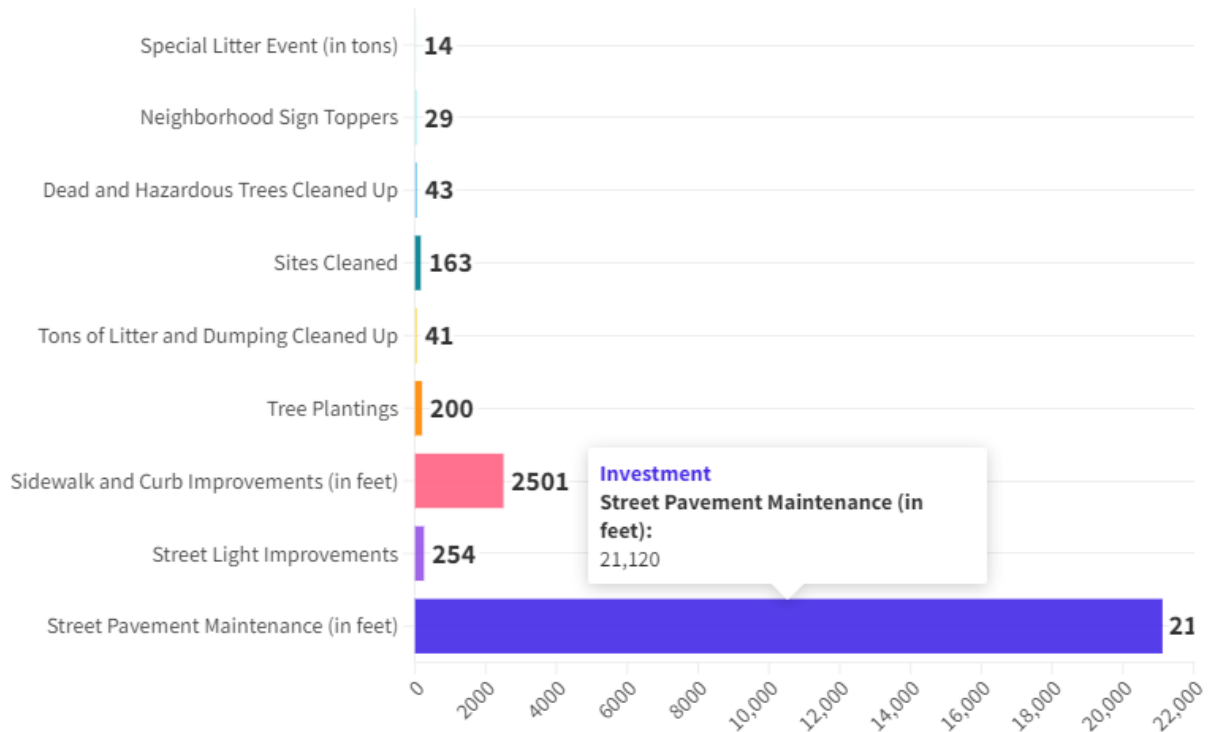
Rosemont Park and Unity Park received new equipment, improved paths and maintenance while 50 city-owned vacant lots were cleaned:

Rosemont has less than \$150,000 available from its total \$3 million pool of funds.



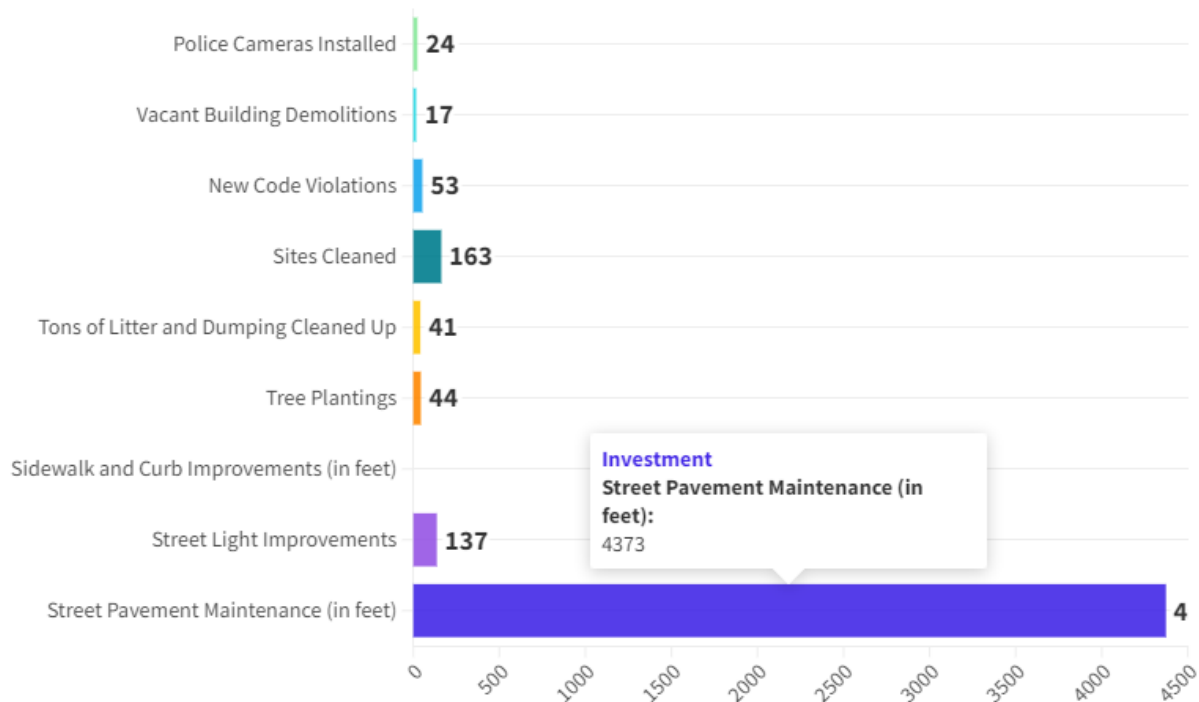
Como improvements also included public art and installing trash containers along Horne Street. Three parks, Lake Como Park, Goodman Park and Ed K. Collet Park, saw some maintenance as well:

Lake Como has benefited from almost \$3 million of investment through the program.



A new traffic roundabout was installed to calm traffic on Las Vegas Trail. Other improvements include new shelters, benches and picnic tables at the parks:

Las Vegas Trail has benefited from almost \$3 million of investment through the program.



Data for Historic Marine, the latest neighborhood added in 2023, is not yet available. However, the city has installed new lighting at Marine Park, added trash cans around the area and improved security lighting. Park improvements are expected in 2024, and community meetings will be held to gather input. There are also ongoing traffic safety studies planned in the near future.

Council member Jeanette Martinez, whose district includes both Seminary and Worth Heights, thanked the department for bringing the program to an area that needs these improvements.

In the past, the city would add one new neighborhood to the program annually. But the doubling of the [program's budget for 2024](#) — a total of \$8 million — allowed the department to work on two neighborhoods in the upcoming year.

Having a scorecard was a suggestion from the [approved Neighborhood Conservation Plan](#).

“This is the fruits of (staff) labor and all of our labor,” council member Jared Williams, who chairs the Neighborhood Quality and Revitalization Committee, said. “It’s really cool to see the work in action.”

COMMENTARY: MOBILITY IS CRUCIAL AS REGION KEEPS GROWING

By Robert Folzenlogen, Hillwood

Hillwood, the developer of AllianceTexas, has a legacy of innovation, so establishing the Mobility Innovation Zone (MIZ) was a natural next step. Since 1989, with the opening of the world's first industrial airport, AllianceTexas has grown to 27,000 acres, with 560 companies generating 66,000 direct jobs and an estimated \$111 billion in economic impact for the region. As we see the development and the region continue to experience exponential growth, Hillwood remains committed to innovating and adapting for what's next.

The AllianceTexas MIZ was established to attract and convene mobility innovators here in North Fort Worth, providing the infrastructure and strategic partnerships needed to scale and commercialize new technologies and mobility solutions, both on the ground and in the air. That combination works to connect people, places, and ideas that push innovation forward in surface and air mobility.

In order to keep up with population growth, the region must innovate with creative solutions that include all modes of transportation. The Dallas-Fort Worth metro is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the U.S., gaining 328 people daily and set to surpass the Chicago metro soon. Within 20 miles of the AllianceTexas development, there is a population of two million residents with an annual growth rate of 1.62%. The numbers speak for themselves when talking about infrastructure needs, supply chain reliability and growth, as well as dependable transit solutions.

To retain and attract corporate residents, we need a strong workforce with flexible options for commuting. Part of solving that challenge is public-private partnerships like those established with Trinity Metro, collaborating on innovative solutions and public transportation challenges. The Alliance area is served by two bus routes and the Alliance ZIPZONE, which helps riders with their first-mile and last-mile connections. Additional options include riding TEXRail and connecting to the Mercantile ZIPZONE, which allows riders to connect to Alliance ZIPZONE. Another great option is VANPOOL, a service for groups of five or more commuters who live and work near each other and who want to share the cost of traveling to and from work. The program is available for residents in Tarrant County as well as 10 other counties.

Future transit plans include an express route that stops in downtown Fort Worth and continues to Alliance. Potential commuters on this route may be concerned about traffic on I-35W, but this new route will guarantee arrival time, or the ride is free. The route will feature a new luxury bus fleet with onboard Wi-Fi and will utilize the recently completed North Tarrant Express (NTE) TEXpress lanes along I-35W.

The NTE TEXpress lanes are part of the critical roadway systems that directly connect to over 75 million square feet of industrial logistics facilities, giving AllianceTexas-based companies a strategic advantage in mobility innovation. The new stretch of highway will significantly improve capacity and safety in the movement of goods and people through the region, state and nation, with a guaranteed minimum rate of travel of 55 mph from the Alliance corridor to Dallas. The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is another public-private partnership

essential to transit and mobility growth, convening local governments and driving regional planning.

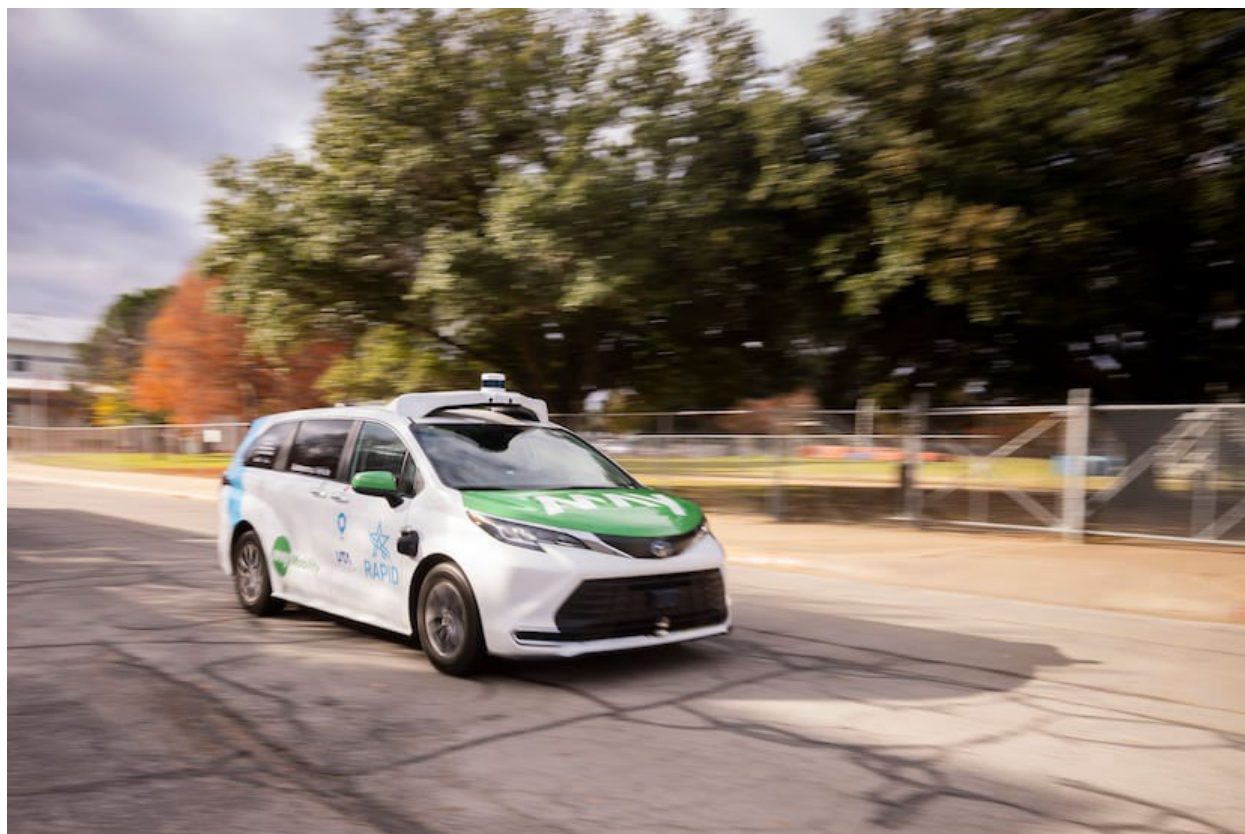
As we look ahead to continued growth and new innovations, we know that a robust workforce is vital to successful operations and a strong future. Helping our employees reach their jobs is an essential component of the success of our region.

Robert Folzenlogen is Senior Vice President of Strategic Development & Innovation at Hillwood.

A NORTH TEXAS CITY IS EMBRACING AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES WHILE OTHERS TAP THE BRAKES

May Mobility's fleet of Toyota Sienna's travels UT Arlington students for free and the general public at \$3 per ride.

By Irving Mejia-Hilario



Sight autonomy engineer Chris Hollwedel with May Mobility, an autonomous vehicle service in Arlington, demonstrates the company's Arlington RAPID (Rideshare, Automation, and Payment Integration Demonstration) autonomous vehicle in Arlington on Friday, Dec. 8, 2023. The service is a partnership between May Mobility, Via, the City of Arlington and the University of Texas at Arlington. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

Dreams of autonomous vehicles in Downtown Dallas seem further away than ever after General Motors' robot-taxi unit, Cruise, stumbled out the gate when its [CEO stepped down](#) after its [cars were pulled from Dallas roads in late October](#) and [GM pulled its investment](#).

But where Dallas is falling short, its neighbor to the west is picking up the slack. Through Arlington's [Rideshare, Automation and Payment Integration Demonstration Program](#), the city has implemented AVs from downtown to the University of Texas at Arlington's campus fueled by Ann Arbor, Mich.-based AV company May Mobility.

The Midwest AV company [launched its services in Arlington in March 2021](#), intending to warm people up to the idea of AVs sharing the same roads as cars with drivers, said Rob Carter, May Mobility's customer operations manager.

“I just encourage people to take a ride themselves and see how they like it,” he said. “I was working in business, and I took a class in self-driving technology while I was working out of school and I got interested in what was next in the future of automotive. I hope this piques people’s curiosity, too.”

May Mobility’s fleet of four Toyota Sienna minivans uses the company’s multi-policy decision-making technology on its predetermined route network during each ride. It means the vehicle’s seven cameras and five sensors are helping run thousands of simulations on familiar roads to choose its next move.

May Mobility originally had a fleet of four Lexus RX 450h SUVs and an electric Polaris GEM, but moved to Siennas in 2022 after it closed its [Series C funding round, which netted the company \\$111 million](#). Toyota also backed May Mobility with a \$67 million investment last month.

On average, the company sees between 150 to 200 riders per day, with most of them being UTA students, Carter said. According to the company’s latest estimates, May Mobility has given approximately 45,000 rides since it launched.

For UTA students and staff, the program is free. It costs \$3 per ride for anyone else. People can use May Mobility’s app Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to book a ride.

Unlike Cruise, May Mobility isn’t operating on a typical commercial model. Instead, it’s benefitting from its [\\$1.7 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration](#) and its partnership with the university, the city and New York City-based Via Transportation, which powers the company’s app.

In turn, May Mobility doesn’t have to scrape together money from its fares to turn a profit, Carter said.

“We operate off grants. We’re not actually collecting the fare,” he said. “Via is helping with the app, and the fare goes to the city. Our business end is operating as public transportation through local or federal funding, depending on the different types of grants that are available.”



Sight autonomy engineer Chris Hollwedel with May Mobility, an autonomous vehicle service in Arlington, hovers his hands over the steering wheel during a demonstration of the company's Arlington RAPID (Rideshare, Automation, and Payment Integration Demonstration) autonomous vehicle in Arlington on Friday, Dec. 8, 2023. The service is a partnership between May Mobility, Via, the City of Arlington and the University of Texas at Arlington. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

[Arlington's infamously poor public transportation system](#) is one of the reasons why May Mobility decided to set up its operations in town, Carter said.

"We heard a lot of stories about people not having public transportation and Arlington's move to Via was really unique for offering ridesharing to supplement what the city was lacking," he said. "So now, being on Via's platform as their autonomous option is great because we're the people who show up."

Seeing how Cruise's downfall partly came down to safety concerns, May Mobility is looking to avoid the same mistakes by taking its rides at a brisk pace, Carter said.

"We always have someone behind the steering wheel because we stress safety," he said. "Our top speed in autonomy is 30 miles an hour. We're just slowly ramping up the speeds that we use."

Though you'll never see one of May Mobility's cars on a freeway, the company emphasizes its [safety program](#), Carter said. Anytime the company has new software, it has to run through thousands of simulations before seeing a road. The company's AV operators also have to go

through federal training safety programs, which are similar to what truck drivers across the country use.

It hasn't quite been perfect, though. The company has seen a few small fender benders across the country, but Carter said it's to be expected as the technology and people learn how to share roads with one another.

"There's always going to be situations where there have been minor accidents," he said. "We come to full stops at stop signs and take turns carefully. So I think people are getting used to how our cars drive so they can know not to rush or get around us or anything."

May Mobility is still eyeing expansion and with Cruise out of the way, Dallas may be one of its next destinations, Carter said. Currently, the company has operations in Arlington, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Minn. and Sun City, Ariz.

"We'll have more announcements coming up in the near future about new cities and new operations, which is great to see," he said. "We're going to ramp up our testing to see how far our technology can go with and without a human operator."

But for now, getting May Mobility's name out there is the company's top goal.

"We need to increase our exposure and get more people in the general public aware of what we're doing," he said. "The ridership here has been great and we're seeing students really love it. So it's all about capitalizing on the right demographic that wants to ride with us."

MCKINNEY LEADERS TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL, STATE AGENCIES FOR LOWER 5 PLAZA PROJECT

By Shelbie Hamilton

The Lower 5 Plaza will feature park spaces on each side of SH 5 connected by a walkable underpass. (Rendering courtesy city of McKinney)

McKinney City Council members approved allocating funding for the design of the Lower 5 Plaza project at a Dec. 5 meeting.

The project is a pedestrian connectivity initiative that would add an at-grade bridge with a walkable underpass [connecting park areas on either side of SH 5](#) between Louisiana Street and Virginia Street, according to [city documents](#).

City staff presented an update on the Lower 5 Plaza initiative, previously referred to as the deck park project, to City Council members at the meeting, including details on how the Texas Department of Transportation and the North Central Texas Council of Governments are expected to contribute to the project.

How we got here

City staff [presented three design options](#) for the project in April 2022.

The options presented included:

- A traditional deck park with the road routed underneath a bridge
- An at-grade option where both the park and road remain at ground level
- An inverted deck park style, in which the road remained at grade, and the pedestrian connection is routed underneath the road

Council members [identified the inverted deck park](#) as the preferred design style in April. The project is expected to cost between \$40 million-\$45 million, including costs for both infrastructure and the planned park, according to city documents. The park is also expected to cost the city between \$2 million-\$2.5 million in annual operation and maintenance costs once completed.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments has committed \$30 million for the infrastructure work, Assistant City Manager Kim Flom said. The funding is expected to be available in late 2024.

The gist

Council members approved three items related to the project, including a budget amendment and two contracts with design and planning firm Kimley-Horn.

The design contracts include:

- \$225,000 for the design of a conceptual park layout
- \$435,000 for the preliminary drainage design as well as preliminary layouts for the bridge and park grading

The items were all approved in three separate votes with a 5-2 vote split. Council members Patrick Cloutier and Justin Beller voted against the items in each of the three votes.

Cloutier noted his concerns for the potential for the park to attract homeless individuals that would seek shelter in the underpass. Other concerns raised included issues with echoing noise from the traffic overhead and cost escalation over the course of the seven-year project.

Council member Charlie Philips voted in support of the items related to the project but shared his thoughts on the project during a presentation in a Dec. 5 work session. Philips said he voted against the design style the council is pursuing in favor of the traditional deck park style earlier this year but would vote to support the design contracts to align with fellow council members.

“I will support your motions this evening to fund the design and construction of this park because it is the will of the entire council, but I still maintain it is not the appropriate design we should have undertaken,” Philips said.

Diving deeper

The project is being incorporated into the [planned reconstruction of SH 5](#) by TxDOT, with the state organization taking on the construction of the bridge portion of the Lower 5 Plaza project.

As a result, the SH 5 roadway improvement project is being split into two phases:

- Phase 1: Country Club Road to McMakin Street, which is expected to begin construction in spring 2025
- Phase 2: McMakin Street to Power House Street, which is expected to begin construction in mid-2026

The roadway improvement project is also expected to include additional pedestrian crossing points following an analysis of pedestrian activity in the area, McKinney Director of Engineering Gary Graham said. TxDOT will also manage environmental documentation as well as acquiring right of way for the project, including business relocations and demolition for five affected properties adjacent to the roadway, according to the presentation.

The city is responsible for the design and construction of the drainage system, infrastructure and plaza amenities as well as for creating the initial bridge design, according to the presentation.

Going forward

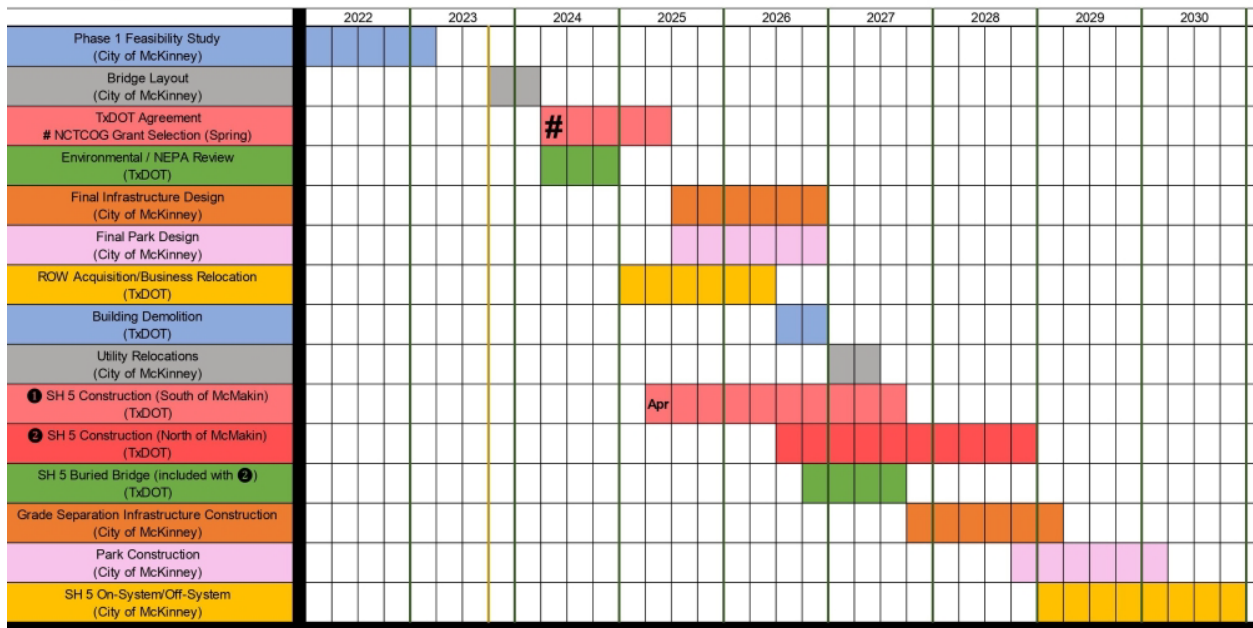
Work on the design of the project is underway, with the bridge schematic design expected to be

completed in early 2024, according to city documents.

The design of the park is expected to change from the renderings that have been presented so far. Additional public input opportunities will be held prior to the final park design, Graham said.

The total project isn't expected to be completed until 2030 and will follow the completion of the SH 5 reconstruction, according to the presentation.

Project Timeline



The final iteration of the park isn't expected to be completed until 2030, according to city documents. (Courtesy city of McKinney)**Learn more**

For more information on the Lower 5 Plaza project, visit www.mckinneytexas.org/3340.

DALLAS GETS \$21.8 MILLION TO IMPROVE SAFETY ON DANGEROUS STRETCH OF ROAD IN SOUTH DALLAS

Money comes from bipartisan infrastructure law.

By Joseph Morton

WASHINGTON — Dallas has some of the most dangerous roadways in the country, particularly for pedestrians, but one dicey South Dallas stretch will get a safety makeover thanks to a \$21.8 million federal grant announced Wednesday by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The City of Dallas and the North Central Texas Council of Governments have found some of the area's highest fatality and severe injury crash rates along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Local officials welcomed news of the award and said the project would not just help reduce crash rates and bolster pedestrian safety, but also transform a historically underserved neighborhood.

"Knowing this significant investment will bring enhanced safety, community connection and growth, this is a great step towards a future streetcar in the area," Council member Adam Bazaldua said in a statement.

The plan calls for new safety measures such as separate bike lanes, improved crosswalks, lighting upgrades, traffic signal enhancements and better transit access.

The 2.5-mile project area of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Cedar Crest Boulevard runs from Fair Park southward to 11th Street. It was designated as a priority corridor by NCTCOG's regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.

City Manager T.C. Broadnax said in a statement it was a great day "for mobility and safety improvements for the pedestrians of Dallas."

It's unclear how long it will take to implement the changes but federal officials said most projects included in a previous round of funding have been progressing quickly.

The money flows from the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law and requires a 20 percent match that can come from either local entities or state funding.

The White House has been highlighting grant awards from the infrastructure law with some fanfare as it seeks to tout President Joe Biden's accomplishments going into the 2024 elections.

Mitch Landrieu is a senior adviser to the president responsible for coordinating implementation of the infrastructure law. Landrieu cited the Dallas grant money as he spoke to reporters Wednesday about the administration's work to improve the country's infrastructure with an eye toward safety and preventing deaths.

"Unfortunately, too many of us know firsthand the pain of losing a loved one in a crash," Landrieu said. "Roadway safety of course is personal to the president, as you know. So this is something that is near and dear to his heart."

President Joe Biden [lost his first wife and their baby daughter in a tragic crash more than 50 years ago](#).

Dallas had the highest rate of pedestrian deaths among the 20 largest cities in the U.S. in 2020, with 4.91 pedestrian deaths per 100,000 people.

[The Dallas City Council signed off on a Vision Zero plan last year](#) featuring dozens of steps to curb traffic deaths. Those include improving safety infrastructure, increasing traffic enforcement and educating the public.

The plan's goal: eliminate all traffic deaths by 2030.

Part of the plan includes identifying and addressing the city's highest-risk areas.

A crash data analysis found [7% of Dallas streets account for 62% percent](#) of severe crashes.

The stretch of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard fits into those plans as one of the most frequent areas in Dallas for pedestrian accidents. The corridor offers access to a light rail station, community center, library and other destinations.

Federal officials touting the latest road safety money on Wednesday said they have prioritized local solutions and that Dallas specifically has worked with residents and local businesses on its plans.

Asked about the effectiveness of improvements in the Dallas project such as a "road diet" that reduces the number of traffic lanes by repurposing them for cyclists, pedestrians or mass transit, Deputy Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg said those approaches have worked in other places such as New York.

"The statistics often showed a dramatic improvement in safety," Trottenberg said.

NEW HOPES FOR A TRAIN FROM DALLAS TO HOUSTON

With \$2.5 million in federal grants, Amtrak and TxDOT will study adding passenger rail in Texas.

By Megan Kimble

The Texas Eagle, an Amtrak passenger train, made its final run from Dallas to Houston on September 10, 1995. The trip was scheduled to take a little more than six hours, but it dragged on for nine, as signal problems and freight traffic forced delays along the 265-mile route. No one on board, many there to take part in transportation history, seemed to mind: “I’m sorry I never rode it before,” one woman told the Associated Press. But Amtrak was shedding unprofitable lines across the country, and so the service was discontinued.

Now, it seems, the Texas Department of Transportation wants to bring it back. On Friday, the Federal Railroad Administration awarded \$2.5 million to fund five studies of up to \$500,000 each to explore passenger rail service in Texas, including a TxDOT project to restore a Dallas-Houston route on the same Union Pacific tracks that once carried the Texas Eagle, as well as an Amtrak partnership to resurrect a [controversial high-speed rail project](#) that stalled out in 2022.

The money comes from the Federal Railroad Administration’s new Corridor Identification and Development Program, which was enabled by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in 2021. The inaugural round, announced Friday, funded 69 studies, an attempt to build a pipeline of intercity rail projects in almost every state. It’s unlikely all of them will get built. “Half a million to study something is a pittance. That’s hardly a down payment,” said David Peter Alan, a writer for *Railway Age* and longtime transit advocate.

TxDOT applied for three passenger rail studies that would connect the so-called Texas Triangle, encompassing Austin, Dallas–Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. Two of the three corridors were funded, one to restore service between Dallas and Houston and another to expand service between Houston and San Antonio along an existing Amtrak line.

This area contains two thirds of the state’s population and accounts for nearly 90 percent of the state’s growth over the past decade. A TxDOT spokesperson declined an interview with *Texas Monthly*. In its grant application, the agency acknowledged that Texas highways are among the most congested in the nation and that adding passenger rail would alleviate road congestion, improve safety, and reduce emissions. The state leads the nation in traffic deaths and carbon emissions on its roads.

Although the funding represents a commitment only to study the corridors, the fact that TxDOT applied is significant, said Peter LeCody, the president of Texas Rail Advocates, a nonprofit dedicated to developing rail service across the state. “Passenger rail really has not been in TxDOT’s vocabulary at all,” he said. The agency’s rail division was established in 2009 and received only [\\$21 million](#) in TxDOT’s \$37 billion [2024–2025 budget](#). “We’re pleased to see that TxDOT is making these steps in the right direction.”

But there is no state money designated by the legislature for passenger rail, LeCody said. To secure federal funding for construction, TxDOT would have to commit to paying for 20 percent of any rail project, even as state law requires roughly 97 percent of the agency’s funding be spent on roads. TxDOT cited the Texas Mobility Fund—which has a balance of [\\$460 million](#)—

and “state general revenue” as funding sources for the Dallas-Houston and San Antonio–Houston rail projects. “We have asked TxDOT in the past, in their legislative appropriation request, to put in funding for passenger rail projects. They’ve shied away from that,” LeCody said.

TxDOT estimated the cost of establishing the Dallas-Houston line at \$1.3 billion. Meanwhile, the agency has committed [\\$10 billion](#) to expand Interstate 45 from downtown Houston to the suburb of Spring to accommodate increased traffic congestion along a short stretch, roughly 10 percent, of the same corridor. “You just can’t pour enough concrete and asphalt to take care of traffic in the next ten, twenty, thirty, forty years here in Texas,” LeCody said. “We’ve got to look at some multimodal solutions.”

In August, Amtrak announced it was considering a partnership with Texas Central to revive the company’s high-speed rail plan between Dallas and Houston, which promised to ferry passengers 240 miles in only ninety minutes using Japanese bullet trains. That plan had appeared all but dead: in 2022, [the same month](#) that the Texas Supreme Court ruled that Texas Central could use eminent domain to acquire property for the project, its [CEO abruptly resigned and the board disbanded](#). Since then, landowners along the train’s potential route have grown increasingly frustrated by the company’s silence and lack of transparency.

Earlier this year, state representative Cody Harris, a Republican who represents several rural counties between Dallas and Houston, filed a bill that would have required Texas Central to disclose its financial statements, including how it planned to pay for the project—estimated to cost more than \$30 billion—as well as timelines for construction and completion. In a House Transportation Committee hearing on the bill, chairman Terry Canales, a Democrat from Edinburg, lambasted Texas Central’s CEO Michael Bui, who took over in 2022 and still works as a managing director at FTI Consulting in Houston, for the company’s lack of communication. “Nobody knows what’s going on. They’ve been trying to contact you. You haven’t responded,” Canales said.

Bui defended the company, saying it had responded to “a letter from an attorney that represents a lot of the homeowners . . . We receive emails from media, emails from homeowners associations . . . and we do respond,” he said. Texas Central did not respond to multiple phone calls and emails from *Texas Monthly*, nor did FTI Consulting. In September, Bui wrote a letter to Canales affirming that “Texas Central has continued to make progress with its high-speed rail project” and that the company looked forward to Amtrak’s “continued collaboration” on the project. ([HB 2357](#), the transparency bill, never went to a vote.)

A spokesperson from Amtrak declined an interview, but Michael Morris, the director of transportation at the North Central Texas Council of Governments, said the federal agency told him earlier this fall that it was in the process of reviewing Texas Central’s final environmental impact statement, completed in 2020. “Whoever builds high-speed rail between Dallas and Houston will eventually have to knock on the door of the previous Texas Central partners,” Morris said. The company still owns a significant amount of land along the corridor, and because its environmental review has already been approved, the project needs only an approval from the federal Surface Transportation Board before construction can begin. (Well, and \$30 billion.)

NCTCOG also received a federal planning grant to study a high-speed rail corridor between Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston. Morris said the Fort Worth–Dallas line has independent utility,

regardless of the fate of the Dallas-Houston segment. “I think if you really, truly want to grow the economy of Texas, it’s not a heavy lift to have a foundational piece . . . being a high-speed rail.”

Alan of *Railway Age* is skeptical that Texas will ever get high-speed rail. It’s significantly more expensive than conventional rail, which can travel up to 110 miles per hour on a high-performance system, he said. That wouldn’t be quite as fast a trip—four and a half hours from Dallas to Houston, according to TxDOT, instead of the ninety minutes promised by high-speed rail boosters. But less pricy, more frequent passenger rail should be the first step for Texas, he said. “When you have a robust rail network, high-speed rail is not revolutionary. It’s evolutionary. When you have no trains at all, to the average person, high-speed rail is science fiction.”

Conventional rail is also perhaps more politically palatable in the Texas Legislature. In September, Harris, the legislator who filed the rail transparency bill, wrote a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration opposing Amtrak’s involvement in the Dallas-Houston corridor. “We’re just looking at a project that’s just going to continue to sink billions of dollars of taxpayer funds into it to keep it afloat,” he told *Texas Monthly*.

Of course, the same could be said of the interstate highway system. Texas will receive [nearly \\$13 billion](#) from the federal government during the next two years to build and maintain highways. But with only one stop, in the Brazos Valley between College Station and Huntsville, the high-speed rail system would primarily serve residents in Dallas and Houston, Harris said. He would be “much more open” to a traditional passenger rail project along the I-45 corridor, one that included stops in his district.

One like the Texas Eagle, perhaps?

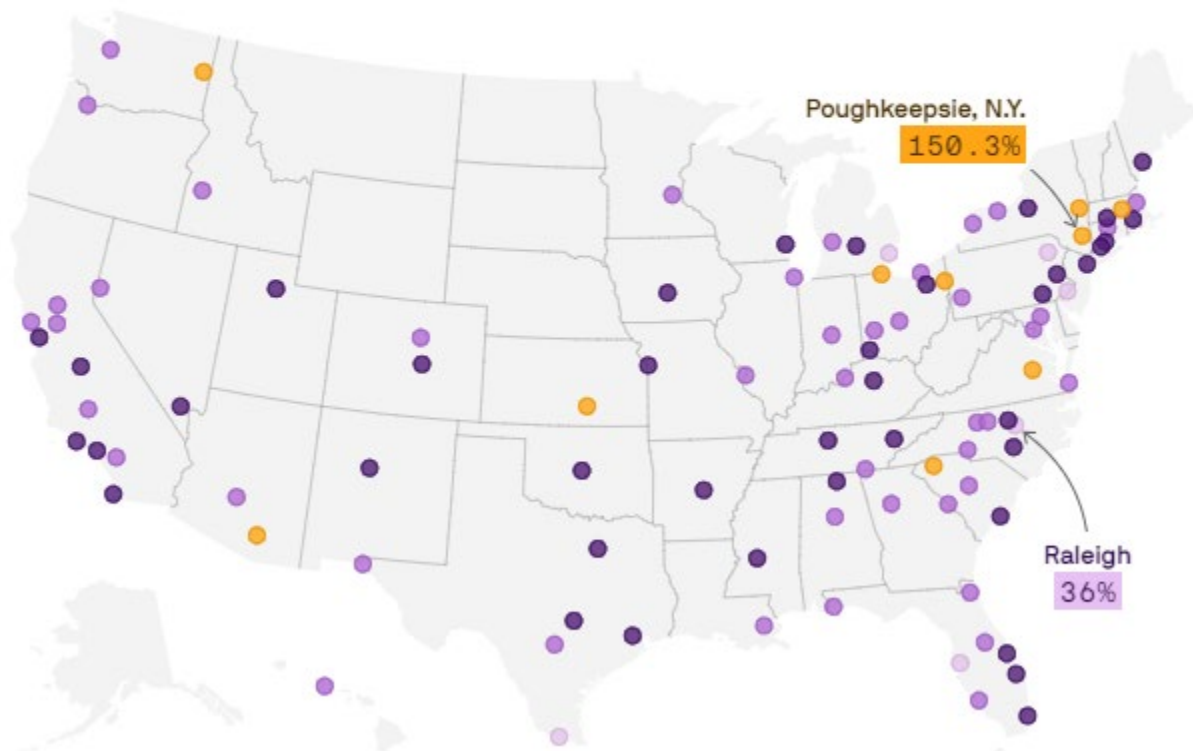
DALLAS-FORT WORTH PUBLIC TRANSIT REBOUNDED AFTER PANDEMIC

By Tasha Tsiaperas, Alex Fitzpatrick, and Kavya Beheraj

Public transit ridership recovery

Estimated total transit trips via all modes in August or September 2023 compared to 2019 levels

■ <50% ■ 50%-75% ■ 75%-100% ■ Exceeded 2019 levels



Data: [American Public Transportation Association](#); Note: Among metro areas with at least 500,000 people; Richmond's data compares August 2023 to August 2019; Map: Kavya Beheraj/Axios

Public transit ridership in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is at 78% of pre-pandemic levels, per American Public Transportation Association data.

Why it matters: Public transit — whether in the form of buses, light rail or even cable cars — makes for cleaner, greener cities and opens up possibilities for those who can't afford a car.

The big picture: Of around 100 U.S. metro areas with more than 500,000 people, September 2023 public transit ridership was at or above 100% of September 2019 levels in just nine metro areas.

- Nationally, "ridership recovered throughout 2022 and 2023 to stand at 77% of pre-pandemic levels in November 2023," per APTA's latest data.

Zoom in: About 5.1 million riders used D-FW public transit in September, down from the more than 6.5 million riders in September 2019.

- But, bus and train use has increased this year compared to last.

Public transit trips in the Dallas metro area

Monthly; January 2019 to September 2023



Data: [American Public Transportation Association](#); Note: Includes bus, rail, ferry and other modes; Chart: Axios Visuals

By the numbers: Dallas Area Rapid Transit recorded nearly 4.5 million bus and light rail trips this September, compared to just shy of 3.9 million trips in September 2022, according to the national transportation [data](#).

- Fort Worth's Trinity Metro recorded nearly 490,000 trips in September, compared to 455,000 trips last September.

Yes, but: Overall, local public transit ridership was declining before business and government shutdowns in 2020.

- DART bus and train ridership had been dropping for years, down to about 69 million annual passenger rides in 2019, compared to almost 71.3 million in 2013, per the [Dallas Morning News](#).
- And ridership on [Trinity Railway Express](#) — which connects downtown Fort Worth to downtown Dallas — had dropped from a peak of 2.7 million in 2009 to 2 million rides in 2019.

Between the lines: DART has been [increasing security](#) on its trains and at stations to address riders' concerns about safety, which the transit authority's leadership says had led to declines in ridership.

The bottom line: It may take years for public transit ridership to reach pre-pandemic levels, but workers returning to office and a rebound in all other travel appears to be helping.

HERE'S HOW MUCH SPACE YOU CAN RENT IN DALLAS FOR \$1,700 PER MONTH, THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

A new analysis shows where you can get the most and the least amount of space in Dallas for the national average rent. But how many can afford it?

By Simone Carter

Many Dallas residents are feeling the pinch in terms of housing. The rent is too damn high, and the square footage is too damn low.

Folks living close to the city's urban center can generally expect to see less bang for their buck, sad to say. A recent analysis of 50 U.S. cities by RentCafe, a nationwide apartment search website, breaks down what a [Dallas renter can get with \\$1,700](#), around the national average rent.

RentCafe examined 75 Dallas ZIP codes and found that 46 of them provide more space for \$1,700 when compared with the national average of roughly 950 square feet.

Take, for example, Lancaster's 75134. It boasts the greatest amount of apartment legroom in the Dallas area: 1,414 square feet. That's not a mansion by any means, but it's still more than double what you could get in 10033, "Manhattan's most generous" ZIP code.

"On the flip side, in 75205 (including Highland Park and University Park), the average rent of \$1,700 will stretch only as far as 539 square feet — the tightest space you'll find in Dallas for this price," RentCafe continued in a news release. "Would you give up some room for a 15-minute commute to downtown in one of Texas' top-notch neighborhoods?"

RentCafe's analysis comes as Mayor Eric Johnson said during his [state of the city](#) address that funding for parks is his priority in the upcoming bond package, not affordable housing. Yet advocates pushing for more affordable homes have blasted Dallas City Council for putting ["parks over people."](#)

It makes sense that many renters would feel squeezed out of the housing picture. RentCafe broke down some Dallas-specific findings via email, highlighting several ZIP codes that provide the most and least amount of room.

"Most space

1. 75134: 1,414 square feet for \$1,700
2. 75233: 1,342 square feet for \$1,700
3. 75241: 1,320 square feet for \$1,700

Least Space

1. 75205: 539 square feet for \$1700
2. 75202: 685 square feet for \$1700
3. 75219: 690 square feet for \$1700"

As for what you can get in 75201, where the *Observer's* headquarters are located? A decidedly

modest 702 square feet. (Look for your own ZIP code by checking out this [interactive map](#).)

RentCafe's info helps lay bare a particular trend in the local rental housing market: Big D is turning "increasingly unaffordable," said Bryan Tony with the [Dallas Housing Coalition](#). The way he sees it, Dallas needs to invest in housing if it doesn't want to lose its cost-of-living edge. Otherwise, we could potentially start to parallel other pricey urban markets, such as Austin and metros on the West and East coasts.

When someone is cost-burdened with housing, it means that they're paying at least 30% of their income toward keeping a roof over their heads, Tony said. So, a household earning Dallas' median income of \$58,200 would ideally not spend more than \$1,455 on monthly rent.

"That is why many people from Dallas are moving to neighboring cities," Tony said via email, adding that Kaufman County saw the state's largest population boom, 8.9%, from 2021 to 2022. "The City of Dallas has [only grown only 0.4% in population](#) since 2020. It is due to a lack of affordable housing."

For most Dallas residents, a \$1,700 monthly payment would not be considered affordable housing, he said. Certain renters are especially struggling to get by. Nearly 75% of single parents with children in Dallas are considered cost-burdened, and the same is true for more than 50% of senior renters, Tony said.

The aforementioned interactive map shows the highest demand for "Dallas' urban core, ZIP codes located along busy transportation corridors, and zip codes with larger amounts of jobs," Tony said. A limited amount of multifamily housing is available within these ZIP codes.

"Dallas must consider how we can make more housing available across the city of Dallas, so renters can have more options outside the urban core," he said. "Unfortunately, 86% of Dallas' land is zoned for single-family, detached housing, making it difficult for households to find rental opportunities when homeownership is so far out of reach.

"A family of four would have to earn \$135,000 a year to afford the average price of a home in Dallas, \$405,000," he continued.

A Rent.com report from earlier this year found that Dallas is the [third-priciest metro area in the South](#), after Nashville and Austin. The median rent at the time for Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington was \$145 higher than the national median cost.

There's a large gap between housing supply and demand for Dallas' lowest-income renters, or households making at or below 50% of area median income, said Ashley Flores, senior director of the Child Poverty Action Lab. By 2030, this disparity is expected to climb by an additional 50,000 rental units to a supply gap of around 83,500.

Rent increases [started to accelerate](#) once the pandemic began, according to a detailed CPAL report released earlier this year. Wages have grown a bit, but not enough to keep up with rising rents. And higher-income folks who would have normally entered homeownership by now are instead remaining renters, putting "pressure on the rental market."

Paying \$1,700 in rent is still far out of reach for many people, particularly given that the DFW area has a high prevalence of low-wage jobs, Flores said. She also posed a relevant hypothetical: "Yes, this is sort of the average [national] rent, but who is able to afford it?"

NORTHWEST ISD PURCHASES \$12M LAND IN DENTON COUNTY TO PREPARE FOR GROWTH

By Dang Le



Construction to renovate Northwest High School is in progress Nov. 28, 2023, in Justin, Texas. The renovation was a part of the voter-approved 2023 bond package to prepare for the district's population boom. (Courtesy photo | Northwest ISD)

Northwest ISD continues to buy land to prepare for population growth.

The district's board of trustees unanimously approved a \$12 million purchase of a 171-acre property in Denton County at its Dec. 11 board meeting. The property will accommodate a future high school and middle school. The purchase was covered by the [\\$2 billion bond voters approved in May](#).

The land is southwest of the intersection of Bill Cook Road and Farm to Market 407 in Justin. It does not currently have an assigned address, according to the district's documents. Northwest ISD does not have a timeline for when the schools will open.

Anticipating more developments coming to the area, the district proactively purchases higher-acreage land sites so as to pay the lowest price possible, said Anthony Tosie, the district's executive director of communications.

Northwest ISD doesn't have estimated construction costs for future schools as they could be decades away from being built, Tosie said.

Northwest ISD currently owns land for four comprehensive high schools and additional middle schools, said Tim McClure, assistant superintendent for facilities.

“Given the fast growth of our district, we know that when our district gets close to 100% built out of the available land, we will have eight to 10 high schools to serve our students,” McClure said.

The district currently has three high schools: Byron Nelson High School, V.R. Eaton High School and Northwest High School. Northwest ISD expects all three [will be over capacity](#) by the 2028-29 academic year, the district previously told the Fort Worth Report.

Northwest ISD also [purchased a lot in Rhome in October](#) for another high school.

[The voter-approved bond](#) is projected to help the district accommodate 8,400 additional students. The district has added 23,000 students in the past two decades and is projected to [see almost 1,900 students enroll](#) every year through 2033.

The district plans to open a 2023 bond-funded [fourth high school](#) during the 2026-27 academic year near Interstate 35 and State Highway 170 in Fort Worth. The package also approved a middle school in Northlake, which is also in the works, Tosie said.

Reunion owner plans \$5B redo of the property

With new convention center on way, Hunt says time is right to add hotel, apartments

By STEVE BROWN

Real Estate Editor

stevebrown@dallasnews.com

A half-century-old Dallas property development is getting a new start with plans for a convention hotel and workforce housing that could bring 5,000 new residents downtown.

Downtown's Reunion project was revolutionary when it kicked off in the early 1970s on the southwest corner of the central business district. The signature Hyatt Regency Hotel and Reunion Tower forever changed the Dallas skyline.

Reunion owner Hunt Realty Investments has just revamped plans for the more than 20-acre property as Dallas prepares an almost \$3 billion replacement of its aging convention center.

"We think the timing is right with what's happening at the convention center," said Chris Kleinert, CEO of Hunt Investment Holdings. "This will be an incredible asset for the city."

Hunt Realty's new vision for Reunion is the most ambitious yet.

'\$5B of development'

The longtime owner of one of downtown's largest undeveloped properties is planning for as many as 3,000 apartments, a 600- to 1,000-room hotel, 150,000 square feet of retail space and up to 2 million square feet of offices surrounding a 3- to 4-acre park.

"That's probably \$5 billion of development," said Hunt Realty Investments president Colin Fitzgibbons. "It will be home to 5,000 residents, which is a third of the current downtown population — a significant add.

"There could be as many as 1,500 affordable units," Fitzgibbons said. "It would be workforce housing for nurses, teachers, firemen, policemen."

Previous development plans for Reunion surrounded the landmark Hyatt Regency with a series of glass office towers.

New York and San Francisco-based Hart Howerton architects prepared the new master plan, which includes a variety of high-rise residential and commercial buildings between the convention center site and the rest of downtown.

Hart Howerton is also the designer for Hunt Realty's 2,500-acre Fields development in Frisco and the NorthEnd project on the edge of downtown that includes a half-billion-dollar office project for Goldman Sachs.

"They are very good at placemaking and walkability and the human experience in these large-scale urban developments," Fitzgibbons said. "What we have planned is 5 million square feet, which is a pretty conservative plan from a density standpoint.

"The first phase is likely to be a combination of the hotel, some retail dining and entertainment to support the convention center and the first phase of workforce housing," he said.

Architect's renderings for the Reunion development show a dozen new high-rises between Interstate 35E and Houston Street. Construction across the railroad tracks would link Union Station more directly to the Hyatt.

"We have huge aspirations to redevelop Union Station," Fitzgibbons said. "Other stations around the country have been redeveloped to other uses."

Union Station, which opened in 1916, serves as a passenger station for Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Trinity Railway Express and Amtrak.

Unrealized dreams

When the Reunion project was started in the early 1970s, Hunt Realty and original builder Woodbine Development sought to turn an underutilized rail yard and industrial area into a new development district.

But after the hotel and signature observation tower were completed in 1978, much of the rest of the property remained vacant. The old Reunion Arena where the Dallas Mavericks and Dallas Stars once played was demolished in 2009, freeing up more land for Hunt Realty to develop.

Kleinert said the developer for years held hopes the Reunion properties could be developed for corporate offices.

He asserted that "350,000 people pass by on Interstate 30 and Interstate 35 every day. What an incredible front door for the city and Fortune 500 companies. That's what we held out for, but they never materialized."

Reunion's owners resisted the temptation to break up the land, Kleinert said.

"I cannot tell you how many inquiries we have received to buy 2 acres or buy this or that," he said. "We've heard more than once, 'You guys haven't done anything down there in decades.' We'd rather have something we are proud of than something that was pieced together without real thoughtful planning."

Projected tax revenues

Hunt Realty estimates the Reunion development so far has contributed \$350 million in taxes to local governments.

Over the next 20 years, the company said, the planned new development would bring \$750 million more in tax revenues.

"We are talking about over \$1 billion of tax revenue" all combined, Fitzgibbons said. "Hunt has owned that land for 50 years. They waited patiently for something to come around to accelerate redevelopment, and here comes the convention center."

The proposed Reunion development is the largest new real estate investment disclosed for the southwest corner of downtown since voters approved funding for a new convention center last year. Funds from hotel and motel taxes would be used to help pay for the replacement of the existing Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center.

Other new property projects are expected in one of the last areas of downtown to see significant redevelopment.

“The convention center needs all the surrounding land owners to make an effort to bring entertainment, restaurants and other uses that conventioners will like and the people of Dallas would like,” said Jack Matthews, whose firm has been hired to oversee the convention center project.

In September, the Dallas City Council approved a six-year, \$65 million deal with Matthews’ firm. Construction is planned to start next year and be complete by 2028. A proposed deck park attached to the convention center and built over Interstate 30 is scheduled to open by 2030.

Other Hunt projects

Hunt Realty is reimagining its plans for Reunion at the same time it’s building another huge project on the northwest edge of downtown.

The 11-acre NorthEnd project on Field Street just north of Woodall Rodgers Freeway will include a more than 800,000-square-foot office campus that will house thousands of Goldman Sachs workers. Other sections of the property adjacent to Victory Park are planned for high-rise residences, a hotel, and more office and retail space.

“Even with Goldman there, we have 6 acres left,” Fitzgibbons said.

Thirty-five miles north of downtown on the Dallas North Tollway in Frisco, Hunt Realty is a partner in the \$10 billion Fields development that’s planned to include over 10,000 homes and apartments, new commercial districts and a Universal theme park. It’s being built around the PGA of America offices, resort and golf courses.

The project was launched in 2018 when Hunt Realty and Karahan Cos. teamed up to acquire the largest remaining vacant property in Frisco from the estate of the late Dallas businessman Bert Fields. Investors Chief Partners and Crosstie Capital partnered on the massive property.

NORTH TEXAS COULD GET UP TO \$500M IN FEDERAL FUNDS TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY. HERE'S HOW

By Haley Samsel



Chris Klaus of the North Central Texas Council of Governments, right, speaks to Aledo officials about grant opportunities through the Environmental Protection Agency on Dec. 12, 2023. The council will submit an initial air quality improvement plan by March 1, 2024. (Haley Samsel | Fort Worth Report)

Dallas-Fort Worth officials are in a race against time to finish [a plan](#) that could bring in hundreds of millions of dollars to fight air pollution.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments was awarded a \$1 million Environmental Protection Agency grant last year to develop a regional climate action plan. Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Austin and the state of Texas are also expected to submit by March 1 their preliminary, short-term plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Using funding made available by the Inflation Reduction Act, the Environmental Protection Agency will award \$4.6 billion to local governments and states to execute those climate action plans.

“Sometimes plans can be developed and they just sit on the shelf and nothing is ever done with them,” Savana Nance, a senior air quality planner for the council of governments, said during a recent public meeting. “The EPA made sure there was an opportunity where that didn’t necessarily have to happen because they set aside money to implement the plans that we developed.”

The agency anticipates doling out between 30 and 115 awards nationwide by December 2024. Four to 10 applicants are expected to receive the largest grants between \$200 million and \$500 million.

What are greenhouse gas emissions and what are some examples of air quality strategies?

[Greenhouse gas emissions](#) “... trap heat and make the planet warmer. The largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities in the United States is from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat, and transportation.”

The North Central Texas Council of Governments has [an extensive list](#) of potential pollution reduction projects on its website. Examples include:

- Reduce heavy-duty diesel vehicles with newer ones that meet emissions requirements.
- Provide local electric vehicle rebates to residents and fleet managers.
- Update roadways to minimize idling and improve safety.
- Subsidize individuals' costs of public transportation (e.g. transit passes).
- Update building codes.
- Install cool roofs on government or commercial buildings (includes white paint for reflectivity, green roofs planted with vegetation).
- Decarbonize lawn equipment.

As one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country, Dallas-Fort Worth should be eligible for the highest grant amount, said Susan Alvarez, environment and development director for the council of governments. Residents have already paid the taxes that will fund the federal program, she added.

“We feel pretty certain that we can come up with a viable list of good projects because a lot of communities have stuff they want to do, but they don't have funding and they don't want to raise taxes on their residents,” Alvarez said. “This is a way of using the taxes that have been paid, bringing them back and putting it to good use.”

The deadline to submit specific project proposals is April 1 — just a month after initial plans are due. In response to the tight schedule, the North Central Texas Council of Governments is holding a [series of open houses](#) to connect with cities, school districts and other organizations interested in grants for environmental projects.

Council staff hit Aledo and West Dallas in December and will head to Fort Worth, Granbury and Fate in January to answer questions about the planning process and solicit ideas from community members. Residents and government officials alike can also fill out [an online survey](#) to rank their priorities for air quality, energy use, agriculture and waste.

If you go

What: Open house on the Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan hosted by the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

When: 6-7:30 p.m. Jan. 18

Where: Hazel Harvey Peace Center for Neighborhoods, 818 Missouri Ave., Fort Worth. Residents can also fill out an online survey [here](#).

Public input will help inform which air quality strategies are prioritized in the grant application, Alvarez said.

Her staff are also focused on incorporating the needs of what she calls “frontline communities,” or the low-income, disadvantaged communities that are often hit hard by rising temperatures, flooding disasters and other impacts of climate change. Assisting disadvantaged communities is part of how the EPA scores applications, Alvarez said.

“Maybe not everybody needs an (electric vehicle). Maybe somebody just needs transportation, period,” she said. “It’s really, really important that we have a wide range of solutions so that the different parts of our community are able to participate and are able to benefit from the work we’re doing.”

Departments across the city of Fort Worth are collaborating to prepare projects for the EPA application, environmental services spokesperson Lola McCartney said. Fort Worth is one of the few major U.S. cities without a climate action plan of its own, but city staff have been supportive of the regional plan, according to [previous Fort Worth Report coverage](#).

“Through the planning process, city staff will continue to collaborate with NCTCOG staff for sector-specific strategies and unified communication efforts,” McCartney said.



The North Central Texas Council of Governments will host open houses about its air quality improvement plan in Fort Worth, Granbury and Fate in January 2024. (Haley Samsel | Fort Worth Report)

After submitting its grant application in April, the council of governments will continue working on a more fleshed-out version of the climate action plan. The comprehensive climate action plan, due in summer 2025, must address all major sources of greenhouse gas emissions and identify near- and long-term strategies for reducing them.

By summer 2027, the council of governments will deliver a status report on how North Texas has implemented different strategies for improving air quality. All of these projects will help the region meet federal air quality standards, said Chris Klaus, senior air quality manager for the council of governments.

Last year, North Texas became [a “severe” violator](#) of the EPA’s 2008 ozone standard requiring metro areas to average at or below 75 parts per billion of ozone. The clock to avoid imposing [\\$45 million in annual fines](#) on the region’s largest polluters begins ticking in 2024 and wraps at the end of 2026, according to [previous Fort Worth Report coverage](#).

That’s why it’s crucial for North Texas to pursue as much funding as possible from the EPA, Klaus said.

“For all the projects that we can implement through this program, it’ll help us in ’24, ’25, ’26,” Klaus said. “Those are the three years that EPA will look at for our next ozone attainment, if we’ve done a good job or not. If we don’t, then there are significant ramifications that will come to this region.”

Haley Samsel is the environmental reporter for the Fort Worth Report. You can reach them at haley.samsel@fortworthreport.org.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

PARKS ARE NOT JUST ‘AMENITIES,’ BUT A WISE INVESTMENT IN DALLAS’ FUTURE

We should rethink our approach to using bond packages for street repairs.

By Tim Dickey



A paletero man waits for customers on the northern side of Bachman Lake Park on Wednesday. Characterizing the critical services offered by our Parks and Recreation Department as mere “amenities” reveals a real misunderstanding of the lasting impact these facilities have on lives — both young and old, writes Tim Dickey. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

A disturbing narrative over the recommendations of the Community Bond Task Force is misguided. [The basic premise of this narrative](#) is that the task force is recommending large investments in park and recreation facilities, a focus on “amenities” at the expense of investing in basics like street repairs and housing.

These recommendations on how the [\\$1.1 billion 2024 bond package](#) should be allocated were part of an eight-month process in which the 90 members of the task force and five subcommittees created a series of recommendations for the Dallas City Council.

Characterizing the [critical services offered by our Parks and Recreation Department](#) as mere “amenities” reveals a real misunderstanding of the lasting impact these facilities have on lives — both young and old.

I grew up in northwest Dallas, in what is now Midway Hollow, on Mañana Drive.

My parents both worked, and I was a latchkey kid. Therefore, I was a Park and Rec kid, hanging out at the Walnut Hill Recreation Center after school on many days. In summer, I would walk down to Foster Elementary, where Dallas ISD and the Park and Recreation Department sponsored a joint program, keeping the gym open for neighborhood kids with supervision provided by a Park and Rec paid-for college student.

That place was my home-away-from-home on long summer days.

I now represent northwest Dallas and West Dallas on the Park and Recreation Board. Kids from Bachman Lake apartments and West Dallas kids at Nash-Davis Recreation Center, Anita Martinez Recreation Center and Jaycee-Zaragoza Recreation Center all benefit from after-school and other youth-oriented programs sponsored by the Park and Recreation Department.

These programs change lives and help keep our kids off the streets.

Many of our 43 recreation centers also have extremely popular seniors programs, offering lunch, recreation and a sense of community for our older residents.

In addition, our beautiful parks, trails, golf courses and aquatics centers offer exercise and a place for relaxation and peace to all of us.

There is no question that our streets are a horrible mess and that we are tens of thousands of units short of affordable housing. With about \$17 billion in unmet needs, a \$1.1 billion bond package won't even scratch the surface.

The culprit is not the suggested \$350 million allocation for the Parks and Recreation Department, but rather our city's reliance, decade after decade, on using bond packages to take care of deferred street maintenance. Since 1995, "streets" have gobbled up an average of 40% of the total of every bond package.

By not taking care of street maintenance on an ongoing basis, by always kicking that can down the road to the next bond package, we are allowing deferred street maintenance to reduce our ability to use bond money every five or so years to make significant investments in public safety, housing, cultural and arts facilities, flood and drainage control, and a host of other critical needs that must be addressed to make up that \$17 billion shortfall.

In whatever way the City Council decides to allocate the 2024 bond money, we must find a way to break the current cycle of deferring most street maintenance to bond packages.

Other cities have managed to do this.

Austin, Waco, Arlington, Corpus Christi and Abilene have instituted a street maintenance fee based on the traffic levels generated by each dwelling or business, and that fee helps pay for ongoing maintenance of street infrastructure.

Austin's annual revenue from what it calls its "transportation user fee" generates about \$100 million a year.

Let's not blame our commitment to parks and recreation for the sad state of our streets and instead ask our City Council to focus on the basics — like maintaining our streets on a "pay as you go" basis instead of using most of our bond money for that purpose, cycle after cycle.

Tim Dickey is a representative for District 6 at the Dallas Park and Recreation Board and was part of the Community Bond Task Force.

A TOLLWAY COST \$2.6 BILLION TO CONSTRUCT. HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT IS IT MAKING?

By Matthew Sgroi



An autonomous truck leads a convoy down the North Tarrant Expressway in far north Fort Worth on June 20, 2023. According to 2020 data from the North Central Texas Council of Governments, 67% of nitrogen oxide emissions come from transportation. (Matthew Sgroi | Fort Worth Report)

Editor's note: During the holiday season, the Fort Worth Report is looking back at the stories you told us you appreciated the most in 2023.

Bianca Weaver, a far north Fort Worth Starbucks manager, [avoided the highway system](#) near her store ever since the location opened earlier this year.

Construction of the 18-mile North Tarrant Expressway had forced Weaver to take the long way around, criss-crossing through overpasses and navigating different exits.

“But the construction will definitely be a life-saver, and a lot less stressful,” Weaver said in a June interview with the Fort Worth Report.

The project lasted over three years, and cost \$2.6 billion to complete. Now that it's finished, nearby employees like Allison Andrews, who works for Starbucks' neighbor [Overlook Ranch Apartments](#), haven't seen much of a change.

“Traffic is still the same to me, to be honest,” Andrews said, adding that she never takes the tollway.

Her co-workers haven’t noted any major changes, she said.

“I don’t think many of my co-workers use the express toll, either,” Andrews said.

The Texas Department of Transportation and NTE Mobility Partners both note positive changes.

Congestion has slowed down and the flow of traffic works better than it did before, according to an NTE Mobility Partners statement. Heavy, large equipment has also been removed from the area.

The project “has greatly improved the infrastructure along the major north-south interstate and has facilitated the safer, faster, and more reliable movement of people, goods, and services,” the statement said.

When construction began in 2020, this stretch of Interstate 35 West was called [one of the most congested in all of Texas](#).

By June 2023, [it had become the 32nd most congested roadway in the state](#), according to a Texas A&M University study on Texas’ most congested roadways. Nearly 300,000 vehicles drive that stretch of highway a day.

Now, after construction, this same route has fallen to the 35th most congested roadway in Texas. NTE Texpress anticipates continued traffic growth in north Fort Worth.

Officials added that for commuters driving on express lanes, it’s smooth sailing all the way to downtown Fort Worth from the Haslet area. They noted that luxury wasn’t available before.

And for commuters driving on free, general purpose lanes on I-35W, officials say the average speed during peak hours has increased from 40 mph to 70 mph.

TxDOT or NTE Mobility Partners would not disclose how many commuters use the tollway daily. The [average cost of driving on the tollway during rush hour is \\$4.93](#), according to NTE Texpress.

The project was the final leg of the decade-long I-35W expansion project and added 7.2 miles of fresh asphalt.

HOODLINE

TEXAS ON TRACK FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL EVOLUTION WITH MAJOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT FOR FORT WORTH-TO-HOUSTON LINE

By Margie Townsend

Texas is gaining momentum in the race to a high-speed future with a chunk of federal dough set to bankroll further planning of a proposed zippy rail running from Fort Worth to Houston, as announced by the Biden-Harris administration, a cool million is now on the table for what could be a game-changer in Texan transit.

The wheels are turning for Texas' rail aspirations, with not one, but two high-speed projects gearing up—the Fort Worth-to-Houston line backed by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) cutting through Dallas, and a separate Dallas-to-Houston proposal sent in by Amtrak. Both pitching to capitalize on the corridor, Texas Central got the green light on from the Federal Railroad Administration. These initiatives are part of a grander national scheme, joining seven projects across the US basking in the same federal planning fund spotlight, [according to the City of Fort Worth](#).

NCTCOG has some heavy lifting done already, mapping out a route that mainly hugs the I-30 with a key pitstop in Arlington, potentially linking travelers with the planned Dallas-to-Houston stretch for a hitch-free ride. The DFW High-Speed Transportation Connections Study peered into over 40 potential paths, with high-speed rail skirting alongside the IH 30 taking top honors.

What's cooking next is an environmental deep-dive—courtesy of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis—zeroing in on the nuts and bolts of the route, station stops, and what ripple effects—if any—could unfold socially and environmentally. NCTCOG is piecing this puzzle with the Federal Transit Administration before the grand NEPA process officially kicks in, with its eye on the prize of more federal funds for design and construction later on. Being in the Corridor ID Program queue is like having a backstage pass—it affirms the project's ripe for growth, chums up potential partners, and ultimately aims to usher in a coherent network of intercity rail systems, as per the White House's grand plan.

The promise of high-speed rail is nestled within the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law, with the Corridor Identification and Development Program birthing this opportunity for Texas, and peradventure, trailblazing a fresh avenue for commuters and city-hoppers alike, [per the City of Fort Worth](#).

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

TRAIL CONNECTING WHITE ROCK LAKE, GREAT TRINITY FOREST OPENS, CONNECTING DIVIDED DALLAS

The Loop adds more miles, soft surface mountain biking trail fulfilling decadeslong promise of greenbelt to underserved areas

By Leah Waters



Anthony Fopp from Princeton jumps his mountain bike at a trail adjacent to the The Trinity Forest Spine Trail in Dallas on Monday December 4, 2023.(Nathan Hunsinger / Special Contributor)

Kelvin Reed, 47, and his son Judah, 9, walked along the newly opened section of The Trinity Forest Spine Trail and marveled at the mountain bikers soaring off hills at a training ground nearby.

“When I was a kid I grew up in the Spanish apartments,” Reed said. “And all of this was like dumping grounds, some walking trails maybe. But it definitely wasn’t developed for anything like this.”

Reed and his son, who both love biking, scouted the location before riding from their home on Jim Miller Road.

“It’s very cool riding back here and seeing people who’ve come for the first time to be so surprised that this part of Dallas would have this,” Reed said.



SOURCE: City of Dallas

Michael Hogue/Staff Artist

(Staff)Related:[National Cricket League's tournament site to bring economic attention to southern Dallas](#)

The Trinity Forest Spine Trail and a soft surface mountain bike trail – a section of the contiguous loop that will soon connect the city – opened this fall, for the first time linking White Rock Lake and the Great Trinity Forest, the largest urban forest in the United States.

The Spine Trail connects the Santa Fe Trail north of the Tenison Park Golf Course in East Dallas to Samuell Blvd north of Interstate 30.

“It’s a project that had been promised to the residents for 20 years and had never actually gone anywhere,” said Philip Hiatt Haigh, executive director of The Loop Dallas.



Christina James, (from left) Rae cook, Ben Elting, Anthony fopp and Hart Haskin talk next to a mountain bike trail adjacent to the The Trinity Forest Spine Trail in Dallas, TX on Monday December 4, 2023.(Nathan Hunsinger / Special Contributor)

Equity for communities

The Trinity Forest Spine Trail will serve portions of Dallas that historically have been left out of major pedestrian infrastructure projects, bridging the gap between communities divided by I-30, Haigh said.

“One of the reasons why TxDOT partnered with us and we won an award on the south phase of the spine trail is because of the equity that the federal government is recognizing in their applications for infrastructure funding these days,” Haigh said.

Related:[Soil clean-up complete on South Dallas lot where Shingle Mountain once towered](#)

Over two-thirds of The Loop's investment is south of I-30, a geographical division between the more affluent north and less developed south.

Haigh says he hopes the shared public asset of The Loop inspires residents to see Dallas differently and helps bring some equity to the southern sector.

"Knowing that the trail in your neighborhood is the same amenity that connects through uptown and White Rock Lake and the Trinity River is really inspiring because we've never had anything like that in Dallas before."



Hart Haskin from Lewisville, TX, jumps his mountain bike at a trail adjacent to the The Trinity Forest Spine Trail in Dallas, TX on Monday December 4, 2023.(Nathan Hunsinger / Special Contributor)

Trail's 20-year vision

The connection between Dallas' greatest natural resources has been part of the city's parks master plan since 2003, Haigh said.

In 2012, the old Trinity Trust created another master plan for the trail, changing its name from White Rock Creek South to Trinity Forest Spine Trail.

The trail design and construction lacked any financial backing, however, until Dallas County Dallas County Commissioner Teresa Daniel helped allocate \$5.3 million as part of the county's capital improvement program.

Related: [Housing advocates wage education campaign to fight NIMBYISM](#)

After the Loop was founded in 2014, Haigh said, the Trinity Forest Spine Trail was a natural fit for the organization's ambitious project to loop together 50 miles of walking and biking trails.

The Loop Dallas secured a \$43 million public-private partnership with the city of Dallas in 2019, a major catalyst to begin joining 39 miles of existing trails with 11 miles of newly built trails.

What's left on The Loop?

The most challenging parts of the loop to construct are the ones that remain, Haigh said.

One of the last pieces to finish the Trinity Forest Spine Trail is a more than \$20 million pedestrian bridge over Union Pacific railway that connects the greenbelt with Parkdale Lake.

"With the environmental challenges of floodplains, railroads and utilities, it shows how certain parts of Dallas were invested in and others were just left to their own devices," Haigh said.

The Loop helped negotiate on behalf of the city of Dallas a license agreement with Kansas City Southern railway to pass a hiking and biking trail underneath an active freight rail line, a first for North Texas.

The agreement allows the city perpetual access in the trail area for construction and maintenance, Haigh said.

Related: [Dallas' Mill City community wins \\$1 million grant to revitalize neighborhood](#)

The Hi Line Connector – a 1-mile urban trail that will expand Katy Trail through Victory Park and the Design District to the Trinity Strand Trail – will open in early 2024.

"We're really having to kind of reconfigure the street to make it safe for bikes and pedestrians," Haigh said. "We're showing that the priority is on people movement and not car movement."

Within the next six months, The Loop will have 9 of the 11 miles of new trails either under construction or open to the public.

SOUTHERN DALLAS BUSINESS EXPANDS TRANSPORTATION SERVICE TO HELP CARLESS WORKERS

Southern Dallas Link shuttles residents to work, stores and doctor appointments in transportation desert.

By Leah Waters



Curtis Lee Corbins, president and CEO of C. LEE Transportation and Southern Dallas Link, sits in a holiday bus Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, in Dallas. Corbins' organizations provides transportation access for some of the most disadvantaged residents in Dallas County. (Chitose Suzuki / Staff Photographer)

When Karla Mayfield, 32, and her 13-year-old son left Louisiana for better job prospects in Dallas, she didn't realize how hard it would be living and working in a huge metroplex.

"I was able to get hired," Mayfield said. "But I had an issue getting back and forth to work because I didn't have a car."

Mayfield's warehouse job in Ennis, which paid good money, was about 30 miles from her home in Oak Cliff. She heard through word of mouth about a man named Curtis Corbins whose bus service gave people rides to work.

"Mr. Curtis was a ray of sunshine for me," Mayfield said. "Rain, sleet or snow, he showed up. He made sure I was at work. He made sure we were able to get back home."

Mayfield is one of thousands of clients who have used Corbins' transportation service, Southern Dallas Link, since its founding in 2015. The service helps residents whose jobs often are outside public transportation routes get to work.

For residents in southern Dallas County without a vehicle, getting to work can often be a burden too high to overcome, a need that spurred Corbins to start his own business to help his neighbors.

After COVID hit, Corbins said some DART bus stops in southern Dallas closed down, adding to the transportation desert in the area.

"I hate seeing people struggle and suffer because of the system," Corbins said. "It's just a never-ending cycle for them."

Many of Corbins' clients are single moms struggling to make ends meet. Without a transportation service, Corbins said his clients would be stuck in poverty because they wouldn't be able to get to work.

"Transportation seems to be one of the biggest vehicles that has helped a lot to be able to get over that hurdle," he said.

Related: [Dallas' Mill City community wins \\$1 million grant to revitalize neighborhood](#)

Southern Dallas Link— which started as a one-man operation with a borrowed van — has grown into a reliable and robust fleet of buses, helping get more than 2,000 people a day to the grocery store, doctor appointments and work.

"We get started every morning at three o'clock and we go up until one o'clock in the morning," Corbins said. "It's just nonstop."

Corbins' staff also provides a shuttle service when the Dallas Regional Chamber takes tours of the southern sector to show off business opportunities in the area.

"There's this myth that anything on the southern side is not good, but there's a lot of good going on," Corbins said.

During a recent tour, Corbins met Marcelo Mills, emerging markets president at American National Bank of Texas, who walked away heartbroken at the lack of investment in southern Dallas.

"If you go on this southern Dallas vision tour and you don't leave a little bit angry and inspired, then you weren't looking hard enough," Mills said.

The most striking revelation for Mills was how underbanked the southern sector is, a financial desert for small business owners like Corbins who face growing demand for their services.

Southern Dallas Link recently secured a contract with DART, adding 30 buses to the service's fleet. But the DART contract wouldn't start paying for months, spurring Corbins to look for financing to support his business' growth.

Mills said it was a no-brainer to connect Corbins with financial options to help cover the gap before DART paid out. Corbins had tried— without any success — to get a loan from other banks.



During a recent vision tour, Curtis Corbins (right) of Southern Dallas Link met Marcelo Mills (left), emerging markets president at American National Bank of Texas, who walked away heartbroken at the lack of investment in southern Dallas. Mills helped Corbins close on a \$500,000 revolving line of credit to support his new contract with DART. (Kelly Morris)

"I've done a lot of rewarding loans in my career," Mills said. "When you help small business owners, it's always rewarding. But to help Mr. Corbins was extremely rewarding. I just couldn't believe that he had had so much trouble to that point."

Mills helped Corbins close on a \$500,000 revolving line of credit to support his new contract with DART.

A revolving line of credit works just like a credit card but with a lower interest rate. Customers borrow what they need and, when they have repaid the loan, they have access to those funds once again.

Related: [Dallas-Collin homeless response system is housing more people per month than ever before](#)

"That allows us to pay our staff, our drivers, take care of fuel costs, whatever costs we incur until we start getting our monthly deposits from DART," Corbins said. "So without that line of credit, we probably would have had to walk away from the contract because we wouldn't have been able to sustain it until the deposits started coming in. So the timing was just perfect."

By the end of next year, Southern Dallas Link will have a contract through DART for all its paratransit services. Corbins also hopes to soon launch an app where riders can schedule transportation like they can with Uber or Lyft.

“The need is out there,” Corbins said. “It’s just a matter of having a reliable company that can come in there and provide the services. That’s what we plan to do, is to come in here and fill those pockets and get the people in the southern sector the mobility that they need.”

KERA

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION CALLS ON TRANSIT AGENCIES TO ADDRESS ASSAULTS ON WORKERS

By Pablo Arauz Peña

The Biden administration is calling on transit agencies to better protect workers following what it's calling an "unacceptable level" assaults on transit workers.

The Federal Transit Administration announced the [proposed General Directive](#) Wednesday with an opportunity for the public to comment on the new guidance.

"Everyone deserves a safe workplace, including and especially the frontline transit workers who keep our nation moving," said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg in a written statement. "Assaults on transit workers are unacceptable, and I look forward to working with leaders across the transit industry on ways to further enhance the safety of these essential workers."

The directive would require agencies, like Dallas Area Rapid Transit, to assess safety risks and strategies to prevent incidents.

Last month, [a bus driver was shot](#) and his vehicle was stolen near Fair Park as DART workers have been alerting the agency's board to safety concerns in recent months.

"We worry about showing up at work at two, three o'clock in the morning, getting out of our cars going into the workplace, someone coming up to you putting a gun to your head, taking your vehicle," DeBoss Christian, leader for the local Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1338, said at a September board meeting.

The union has been in [talks with DART over pay raises and safety conditions](#).

The FTA says transit agencies in larger cities, like DART, are required to form a joint safety committee between management and labor representatives.

The public comment period for the new proposed guidance is open through Feb. 20.

BLOOMBERG

DALLAS TRIES TO OUT-HUSTLE NYC, LA WITH UNDERDOG BID FOR WORLD CUP FINAL

By Maria Paula Mijares Torres

(Bloomberg) -- Dallas is seeking to snatch the 2026 World Cup final from bigger and more glamorous cities, pitting a paragon of Texas sprawl against mighty New York and Los Angeles.

Dan Hunt, leader of the Dallas effort and scion of a Texas oil tycoon, envisions selling as many as 200,000 tickets across several venues and tapping a pile of state money to seal the deal. According to his proposal, the game itself would take place at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys, one of the world's most valuable sports teams.

At stake are the bragging rights that come with hosting one of the world's most beloved sporting events, which according to FIFA drew about 1.5 billion television viewers in last year's tournament. There's also the gusher of spending from legions of soccer fans who are expected to crowd into the host cities during the tournament, and the final is the most coveted prize.

The US is co-hosting the tournament with Canada and Mexico, a country whose hulking Azteca Stadium was the site of World Cup finals in 1970 and 1986. But for the 2026 tournament, the three nations agreed that the US will be the sole host for all games as of the quarterfinals, meaning that American cities are vying for the highest-profile matches. Location announcements are expected in the coming weeks.

One part of Dallas's bid that sets it apart is access to money from a state initiative called the Texas Event Trust Fund Program. That would help pay for a significant chunk of the costs to put on the final, said Monica Paul, executive director of the Dallas Sports Commission, who was instrumental in the city's bid.

It may not be enough. Dallas is going up against the most famous US cities — the kind of places FIFA naturally gravitates to when it's choosing a location for its marquee event.

Southern California's Rose Bowl served as the venue for the final in 1994, the last time the World Cup came to the US. The Los Angeles area now has SoFi Stadium, which has already hosted a Super Bowl for the National Football League.

But SoFi is too narrow for FIFA's specifications, and the Los Angeles Times has reported that stadium boss Stan Kroenke would probably have to demolish some ground-level suites in the corners to comply. That would reduce the revenue-generating capacity of the three-year-old, \$5.5 billion stadium.

Kroenke Sports & Entertainment didn't respond to requests for comment, nor did the Los Angeles Sports & Entertainment Commission or the city's host committee for the World Cup.

Besides Los Angeles, FIFA has 10 other US cities to choose from in assigning games, including Miami, Atlanta and the San Francisco Bay area. But organizers of the regional bids are predicting that the frontrunners for the final are stadiums in the suburbs of New York and Dallas.

The venues are close matches in size. MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, has slightly more seating at 82,500. But AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, has an edge when standing-room tickets are included, which can push the capacity to approximately 100,000.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino was spotted at both stadiums in September. In Texas, he caught a Cowboys game with team owner Jerry Jones and met Governor Greg Abbott. He followed that up with a New York Jets game at MetLife, where he met with New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy.

The New York and New Jersey host committee is touting the area's experience in hosting major events, as well as the allure of one of the world's great cities and a diverse population that includes ready-made fan bases for many countries. Lauren LaRusso and Bruce Revman, co-managers of the committee, also pointed to the area's comprehensive public transportation system.

The contrast with car-centric Dallas could hardly be sharper. Arlington, which is located midway between Dallas and Fort Worth, is famously known as the largest US city without a public transportation system.

To make up for that, getting around to hotels, fan events and matches will be free for participants, staff and media, said Michael Morris, director of transportation at the North Central Texas Council of Governments. Arlington is also getting \$17.5 million in enhancements ahead of the World Cup and Major League Baseball's 2024 All-Star Game, which will be played near AT&T Stadium.

"Early on I probably thought transportation may be a challenge, but I don't see that now," Paul said.

Another potential downside: Texas summer heat, which might come as a shock to fans from cooler climes. Temperatures in Dallas routinely surpass 95F (35C) in July, when the final will be played. But AT&T Stadium has a retractable roof and air conditioning, so people attending the game itself would be comfortable.

While the Dallas Cowboys play on artificial turf, the team's executive vice president of business operations, Chad Estis, said he's confident in a lighting system the stadium will use to grow grass — a key requirement for FIFA.

The facility is located near the current home of MLB's Texas Rangers, as well as a ballpark that housed the baseball team until 2019. Together, the baseball stadiums can seat about 90,000. There's also an entertainment center with capacity for 10,000 people.

Hunt, the Dallas committee head, is asking why not use all of the venues for a big event centered around the final in AT&T Stadium?

"You could cordon this whole area and do a ticketed event of around 200,000, something that has never ever been seen in a World Cup, especially a World Cup final, before," he said. "FIFA wants to continue to innovate, and by doing this, we're doing something that I'm not sure will ever be done."

--With assistance from Randall Williams, Anna Kaiser and Michael Smith.

DALLAS' VISION ZERO PLAN ROLLS ON AS OFFICIALS DEMAND FASTER RESULTS

State data shows more pedestrians were hurt on Dallas roads this year, but decreases in stats across the board in other areas.

By Everton Bailey Jr.

More pedestrians were reported injured in Dallas traffic crashes in 2023 than last year and the final tally will likely be near pre-pandemic numbers, state data shows.

According to [preliminary crash data from the Texas Department of Transportation](#) as of Dec. 20, 661 pedestrians have been hurt in crashes in Dallas. That's up from 620 in 2022, 531 in 2021 and 540 in 2020. There were 695 in 2019, the data shows.

Dallas is [18 months into a Vision Zero plan](#), a series of strategies meant to hit goals by 2030 of no traffic-related deaths and a 50% reduction in serious injuries. More than 45 cities nationwide including Houston, San Antonio and Austin, as well as others around the world, have taken similar road safety pledges. The initiative started in the late '90s in Sweden.

Overall, city crash numbers this year appear to show a step forward, with decreases in total accidents and deaths compared to 2022, according to state data. But the increases in pedestrian injuries loom as elected officials are calling for more visible progress toward keeping people safe.

In total, 181 drivers, passengers, bicyclists and pedestrians have died on Dallas streets this year and another 14,159 have been injured.

Although crashes involving pedestrians in Dallas made up almost 2% of the 29,786 total, pedestrians made up 38% of the people killed and nearly 47% of the injuries, state data shows.

Jennifer Chapa lives in the Dallas Love Field area near Cherrywood Park, a few blocks from Maple Avenue. A mile-and-a-half stretch of that road between Hudnall Street and Oak Lawn Avenue is one [city officials identified in the Vision Zero plan last year as having the highest number of fatal and severe injury crashes involving pedestrians](#).

"I don't know if it can be eliminated altogether," she said. "It's a solution worthy to strive for, but I think we all want to see more about the logistics from the city on how exactly we can reach this goal."

Chapa said drivers routinely speed in the area and vehicles have careened into poles and driven into an apartment building sign. She said she has tried to get speed bumps installed at least three times.

In recent weeks, Chapa was awoken by a loud bang and went outside fearing it could have been a small explosion. She discovered her neighborhood bathed in the blue and red lights of Dallas police cars and road flares after a crash.

"It's been a mess," said Chapa, president of the Maple Lawn Neighborhood Association. "It's been dangerous."

Chapa pointed to a crash in March 2022 when a [27-year-old man was killed after being hit on Hudnall Street near Maple Avenue by a suspected drunk driver](#). According to a Dallas police arrest warrant affidavit, Manalik'i Wilson was crossing Hudnall Street a little after 1:30 a.m. when he was hit by a Toyota Tacoma driven by Richard Rojas.

Wilson died at Parkland Hospital from blunt force trauma three hours after being hit, the affidavit said. Rojas had a blood alcohol concentration of .22, almost three times the .08 legal limit, the document says. Rojas, now 29, is accused of intoxicated manslaughter with a vehicle. The legal case is ongoing.

Dangerous roads rank high nationwide

Dallas, the ninth-largest city in the country, ranks high among dangerous roads nationwide.

According to the [most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), Dallas had the second-highest rate of pedestrian deaths among the 20 largest cities in the U.S. in 2021, with 4.73 pedestrian deaths per 100,000 people. Only Phoenix had a higher rate, at 6.03.

Dallas also ranked seventh in total road fatalities among cities with a population of at least 50,000 people, trailing Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, New York, Memphis and Chicago, [according to the data](#).

Dallas City Council member Jesse Moreno, who represents areas that include the high-crash section of Maple Avenue, said he felt it was “embarrassing” for Dallas to be in the conversation of leading the nation in pedestrian deaths.

“We have a good plan in place,” said Moreno referring to Dallas’ Vision Zero action plan. “But the implementation part has been very frustrating on how slow things have been moving.”

Dallas committed to eliminating traffic fatalities and reducing injuries through Vision Zero in 2019 but [didn’t have a road map on how to get there until June 2022](#).

The city’s plans include improving road and sidewalk infrastructure, and tracking yearly progress on efforts to reduce the number of fatal and serious crashes.

City officials told council members [in a November memo](#) that out of 40 action items for 2023, only nine had been done. Another seven, including creating metrics for evaluating safety projects and adopting new policies, procedures and standards related to city street designs, haven’t been started. The other 24 items, like conducting a citywide review of speed limits and installing new or improved pedestrian crossings at problem areas such as along Maple Avenue and on Great Trinity Forest Way, were in progress.

Among the items completed were starting the safety evaluations for areas with high injuries, maintaining street markings like crosswalks and putting in speed bumps or raised crosswalks in at least four locations.

“If the goal is to complete this by the end of the year, I’m wondering why we are where we are,” City Council member Jaime Resendez said during a Nov. 7 committee meeting.

In an interview with *The Dallas Morning News*, Moreno highlighted as an example that the City Council in September approved the city paying engineering consultant firm Kimley-Horn and

Associates Inc. close to \$750,000 to provide a study evaluating pedestrian accessibility and traffic safety along Maple Avenue as well as Skillman Street and South Beacon Street/Graham Avenue in East Dallas.

All three areas have been identified as having a disproportionately high rate of vehicle crashes. The study is estimated to be done in October 2024.

Moreno said city officials held meetings with residents in the Maple Avenue area roughly a year ago where they were presented with plans of new bike lanes, along with more traffic and pedestrian signals to help increase safety. But he said he is concerned the consultant study will delay those plans.

He said he believes several stretches of Maple Avenue without traffic signals or signs, as well as a number of undeveloped lots, inadvertently encourage people to speed.



A cyclist goes through the intersection of Hawthorne Avenue and Maple Avenue in Dallas on Dec. 22. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

When asked if he felt confident Dallas could hit its goal of zero traffic-related deaths by 2030 and heavily reduce severe injury accidents, Moreno said, “No.”

“I think it’s achievable, but we have to change our practices,” the council member said. “We have to be a lot more proactive.”

Trending in the right direction

Preliminary 2023 state data shows the numbers overall trending in the right direction.

The data shows around 4,200 fewer total crashes than last year, along with almost 1,000 fewer crashes where people were injured, 39 fewer fatal traffic accidents, 47 fewer people killed, and more than 1,300 fewer injuries, according to [TxDOT's Crash Records Information System](#) as of Dec. 20.

There were decreases in all of the same stats for Dallas crashes involving pedestrians except in the number of injuries, which rose from 620 in 2022 to 661 as of Dec. 20, state records show.

Dallas Police Major Mark Villarreal told *The News* he believes the way roads are designed, high speed limits and SUVs and trucks being popular to drive contribute to traffic deaths and severe injury crashes in Dallas.

"It's harder for drivers to see pedestrians when they're higher up in these vehicles," said Villarreal, who is the division commander for DPD's tactical operations division, which includes overseeing the traffic unit.

He said he hadn't yet fully reviewed and analyzed city crash data from 2022 to 2023, but described what he had seen as encouraging. He said the police department has focused on increasing traffic enforcement in areas with high numbers of crashes, like along Great Trinity Forest Way in southern Dallas. He said they're also trying to do more to educate motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users through social media and in-person interactions. He said the department has received federal grant money to supplement enforcement.

More will have to be done if Dallas wants to get closer to the Vision Zero goal, Villarreal said.

"I think engineering in the future — the design of vehicles and the design of roadways — there's going to have to be discussions related to that to have some measurable success with fatalities," he said.

Dallas transportation officials didn't respond to interview requests.

Catherine Cuellar, the city's communications, outreach and marketing director, sent a statement attributed to the transportation department saying the City Council would be briefed about the Vision Zero initiative in early 2024.

"Corridor studies, or assessments of potential safety improvements, are in progress or in the process of being approved for high-injury networks — locations that experience high crash casualties," the statement said. "Public meetings on these study results will begin in 2024."

Some federal help is coming to make another high-crash area in the city safer. The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Dec. 13 that Dallas [would be getting a nearly \\$22 million grant to help improve crosswalks, lighting, traffic signals and other upgrades](#) along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Jay Blazek Crossley, who helps lead the advocacy group [Vision Zero Texas](#), said he believed Dallas' action plan appeared to be a "good first go" at tackling road safety. After reviewing the city's 2022 report and 2023 progress memo, Crossley said he found it promising that the city is using data to target areas where people are hurt the most and incorporating help from departments other than transportation.

He expressed concern that there are no performance measures available for the public to see progress and that more city departments aren't involved. He noted not seeing anything that took input from zoning and sanitation.

"Planning and zoning significantly impacts street safety and trash collection workers drive all over the city," said Crossley. "I think nearly every city department should have a role in this."

Crossley said Dallas will need a lot of help to eliminate traffic deaths by 2030. There are several state-controlled roads that run through the city where aspects like speed limits can't be changed by Dallas. And the behaviors and expectations of drivers will also have to change, he said.

"You're going to have to convince a lot of people to give up driving fast and sitting in traffic longer for this to work," Crossley said, "and most people don't like change."

‘DEATH AFTER DEATH AFTER DEATH.’ LOCALS DECRY DEADLY US 67 BETWEEN CLEBURNE AND GLEN ROSE

By Ciara McCarthy

When Toni Jackson would commute home from work, she would always take the long way.

Taking the back roads to her home near Glen Rose added another five minutes to her drive, but it was a small sacrifice to make to avoid making a left turn off of U.S. 67 to head down her driveway.

“I was afraid to turn,” Jackson said, as she filled a display case in an Exxon gas station with fried pies on Wednesday.

“There were different routes to go when I didn’t feel safe,” Jackson said.

Additional lanes have since been added near Jackson’s home, but much of U.S. 67 is just two lanes, making the highway — the [site of Tuesday’s crash that killed six people](#) — dangerous to travel on as traffic volumes increase, multiple residents said. The highway’s speed limit ranges from 65 mph to 70 mph in the area near the crash site at County Road 1119.

Locals who live, work, and shop along the stretch of U.S. 67 between Cleburne and Glen Rose rattled off scores of fatal crashes that had occurred there before Tuesday’s wreck.

Nine years ago, a 16-year-old girl was killed in a crash outside of the Squaw Valley Golf Course in Glen Rose on New Year’s Eve. The girl was traveling in a car driven by a 17-year-old boy, who was later charged with manslaughter in her death, according to the crash report from the Texas Department of Transportation.

In 2017, at the same intersection where Tuesday’s crash occurred, a car traveling south on U.S. 67 collided with a car traveling north as the driver of the first car attempted to turn left onto County Road 1119. The crash killed 63-year-old [Rhonda Cagle](#), [a beloved teacher](#) who had retired from the Glen Rose school district. The 17-year-old driver of the first car was [charged with](#) criminally negligent homicide.

Mac Bone, a business owner in Glen Rose, said that intersection — where southbound drivers on U.S. 67 turn left onto CR 1119 — needs to be made safer.

“It’s just constant,” Bone said about the crashes, injuries and fatalities near her home. “It’s death after death after death.”

Bone said she’d like to see both U.S. 67 and nearby Texas 144, which connects Glen Rose to Granbury, become wider, with turn lanes and signs indicating intersections.

The Texas Department of Transportation has [proposed widening 13 miles](#) of U.S. 67 from Glen Rose to Cleburne. According to the department’s website, the project would expand U.S. 67 from two lanes to four lanes, with a median and 12-foot shoulders. The project, which has not been funded, would cost an estimated \$96 million.

Asked to comment, a TxDOT spokesperson emailed information about [public hearings regarding the project](#).

In the last 11 years, 73 people have died in car accidents along U.S. 67 in Johnson and Somervall counties, according to data from the Texas Department of Transportation. Tuesday's crash occurred in Johnson County just before the county line.

Jackson, who works at the Exxon station in Glen Rose, said she feels much safer now that the part of U.S. 67 near her home has been expanded to four lanes.

"With 67 as busy as it is, it could definitely be wider," Jackson said.

The Texas Department of Public Safety released preliminary information about the crash on Wednesday. According to the initial investigation, a pickup truck traveling south on 67 entered the northbound lane in a no-passing zone near the intersection with County Road 1119. A minivan traveling north hit the pickup head-on, according to authorities. Six of the minivan's seven passengers died, including two children, police said. The crash occurred at about 4 p.m. Tuesday.

The owner of one business less than two miles from Tuesday's crash was so concerned about the road's safety, he installed a steel pipe to act as a guardrail for his building. Inside, a first aid kit with emergency supplies stands ready to go in the event of a crash.

"We're the first people out there," said the owner, who asked that he not be identified, in part because of the local debate over whether to widen U.S. 67. His employees are often the first to respond to crashes, and work to secure the scene and provide emergency first aid before first responders arrive. He estimates his employees have responded to at least six crashes on U.S. 67.

They can hear when something's gone wrong on the highway outside: First, they'll hear the screech and noise of the crash. After, the traffic stops, and everything is quiet.

CURIOUS TEXAS INVESTIGATES: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE OLD TEXAS STADIUM SITE IN IRVING

The City of Irving has ambitious plans to transform the former Dallas Cowboys stadium site.

By Ariana Asrawi



The huge three-sided billboards at the old Texas Stadium site bring in about \$600,000 annually.

The land where the former iconic Dallas Cowboys stadium once stood for 38 years has turned into a scene of construction.

Recently, a [Curious Texas](#) reader asked, “What is planned to be developed on the old Texas Stadium site in Irving, Texas?”

We turned to Beth Bowman, the president and CEO of the Irving Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development for more insight. Here’s what we uncovered.

Goals for redevelopment and City planning

In the time since the former Texas Stadium was demolished in 2010, the site – which is owned by the city – has been used by the Texas Department of Transportation for staging vehicles in preparation for local highway construction projects, such as the [Irving Interchange](#), according to Bowman.

Irving is transforming the industrial space into a mixed-use and transit-oriented area. That’s according to a document detailing the Stadium Site Redevelopment Plan, which the city shared with Curious Texas.

They aim to develop 400 acres, including the almost 80 acres the former Texas Stadium occupied. The land is divided into eight sections for development, with plans for over 9,200 residential units. The project is estimated to generate 20,500 jobs.

Those developments include “corporate headquarters, an international business district, retail, and services, with a mix of residential buildings in a walkable urban environment, accessible to the region and the globe,” according to the [City of Irving’s website](#).

Bowman envisions a significant impact on the local landscape.

“The ultimate project built on the stadium site, as well as the adjoining tracts of land, will benefit and, therefore, create a sustainable development environment in this area for the City of Irving and the North Texas region to enjoy,” she said.

Related: [Billionaire family buys Dallas Mavericks from Mark Cuban: What we know about the Adelsons](#)

Irving Interchange

The development also encompasses a transportation hub.

A reconstruction project known as the Irving Interchange or Diamond Interchange will reconstruct Loop 12, Spur 482, and State Highway 114 and 183 interchanges, Bowman said. The roads will expand from six to eight lanes. It’s 81% complete, according to the [TxDOT](#), which is supporting the project.

The \$355 million project is planned to be completed in 2025 according to the [city](#).

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit Light Rail Transit Station (DART) nearby will be utilized in creating a mixed-use transit-oriented development.

The city approved a \$45 million “Signature Bridge” that will extend across State Highway 114. The bridge will connect the stadium site to the DART LRT station, with vehicle access and pedestrian entry.

“Many of the transportation infrastructure pieces needed for such a large-scale development are present, including access to the DART Light Rail and the Signature Bridge,” Bowman said.

Irving residents can expect a modernized freeway and improved area accessibility after highway reconstruction, according to the city’s plans.

Related: [Why did Sam Houston carry a cane? Curious Texas Investigates](#)

The city is no stranger to economic success. Bowman refers to the Irving-Las Colinas area as the “Headquarters of Headquarters.”

The city has received many requests about potential development opportunities for the site.

“The Chamber, City of Irving, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and all neighboring stakeholders are focused on finding the right partners for a development that will serve Irving residents and North Texans well into the coming years and decades,” she said.

An [entity connected with the Adelson family](#), owner of the Sands Casinos which recently bought a majority share of the Dallas Mavericks, purchased a 249-acre parcel of land adjacent to the stadium last summer. The Adelsons have not disclosed what they plan to do with the property.

WFAA

'IT'S DIRE' | DALLAS FOOD DISTRIBUTION EVENT DRAWS HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES AMID RISE IN FOOD INSECURITY

The North Texas Food Bank held a food distribution event at Marsalis Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas. It's one of several events planned this week.

By Adriana De Alba

DALLAS — Cars lined up by the hundreds during a mile-long stretch leading up to the [Marsalis Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas](#).

The church partnered with the North Texas Food Bank to hold a food distribution event Thursday morning.

Church coordinator Ruth Williams told WFAA the first cars began lining up at about 4:30 a.m., almost five hours before the 9 a.m. distribution began.

"The need is great," Williams said. "It's dire."

Stephen Brownfield and Diane Franceschini waited in line for more than two hours. On their days off, they drive to food distribution events and pick up food for other families in need, many of whom live in counties north of Dallas.

Brownfield, a paramedic of 35 years, told WFAA he struggles to pay his bills, but tries to help others.

"There's always somebody worse off than me," Brownfield said. "On my days off I usually ride for rideshare companies, because I can't make ends meet. It's gradually getting worse as the year has gone on."

Brownfield said he hasn't received a pay raise in 10 years.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas has the second-highest rate of food insecurity in the nation. Data from the USDA shows food insecurity in the city of Dallas has worsened. Since 2020, [food insecurity in Dallas has seen a 37% increase](#).

"It's almost unbelievable that in these United States we have people without food," Williams said. "The need is serious, and I don't see an end to it."

Nohelia Barrigaz and her family ran out of gas as they waited in line and physically pushed their vehicle through part of the line. For Barrigaz, the help is crucial. They just arrived to the U.S. after a month-long journey from Venezuela.

"We have to do what we have to do, physically, to move forward," Barrigaz said in Spanish.

The North Texas Food Banks has several food distribution events planned on Friday:

- **Covenant Life Church**
 - 423 N College St. in Waxahachie from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- **Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia Dallas Norte**
 - 3751 Merrell Road in Dallas from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

- **Crossroads Covenant Church**

- 647 E Pleasant Run Road *in DeSoto from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.*

[Dallas food distribution event draws hundreds | wfaa.com](https://www.wfaa.com/news/dallas-food-distribution-event-draws-hundreds/2017/09/07/)

LEWISVILLE APPROVES CONTRACT FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES IN RURAL DENTON COUNTY

By Cody Thorn



The city of Lewisville approved an interlocal agreement with Denton County for fire and ambulances services unincorporated portions of the county. (Courtesy city of Lewisville)

The city of [Lewisville](#) approved a pair of interlocal agreements with Denton County for [fire and ambulance services](#).

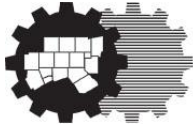
Both agreements were approved during the Dec. 18 City Council [meeting](#), though the contract went into effect Oct. 1. It will run through Sept. 30, 2024.

The details

The contract is an agreement with the county to provide emergency services in unincorporated [Denton County](#).

- Denton County will pay the city \$57,428 and the city will bill \$254.71 per transport in an ambulance.
- The fire department contract is for a \$10,000 readiness fee and then \$700 per fire call.

[Lewisville approves contract for emergency services in rural Denton County | Community Impact](#)



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

PRESS RELEASE
Contact: Brian Wilson
(817) 704-2511
bwilson@nctcog.org

Texas High-Speed Rail Projects Receive Additional Planning Funds

Federal government includes Fort Worth-to-Houston project in Corridor ID Program

Dec. 8, 2023 (Arlington, TEXAS) – High-speed rail from Fort Worth to Houston took another step forward Friday when the federal government announced the project has been included in the Corridor Identification and Development Program.

Up to \$1 million in additional planning funds will be provided for proposed high-speed rail service along the corridor, the Biden-Harris administration said.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments submitted the Fort Worth-to-Houston project (via Dallas), and Amtrak submitted a separate application for the Dallas-to-Houston line; both applications propose using the corridor that Texas Central received a Record of Decision on from the Federal Railroad Administration between Dallas and Houston. These were among seven high-speed rail projects nationwide awarded planning funding as part of the Corridor ID Program.

NCTCOG has been planning the North Texas line, which would run along Interstate Highway 30 from Fort Worth to Dallas, with a stop in Arlington, and connect to the Dallas-to-Houston project. Through the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study, NCTCOG examined 43 potential alignments, with high-speed rail along the IH 30 emerging as the preferred method to connect people seamlessly from throughout the region to the planned Dallas-to-Houston route via a one-seat ride.

The DFW High-Speed Transportation Connections Study is set to move into a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, focusing on route alignment, possible station locations and potential social and environmental impacts.

NCTCOG is working with the Federal Transit Administration on final steps before the Dallas-Fort Worth corridor can advance to the formal NEPA process.

In addition to the planning funds, inclusion in the Corridor ID Program is considered an acknowledgement of the need to advance project development and explore partnership opportunities as well as positioning the project for future federal funding to support design and construction.

The Corridor ID Program is intended to help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and create a pipeline of passenger rail projects ready for implementation, according to the White House.

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

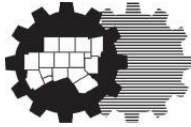
NCTCOG is a voluntary association of local governments established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development.

NCTCOG's purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions. NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered in the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently, NCTCOG has 229 member governments including 16 counties, 169 cities, 19 school districts and 27 special districts. For more information on the Transportation Department, visit www.nctcog.org/trans.

About the Regional Transportation Council:

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) of the North Central Texas Council of Governments has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for regional transportation planning in the Dallas-Fort Worth area since 1974. The MPO works in cooperation with the region's transportation providers to address the complex transportation needs of the rapidly growing metropolitan area. The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area includes Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise counties. The RTC's 45 members include local elected or appointed officials from the metropolitan area and representatives from each of the area's transportation providers. More information can be found at www.nctcog.org.

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North Central Texas
Council of Governments

PRESS RELEASE
Contact: Brian Wilson
(817) 704-2511
bwilson@nctcog.org

Public Input Opportunity Opening to Residents on Dec. 11

Comments being accepted on 2023 Ozone season, National Drive Electric Week and more

Dec. 11, 2023 (Arlington, TEXAS) – The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is closing the year with an online public input opportunity beginning on Monday, Dec. 11. North Texans can provide feedback on the end of 2023 ozone season, the Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Fleet Recognition Awards and Annual Survey results, and the National Drive Electric Week recap. Information will be posted online at www.publicinput.com/nctcogDec23 for public review and comment through Jan. 9.

Ozone season concluded Nov. 30 for the 10-county Dallas-Fort Worth nonattainment area. As the region continues to work toward compliance of the 2008 and 2015 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards, staff has been tracking the exceedance days at various monitors and will provide a summary of the 2023 ozone season data. Staff will also provide comparative data from previous ozone seasons and a snapshot for the 2024 ozone season.

Each year, DFW Clean Cities surveys local fleets about alternative fuel use and other fuel saving activities. Staff will present the 2022 Annual Survey results and details of the 2023 Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Fleet Recognition Awards.

National Drive Electric Week is a celebration used to educate people about the benefits of owning an electric vehicle. The Clean Cities Coalition has hosted a regional NDEW event annually since 2011. The 2023 event was held in October in Fort Worth. Staff will provide a full summary of the 2023 DFW NDEW event.

Information and resources about Map Your Experience, the Regional Smoking Vehicle Program (RSVP), vehicle incentive and funding opportunities and Try Parking It will also be made available.

For special accommodation due to a disability, language interpretation or to request printed copies of the information, contact Jackie Castillo at 817-695-9255 or jcastillo@nctcog.org at least 72 hours prior to the deadline. Reasonable accommodation will be made.

Public Input Opportunity

Monday, Dec. 11- Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024

How to Comment:

Website: www.publicinput.com/nctcogDec23

Email: nctcogDec23@publicinput.com

Phone: 855-925-2801 (code 8419)

Fax: 817-640-3028

Mail: P.O. Box 5888, Arlington, TX, 76005-5888

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

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NCTCOG PRESENTATION

Advancing Transportation Technologies and Innovative Program

Regional Transportation Council
1.11.2024

Natalie Bettger
Senior Program Manager

Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program

- Continuation of Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) program
- \$120M ((\$60 million for FY 2023 and \$60 million for FY 2024). Rural Set-Aside of 20%.
- 5-10 awards up to \$12M apiece
- 20 percent local match required
- NOFO issued 11/24/23
- Applications due: 02/02/24



ATTAIN Program Goals

- Reduced fatalities and injuries and increased safety
- Reduced traffic delays/improved travel time reliability
- Reduced emissions
- Optimized multimodal system performance
- Improved access to transportation alternatives
- Integration of payment systems
- Integrated multimodal transportation information
- Transportation-related cost savings



Regional Operations Related Issues

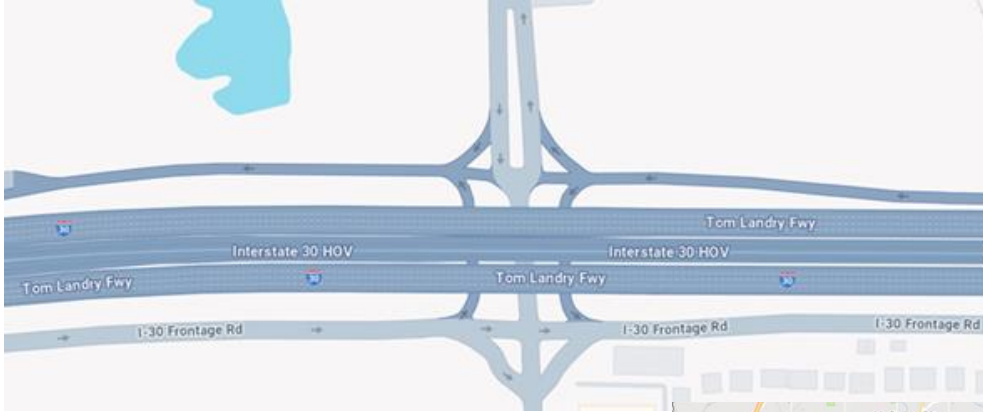
- Silo-based operations
- Minimal real time information sharing
- Lack of regional operations coordination and cooperation
- Many stand-alone proprietary systems
- Lack of coordinated regional technology deployment
- Lack of regional coordinator



ATTAIN Proposal- I-30 Regional Technology Corridor

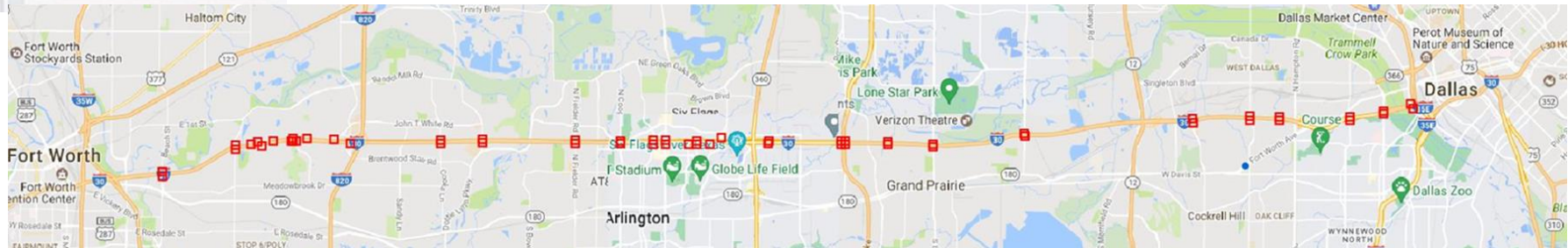
Project Area:

- I-30 from Dallas to Fort Worth
 - Mainline freeway, frontage roads, managed lanes, and 56 intersections
 - Cities of Dallas, Grand Prairie, Arlington, and Fort Worth
 - TxDOT Dallas and Fort Worth Districts

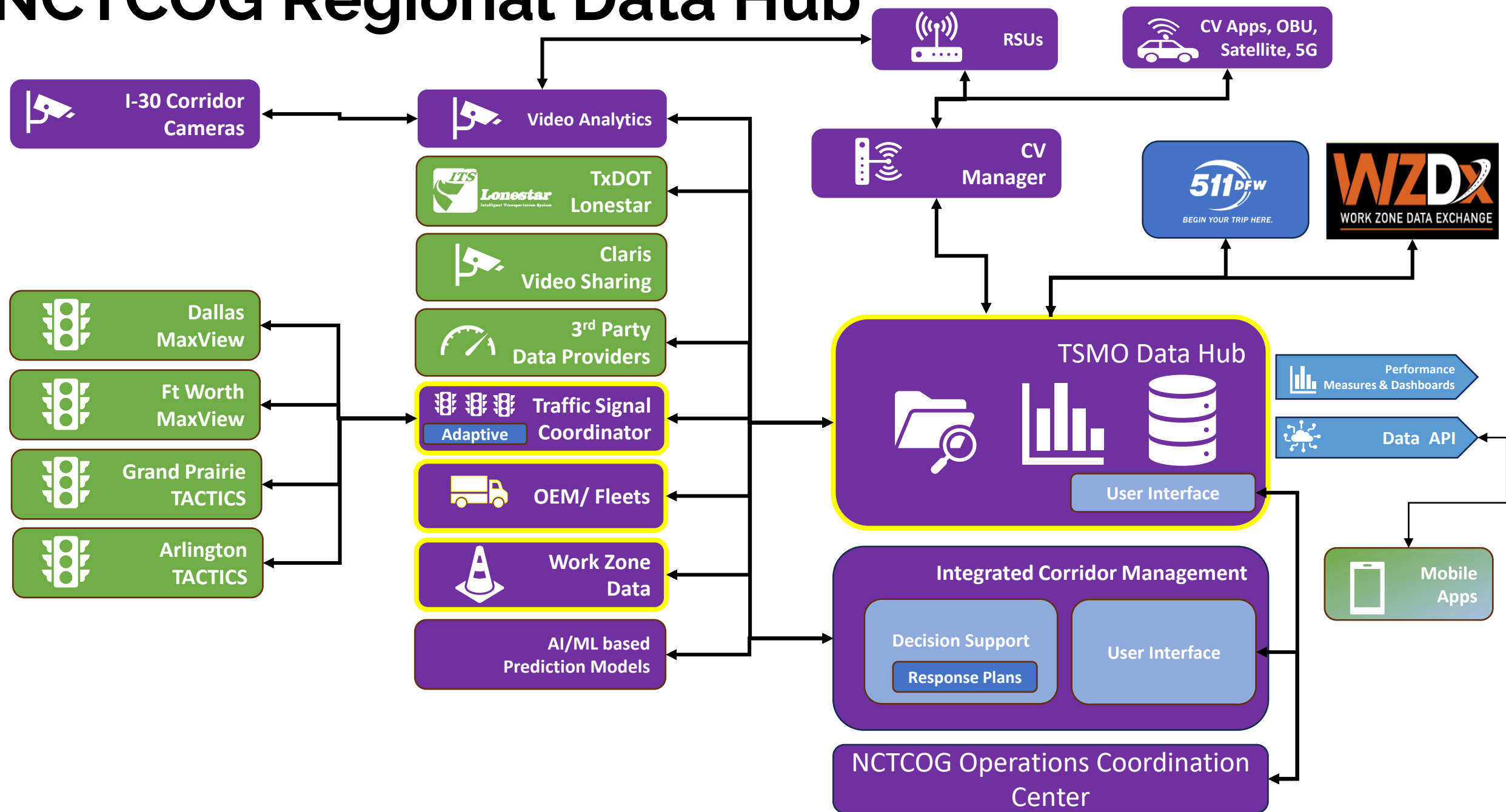


Bigger Picture:

- Regional perspective with corridor focus
- Innovative regional operations
- Proactive management -digital infrastructure (Forecasting / AI / ML)
- Open architecture concept
- Standards compliance
- Inter-operability
- End user connectivity
- No more pilots, operational system



NCTCOG Regional Data Hub



Schedule

~~12/08/23: STTC Information~~

~~12/14/23: RTC Information~~

01/11/24: RTC Action

01/25/24: NCTCOG Executive Board Action

01/26/24: STTC Endorse RTC Action

NCTCOG letters of support requests due: 01/22/2024

Contact: [Nicholas Allen](#)



REQUESTED RTC ACTION

- Request RTC approval of:

Submittal of Regional Technology Corridor and Data Hub for funding consideration through the FY23 Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program (\$10M) and Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) (\$6M) for a total of (\$15M)

Administratively amend NCTCOG and State Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP / STIP), as well as other planning and administrative documents, to include the proposed project if selected for an FY23 ATTAIN Grant total award (\$16M)



Contacts



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Senior Program Manager

Congestion Management and System Operations

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Vickie Morris

Project Engineer

Congestion Management and System Operations

Email: VMorris@nctcog.org



Regional Transportation Council Attendance Roster
January 2023 - December 2023

RTC MEMBER	Entity	1/12/23	2/9/23	3/9/23	4/13/23	5/11/23	6/8/23	7/13/23	8/10/23	9/14/23	10/12/23	11/9/23	12/14/23
Daniel Alemán Jr (01/22)	Mesquite	P	E(R)	P	E(R)	P	P	P	E	E(R)	P	E(R)	P
Arfsten, Bruce (07/23)	Addison	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	P
Steve Babick (06/22)	Carrollton	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P
Dennis Bailey (02/21)	Rockwall County	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	A	P	P	A
Rick Bailey (07/22)	Johnson County	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P
Adam Bazaldua (09/21)	Dallas	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	A	P
Elizabeth M. Beck (08/21)	Fort Worth	A	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	A	A	E	P
Gyna Bivens (08/21)	Fort Worth	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Alan Blaylock (03/23)	Fort Worth	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	E	P
J. D. Clark (07/22)	Wise County	P	P	A	P	E(R)	P	A	P	A	E(R)	P	P
Ceason Clemens (10/22)	TxDOT, Dallas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Michael Crain (06/22)	Fort Worth	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	A	P
Theresa Daniel (11/18)	Dallas County	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Jeff Davis (11/19)	Trinity Metro	P	P	P	A	E	E	P	P	A	P	P	P
Andy Eads (1/09)	Denton County	P	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	E	P
Michael Evans (2/23)	Mansfield	--	P	P	A	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P
Gary Fickes (12/10)	Tarrant County	P	P	P	E	P	P	E(R)	P	E(R)	E	E	P
George Fuller (07/17)	McKinney	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	E
T.J. Gilmore (11/23)	DCTA	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	E(R)	P
Raul H. Gonzalez (09/21)	Arlington	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P
Barry L. Gordon (12/20)	Duncanville	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Lane Grayson (01/19)	Ellis County	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	E
Mojy Haddad (10/14)	NTTA	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P
Clay Lewis Jenkins (04/11)	Dallas County	P	P	P	E	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	E(R)
Ron Jensen (06/13)	Grand Prairie	E(R)	P	E(R)	P	P	A	P	P	E(R)	P	E(R)	P
Brandon Jones (05/21)	Lewisville	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P
John Keating (12/19)	Frisco	E(R)	A	A	P	A	E	A	A	A	A	A	A
Brad LaMorgese (07/22)	Irving	P	E(R)	E	P	P	E	P	A	E	P	P	P
Cara Mendelsohn (07/20)	Dallas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	A	P	P
Ed Moore (07/22)	Garland	P	P	P	P	E	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	E
John Muns (6/23)	Plano	-	-	-	-	-	P	A	P	P	P	E	P
Raj Narayanan (03/23)	DFW Airport	--	--	P	P	P	P	E	E	E(R)	P	P	E(R)
Omar Narvaez (09/21)	Dallas	P	E	P	E	E(R)	P	E	P	E	P	P	A
Manny Ramirez (1/23)	Tarrant County	P	A	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	E	P	E	P
Jim R. Ross (07/21)	Arlington	P	E(R)	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P
David Salazar (10/22)	TxDOT, FW	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P

P= Present
A= Absent
R=Represented by Alternate
--= Not yet appointed

E= Excused Absence (personal illness, family emergency,
jury duty, business necessity, or fulfillment
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January 2023 - December 2023

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Chris Schulmeister (07/20)	Allen	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	A(R)	P	P	E(R)	P	A
Gary Slagel (11/23)	DART	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	P	P
Jeremy Tompkins (10/19)	Eules	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P
T. Oscar Trevino Jr. (6/02)	Nrth Rch Hills	A(R)	P	P	P	P	A(R)	A(R)	P	P	E	P	A
William Tsao (3/17)	Dallas	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	P	P	P	P	P
Watts, Chris (12/22)	Denton	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	E	A
Duncan Webb (6/11)	Collin County	P	P	P	P	P	P	E(R)	E(R)	P	P	P	A
Chad West (11/22)	Dallas	A	P	P	A	A	A	E	P	A	E	P	P

Note: Date in parenthesis indicates when member was
1st eligible to attend RTC meetings

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