Strategic Plan for 2003-2007
NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Geared for the future

In May 2003, NCTCOG's Executive Board adopted the agency's *Geared for the Future: Strategic Plan for 2003-2007*. The Plan outlines the agency's objectives, as well as steps to attaining them, for the coming years.

BACKGROUND: In November 1999, the Executive Board of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) adopted the *Strategic Plan for 1999-2003*. The plan identified over 30 issues in which NCTCOG could offer services and programs to assist in strengthening the region it serves. Thanks to regional cooperation and hard work, much has been accomplished in these past years.

Due to the success of the *Strategic Plan for 1999-2003*, NCTCOG has undertaken the *Geared for the Future Strategic Plan for 2003-2007*. Using the format of the former plan as a guide, each department again worked closely with their advisory committees and others to identify issues for the future.

The Plan is divided into the following sections:

Community Services

The Department of Community Services has program responsibilities for the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging; Law Enforcement Training; 9-1-1 Emergency Number Planning; Criminal Justice Planning and Funds Allocation; Public Safety Radio Communications; Auto Theft Prevention; and Regional Training for non-law enforcement personnel.

Area Aging & Disabilities

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) provides an accessible, locally based, coordinated system of services to older persons and their family caregivers who live in the 14 counties surrounding Dallas and Tarrant counties. The program's mission is to help older Texans live as independently and safely as possible. This is accomplished in part by providing services on a direct and contractual basis that include: information, referral and assistance; home-delivered meals; congregate meals; transportation; nursing home ombudsman; case management; benefits counseling; legal assistance; homemaker; caregiver education; and respite services.

During fiscal year 2002, the AAA provided case management services to 1,126 frail elderly clients at risk of nursing home placement. In addition it funded 107,557 congregate meals, served to 3,495 older clients; 596,484 home-delivered meals, served to 3,700 homebound elders; and 49,312 one-way trips for older riders.

Issue:

Better Prepare for an Aging Population

Vision of Success:

Local communities will be prepared to meet the needs of Baby Boomers.

Steps to Success:

Establish partnerships with local businesses and agencies to better support working caregivers, develop emergency preparedness plans for older citizens, and meet the needs of high-risk older persons.

Indicators of Success:

Greater visibility of Agency services among local employers; greater sensitivity of emergency preparedness plans to the needs of older persons; greater interagency cooperation to meet the needs of older persons with multiple, complex needs

Issue:

Diversify Funding Streams

Vision of Success:

Additional funds will support the need to expand program capacity and information and referral databases. Greater information on health and social services will be available to identify the needs of people of all ages.

Steps to Success:

Diversify funding streams by offering innovative, revenue-generating services and applying for grants.

Indicators of Success:

Effective prioritization of federally funded services, based on efficiency and effectiveness; development of new non-federal funding streams.

Issue:

Reduce Volunteer Attrition

Vision of Success:

More volunteers will be available to respond to the needs of the elderly and disabled.

Steps to Success:

Develop and/or refine program-specific outcome measures; better understand the factors most critical to volunteer recruitment and retention.

Indicators of Success:

Expanded volunteer base and program activity levels for ombudsman, benefits counseling, and money management programs.

Issue:

Partnering with Local Businesses

Vision of Success:

Family caregivers will receive increased worksite education and support.

Steps to Success:

Partner with human resource departments to conduct caregiver education seminars at local businesses and place caregiver curriculum on the Web, so that family caregivers can more easily access eldercare education and information.

Indicators of Success:

Employers' participation in educational programs; "hits" on Agency's Web site.

Public Safety: Law Enforcement Training

Law Enforcement Training through the Regional Police Academy provides basic and advanced peace officer training to local law enforcement officers, corrections personnel, and telecommunicators. Future challenges include developing Web-based courses for veteran officers and enhancing existing courses through simulator training.

During fiscal year 2002, the Regional Police Academy trained 164 rookie officers and 3,462 veteran officers.

Issue:

Identify Additional Income Streams

Vision of Success:

Training needs such as Professional Police Driving, Pistol Qualifications, Incident Command, and Scenario-Based Training will have greater opportunities to be implemented.

Steps to Success:

- Involve Emergency Preparedness to assist with Incident command funding and coordination.
- Additional funding may be accomplished through:
  a.) identification of private foundations wiling to provide endowments or other funding assistance;
  b.) cooperative agreements with member cities to provide funding;
  c.) funding agreements with educational institutions.

Indicators of Success:

Continued satisfaction of local agencies; continued operation of the Regional Police Academy; provision of cost-effective training programs to member agencies; continued high quality of instruction.

Issue:

Development of Plan for Long-term Lease Agreement for Regional Training Facilities

Vision of Success:

Long-term lease agreements will provide more reliable facilities and improve the Academy's potential to meet local agencies' training needs.

Steps to Success:

Identification of training facilities can be accomplished by:
a.) surveying the region to determine existence of adequate facilities;
b.) enacting inter-agency agreements for facility use.

Indicators of Success:

Well trained law enforcement officers; adequate and safe facilities for driving, firearms and practical application courses; increase in attendance for practical application courses; continued satisfaction by local agencies; increase in revenues.

Issue:

Increases in Mandated Training Require Additional Programs, Courses, and Well-Qualified Instructors

Vision of Success:

Additional resources will help meet increased state demands for courses and maintain highly qualified instructors.

Steps to Success:

- Conduct training courses required by TCLEOSE.
- Conduct surveys of area agencies to identify qualified instructors in specific areas of expertise.

Indicators of Success:

Increased resources will enable required courses to be taught by the best available instructors with continued high pass rates for participants.

Public Safety: 9-1-1 Emergency Number Planning

9-1-1 Emergency Number Planning and systems maintenance allows for systems upgrades through the timely replacement of 9-1-1 equipment, rural addressing, public education and information, training of Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) personnel, and planning for required network and wireless location solutions. Forty-one PSAPs participate in NCTCOG's 9-1-1 Program. Future challenges include systems integration of location determination solutions that will pinpoint the proximity of wireless callers. NCTCOG's 9-1-1 program will be adding mapped ALI to assist 9-1-1 call takers in pinpointing the location of calls made to 9-1-1 on landline phones. In addition to mapped ALI, all 42 PSAPs will receive equipment upgrades in 2003.

During fiscal year 2002, the 9-1-1 Program had a total of 542,597 calls and 223,971 wireless calls answered at the PSAPs in the NCTCOG service area. In addition, Wireless Phase I was implemented in all fourteen counties; 188 call takers were trained on the operation of 9-1-1 equipment; and service contracts with 82 competitive local exchange carriers (CLEC) were established.

Issue:

Wireless Solution To Meet Wireless Location Identification Requirements

Vision of Success:

Wireless location identification will be implemented when funding is appropriated and carriers are ready with a handset or network based solution.

Steps to Success:

- Continue to work with *Research and Information Services* to assist with GIS and other mapping issues.
- Prepare the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for Wireless Phase II implementation by implementing Mapped ALI.
- Follow procedures and rules set forth by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) when and if appropriations are made for implementation of Wireless Phase II.

Indicators of Success:

- 9-1-1 wireless callers will have their geographical location appear at the PSAP.
- Improved response to actual location of 9-1-1 wireless callers.
- Achievement of Phase II FCC requirements.

Issue:

Vulnerabilities in the 9-1-1 Landline Network Infrastructure

Vision of Success:

Network integrity will be strengthened through redundancy and diversity.

Steps to Success:

- Work with *Emergency Preparedness* to help identify potential communications targets and harden any existing vulnerabilities.
- Follow procedures and rules set forth by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) when and if appropriations are made for implementation of network diversity.
- Work with local telephone company network providers to implement dual mated tandems and create unique Emergency Service Numbers (ESNs).

Indicators of Success:

A more reliable 9-1-1 network in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

Public Safety: Criminal Justice Program

The Criminal Justice Program allocates funds and provides technical assistance to existing and potential grantees seeking grants for federal and state funds. Local governments, independent school districts, and non-profit agencies apply for the funds to implement new programs or strengthen existing ones. Additionally, applicants for CJD grant funds receive assistance with the development of Community Plans, designed to encourage local governments and agencies to examine their own needs based on current statistical data.

In FY 2002, the Criminal Justice Program, through the Governor's Criminal Justice Division, allocated $24 million to fund 249 grants for cities, counties, school districts, and non-profit agencies.

Issue:

Coordination of Criminal Justice Programs

Vision of Success:

Comprehensive community planning will reduce duplication of services, determine new service needs, and identify program priorities based on local priorities.

Steps to Success:

Increase stakeholder planning participation throughout the region; collect accurate data to support issues identified by all the planning groups; identify current resources which address identified issues; identify gaps in services; assist local agencies with project development by helping to identify federal, state, local, private foundation funding sources; and assist in the coordination of existing services to meet the needs of the local communities.

- Continue professional development to improve service delivery to local units of government by streamlining the application process.
- Continue to provide technical assistance to grantees to ensure the successful use of project funds.

Indicators of Success:

Increased participation in the community planning process; increased knowledge of existing service delivery components; reduced duplication of service areas; reduction in crime and/or re-victimization; improved intra-agency planning; continued positive feedback from applicants/grantees; reduction in audit findings for grantees; improved success of funded programs.

Public Safety Radio Communications

Public Safety Radio Communications coordinates the allocation of 821MHz frequencies to local public safety agencies. It serves 42 counties across the North Central Texas, East Texas, and Northeast Texas regions. Since 1987 many public safety agencies have received frequencies to relive interference and congestion problems, particularly in the metropolitan area of North Central Texas. The Region 40 Committee provides coordination services in conjunction with the State Frequency Coordinator's Office and the Federal Communications Commission. The Committee is responsible for planning to position local public safety agencies for new frequencies from the 700 MHz spectrum. The plan will be completed by the end of 2003. An interoperability component will allow consistent inter-agency communications in case of natural or man-made catastrophic disasters.

In fiscal year 2002, the Region 40 Committee held public meetings to work on the 700 MHz frequency allocation plan. Three subcommittees were formed to focus on technology, interoperability, and implementation.

Inadequate Public Safety Radio Communications

Vision of Success:

A Regional Communications System that reduces channel congestion, increases reliability, and assures inter-agency communications in cases of natural or man-made incidents of major proportions.

Steps to Success:

- Assist the Region 40 700 MHz planning committee in developing a Regional Communications Plan.
- Receive technical and funding assistance from *Emergency Preparedness* to incorporate a strong interoperability component in Regional Public Safety Radio Communications Plan.
- Engage as many public safety officials in the planning process as possible.
- Appoint various working sub-committees to identify communications needs.
- Receive funding support for development of the regional plan.

Indicators of Success:

- A completed Regional Public Safety Radio Communications Plan that improves radio and data transmissions among public safety personnel and agencies.
- Implementation of 700 MHz systems by agencies needing improved communications.

Public Safety: Automobile Theft Prevention

Reduce Auto Theft in Texas (RATT) is a statewide automobile theft prevention program funded by the Texas Automobile Theft Prevention Authority. It encourages a cooperative, coordinated effort to spread the message of how to protect vehicles from being stolen. Program staff coordinate auto theft awareness, prevention, and education projects for the general public and public safety agencies across the state.

In FY 2002, RATT distributed 516,019 promotional items, brochures, and materials to citizens, auto theft prevention trainees, grantees, and law enforcement agencies. A total of 99 presentations and exhibits were completed and approximately 4,170,481 people had the opportunity to learn about auto theft prevention through these events.

Issue:

Public Education and Information to Reduce Auto Theft

Vision of Success:

Increased public awareness and prevention education will help reduce auto theft rates in Texas.

Steps to Success:

- Increase vehicle theft awareness and education efforts in Texas' major metropolitan areas.
- Seek new, diverse public awareness opportunities in order to reach more Texas drivers with the message of prevention.
- Strengthen relationships with Texas auto theft task forces and law enforcement units.
- Acquire foundation funding to supplement ATPA monies for equipment and educational materials.

Indicators of Success:

- Decrease in Texas' annual auto theft total and per capita rate.
- Increased public awareness events partnering with new public and private entities.
- Increased acquisition of public awareness opportunities for fellow ATPA grantees.
- Increased recognition of the "Watch Your Car" educational campaign among Texas drivers.

Regional Training Center

The Regional Training Center offers programs to meet the specific training needs of local governments. Courses are offered at the Regional Training Center in Arlington, as well as on-site. Personnel are able to receive quality, cost effective courses in planning and zoning, animal control, public works, supervision and management, water/wastewater, and finance, to name a few.

In FY 2002, the Regional Training Center conducted 165 training programs providing instruction to 4,134 students.

Issue:

Regional Training Center's Perspective on Training

Vision of Success:

Local agencies will use the Regional Training Center as their primary training source.

Steps to Success:

- Offer required training courses to maintain professional standards.
- Offer in-service courses to provide required training to member governments personnel.
- Offer cluster training in the region to reduce travel costs of member governments.
- Notify member governments by E-mail and fax to reduce overhead costs.

Indicators of Success:

Maintain a number of course offerings to allow member governments the opportunity to take advantage of reduced cost training, while holding cancellations to less than 15 percent.

Issue:

Regional Training Center's Financial Condition

Vision of Success:

The Regional Training Center will be financially self-sufficient.

Steps to Success:

- Continue to meet the Transportation Department's need for well-trained transportation professionals by offering courses funded by Transportation and coordinated by the Regional Training Center. Training courses may include the Safety Audit Program.
- Coordinate, with funding assistance from the Transportation Department, the training of incident response professionals to better manage freeway accidents and other incidents.
- Attain breakeven status through:
    - o overhead cost control;
    - o increased use of e-mail for course notifications;
    - o maintaining cost control of instructors;
    - o meeting member governments training requirements during times of reduced training dollars.

Indicators of Success:

Revenues will match expenses.

Development & Environmental Services

As one of the fastest growing regions in the country, North Central Texas has faced and will continue to tackle some of the most challenging environmental and development-related issues in the nation. From air quality to water quality, from construction codes to solid waste management, the Department of Environmental Resources has helped local governments and others come together to answer these challenges and, ultimately, to lead the region toward Sustainable Environmental Excellence.

The Sustainable Environmental Excellence, or SEE, initiative is identifying the most pressing issues facing the region and seeking cooperative, cost-effective solutions. The SEE initiatives—SEE Development Excellence, SEE Safe Clean & Green Regional Environmental Corridors, SEE Less Trash, and SEE Clean Air — form the framework for our strategic issues for 2003-2007.

Issue:

Inefficient development patterns that can increase transportation constraints, inhibit the ability to meet air quality standards, use excessive water and energy resources, and cause environmental damage to land and water resources.

Vision of Success:

Promote quality growth that enhances the built environment, reduces vehicle miles of travel (VMT), uses water & energy resources effectively and efficiently, and helps advance environmental stewardship in order to ensure continued economic vitality and provide the highest attainable quality of life for all residents.

Steps to Success:

NCTCOG supports the adopted "10 Principles of Development Excellence" and sustainable development concepts in the metropolitan transportation plan: a) continues and builds upon the success of the Center of Development Excellence through expanded outreach, year-long celebrations of the biannual development excellence award winners in 2003, 2005 and 2007, identification of effective technical tools; b) examines alternative development scenarios that promote the development excellence principles (e.g., a transportation infrastructure boundary as a way to limit the growth of vehicle miles of travel); c) gives priority attention to planning and funding for development excellence compatible investments such as bicycle & pedestrian facilities, rail corridors for future suitability for light rail & commuter rail services, access management, regionalized wastewater services (including relationship to the Texas Community Development Program).

Indicators of Success:

Local governments adopt comprehensive plans and ordinances that support development excellence and involve citizens and stakeholders in all aspects of the planning process.

Issue:

Selected waters associated with environmental corridors do not currently meet state or other desired water quality goals. Flooding and other hazards or nuisance conditions associated with water flow threaten life and property. Urban development impacts open space uses and habitat quality.

Vision of Success:

2,400 miles of safe corridors where flooding is reduced, clean corridors where water quality meets or exceeds state standards, and green corridors where ribbons of greenways are tied together for ecological benefits and recreational & mobility opportunities.

Steps to Success:

NCTCOG with local governments and state/federal partners implements the action recommendations of the adopted SEE Safe Clean & Green Regional (SC&G) Environmental Corridors strategic plan for the a) Common objectives such as having local governments incorporate SC&G visions in

comprehensive plans, expand federal/state partnerships (e.g., Trinity River COMMON VISION, new MOU's), explore creative funding approaches, develop educational programs, and promote watershed approaches (e.g., Big Fossil Creek); b) SAFE objectives such as recognize and protect the natural function of floodplains, achieve 100 percent local NFIP participation & promote implementation beyond the minimum, achieve more federal/state/local cooperation (e.g., Stream Team, Hazard Mitigation Action Plan); c) CLEAN objectives such as continue & expand cooperative programs for meeting state storm water permit requirements (e.g., cooperative monitoring, Texas SmartScapeTM), facilitate regionalization of wastewater systems and water quality management best practices through annual plan updates, explore opportunities for wastewater reuse; d) GREEN objectives such as facilitate an open forum among all interested parties, strategically plan a green infrastructure network, facilitate non-motorized mobility & recreation by properly linking pedestrian and bicycle trail networks (e.g., Trinity Trails), prepare guidelines for consistent planning and design of greenways.

Indicators of Success:

Safer, cleaner and greener regional environmental corridors.

Issue:

Waste disposal seems to be given the first priority by most people rather than minimization, reuse and recycling of discarded materials. Closed and abandoned landfills can threaten human health and safety if not properly controlled. Illegal dumping causes environmental damage and costs taxpayer money to clean up.

Vision of Success:

Purchased materials are reused and recycled wherever possible, illegal dumping is significantly reduced, and remaining waste is handled in a safe manner at permitted facilities.

Steps to Success:

Through public-private partnerships, staff activities and pass-through local funding, NCTCOG implements the action recommendations of the adopted SEE Less Trash strategic plan for the: a) Time-to-Recycle objectives to increase citizen participation, expand multifamily housing & commercial recycling programs, benchmark and track residential & commercial recycling efforts, promote construction and demolition debris recycling, use outreach & education programs to facilitate long-term, changes in attitudes about source reduction, reuse, and recycling, promote innovative technologies to reduce waste, and expand collection & management of special wastes; b) Stop Illegal Dumping objectives to facilitate public awareness and education opportunities to reduce illegal dumping, increase coordination between cities and counties through enforcement groups as well as political and organizational entities, promote increased enforcement against illegal dumping crimes, and reduce the number of illegal dump sites and expand clean-up events through public and private partnerships; c) Assure Capacity for Trash objectives to facilitate the development of local & sub-regional solid waste management plans, maintain a minimum of 10 years capacity at permitted facilities, promote integrated waste management practices, and provide convenient collection & disposal options in underserved areas.

Indicators of Success:

State reporting of landfill usage and per capita waste generation; results of NCTCOG benchmarking; biennial reports to the Legislature through the Texas Association of Regional Councils.

Issue:

Conflicting development policies that add cost and confusion (e.g., wider streets for bike lanes or narrower streets to reduce storm water pollution runoff?). Development policies and processes that address important environmental and quality of development issues at the wrong time in the planning, design, and construction of urban development.

Vision of Success:

Local governments have the tools necessary to make the best development decisions possible.

Steps to Success:

NCTCOG prepares and implements a detailed strategy for development services that: a) continues "traditional" services such as review of the International Codes and recommendation of regional amendments on a three-year cycle; maintenance of the Standard Specifications and design details; support of the Texas Community Development Program; infrastructure planning for water/wastewater; b) addresses "emerging" issues that came from implementing the 1999-2003 strategic plan such as: *integrated* Storm Water Management (iSWM) to minimize impervious surfaces and related development costs; Clean Construction Campaign (C3) for nonroad construction equipment/air quality, erosion control and C&D waste minimization; Texas SmartScape™ to conserve water and reduce pollutants; public works assistance for ROW management; expediting of projects; and c) pursues new "cooperative initiatives" for the 21st century such as the Metroplex Electrical Licensing (MEL) and other service delivery opportunities where requested by local governments; an approach to "Sustainable Buildings" that integrates potentially conflicting program needs for less energy use, more reflectivity, less rooftop runoff, more safety & security, less construction waste; a regional alliance of brownfields programs; and being available to respond to multi-jurisdictional needs as they occur.

Indicators of Success:

The successful implementation of cooperative programs.

Issue: (*also appears in Transportation*)

Air Quality - Regional ozone levels exceed health standards, and conformity tests are necessary to implement transportation projects, policies and plans.

Vision of Success:

- Steering Committee, comprised of public and private sector leaders, aimed at meeting federal air quality standards.
- Regional Transportation Council's (RTC) Air Quality subcommittee will monitor transportation commitments in the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Steps to Success:

Strengthen public/private participation in regional effort to:

a) Provide input to Texas Commission of Environmental Quality's State Implementation Plan.
b) Develop regional transportation conformity documents.
c) Pursue air quality legislative goals at state and Federal levels.
d) Support the Area Emissions Reduction Credit Organization (AERCO).
e) Address regional eight-hour air quality standard.

Indicators of Success:

- TCEQ/EPA: EPA action on state plan; TCEQ ability to meet standards.
- Public: Increased awareness of potential sanctions and support of clean air programs.
- RTC: Performance of transportation conformity tests.

Emergency Preparedness

The newly created Emergency Preparedness Department continues to serve as a convener, coordinator, and advocate for city and county governments, volunteer and non-profit agencies and private industry in North Central Texas to increase emergency preparedness capacity for the region. Deficiencies will be identified and recommendations made through a broad representation of regional stakeholders. Local, State and Federal funding and training opportunities will be aggressively sought out and coordinated while placing emphasis on collaboration and effective use of existing resources. The Emergency Preparedness Department works closely with other NCTCOG Departments to leverage a wide range of talent and resources within the agency to address the following issues.

Issue:

Substandard/Outdated Local and County All-Hazards Emergency Management Plans

Vision of Success:

Increase the development and updating of state approved emergency plans for local and county governments in a manner, which facilitates a regional approach to common problems, and results in an increased regional emergency preparedness capacity.

Steps to Success:

1. Identify funding opportunities to aid city and county governments in completing emergency planning documents.
2. Work with local elected officials to increase the understanding and awareness of state statutory requirements for having an emergency management program, which includes an approved emergency plan with accompanying legal documents.
3. Assist city and county personnel responsible for completing plans and provide support and technical guidance when appropriate including assistance through the University of North Texas Emergency Administration and Planning internship program.

Indicators of Success:

1. Increased number of approved emergency plans listed in state Division of Emergency Management database.
2. Increased participation and knowledge demonstrated by local elected officials regarding emergency management issues, planning concepts, and responsibilities.
3. Increased participation by regional emergency managers in emergency management activities sponsored by NCTCOG.
4. Positive feedback from regional elected officials, emergency managers and the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

Issue:

Lack of Coordinated Emergency Preparedness Efforts Among Public, Private and Volunteer/Non-Profit Disciplines.

Vision of Success:

There should be well-established technical committees in each appropriate discipline that come together to address common regional issues and serve as subject matter experts when establishing regional priorities. Existing parallel efforts are identified and joint meetings, planning efforts and disaster drill exercises are convened. Activities are evaluated and gaps in preparedness are addressed. Memorandums of Understanding and Mutual Aid Agreements are formed between public and private agencies.

Steps to Success:

1. Identify all appropriate public, private, volunteer and non-profit agencies, including NCTCOG departments, involved in planning activities or projects that may contribute or enhance emergency

preparedness activity in the region.
2. Attend and participate in emergency planning meetings and forums to identify common efforts.
3. Convene meetings between groups that are involved in similar efforts but reside in different geographical locations in the region.
4. Create and maintain comprehensive distribution contact lists.
5. Create and maintain regional electronic calendar informing stakeholders of meetings and training opportunities.

Indicators of Success:
1. Increased level of participation by public, private, volunteer and non-profit agencies in emergency preparedness activities.
2. Increased level of awareness by all agencies of the importance of regionalism in emergency preparedness.
3. Increased requests for presentations on regional collaboration and emergency planning.
4. Involvement in joint projects with other NCTCOG departments.
5. Feedback from elected officials, city and county managers and the Emergency Preparedness Planning Council.

Issue:

Lack of Training and Equipment for Weapons of Mass Destruction Threats and Incidents

Vision of Success:
Priorities for emergency preparedness related training are identified, communicated and acted upon using existing resources and grant funding. A variety of low cost or no cost training is identified and coordinated by NCTCOG. Regional emergency preparedness capacity is increased and the need for state and federal government assistance is decreased.

Steps to Success:
1. Communicate the findings in the Regional Strategies Document to regional stakeholders and elected officials.
2. Identify funding opportunities, communicate those opportunities and assist local and county governments in completing grant applications.
3. Assist state and federal agencies as requested in administering equipment and training grants.

Indicators of Success:
1. Training opportunities are increased and well attended.
2. Surplus equipment programs are identified and taken advantage of.
3. Equipment grants are completed and cities and counties receive detection, decontamination and personnel protective equipment including interoperable communications equipment.

Regional Information Infrastructure

The rapid advances in information technology continue to provide more opportunities for local governments to share knowledge and information, communicate planning activities with the public, and reduce the overall cost of providing services by reducing duplication. The three major regional issues are unchanged from the previous strategic plan:

Issue:

Regional Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Vision of Success:

An integrated layer of geographic information accessed through a data interchange and Web services architecture over the Internet.

Steps to Success:

NCTCOG will expand its cooperative purchase process for common data layers, mirroring the aerial photography acquisition. NCTCOG will also provide a distributed GIS services to its members providing direct staff support, licensing, and project management for local members.

Indicators of Success:

Standardization of common data layers used in north central Texas, interactive access to data layers and Web services tools available to consultants and application developers

Issue:

Technology Leadership

Vision of Success:

Operate a technology clearinghouse to share information and provide business and information services to local jurisdictions.

Steps to Success:

NCTCOG will expand the Internet mapping service to provide real-time interaction with member and third party information systems for applications in local government services, emergency management, permitting, and economic development. As an Application Services Provider (ASP) NCTCOG will also broaden its business services to include information systems support, applications development, and project consulting.

Indicators of Success:

Members are able to reduce costs for providing services.

Issue:

Local Demographic Information

Vision of Success:

Interactive demographic forecast process that is sensitive to local development trends; locally endorsed process that can evaluate development impacts and evaluate land use alternatives at the local/neighborhood level.

Steps to Success:

Continue to support a technical advisory task force to evaluate model assumptions and assess results; coordinate the information produced by local governments, create updates to demographic and economic indicator information.

Indicators of Success:

Locally adopted impact assessments based on regional models; local jurisdictions are providing regular updates on zoning changes, comprehensive plans, and site plans; regional demographic models are updated at more frequent intervals.

Transportation

Identifying strategic transportation issues for the 2003-2007 Strategic Plan has been an ongoing process since NCTCOG's existing Plan was developed. During 2000, the Transportation Department held six "listening sessions' to allow citizens to comment on various transportation issues that are of concern. During the 2001 State Fair of Texas, more than 600 of the people who visited the Transportation Department's booth completed a survey and ranked transportation issues according to their importance. The Strategic Plan was included on the agenda of six public meetings in late 2002 and early 2003 where the public was again asked to comment.

With staff's assistance, the Surface Transportation Technical Committee and the Regional Transportation Council narrowed the list down to seven policy initiatives which are important to the region: Safety, Regional Transit Infrastructure and Implementation, Security, Inefficient Development Patterns Which increase Transportation Constraints, Funding Shortfall, Air Quality and Enhanced Accountability to Transportation-Related Performance Measures. Two of the initiatives have agency-wide implications. "Security," as it relates to the transportation system has been integrated into the regional initiatives of the Emergency Preparedness Department. In a similar fashion, "Inefficient Development Patterns Which Increase Transportation Constraints" has been combined with related land use and resource issues addressed by the Environmental Resources Department.

One of the highlights of 2002 was the Regional Transit Summit. One hundred and fifty elected officials, transportation professionals and citizens gathered last March to explore the barriers to and benefits of expanding the region's transit infrastructure. The Regional Transit Summit produced numerous visions of transit for the region and allowed consensus to be reached on several. Following up on this success, a framework needs to be established to decide the "Who, What, When, Where and How" of expanding public transportation across the region and coordinating those services into a seamless system.

Issue:

Regional Transit Infrastructure and Implementation - Lack of regionally coordinated public transportation services.

Vision of Success:

To provide seamless transportation opportunities for all citizens

Steps to Success:

Through a regional process:
a) Establish Regional Transportation Council's taskforce structure.
b) Coordinate recommendations of the Mobility Plan with transit agencies.
c) Implement Regional Rail Corridor Studies.

Indicators of Success:

Seamless transit services to citizens traveling throughout the region.

Needed improvements to the regional transportation system do not come without a price tag. Estimates to implement Mobility 2025 Update: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan identifies a 3 billion revenue deficit. Partnerships among federal, state and local governments; between roadway and transit agencies; and between the public and the private sectors are going to be even more important in the future as we try to maximize funding. The RTC's priority is to maintain the existing infrastructure before building new facilities with about 40 cents of every dollar going to maintain the current infrastructure. Without increased revenue, needed transportation improvements will not occur.

Issue:

Funding Shortfall - Lack of funding available to meet critical transportation needs in the region and state.

Vision of Success:

Enhanced mobility in the region resulting from increased project programming and construction from partnership programs, institutional structure modifications, and enhanced user fees.

Steps to Success:

Develop an enhanced legislative strategy by:

a) Review the role and structure of "Partners in Mobility" and recommend improvements.

b) Review the outcome of recent legislative sessions and recommend improvements in programs.

c) Increase membership of the transportation authorities.

d) Continue priority of maintaining existing infrastructure.

e) Implement "Partnership" Programs approved by the RTC.

Indicators of Success:

Increased revenue for the implementation of transportation improvements.

Issue: (*also appears in Development & Environmental Services*)

Air Quality - Regional ozone levels exceed health standards, and conformity tests are necessary to implement transportation projects, policies and plans.

Vision of Success:

- Steering Committee, comprised of public and private sector leaders, aimed at meeting federal air quality standards.
- Regional Transportation Council's (RTC) Air Quality subcommittee will monitor transportation commitments in the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Steps to Success:

Strengthen public/private participation in regional effort to:

a) Provide input to Texas Commission of Environmental Quality's State Implementation Plan.

b) Develop regional transportation conformity documents.

c) Pursue air quality legislative goals at state and Federal levels.

d) Support the Area Emissions Reduction Credit Organization (AERCO).

e) Address regional eight-hour air quality standard.

Indicators of Success:

- TCEQ/EPA: EPA action on state plan; TCEQ ability to meet standards.
- Public: Increased awareness of potential sanctions and support of clean air programs.
- RTC: Performance of transportation conformity tests.

Issue:

Safety - Unacceptable level of injuries and loss of human life related to transportation activities.

Vision of Success:

Safe travel for all citizens in the region through improved data collection, analysis, training, education, enforcement and engineering.

Steps to Success:

- Improve railroad grade crossings.
- Coordinate hazardous material routes for trucks traveling in the region.
- Train law enforcement professionals to better manage freeway accidents and incidents.
- Explore opportunities to partner with insurance companies to develop database of accident information.
- Establish the Safety Audit Program.

Indicators of Success:

- Reduce injuries and fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.
- Reduce incident clearance times on freeways and tollways.

Issue:

Enhanced Accountability to Transportation-Related Performance Measures - Inadequate assessment of programs that have been implemented to address regional transportation issues.

Vision of Success:

Increased accountability in decision-making by measuring the performance of implemented programs.

Steps to Success:

a) Determine appropriate measures for evaluating transportation activities; calculate them for the October, 2002-September, 2003 period; and publish the results.

b) Use the data as benchmarks for future evaluations.

c) Identify ways to integrate the measures into the decision-making processes of the Surface Transportation Technical Committee, Regional Transportation Council and Transportation staff members.

Indicators of Success:

Annual publication of the "State of the Region" report.

Workforce Development

North Central Texas WorkForce is dedicated to providing a seamless, efficient, and effective workforce system that connects businesses to skilled workers and citizens to jobs thereby improving the quality of life and promoting a healthy economy in the fourteen-county North Central Texas Workforce Development Area. Three important regional issues have been identified:

Issue:

Business Driven Workforce Systems

Vision of Success:

A demand-driven system aimed at meeting the human resource and workforce development needs of business in the competitive global economy.

Steps to Success:

Identify business trends and industry sector skill needs; develop inter-related strategies to improve the system's responsiveness to business needs; coordinate the effective use of available funding throughout the region and increase private sector financial contributions; address contemporary work/family issues such as an aging population.

Indicators of Success:

Increase the number of industry-driven training projects; develop vocational education strategies addressing industry needs and trends; improve economic growth with better productivity and competitiveness.

Issue:

Developing Qualified Job Seekers

Vision of Success:

Provide tools and strategies to develop a knowledgeable and skilled regional workforce that integrates every available worker.

Steps to Success:

Develop initiatives, such as distance learning, that work towards increasing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic independence and life-long learning; implement projects such as English as a Second Language and enculturation to address language and cultural barriers in addition to accessibility projects to focus on the needs of disabled workers; build upon current endeavors related to transportation and supportive service issues including child care and housing; collaborate to address the needs of out-of-school youth.

Indicators of Success:

Enhanced employment, retention, and earnings for individuals; increased occupational skill attainment; training provider accountability; increased customer choice and satisfaction.

Issue:

A Dynamic Regional Workforce Development System
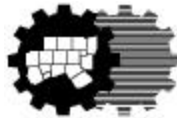
Vision of Success:

Combine employment, economic development, and education through strategic, targeted initiatives that impact the capacity and effectiveness of the system strengthening the economy and vitality of the region.

Steps to Success:

Build upon prior successes such as economic development and educator summits; augment strategic partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, Apprenticeship programs, Job Corps; strengthen Industry Cluster projects and enhance collaboration with regional economic development ventures; develop incentive strategies to increase coordination; institute an annual report card of regional indicators.

Indicators of Success:

Increased economic growth and economic development initiatives; flexibility to changing economic conditions; increased non-financial partnerships with other organizations; continued recognition of "best practices" at state and national levels.