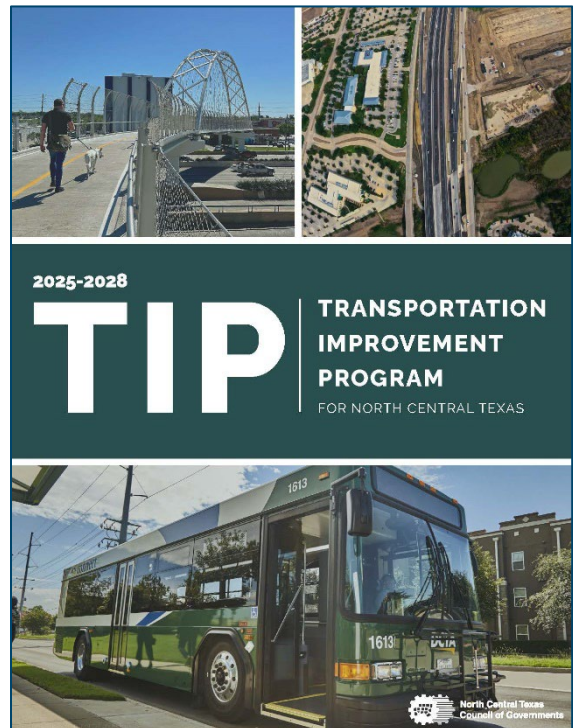


Chapter III

Project Selection and Prioritization Process

2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program



Chapter III

Project Selection and Prioritization Process

OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the project selection process, criteria for evaluation of project eligibility and benefits, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) modification process. The TIP has been updated and/or reprioritized regularly since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). The metropolitan transportation planning and programming processes provide for continual refinement of the TIP to make adjustments to projects as they near implementation.

The TRE carries commuters between Fort Worth Central Station and Dallas Union Station



With the enactment of ISTEA came new responsibilities for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Subsequent transportation bills, including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), reconfirmed these responsibilities. State departments of transportation share project selection authority with MPOs for certain transportation funding programs. The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), as the MPO for the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, the Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area, are assigned project-level programming responsibilities for funding programs which focus on achieving the regional mobility and air quality objectives of the Metropolitan Area. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) continues to select projects that focus on maintaining and improving the State and National



Highway System both in and out of the metropolitan area. Exhibits III-1 and III-2 illustrate the agencies responsible for selecting projects for each of the state and federal funding programs listed in the TIP.

Exhibit III-1. Roadway Section Program Selection Responsibility

Category	Program Title	Selected By
1	Preventive Maintenance and Rehabilitation	TxDOT
2M	Metropolitan Corridor Projects	MPO/TxDOT
2U	Urban Corridor Projects	MPO/TxDOT
3	Non-Traditionally Funded Transportation Projects	MPO/TxDOT
3LC	Local Contribution	Local Government/ Transportation Agencies
3RTR	Regional Toll Revenue	MPO
3TDC (MPO)	Transportation Development Credits	MPO
3TDC (TTC)	Transportation Development Credits	TxDOT
4	Rural Connectivity (4R) and Urban Connectivity (4U) Projects	TxDOT
5	Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)	MPO/TxDOT
6	Structures Replacement and Rehabilitation	TxDOT
7	Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)	MPO
8	Safety	TxDOT
9	Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TASA)	MPO/TxDOT
10	Supplemental Transportation Projects	TxDOT
	Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	MPO/TxDOT
11	District Discretionary	TxDOT
	District Safety	
	Energy Sector	
	Construction Cost Overruns/Change Order	
12	Strategic Priority/Texas Clear Lanes	TxDOT
SW PE	Statewide Preliminary Engineering	TxDOT
SW ROW	Statewide Right-of-Way	TxDOT

Exhibit III-2. Transit Section Program Selection Responsibility

Transit Category	Selected By
Section 5307 - Urbanized Area Formula Program	MPO
Section 5309 - Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grant Program	Congress/FTA
Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program	MPO/TxDOT Districts
Section 5311 - Nonurbanized Area Formula Program	TxDOT
Section 5337 - State of Good Repair Program	MPO
Section 5339 - Bus and Bus Facilities Program	MPO/TxDOT

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING PROGRAMS

The summaries contained in Exhibits III-3 and III-4 provide brief descriptions of transportation funding program categories included in the 2025-2028 TIP and the specific types of projects funded in the various categories. Complete project listings for each of the programs listed in the 2025-2028 timeframe can be found in Chapter VII.

Exhibit III-3. State and Federal Roadway Section Funding Categories

Category Number	Category	Description
1	Preventive Maintenance and Rehabilitation	Preventive maintenance and rehabilitation on the existing state highway system, including: (A) Preventive maintenance - minor roadway modifications to improve operations and safety; and (B) Rehabilitation - installation, rehabilitation, replacement, and maintenance of pavement, bridges, traffic control devices, traffic management systems, and ancillary traffic devices. Funds are formula allocated.
2M/U	Metropolitan and Urban Corridor Projects	Mobility and added-capacity projects along a corridor that decrease travel time and the level or duration of traffic congestion and increase the safe and efficient movement of people and freight in metropolitan and urbanized areas. This category is split into two types of funding: <i>Metropolitan Corridor (2M)</i> projects are within the boundaries of a Transportation Management Area (TMA) like Dallas-Fort Worth. <i>Urban Area Corridor Projects (2U)</i> are in areas without a Transportation Management Area (non-TMA) like Sherman-Denison. Funds are formula allocated. These funds are generally approved through the Unified Transportation Program (UTP) or 10-Year Planning process.

Category Number	Category	Description
3	Non-Traditionally Funded Transportation Projects	<p>Transportation related projects that qualify for funding from sources not traditionally part of the state highway fund, including state bond financing under programs such as Proposition 12 (General Obligation Bonds), Proposition 14, pass-through toll financing, Regional Toll Revenue (RTR), Regional Transportation Council/Local funds (RTC/Local), and local participation funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTR funds include toll proceeds from toll project agreements. RTR funds may include up-front payments by tolling entity, excess revenue payment by tolling entity, or interest accrued on these funds. RTR funds can be spent on state highway system, public transit, or air quality projects. They are selected by the RTC with strong participation levels from local agencies (cities, counties, etc.). The Texas Transportation Commission has final approval via minute order. • RTC/Local funds are local funds created by and available to the RTC. The funds are generally created through federal/local funding exchanges. Projects are selected by the RTC, and primarily consist of air quality, sustainable development, and study-type projects.
3TDC (MPO)	Transportation Development Credits (Metropolitan Planning Organization)	TDCs are a financial accounting tool approved by the Federal Highway Administration that allow agencies to use federal funding to offset a local match. They are non-cash credits allocated to states (and later to regions) as a representative value to account for toll road and tolled managed lanes that benefit the federal system. This category of TDCs is selected by the MPO.
3TDC (TTC)	Transportation Development Credits (Texas Transportation Commission)	TDCs are a financial accounting tool approved by the Federal Highway Administration that allow states to use federal funding to offset a state match. They are non-cash credits allocated to states (and later to regions) as a representative value to account for toll road and tolled managed lanes that benefit the federal system. This category of TDCs is selected by the TTC.
4R	Rural Connectivity Corridor Projects	Mobility and added-capacity projects on major state highway system corridors (which provide statewide connectivity between urban areas and corridors) to create a highway connectivity network composed of the Texas Highway Trunk System, National Highway System, and connections to major ports of entry, whether international borders or Texas water ports. Generally used in rural (non-urban) areas.
4U	Category 4 Urban Connectivity	The Urban Connectivity program is designed to provide connectivity for interstates and major freight/trade corridors and enables the use of Category 4 funds in urban areas. Projects should be prioritized and selected based on criteria consistent with House Bill 20. Funds are formula-allocated using the Category 2 formula.

Category Number	Category	Description
5	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)	Designed for air quality or transit projects that address attainment of national ambient air quality standards in the nonattainment areas (currently Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, El Paso, and San Antonio). Funds cannot be used to add capacity for single-occupancy vehicles. Funds are formula-allocated based on population and air quality severity.
6	Bridges	Replacement or rehabilitation of eligible bridges on and off the State Highway System (functionally obsolete or structurally deficient). Replacement of existing highway-railroad grade crossings, and the rehabilitation or replacement of deficient railroad underpasses on the State Highway System. Specific locations evaluated by a cost-benefit derived index.
7	Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)	Designed for mobility (roadway or transit) and air quality projects that address transportation needs within Metropolitan Area boundaries with populations of 200,000 or greater. Funds are formula-allocated based on population of the TMAs.
8	Safety	Safety related projects both on and off the State Highway System including the federal Highway Safety Improvement Program, Railway-Highway Safety Program, Safety Bond Program, and High-Risk Rural Roads Program.
9	Transportation Alternative – Set Aside Program	<p>Federal aid program for the construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrian, bicycle, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.</p> <p>This program also includes the Safe Routes to Schools Program. Projects are selected through competitive calls for projects at the regional and state levels.</p> <p>Funds are formula-allocated. The RTC selects a portion of Transportation Alternatives funds (in urbanized areas with populations over 200,000) and TxDOT selects another portion (in areas with populations under 200,000).</p>
10	Supplemental Transportation Projects	Transportation-related projects that do not qualify for funding in other categories, including landscape and aesthetic improvement (Green Ribbon funds); erosion control and environmental mitigation; construction and rehabilitation of roadways within or adjacent to state parks, fish hatcheries, and similar facilities; replacement of railroad crossing surfaces; maintenance of railroad signals; construction or replacement of curb ramps for accessibility to pedestrians with disabilities; and miscellaneous federal discretionary programs (e.g., RAISE, Safe Streets and Roads for All, BUILD, INFRA). Previous federal earmarks often appear in this funding category.

Category Number	Category	Description
	Carbon Reduction Program	Projects designed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from on-road highway sources. A portion is allocated to urban and rural areas based on population and the remainder is allocated to TxDOT to be obligated to any area of the state.
11	District Discretionary	Miscellaneous projects on the State Highway System selected at the TxDOT District's discretion.
	District Safety	District discretionary funds for standalone safety projects that include proven safety countermeasures.
	Energy Sector	Safety and maintenance funding for facilities on state highways that are affected by the energy sector (e.g., activities related to the Barnett Shale in North Texas).
	Construction Cost Overruns/Change Order	Provides additional funding for costs that are discovered at letting and/or during construction. Statewide allocation is managed by a governance committee and funding is reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.
12	Strategic Priority	Projects with specific importance to the state including those that generally promote economic opportunity, increase efficiency on military deployment routes or retain military assets in response to the federal military base realignment and closure reports, maintain the ability to respond to both man-made and natural emergencies, and provide pass-through toll financing for local communities.
	Texas Clear Lanes	Provides funding for congestion relief projects in metropolitan areas with over 1 million in population, which includes Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. Projects in this category should be listed on the Top 100 Most Congested Roadways list.
SW PE	Statewide PE Funds	Funds TxDOT uses for engineering/design services for projects on the State Highway System.
SW ROW	Statewide ROW Funds	Funds TxDOT uses for right-of-way acquisition or utility relocation for projects on the State Highway System.

Exhibit III-4. Federal Transit Section Funding Categories

Transit Category	Description
Section 5307 - Urbanized Area Formula Program	Provides for the distribution of capital assistance and operating assistance (under specific guidelines) to transit operators in Urbanized Areas.
Section 5309 - Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grant Program	Provides Congressional discretionary funds for new transit start-ups, rail modernization, bus fleet, and other major transit projects (including Small Starts and New Starts Program).
Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program	Provides transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities that increase mobility options through capital and limited operating assistance funds.

Transit Category	Description
Section 5311 - Nonurbanized Area Formula Program	Provides for the distribution of capital assistance and operating assistance to state agencies, local public bodies, nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transportation services outside Urbanized Areas.
Section 5337 – State of Good Repair Program	Provides funding for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement of capital assets used for rail transit and high intensity motor bus systems to ensure public transit operates safely, efficiently, reliably, and sustainably.
Section 5339 – Bus and Bus Facilities Program	Provides capital funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment, and to construct bus-related facilities.

School buses retrofitted to run on propane.



PROJECT SELECTION RESPONSIBILITY

The MPO has project selection responsibility for the following funding programs:

- Surface Transportation Block Grant in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds in the Dallas-Fort Worth ozone nonattainment area in coordination with the local TxDOT Districts
- Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Carbon Reduction Program in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Transit Section 5307--Urbanized Area Formula Program (UAFP) funds in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, the Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area

- Transit Section 5310 -- Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funds in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Transit Section 5337 -- State of Good Repair (SGR) funds in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Transit Section 5339 -- Bus and Bus Facilities (BBF) funds in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Urbanized Area, Denton-Lewisville Urbanized Area, and the McKinney-Frisco Urbanized Area
- Metropolitan Corridor funds (in conjunction with the TxDOT Dallas, Fort Worth, and Paris Districts).
- RTC/Local funds
- Regional Toll Revenue (RTR) funds - projects are selected in consultation with TxDOT, local governments, and local transportation agencies.

Project selection for the STBG, CMAQ, TASA, and CRP programs occurs periodically and is conducted by the MPO through funding initiatives. Local governments and transportation agencies are invited to submit projects for consideration at any time or through calls for projects or strategic programming initiatives. More attention is given to project selection criteria and evaluation methods used by the MPO later in this chapter.



TxDOT is responsible for selecting projects for all other funding programs except for Federal Demonstration, Congressional Earmarks, and Capital Program funds, if/when they are available.

Three TxDOT Districts make up the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area: the Dallas District, the Fort Worth District, and the Paris District. TxDOT's project selection responsibility is shared by the local district offices, TxDOT Division offices, and the Texas Transportation Commission. As shown in Exhibits III-1 and III-2, the TxDOT Districts are responsible for selecting projects for various funding categories in their local areas. TxDOT Headquarters has project selection responsibility for funding categories that are selected on a statewide basis and approved by the Texas Transportation Commission. Other funding programs, such as the Strategic Priority and Texas Clear Lanes Programs, are selected directly by the Texas Transportation Commission.

Transit Section 5309 – Capital Program projects listed in Chapter VII do not necessarily represent approved funding, but rather an intent to pursue funding from Congress or the FTA.

The 2025-2028 TIP represents the culmination of a continuing process to refine and prioritize the projects selected for implementation in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. It was developed through the cooperative

efforts of NCTCOG, local governments, transportation authorities, and TxDOT, with input by the public and groups involved in tourism and natural disaster mitigation. The project selection process utilized by the Dallas-Fort Worth MPO has evolved over time and is explained in more detail in the following section.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Federal legislation authorizes MPOs to coordinate the selection and funding of transportation projects in urbanized areas. Through the MPO process, local governments and cities have the opportunity to



participate in identifying and solving transportation-related problems in their respective areas. Projects submitted for consideration include new roadways, roadway widenings, transit services, intersection and signal improvements, grade separations, incident management systems, active transportation, sustainable development, and other types of transportation improvements or enhancements.

Since ISTEA was signed into law, the Dallas-Fort Worth MPO has conducted countless funding initiatives (i.e., project selection efforts). Over time, NCTCOG and the RTC have employed different criteria and screening processes for different project funding and selection initiatives. NCTCOG first developed project selection and evaluation criteria for the 1992 Call for Projects. Similar evaluation methods were used in the 1994 and 1999 Calls for Projects. The selection criteria in these calls for projects generally addressed cost-effectiveness (both current and future), air quality benefits, local commitment, congestion reduction, and the level of multi-modal and social mobility benefits afforded by a project. This approach involved a comprehensive project rating system with diverse rating criteria, linked to the type of funding being requested.

In 2002, NCTCOG began selecting projects more strategically. Through a strategic initiative, NCTCOG staff works cooperatively with the Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC), RTC, and regional partners to select projects that support regional priorities. Projects are evaluated based on their individual merits and their impact on the regional transportation system. Then, the set of recommended projects is evaluated to ensure an equitable distribution of selected projects throughout the region. The RTC has issued several such funding initiatives, including the 2002 Strategic Programming Initiative, the 2003-2005 RTC Partnership Programs, the 2017-2018 CMAQ/STBG Funding Program, COVID-19 #097 Infrastructure Program, and the 2024 Strategic Transportation Funding Program.

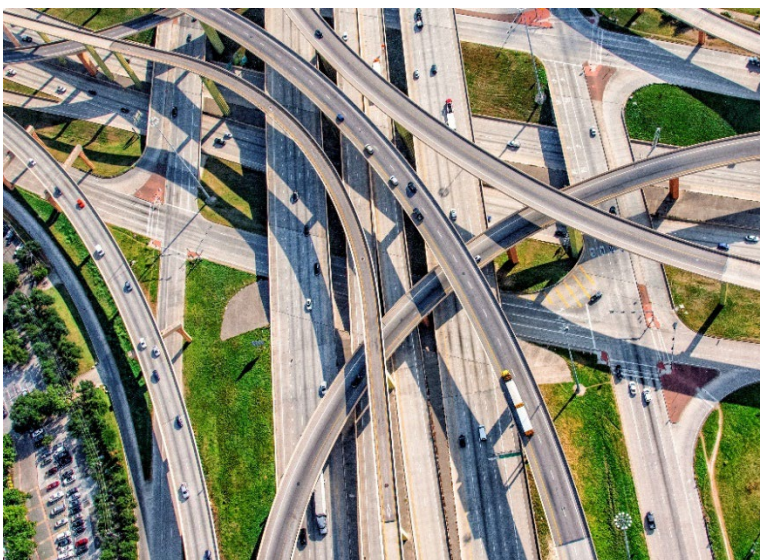
The RTC has also led other types of funding initiatives that lie in the middle of the project selection spectrum between technical and strategic. Examples of these funding programs include the 2001 Park-and-Ride Call for Projects, the 2001 Land Use/Transportation Joint Venture Program Call for Projects, 2005 RTC Partnership Program 3, and the Management & Operations (M&O), Air Quality (AQ),

and Safety Program. These funding initiatives were similar to the "calls for projects" outlined above, in that they involved evaluation criteria; however, the evaluation methodology they employed was more rational than technical. In both cases, a set of evaluation criteria was created, followed by screening or filtering through the criteria. The projects that met all the criteria or screens were recommended for funding.

As the MPO has evolved and matured, the funding initiatives used to evaluate project applications have changed as well. Moreover, different types of funding initiatives are used for different programs and federal funding categories, as appropriate. As regional needs change, so do the project selection and funding methodologies employed by the RTC. In any type of initiative, projects are selected based on a competitive process, with an emphasis on public and local elected official involvement. Project selection criteria generally considered in the Dallas-Fort Worth area (regardless of the type of funding initiative being employed) include air quality benefits, mobility and congestion, financial commitment, safety, intermodalism, regional innovation, and cost-effectiveness.

During the 84th Texas Legislature, House Bill (HB) 20 became law. This legislation requires, among other items, that MPOs develop 10-Year Plans for funding allocated to the region and incorporate a variety of performance metrics into the project selection process. The Dallas-Fort Worth region's project evaluation process begins with reviewing unfunded projects in the first ten years of the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Then, metrics including potential congestion reduction, improvements to system reliability, safety (i.e., crash history), and infrastructure condition are considered to determine the need for a particular project. Project readiness factors like environmental clearance status and estimated let date are considered when prioritizing projects that have been selected.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES IN PROJECT SELECTION



Performance-based planning and project programming have been increasingly utilized by NCTCOG staff in recent years. The most recent federal transportation funding bills, including the IIJA, require that performance-based planning and programming be incorporated into the development of Metropolitan Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs.

Five performance measures are required to have set targets.

- the Highway Safety Improvement Program (PM1)
- Pavement and Bridge Condition (PM2)
- System Performance/Freight/CMAQ (PM3)
- Transit Asset Management (TAM)
- Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs)

More information on the performance measure rules and the targets can be found in Chapter V of this document.

When working to select and program projects, MPO staff factor in a variety of performance measures. Given that projects and programs in an MPO's TIP must be included in and consistent with its MTP, the MTP and the performance measures that support it are critical to the development of the TIP. The projects recommended in the MTP (and eventually programmed in the TIP) go through a rigorous review to determine that they are warranted.

ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE TARGETS

To address performance targets, several of the funding programs approved by the RTC have been dedicated to funding projects and programs designed to address one or more of these targets. One example is the \$50 million of investments approved for safety improvements as part of the 2024-2026 Management & Operations, Air Quality, and Safety Program. The program includes funding that will improve safety for vehicular and non-vehicular travelers by facilitating the engineering of safer roads and bicycle/pedestrian facilities, as well as looking at education and enforcement as methods of reducing speeding and other dangerous behaviors (e.g., impaired driving, wrong-way driving). The 2024 Strategic Transportation Funding Program included funding for projects including new and replacement vehicles for two of the region's passenger rail corridors, reconstruction of roadways to address poor pavement conditions and improve their resilience, new and enhanced pedestrian facilities to encourage non-single occupant vehicle travel, and traffic signal and at-grade rail crossing improvements to improve mobility and air quality across the region.

Performance targets related to transit projects approved by the RTC are largely addressed through the annual transit funding process. While many transit projects maintain existing public transportation service operations, other transit projects maintain, repair, and replace capital assets. These projects are evaluated against the TAM regional performance targets and individual transit provider's TAM plans to ensure consistency. Regional performance targets for TAM were established and coordinated with each transit provider. Transit providers are federally required to develop and implement a TAM plan, either individually or through a group-sponsor such as the MPO or TxDOT. Each TAM plan addresses capital assets used in the provision of public transportation and requires prioritization of investments for repair, maintenance, and replacement. This requirement allows transit providers to strategically plan for funding of capital assets and

allows the MPO to make effective funding decisions for projects included in the TIP. As of FY2024, TAM has been addressed in the TIP through regular maintenance of transit assets and the purchasing of new vehicles in cooperation with the region's transit agencies and NCTCOG's subrecipients using FTA 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula) and 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities) funds. NCTCOG is conducting a Cooperative Vehicle Procurement (CVP) on behalf of transit providers throughout the region. The CVP will ease the administrative burden on several small transit providers by leveraging nearly ten million dollars in funding for both replacement and expansion of ADA-accessible transit fleets across the region.

Performance targets are also being addressed via larger funding initiatives that do not necessarily specify progress toward a certain target as the reason for the initiative. The RTC's Regional 10-Year Plan includes many projects that address congestion reduction, connectivity, and safety issues, along with other criteria like pavement and bridge condition. A notable example is the proposed reconstruction of the IH 30 Canyon in Downtown Dallas. The implementation of the IH 30 project will help reduce congestion, improve connectivity and accessibility, and address safety issues for all users, in addition to other benefits like air quality improvement and economic development. This project eliminates hazardous weaving sections throughout the downtown corridor, which creates a safer driving environment. The project also reconstructs cross streets and overpasses with sidewalks and shared use paths and/or buffer-separated bicycle lanes connecting neighborhoods and businesses on both sides of the project corridor. Connectivity and accessibility are enhanced by providing ADA-compliant ramps and crosswalks along the frontage roads and intersections. The IH 30 project will also bring improved traffic operations with signals and turn lanes, collector-distributor roads, and reconstructed ramps to allow more efficient ingress and egress. Congestion will be reduced by adding roadway capacity. As a result of receiving Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program funding from the United States Department of Transportation, a series of deck parks will be constructed over a portion of IH 30. This project will provide better access to jobs and commercial destinations and improve quality of life for the adjacent disadvantaged communities. Ultimately, the project will address multiple performance measures, which is what made it a regional priority.

This emphasis on projects with multi-faceted benefits also applies to the other performance measures and targets expected to be utilized in the coming years.

Many projects that have been selected by the RTC do not strictly address one issue. An interchange project may be selected primarily for its expected congestion relief, but it can address a structurally deficient bridge at the same time. A project that increases capacity will often also address a pavement deficiency through the reconstruction of existing lanes in addition to



constructing the new ones.

Other focus areas are being considered in addition to the measures and targets described above when determining whether a project is selected and programmed. These considerations include environmental justice, improved air quality, added active transportation options, increased freight movement, geographic dispersion, and many more. The region has also made a concerted effort to provide funding for active transportation improvements as part of roadway projects. When vetting projects, NCTCOG and the RTC consider a variety of measures pertaining to each applicable area.

Going forward, NCTCOG/the RTC will continue to devote funding to projects and programs designed to achieve performance targets, required or otherwise. More details on these targets and how project selection is leading to progress toward them can be found in Chapter V.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECT SELECTION

The Unified Transportation Program (UTP) process is utilized to prioritize projects in certain funding categories for projects that TxDOT selects (either solely, or in coordination with MPOs). The UTP is a 10-year project planning document that guides project development and authorizes various levels of project development or implementation activity. The UTP establishes levels of development authority to allow projects to progress through the various stages of development actions included in each level.

Transportation investments, particularly new facilities, typically take several years of planning before construction can begin. Projects often require feasibility studies, route studies, public hearings, environmental and social impact assessments, and the purchase of right-of-way prior to construction.

TxDOT uses various ranking indices or allocation formulas to prioritize the many projects in the UTP. Projects selected by TxDOT Headquarters are evaluated on a statewide basis, while projects selected by the districts are evaluated against other projects within that district. The UTP identifies funding levels available to program projects against in the TIP.

PROJECT MONITORING, REFINEMENT, AND REVISION

The TIP is intended to be a current and accurate listing of transportation projects proposed for federal or state funding, making diligent monitoring with regular briefings to the RTC essential. The 2025-2028 TIP project listing is balanced to available resources and all projects in Year 1 are considered high priority. Since the program is balanced to available resources, cost overruns can result in the potential of high priority projects being delayed into Year 2. Several other types of actions reinforce the need for a dynamic TIP monitoring program.

Examples of potential changes that could occur during the TIP implementation process include, but are not limited to:

- cost overruns/underruns
- environmental concerns
- local governments' inability to meet local match requirements
- lawsuits
- delays in right-of-way acquisition or utility clearances
- local governments wishing to pursue projects with local funds

The current RTC policy is that reprioritization of projects from later years will occur if earlier construction is feasible and financial constraint requirements can still be met. Therefore, the types of changes listed above could lead to projects being expedited or delayed, depending on the circumstances.

RTC TIP MODIFICATION POLICY AND PROCESS

NCTCOG staff may modify a project in the TIP at any time, however, project modifications are generally handled on a quarterly cycle in coordination with the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) revision process, unless TxDOT has approved an out-of-cycle revision period. Timely modifications to the TIP are important to avoid funding and/or construction delays.

The TIP modification policy consists of four sections:

1. general policy provisions
2. project changes not requiring TIP modification
3. administrative amendment policy
4. revision policy

While TIP revisions require RTC approval, the RTC delegates authority to the Director of Transportation for administrative amendment approvals. Certain project changes do not require a TIP modification, such as changes that do not impact the overall purpose of the project (i.e., CSJ change), increases in local funds, cost/funding decreases, advancing projects, etc. The specific criteria used to determine whether a modification will require a revision or administrative amendment, or if the project change does not require a TIP modification, are outlined in the TIP Modification Policy, which can be found at:

<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/funds/tip/tip-modifications>.

All modifications are reviewed for consistency with the MTP and air quality conformity. After MTP and air quality review, the revisions and administrative amendments are made available online for public review and comment in accordance with the NCTCOG Public Participation Plan. When a modification requires RTC action, proposed revisions are submitted to STTC for review. STTC recommends a position on proposed revisions to the RTC. Then the RTC acts on STTC recommendations. If rapid turnaround is important, a modification can be submitted directly to the RTC, precluding the normal review processing sequence. In that case, the modification will go back to STTC for concurrence. Modifications requiring a revision to the STIP are submitted to TxDOT on a quarterly basis.