

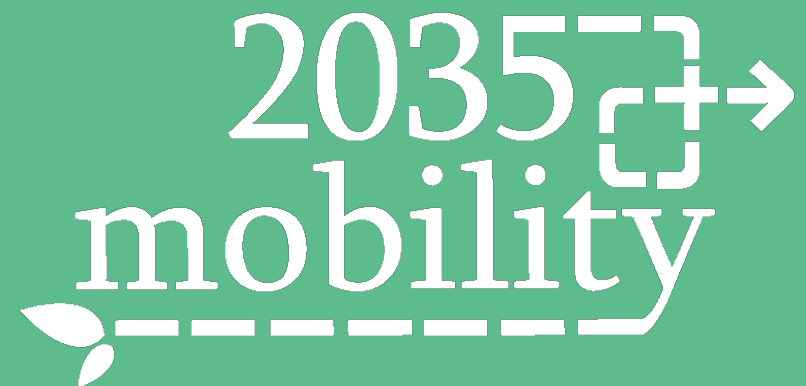
Mobility 2035: Foreword

A New Way of Planning

For the past 20 years or so, transportation funding has increased fairly steadily. Beginning with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Congress began to systematically spend down the balance in the Highway Trust Fund. The trend continued with spending outpacing gas tax revenue and related fees. In 2008, the Trust Fund balance neared zero and Congress was forced to infuse the account with general revenue just to keep up with already approved funding commitments across the country. Since then, more than \$29.7 billion in general revenue has been added to keep the account solvent. In addition, federal and state laws were passed that provided transportation professionals with several innovative financial tools, such as additional bonding capabilities and more flexible public-private partnership arrangements that further increased the availability of near-term funding opportunities.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area was the recipient of its share of this additional revenue and was able to use it to implement critical roadway and transit projects and programs. However, the rate at which we were able to add capacity to our transportation system was exceeded by the continued unprecedented growth in people and businesses wanting to call Dallas-Fort Worth home. Between now and 2035, it is anticipated that the region's population will increase by 48 percent and employment will increase by 47 percent; however, new roadway capacity is expected to increase by only 13 percent while the rail network is expected to nearly triple.

Despite the recent economic downturn, the state of Texas and the Dallas-Fort Worth region continue to sustain strong growth thanks to its diversified economy and favorable business climate. In fact, the recent 2010 US Census showed that municipalities and counties in North Central Texas are still experiencing considerable growth, resulting in the 12-county transportation planning area growing from 5.1 million persons in 2000 to 6.4 million in 2010. Recently adopted population forecasts for the same area indicate that 9.8 million persons will call North Central Texas home in 2035.



*The Metropolitan Transportation
Plan for North Central Texas*

Unfortunately, the financial situation shows little sign of improvement. In fact, it is unlikely that current funding levels will be sustained, let alone increased. Federal and state gasoline taxes (the major source of transportation related revenue) have not increased since 1991 and 1993, respectively, and the state legislature has recently rescinded the option to move ahead with new public-private partnerships. In addition, a wave of fiscally conservative legislators have recently been elected at both the state and federal levels and are aiming to substantially cut government spending. While both the federal Highway Trust Fund and the state's transportation fund, Fund 006, are user fee-based accounts essentially generating their own revenue, the political will to increase funding levels may be quite difficult in the coming years given this reduced spending environment.

As a result of these increasing financial constraints, the inability of the region to build its way out of its congestion is becoming abundantly clear. The way in which transportation issues are addressed at the planning level will have to change drastically. Innovation and openness to exploring concepts that may not have been popular in years past will be crucial. The traditional recommendations of extending roadways and rail lines, as well as adding lanes in existing corridors, will not provide enough capacity to sustain travel expectations. The expected growth in travel demand will overwhelm our transportation system. Even with spending \$101.1 billion on projects and programs, congestion will continue to degrade, resulting in a 44 percent increase in average travel time due to congestion.

Maintaining a vibrant economic and social environment may require changes in both travel characteristics and behavior. This applies not just to the additional three million persons expected to reside in the Dallas-Fort Worth region by 2035, but to everyone who currently lives and works here as well. To that end, a major emphasis of Mobility 2035 will be to promote growth management strategies that strike a greater balance between land use and transportation. Programs and projects aimed at eliminating or reducing vehicle trips, shortening trips that would still occur, and utilizing the capacity of our system to its fullest are major recommendations.

Where capacity is added to the transportation system, it must be done strategically. In areas where the existing pavement or rail track is relatively new or in good shape, the existing infrastructure should be utilized if at all possible. If the pavement or track requires major rehabilitation or replacement, the infrastructure will be

replaced simultaneously, with additional capacity as appropriate, so as to only impact the corridor once.

While strategically adding capacity and improving system operations will provide much needed mobility improvement, they must be done in a way that contributes to the overall quality of life, while also limiting impacts to the environment. This mobility plan expands on discussion points regarding potential environmental and social impacts that may occur as a result of its implementation. This discussion forms the basis for a more rigorous examination of these impacts as projects advance into ultimate planning and development stages such as the federal National Environmental Policy Act evaluations and equivalent state processes.

As Mobility 2035 was being prepared, the Regional Transportation Council held over 30 public meetings and outreach events, along with numerous meetings with local, state, and federal agency staff and elected officials. The policies, programs, and projects were discussed in these meetings over an 18-month timeframe and a Website was established to convey information and to enable additional input. While making hard choices of which programs and projects to keep in and which ones to defer to a later time is difficult, the exercise was extremely helpful in providing both a regional understanding of the current state of transportation funding challenges and a blueprint for future expectations as a result of reduced funding. As the regional and national economic, social, and environmental circumstances change, the North Central Texas Council of Governments will monitor the recommendations in this mobility plan and make adjustments as necessary.