

New Fact Sheets Helping Public Understand Transportation

The NCTCOG Transportation Department recently published the first two in a continuing series of fact sheets intended to provide residents easily digestible information about projects and programs important to regional mobility. The first two cover Mobility 2035, the Dallas Fort Worth area's long-term transportation plan, and the Cotton Belt Innovative Finance Initiative.

The Regional Transportation Council in March approved the \$101.1 billion Mobility 2035, which outlines transportation improvements for the next 24 years. The Cotton Belt IFI was undertaken to identify funding to provide passenger rail service to the 62-mile Cotton Belt corridor between southwest Fort Worth and the Plano/Richardson area.

The fact sheets are both available online in PDF form. Read *Moving People with Strategic Investments at www.nctcog.org/mobility2035*, and *Expanding Passenger Rail Through Innovation at www.nctcog.org/ifi*.

The fact sheets are intended to help the public better understand the complexities of the multimodal transportation system and what is necessary to improve mobility in the fast-growing Dallas-Fort Worth area.



photos/DCTA; Top image provided by DCTA

The Denton County Transportation Authority launched its A-train commuter rail service from Denton to Carrollton this summer. DCTA has begun receiving the new rail cars that will soon be ushering passengers up and down the 21-mile line.

A-train Opens New Frontier for Denton County Commuters

Passengers gather on the platform, preparing to exchange the brutal summer heat for the air-conditioned comfort of a train. They climb aboard the silver cars at Dallas Area Rapid Transit's Trinity Mills Station.

equipment. A typical rail crossing has arms that extend over the road while a train approaches. In a quiet zone, there could be extra gates or medians to prevent vehicles and pedestrians from crossing over while a train approaches.

Denton County's first transit-oriented development.

Data show that passenger rail benefits the economy. According to a 2007 study by researchers at the University of North Texas, a \$4.86 billion investment in rail through 2013 is projected to result in an increase in activity of \$8.1 billion.

The development won't come all at once along the new A-train line. For example, even though the Highland Village Station offers access to Lewisville Lake, it is adjacent to Interstate Highway 35E, which is due for expansion in the coming years. When that happens, the station location will likely change slightly, said Dee Leggett, DCTA's vice president of communications and planning.

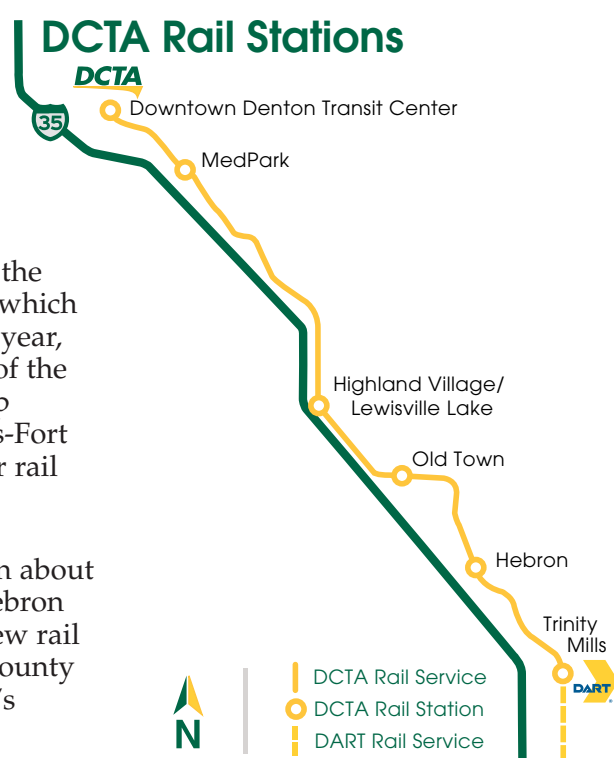
But signs that progress is occurring around the stations are evident. In downtown Denton, already well-established, infill development will be the focus. A-train ridership has been meeting the agency's expectations since its June debut. A 25 percent spike was seen in August, when classes at the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University and North Central Texas College in Corinth began.

A-TRAIN continued on Back Page

Until recently, the only passenger cars on these tracks were the iconic yellow DART trains, transporting passengers between Carrollton and Pleasant Grove along the 28-mile Green Line. Now, passengers arriving from the south on the Green Line, which opened to Carrollton last year, may continue to the end of the line on those trains or hop aboard the A-train, Dallas-Fort Worth's newest passenger rail service.

The A-train left the station about 3:45 pm on the way to Hebron Station, the first of five new rail stops along the Denton County Transportation Authority's 21-mile commuter line.

As it passed rail intersections, the train remained largely silent, not blowing its whistle when it came upon a crossing. The intersections have been declared quiet zones, meaning trains may not blow their loud horns when rolling through them under normal circumstances. Instead, the crossings have extra safety



map/ NCTCOG, adapted from DCTA

The train prepares to pull into Hebron Station to pick up more passengers and drop others off. To the west of the stop is Hebron 121 Station, a 90-acre mixed-use development with apartment homes. Hebron 121 Station, which will contain retail and office space, is being called

A Message From Michael Morris

Transportation Director

Keeping Transportation on a Path to Tomorrow

The way we deliver transportation projects is rapidly changing as we confront the shortage of necessary funding and an explosive growth rate that has seen Dallas-Fort Worth add **3 million people since 1980**. Add to this the public's expectation that government do more with less, and it becomes clear that we must find innovative ways to confront our mobility and related air quality problems. Three examples illustrate how innovation is working in our region: Mobility 2035, AirCheckTexas Drive a Clean Machine and the Cotton Belt Innovative Finance Initiative. With governments facing tight budgets, it becomes essential to find nontraditional methods of improving our quality of life. The groundwork is being laid with these programs.

Mobility 2035 | We are faced with a two-pronged transportation problem. North Texas is expected to continue the staggering growth that has

shaped the region over the past five decades. And we do not have the resources to adequately address the resulting needs. This required planners to think creatively when developing our long-range blueprint.

Mobility 2035 relies on both traditional finance mechanisms and new partnerships between the public and private sectors to build transportation assets and improve quality of life.

Whether roadway, rail or bicycle-pedestrian improvements, or air quality programs, residents need continued transportation progress. And it's happening thanks in part to collaboration with the private sector.

AirCheckTexas | AirCheckTexas has been one of NCTCOG's most successful air quality-related programs, offering qualifying motorists up to \$3,500 toward the replacement of their high-polluting vehicles and up to \$600 for repairs.

But as legislators sought to close a multibillion-dollar budget

deficit earlier this year, they reduced funding to the program by 88 percent. This was a difficult setback for a program that has led to the replacement of more than 25,000 vehicles and the repair of 25,000 more. As always, we deal with the resources we have. That means making changes to programs to ensure they continue to improve the lives of people in the region.

We refocused AirCheckTexas to run for the rest of the year as a vehicle-repair program all year round. Motorists who qualify ReVable to apply We vouchers to help them with emissions-related repairs. By getting their vehicles fixed, these residents are doing their part to improve air quality, especially important since nine Dallas-Fort Worth area counties are in non-attainment for the pollutant ozone.

Early in 2012, replacement vouchers are expected to be offered for a limited time. More details on a specific date will be provided on www.nctcog.org/airchecktexas.

While these changes will be felt throughout North Texas, we expect the program to continue to accommodate the needs of those who rely on it most.

Cotton Belt iFi | The Cotton Belt iFi could change the way transportation is funded. If successful – our analysis to this point gives us reason for optimism – this initiative will help bring rail to a 62-mile corridor running from southwest Fort Worth, northeast to the Plano/Richardson area. It would bring passenger rail service to more than a dozen cities, many of which have been waiting years for trains to come through.

But it won't stop there. If we bring passenger rail service to the corridor, which includes Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the model we use will be replicated in other parts of the region and throughout the country. We want to leverage the value of surrounding land in the corridor, using the projected

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Regional Transportation Council

Harmon, County Eye Long-Awaited Opening of Chisholm Trail Parkway to Fort Worth

Member Profile

Roger Harmon, Johnson County Judge

Talk to Roger Harmon about the drive from Cleburne to Tarrant County, and chances are you'll hear about the preponderance of lights – he counts more than 30 – along State Highway 174. The drive from Cleburne to downtown Fort Worth takes about 45 minutes. By 2014, it could be nearly cut in half.

That's when Chisholm Trail Parkway is expected to be open, providing Harmon and other residents along the road's path a more direct route to Fort Worth. As the Johnson County judge, Harmon frequently speaks with residents about the transportation needs of his growing county. From 2000-10, Johnson County's population grew 19 percent, from 126,811 to 150,934, according to the US Census Bureau.

With the county's growth, the need for the road is as great as ever. And after anticipating its arrival for so many years, residents are genuinely excited about the prospect of being able to use it in just a few short years, he said.

But getting to this point has not been easy. The road has been

planned for more than 40 years, and many people from both Johnson and Tarrant counties deserve credit, he said.

"I guess you could call it truly a combined, team effort," he said.

"There's no one individual person you can single out that made this happen."

"Good things happen when good people come together to accomplish a common goal."

Roger Harmon

Harmon represents Johnson County on the Regional Transportation Council, where he and 42 other policymakers determine how best to steer Dallas-Fort Worth through transportation challenges faced by a region of 6.5 million people.

He has served on the RTC since 2002, when he took over for former RTC Chair Ron Harmon when he retired as a Johnson County commissioner. Roger

Harmon speaks highly of his predecessor, who also worked for years to bring Chisholm Trail Parkway, previously known as Southwest Parkway, to fruition.

Roger Harmon is prepared to welcome the growth he believes the road will attract to the southern portion of his county.

Burleson continues to expand at a fast pace because of its proximity to Fort Worth. The city welcomed 15,714 new residents from 2000-10 to push its population to 36,690, now larger than Cleburne, which grew 13 percent to 26,005.

Once Chisholm Trail Parkway is built, it will bring companies, new housing, retail and commercial development, Harmon said.

Large industries will be drawn by a good road, meaning more employment for the county.

Chisholm Trail Parkway took the cooperation of dedicated transportation leaders in North Texas and Austin.

"Good things happen when good people come together to accomplish a common goal," he said.

Cooperation is one thing on which Harmon prides himself. He often talks about the role relationships play in moving issues forward in government. On the RTC, it's essential that officials representing different parts of the region cooperate with one another. With so many competing interests, members must think about how their decisions will affect not only them, but also their neighbors in other parts of the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The decision to build Chisholm Trail Parkway will be felt by people up and down the corridor today and for years to come.

Web Exclusives Aim to Keep Transportation Content Fresh

The NCTCOG Transportation Department has introduced Web-only content to its annual publication, Progress North Texas 2011, in an effort to keep the conversation about transportation in the Dallas-Fort Worth area moving forward.

Read what Kent Penney, director of aviation for the city of Fort Worth has to say about how surface transportation affects airports.

Progress North Texas focuses on the challenges the region faces and how they are being confronted, using a series of performance measures and testimonials from the people who use the system every day. Commuters who rely on

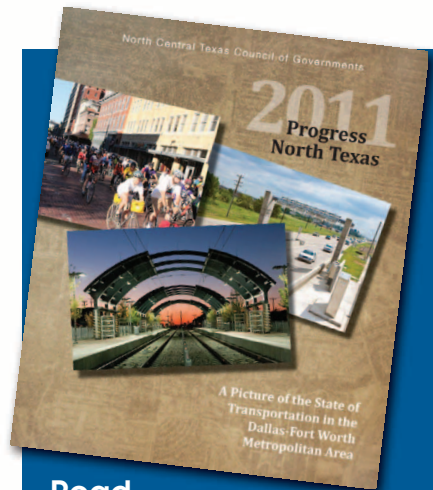
passenger rail, roadways and bicycles to get to work are all featured in this year's report.

You can help shape the conversation by answering the following question: **How should the region overcome transportation challenges and ensure a system of safe, reliable, effective options for the future?**

Your answers could appear in the online version.

As new information illustrating how the region is meeting its transportation challenges becomes available, it will be posted on the site.

On the Web:
www.nctcog.org/ourregion



Read Progress North Texas 2011 online or in print.

To obtain copies for your business, community or civic group, contact Brian Wilson at 817-704-2511 or bwilson@nctcog.org.

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Public-Private Partnership Moving Rail Improvements Forward

One of the nation's busiest at-grade rail intersections is about to be improved, thanks to cooperation between the public sector and businesses that use it every day to move goods throughout the US.

Ray LaHood, US secretary of transportation, recently visited

Fort Worth to finalize an agreement to fund improvements to Tower 55, which serves up to 100 freight and passenger trains a day. This activity causes long traffic tie-ups and safety concerns.

The federal government has committed \$34 million in

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Phase II, or TIGER II, funds.

The \$93.7 million project will include the following improvements:

- Additional track north, south

TOWER continued on Back Page

Refocused AirCheckTexas Remains Key to Region's Air Quality Plan

AirCheckTexas Drive a Clean Machine continues to improve the air quality – and the lives of those who receive vouchers.

The Texas Legislature reduced the program's funding by 88 percent earlier this year as it grappled with a multibillion-dollar budget deficit. Despite the funding setback, AirCheckTexas remains an important contributor to the region's air-quality improvement efforts. The repair of 25,000 vehicles and replacement of 25,000 more have led to the reduction of approximately 1.1 tons per day of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions.

This is helping the area make strides toward compliance with federal ozone standards. Nine Dallas-Fort Worth area counties (Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall and Tarrant) are designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as nonattainment for ozone pollution.

With less funding, AirCheckTexas shifted its focus from a vehicle repair and replacement initiative to one that simply provides vouchers to fix cars and trucks. The program received its last replacement application of the year in July.

Historically, qualifying motorists with vehicles that meet the specifications have been able to apply for vouchers worth up to \$3,500 toward the purchase of a more environmentally-friendly car or up to \$600 toward repairs.

In fiscal year 2010, the vouchers helped motorists retire 7,159 vehicles in favor of newer, cleaner-burning cars and trucks. Emissions problems with another 2,969 were diagnosed or repaired.

Although, the focus has been on repairing as many vehicles as possible, there will likely be a brief opportunity early in 2012 for qualifying residents to apply for replacement vouchers.

Applications for repair assistance must be mailed or faxed. The mailing address is: AirCheckTexas Program, P.O. Box 5888 Arlington, TX 76005-5888. There are two fax numbers: 817-608-2315 and 817-695-9292. Applicants are asked to allow 14 business days for the processing of their applications.

For income guidelines and other program requirements, visit www.nctcog.org/airchecktexas.

How to Apply

Mail: AirCheckTexas Program,
P.O. Box 5888 Arlington, TX
76005-5888

Fax: 817-608-2315 or 817-695-9292



A-TRAIN (continued from Page 3)

\$250 Million:

The approximate investment by the Regional Transportation Council in the A-train line. The money, which came from the Regional Toll Revenue initiative, helped DCTA bring rail to its customers a decade after the agency's creation.

All three institutions are accessible by train and bus, and two-thirds of bus riders are connected to the schools, Leggett said.

Early returns from the public have been positive. Many customers want additional service

to fit their schedules. Some riders want earlier weekday service; others would like more options on Saturday and late Friday night. Their requests are being heard with the reshuffling of the schedule DCTA recently announced. During the week, the A-train offers morning and evening service, but does not run in the middle of the day. For a full schedule, visit www.dcta.net.

The goal of bringing rail to Denton County residents was realized just a decade after DCTA was created, aided by \$250 million in Regional Toll Revenue funding from the Regional Transportation Council. The A-train line was constructed in far less time than if it had been

funded primarily by traditional means, the half-cent sales tax paid by shoppers in Denton, Highland Village and Lewisville.

RTR funds have helped advance projects throughout the region since the North Texas Tollway Authority agreed in 2007 to build State Highway 121 through Collin, Dallas and Denton counties in exchange for \$3.2 billion.

The A-train is just getting rolling, but it opens up new commuting possibilities for people who want to get to work or entertainment options throughout the region. It efficiently connects fast-growing Denton County with the region's rail system, allowing riders to

travel from downtown Denton to Dallas and even Fort Worth, via the Trinity Railway Express, without having to venture out on the congested roadways. DCTA and the TRE share another connection.

The new rail service has used the old TRE cars since beginning service in June but will soon have rail vehicles of its own. Some of the sleek green, white, and yellow cars have already arrived. And the old vehicles could be replaced with the new ones next spring. Regardless of the vehicle, the A-train is moving full steam ahead through Denton County and in the process, helping people see a new side of Denton County.

MORRIS (continued from Page 2)

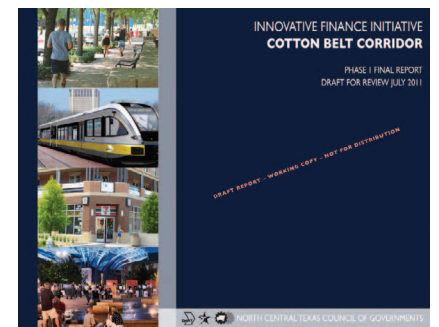
increases to help pay for the service. That's just one of the many possibilities for bringing rail service to the Cotton Belt. But one thing is certain. North Texas will continue striving for solutions to its mobility problems, whether they come by traditional

means, innovative measures or a mix of the two.

We live in uncertain times. And like many areas of government, transportation faces a challenging road ahead. The future is brightest for those regions that embrace innovative approaches

to solve the same old problems. Our work to provide the public with cost-effective improvements gives us hope that Dallas-Fort Worth will continue to lead in uncertain times.

After all ... mobility matters.



Read the Cotton Belt iFi report at www.nctcog.org/ifi

TOWER (continued from Page 3)

- and through Tower 55 on BNSF and UP lines
- Improved alignment and switches promoting faster trains
- Signal enhancements with positive train control capabilities
- New bridges and drainage and improvements to existing structures
- Street and intersection improvements and grade-crossing closures
- Improved pedestrian safety and new emergency-vehicle

access to enhance service to neighborhoods

The changes are being made as part of a public-private partnership also involving Fort Worth; the Texas Department of Transportation; two railroads, Fort Worth-based BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad; and the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

In addition to the \$34 million TIGER II grant, Union Pacific and BNSF Railway have committed a combined \$55 million; NCTCOG

has pledged \$2.5 million; and TxDOT and Fort Worth will each spend \$1 million toward the improvements.

Construction of the Tower 55 improvements will create approximately 900 jobs and provide greater safety with reduced delays for motorists and pedestrians at area highway-rail crossings and bridges, according to the federal government.

Fewer train delays and blocked

crossings will also save 1.9 million tons in carbon emissions from those locomotives and automobiles that will be idling less. Construction is expected to begin early next year.

In addition to Tower 55, the proposed high speed rail line between the Dallas-Fort Worth area and Houston will be aided by federal funding. The project was awarded \$15 million for engineering and environmental work necessary to move forward.

Calendar

•Regional Transportation Council

January 12 — 1 p.m.
NCTCOG Transportation Council Room
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

•Surface Transportation Technical Committee

January 27 — 1:30 p.m.
NCTCOG Transportation Council Room
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

•Public Meeting

TBD
NCTCOG Transportation Council Room
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

•Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition

January 31 — 1:30 p.m.
NCTCOG Transportation Council Room
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

NOTE: Dates, times and locations of meetings may change. Please confirm by calling 817-695-9240.

For an updated list of RTC-sponsored public meetings and other Transportation Department meetings, visit www.nctcog.org/trans and click on the "meetings and events" tab on the right side of the page.

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mobilitymatters

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This publication can be made available in alternate formats upon request

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Editor, Brian Wilson Layout and Design, Kevin Kemp, Graphic Designer Masthead Design, Kristy L. Keener, Graphic Coordinator
Please email comments, suggestions or newsletter topic ideas to mobilitymatters@nctcog.org.

If you would like to change your name or address we have on file, please e-mail us at mobilitymatters@nctcog.org.

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