

## Calendar

### • Public Meeting

September 7 - 6:00 p.m.  
Waxahachie City Hall  
Council Chambers  
401 South Rogers, Waxahachie

### • Regional Transportation Council Meeting

September 8 - 1:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Transportation Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

### • Public Meeting

September 8 - 6:00 p.m.  
Weatherford City Hall Council  
Chambers  
303 Palo Pinto, Weatherford

### • Public Meeting

September 12 - 6:30 p.m.  
Fort Worth East Regional Library  
6301 Bridge Street, Fort Worth

### • Public Meeting

September 13 - 10:30 a.m.  
Lewisville City Hall Council Chambers  
151 West Church Street, Lewisville

### • Public Meeting

September 13 - 6:30 p.m.  
Lakewood Branch Library  
6121 Worth Street, Dallas

### • NCTCOG Executive Board Meeting

September 22 - 12:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

### • Surface Transportation Technical Committee

September 23 - 1:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Transportation Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

### • Regional Transportation Council Meeting

October 13 - 1:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Transportation Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

### • NCTCOG Executive Board Meeting

October 27 - 12:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

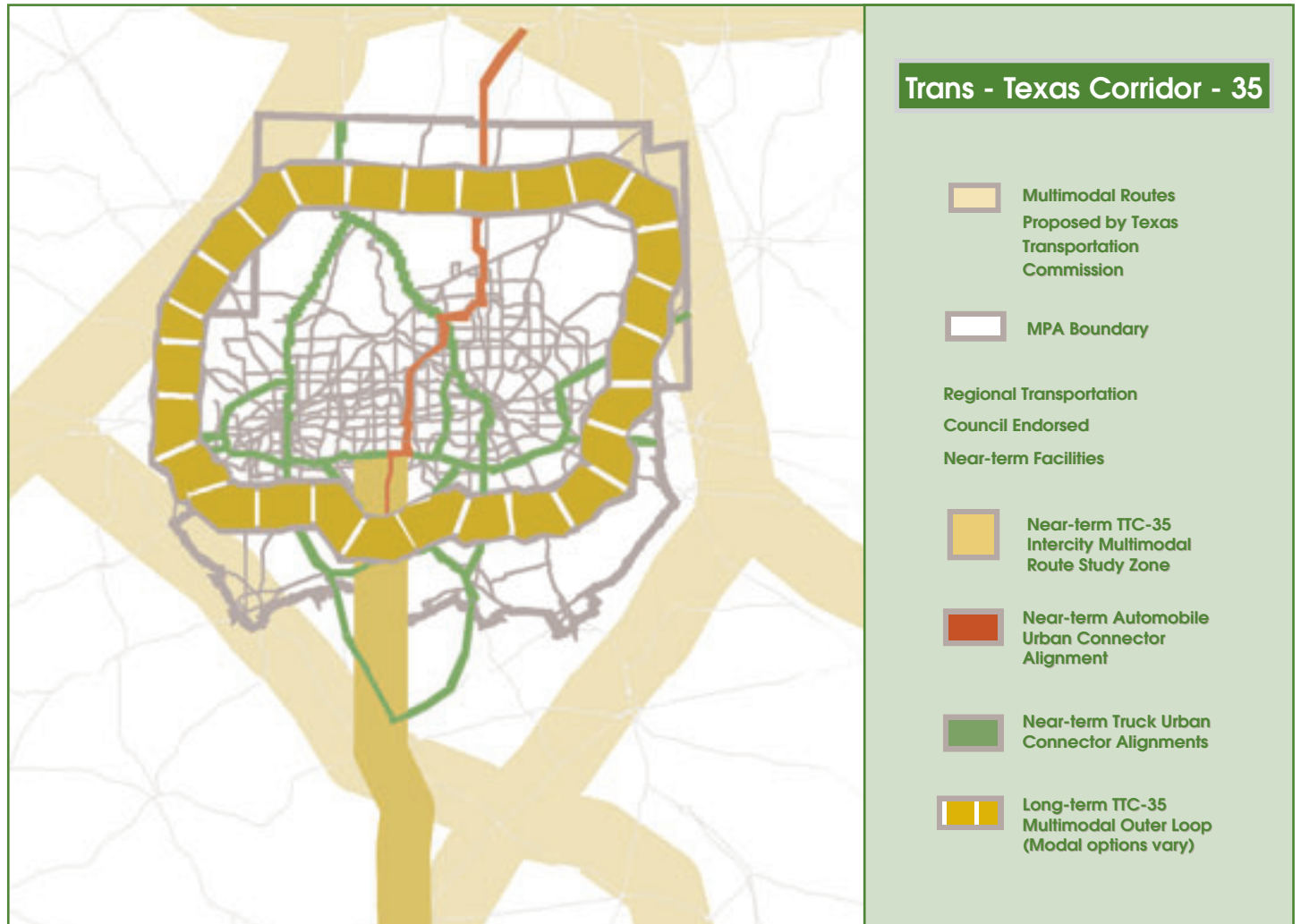
### • Surface Transportation Technical Committee

October 28 - 1:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Transportation Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

### • Regional Transportation Council Meeting

November 10 - 1:30 p.m.  
NCTCOG Transportation Board Room  
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington

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



## RTC Emphasizing Regional Needs in Response to Trans-Texas Corridor

**C**hampioning local transportation needs in the largest public works project in state history, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) recently unanimously approved a regional policy regarding the Texas Department of Transportation's Trans-Texas Corridor-35 (TTC-35) initiative.

The Trans-Texas Corridor is a proposed multi-use, statewide network of transportation routes in Texas that will incorporate existing and new highways, railways and utility right-of-ways.

As proposed by the Texas Transportation Commission, the Corridor will include:

- Roads (separate lanes for passenger vehicles and large trucks)
- Rail (high-speed passenger, high-speed freight, and commuter)
- Utilities infrastructure for water, oil and gas pipelines, and telecommunications services.

The RTC policy supports the TTC-35 proposal to help address the region's mobility, reliability, safety, and air quality needs. An important distinction of the RTC policy is the proposal of separate routes for each of the modes, including urban connectors to facilitate movement within the region. The proposal suggests a

phased implementation approach that allows for addressing sustainable development concerns while also preserving future right-of-way. This will expedite construction and efficiently feed a multi-modal corridor to the south from the center of the region. In addition, the proposal includes an east-west connection on the south side of the region, an element missing from the original TTC-35 proposal that is key to unlocking congestion on the interior of the region, reducing the cost of the overall Trans-Texas Corridor effort and providing a near-term opportunity to construct a freight-rail bypass around the region.

### Autos

The staged auto mode calls for use of the TTC-35 consortium investments and concession fees to evaluate and, as feasible, construct additional capacity improvements to the toll road automobile urban connector along existing and planned sections of the Dallas North Tollway, S.H. 161, the President George Bush Turnpike, and S.H. 360. Ultimately, as demand warrants, the next stage of investment is construction of an auto loop around the DFW region.

### Trucks

The plan highlights TTC-35 truck urban connectors and improvements, including truck

access in the corridor between I.H. I35E and I.H. I35W from I.H. 20 to Hillsboro. The near-term improvements could include dedicated truck lanes, Intelligent Transportation Systems, geometric improvements, interchange and frontage road improvements, and truck safety enhancements. An east-west truck bypass south of I.H. 20 is identified for near-term right-of-way preservation.

### Freight Rail

The RTC proposal would also alleviate freight congestion in the region, especially at Fort Worth's Tower 55, one of the busiest rail intersections in the country. Without substantial improvements, this at-grade rail intersection could reach total gridlock in seven years.

To address the shipment of rail freight, the TTC-35 consortium investments and concession fees should be utilized to construct both an east-west freight rail bypass to the south of the region and a north-south freight rail bypass to the west of the region. These bypasses would alleviate congestion at Tower 55 and relocate hazardous material shipments out of downtown Dallas and downtown Fort Worth. This proposal includes preserving freight rail access to existing businesses in the region.

**Continued on page 3**



## Regional Transportation Council

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## A Message from Michael Morris

Transportation Director

### A Regional Wardrobe Change

As we get older, we transition into big people's clothes. Our parents, our job, our friends, our customers nudge us away from sneakers with lights in them to steel-toed boots, a business suit or a uniform.

How do we nudge our transportation institutions to make a similar transition? As our region grows from 6 million to 9 million residents over the next 25 years, our transportation institutions need to consider a new approach in dealing with that growth and the demands it will bring. Too often we hold on to our old, comfortable clothes, when instead we need to take a new approach to the way we do business. Let me talk about

a few of the ways our region can "update its wardrobe."



#### Regional Transit

By 2030, more people will live outside our transit service areas than within. How do we adjust our transit delivery system to account for this? How will we meet the needs of three million more residents? The Texas Legislature recently

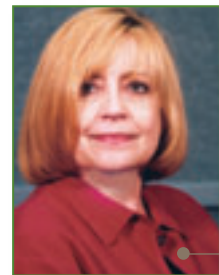
passed two initiatives to address this problem. First, they called for a regional summit of North Central Texas Legislators, local elected officials and transportation authorities to address the funding and delivery system methods for regional rail. They also required regional transit operating plans be developed throughout the state to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of current delivery systems from hundreds of isconnected providers.

#### Funding Roadway and Toll Road Facilities

We need to remember most of the funding for transportation comes from our own region, not Austin or Washington, D.C. The State of Texas, like all states, is in a financial crisis to add capacity and reconstruct an aging roadway infrastructure. We are \$55 billion short in our region alone. Our state legislature has developed new options for regions to pursue user-paid toll facilities. Since

1993, the Regional Transportation Council has proposed toll funding for new road projects that have been delayed, in some cases, more than 20 years. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in cooperation with local governments, the North Texas Tollway Authority, and the North Central Texas Council of Governments' (NCTCOG) Regional Transportation Council and Executive Board, is developing new business relations to maintain strong customer service, developing strong accounting systems, leveraging scarce dollars, maximizing project delivery, and ensuring revenue stays in our region to construct needed facilities over time. Is it time for the NCTCOG to become a 16-county Regional Mobility Authority and establish local control on a project-by-project basis? This could ensure regional efficiency with control by local elected officials.

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## Regional Transportation Council

### RTC member Marti VanRavenswaay's roots are in the community

#### Member Profile

Marti VanRavenswaay, Tarrant County Commissioner

RTC member Marti VanRavenswaay's roots are in the community she represents. From local PTA, Arlington City Council (where she first served on the RTC from 1985 – 1989) and now Tarrant County Commissioners' Court, VanRavenswaay has a long history of serving Southern Tarrant County.

"I attended my first public community meeting in 1978", she says. "A comprehensive study had been done to identify the top four priorities for the City of Arlington – all I actually remember is the dire predictions regarding transportation if Arlington didn't become more aggressive and plan for the predicted phenomenal growth, which at that time anticipated Arlington could reach 400,000 at build-out."

VanRavenswaay has seen tremendous growth in the area she represents. Arlington is home to Six Flags, Hurricane Harbor, Texas Rangers, a convention center, The University of Texas at Arlington, and a host of smaller people magnets – translation – lots of

automobile traffic with a higher concentration in the summer months, she says. Now, add to that mix the Dallas Cowboys.

And just as Arlington is reaching the height of its maturity, VanRavenswaay says the needs for new and rebuilt facilities must be addressed at the same time as the entertainment circulation needs. The impact on the two interstates, three state highways as well as the arterials will be very significant, she says.

"Arlington has always been behind the growth curve and frequently found the roadway construction decisions made just a few years earlier proved to be inadequate to meet surging population," she says. "However, retrofitting to meet growth needs can't be the highest priority when incoming population needs must also be met," she added.

Beyond the needs of Southern Tarrant County, regional coordination is another important issue VanRavenswaay addresses

in her role on the RTC. Over the past few years, the RTC has been directly responsible for developing, articulating, and promoting the new partnership working arrangement with TxDOT that translates to many millions of additional leveraged dollars being made available for desperately needed transportation projects, statewide, she says.

For the next few years, VanRavenswaay says she sees the RTC enhancing that partnership by providing global oversight to the identified projects to ensure projects that are planned actually happen.

"I see the RTC constantly monitoring our regional projects so that we utilize the monies given us; if, for whatever reason a project doesn't move, we have back-up projects waiting," she added. "I see the RTC remaining the neutral stalwart," she says, "always working with cities and counties to develop compromise transportation solutions to regional problems."

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## Passenger Rail

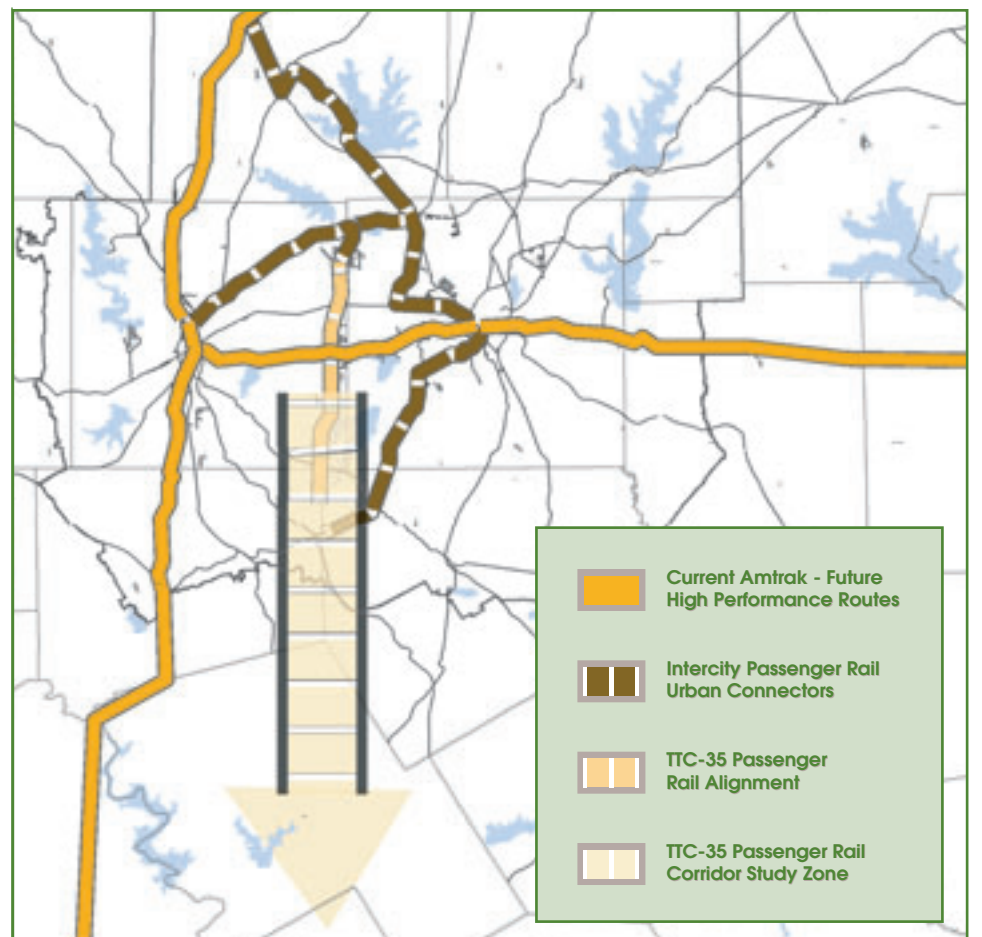
Finally, the high-speed rail portion of the TTC-35 should access the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport from the south as recommended by the recent Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Rail Access Study, and should also connect to the regional light and commuter rail systems to facilitate movement to other destinations in the region.

Once the region reaches concurrency between TxDOT and the RTC for TTC-35 routes within the Metropolitan Planning Area, the final element of the Regional Policy Position calls for the TTC-35 proposal to be placed in the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

TxDOT intends for the Trans-Texas Corridor to be completed in phases over the next 50 years with routes prioritized according to Texas' transportation needs. The RTC emphasizes that

phasing should focus on near-term urban projects that provide near-term congestion relief. TxDOT will oversee planning, construction and ongoing maintenance, although private vendors will be responsible for much of the daily operations.

While final location of the Trans-Texas Corridor will not be determined until an environmental impact study is completed, TxDOT is holding public meetings throughout the state to gather input on the proposed alignments. The RTC expects a continuing dialogue with the state on project phasing and alignments. All major roadway construction projects within the regional Metropolitan Planning Area must be approved by the Regional Transportation Council and the Texas Transportation Commission.



More information about the Trans-Texas Corridor can be found at [www.keeptexasmoving.org](http://www.keeptexasmoving.org) and [www.nctcog.org/trans/goods\\_movement/ttc.html](http://www.nctcog.org/trans/goods_movement/ttc.html)

## Regional Transportation Projects Receive Federal Clearance

On June 16, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued a determination of conformity that the region's transportation initiatives meet federal requirements under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. This process is formally called transportation conformity; a way to ensure that federal funding and approval go to transportation activities that are consistent with air quality goals.

This clearance from the USDOT allows transportation programs and projects in the region to continue moving forward toward implementation.

In April 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency designated Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, and Tarrant Counties as nonattainment for ozone under the new 8-hour air quality standards. This designation imposes the federal requirement of transportation conformity and affects how communities plan and construct transportation systems.

As the metropolitan planning organization for the North Central Texas region, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) develops and

implements transportation programs designed to improve mobility and reduce emissions from the transportation system. The region's long-term planning documents; the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, are both required to meet transportation conformity.

An assortment of RTC transportation initiatives receiving USDOT go-ahead includes continuation of one of the nation's leading sustainable development programs; new turn lanes and signal light timing improvements at

thousands of intersections regionwide; the continued development of the State's most aggressive toll and express lane programs; and expansion of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) system.

Overall, North Central Texas residents will have a broader, more efficient choice of mobility alternatives as the RTC's plans are implemented. This increase in transportation choices and efficiency will help combat roadway congestion for a region expecting to exceed 8 million people by the year 2030.

A Message from Michael Morris Continued

## Enhancing Air Carrier/Air Passenger Operations

Our region has three air carrier airports: Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas Love Field and Fort Worth Meacham International Airport. There is no current service at Meacham and there has not been for some time. As a result, Meacham is currently classified as a reliever airport. Each airport is operated by a different policy entity: Dallas/Fort Worth, Dallas and Fort Worth, respectively. From time to time, whispers are heard about a fourth airport being proposed, largely for local economic development reasons. There is no consolidated air carrier airport authority for North Central Texas. Would recent controversies be better handled under a new institutional structure? How does one policy body make investment decisions without knowing the

investment decisions of the other boards? Unfortunately, these questions will not be answered while current issues continue to split us apart.



## Air Quality Attainment

Our region does not comply with air quality ozone standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency. We implement air quality strategies on a national, state, regional and local level. Yet, we have multi-state, sub-state and regional voids in the air quality institutional structure, such as controls from Louisiana, power plant controls in Waco and large employers in the Metroplex not participating

in air quality programs. It will take an aggressive regional strategy balanced with a new multi-pronged approach to have any chance of meeting the federal air quality standard.

## Safety and Security

Traffic reporters and freeway managers use TxDOT freeway traffic cameras to increase the reliability of our transportation system by communicating delays and responding to incidents and accidents. However, those video images are not saved. A year ago, I challenged the public, press and interested lawyers to review this policy. These images could be saved for 24 hours and assist with Amber Alerts or homeland security incidents. Recent use of similar cameral systems during

the passenger train bombing in London compel me to again challenge the present policy position on saving video images.

Our transportation institutions will need to make the transition into big people's clothes if we are to sustain and enhance our quality of life and the lives of our residents. Don't our children and grandchildren, with lights in their sneakers, deserve as much?

After all...Mobility Matters.



## AirCheck Texas Program Celebrates 10,000<sup>th</sup> Application

A landmark North Texas program aimed at reducing air pollution caused by high-emitting vehicles recently celebrated a significant milestone; its 10,000<sup>th</sup> application. The AirCheck Texas Repair and Replacement Assistance Program offers financial assistance to vehicle owners whose vehicles fail the state-required vehicle emissions test. Since the program started in October 2002, more than 8,000 cars have been repaired and nearly 1,000 have been replaced.

The Program is designed to help vehicle owners comply with emissions standards to reduce ozone-forming pollutants created by on-road vehicles. It targets the highest polluting vehicles and provides an incentive for citizens to assist with the regional air quality solution. The North Texas AirCheck Texas Program was a first of its kind in the county, and has now expanded to the Houston and Austin areas.

All Texas registered vehicles are required to receive an annual inspection that includes a comprehensive safety inspection. Vehicles registered in designated counties must also pass an emissions test that checks for excess levels of hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO) and nitrous oxides (NOx). Vehicles that operate more than 60 days a year within a county that requires emissions testing also fall under the requirement.

"Vehicles repaired through the AirCheck Texas Program are shown to have a 70 percent reduction in NOx emissions, one of the leading causes of ozone," says Shannon Stevenson, air quality operations manager for the AirCheck Texas Program. "This is especially important because North Texas is classified as nonattainment for ozone by the Environmental Protection Agency," she added.

Vehicle owners immediately receive information about the program if their vehicle fails the

emissions test. The simple application process can be completed within one day, and many people who do not usually receive financial assistance discover that they qualify for the AirCheck Texas Program. Eligible participants may receive a voucher worth up to \$600 for emissions repairs, or \$1000 towards the cost of a replacement vehicle that meets emissions standards if they retire their old vehicle.

Locally, the program is implemented through Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall and Tarrant counties.

The program expects to surpass another milestone later this year: its 10,000<sup>th</sup> repair.

For more information about AirCheck Texas, go to [www.dfwcleanair.com/trans/aircheck.html](http://www.dfwcleanair.com/trans/aircheck.html)

## Two Major Planning Documents Completed

### Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the blueprint for our region's multimodal transportation system, has been updated. [Mobility 2025: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Amended April 2005](#) incorporates long-range planning efforts through major investment studies and those



projects needed in the short range, identified in the Transportation Improvement Program.

The MTP identifies policies, programs, and projects for continued development and guides expenditures of Federal and State funds. No transportation projects can be built in the region without being contained within the MTP.

Updates include Partnership Program #1 Projects, changes based on Comprehensive Development Agreements, Value Pricing Pilot Program Initiative,

Refinement of State Implementation Plan (SIP) commitments, Major Investment and Corridor Study changes, Regional Rail Corridor Study and Regional Transit Initiative, recommendations from environmental documents, and refinements of the Truck Lane Demonstration Projects.

The Regional Transportation Council approved the modifications made to the MTP, and to the 2006-2008 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

NCTCOG staff has been reviewing projects contained in the 2004-2006 TIP in order to develop the 2006-2008 TIP project listing. Numerous meetings were held with the implementing agencies in the Dallas-Fort Worth region to solicit current project status and anticipated letting dates for active projects. Staff used the information provided by each agency to allocate federal funding for all active projects to the appropriate years with some adjustments necessary for financial constraint purposes.

The Regional Transportation Council also endorsed transportation conformity results for the nine-county region of Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, and Tarrant Counties. In April 2004, these counties were designated nonattainment under the new 8-hour National

Ambient Air Quality Standard for the pollutant ozone. Transportation conformity is a federal requirement in nonattainment areas to conduct air quality analysis on projects, programs and policies identified in transportation plans, transportation improvement programs, federally funded projects or projects requiring federal approval. Upon designation of these nine-counties, a conformity determination was required by June 15, 2005, to prevent a conformity lapse. The 2005 Transportation Conformity emissions estimate for the region must be below the prescribed motor vehicle emission budgets (MVEB) outlined in the State's air quality plan. [\(see page 3\)](#)

### Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an outline of the regional transportation planning activities that will be conducted by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) and NCTCOG's Transportation Department during the course of Fiscal Years 2005-2007. The UPWP contains all of the major transportation activities carried out in the region, regardless of their funding source. This federally required document details the planning tasks and studies that will be conducted

over a two-year period and includes the objectives, previous accomplishments, methodology, product goals, time frame, budget, funding sources, and the responsible agency for each project.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is programming \$13,000,000 in transportation funds to carry out the planning activities contained in the 2005-2007. The UPWP also contains \$66,331,295 worth of implementation, funded projects, of which \$60,053,038 is being passed through to other agencies as part of the Work Program.

Fifty-two project requests were received from local governments and transportation agencies in reply to NCTCOG's request for project ideas, with 26 agencies submitting potential projects. Forty-nine of these were included in the document, and three were determined to be ineligible for UPWP funding.

The final UPWP document was approved at the July 14, 2005, RTC meeting.

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the opinions, findings, and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, or the Texas Department of Transportation. This document was prepared in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration. Mobility Matters is a newsletter on the transportation planning activities and air quality programs of the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Regional Transportation Council - together serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area since 1974.

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