

Fall 2002

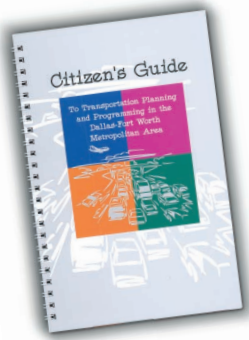
# mobility matters

Quarterly Newsletter of the North Central Texas Council of Governments' Regional Transportation Council, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area

## Transportation News for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area

## Welcome

Most of us have not gone "back to school" in quite a few years, but Fall still signals a mental shift away from the relaxed days of summer and back to the serious world of work. So to help your brain gear back up, this quarter's edition of Mobility Matters includes some number-crunching articles on the 2000 Census, history, geography, and technology. I hope these articles get you thinking about transportation issues.



As you are gathering up your "school supplies," you may want to request a new tool that is available for citizen planners. NCTCOG's "Citizen's Guide" is a handy, 20-page booklet that outlines how a transportation project goes from an idea to reality. You'll learn about North Central Texas' metropolitan planning area, how funding for transportation projects is determined and how to become involved in the process. The "Citizen's Guide" is available at no cost in English and Spanish by e-mailing your order to [transinfo@dfwinfo.com](mailto:transinfo@dfwinfo.com) or by contacting us at the telephone numbers and address included in this newsletter.

Nan Miller,  
Editor



## A Message from Michael Morris

Transportation Director

In the late 1960s, Interstate 30 was "the Turnpike" with toll plazas strategically located between Dallas and Fort Worth; airport traffic went in and out of Love Field and Great Southwest Airport; and bus transportation in Dallas and Fort Worth was dwindling as residents moved out to new communities along the Loop roadways. The name "DFW Metroplex" had yet to be coined because the 1.5 million people in North Texas lived in distinct cities.



Photo: John Roark, Michael Morris, and Gordon Shunk have served as the only Transportation Directors during NCTCOG's 35 years of transportation planning.

The situation today is very different. The Metroplex is a complex region of nearly 5 million people who are served by world-class airports, highways, and transit systems.

### Where did all those improvements come from?

More than thirty years of vision, perseverance, and innovation have allowed Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport to refine a region out of North Texas prairies. Continuing vision and innovation have resulted in the Fort Worth Transportation Authority and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) becoming nationally recognized transit providers. That same spirit

of innovation led to the design of the High Five interchange in North Dallas and the TransVISION traffic control center in Fort Worth.

Sometimes innovation is just recognizing a good idea that has been with us all along. Recently, planners have begun to look at the principles that guided the design of cities before World War II and are trying to incorporate those principles into today's communities. Many of the cities in the DFW area are planning for neighborhoods where we can walk or bicycle to school, shopping centers, or work. Under the label of "Sustainable Development" these principles enable us to better use transportation facilities that have excess capacity, lessen the amount of time we spend in our cars, and increase the amount of time we have to spend on life.

Sustainable development leverages the land use/transportation relationship to improve mobility, enhance air quality, support economic growth, and ensure the financial stability of the transportation system. By planning for options such as rail, automobiles, bicycling, transit, and walking, local governments are able to present a range of development opportunities to the private sector.

The region's metropolitan transportation plan recognizes four categories of sustainable development: Strategic Urban Development, Integrated Land Use Planning/Urban Design, Transit-Oriented Development, and Access Management.

Concrete examples of these principles are on the ground across the region. More than \$1 billion in private funds has been invested in transit-oriented development near DART's light-rail stations allowing patrons to walk or bike to the businesses located there. In Fort Worth, Lancaster Avenue is being redesigned as a boulevard, which will reinvigorate the southern end of downtown and reestablish a link to the residential, medical, and business neighborhoods further south. A new "signature" bridge will connect Downtown Dallas to West Dallas

Through the Council of Governments' Center of Development Excellence, these success stories are being shared with other cities. The Center is envisioned as a comprehensive effort to bring together public- and private-sector experts in the environmental, transportation, development, and information analysis fields to address the regional issues and infrastructure concerns of the future.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region has been recognized for these sustainable development initiatives. The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) selected NCTCOG as an award recipient through the "Smart Moves: Transportation Strategies for Smart Growth" program.

In summary, a lot of things have changed dramatically in the last 30 years because... Mobility Matters.

*NCTCOG's staff members recently completed an issue in the Regional Mobility Initiatives series that discusses the benefits of pedestrian transportation and how to plan and develop successful pedestrian areas. This publication is available by contacting our office.*

## 2000 Census Data Impacts Transportation Planning

It seems a little odd to be talking about the 2000 Census in 2002, but if you filled out the "long form" for the Census you can imagine that it would take a while to sort out that much data.

According to the Census, the DFW area continued to experience high levels of growth. Collin County experienced the greatest percent growth in Texas with an increase of 86 percent. As a result, the McKinney area was designated an "Urbanized Area" of greater than 50,000 population and, as such, is required to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization. The process is underway for NCTCOG to take on these responsibilities for the new urbanized area. Similarly, Denton County ranked seventh statewide in percentage increase and the former

urbanized areas of Denton and Lewisville were combined into a single urbanized area greater than 200,000 in population.

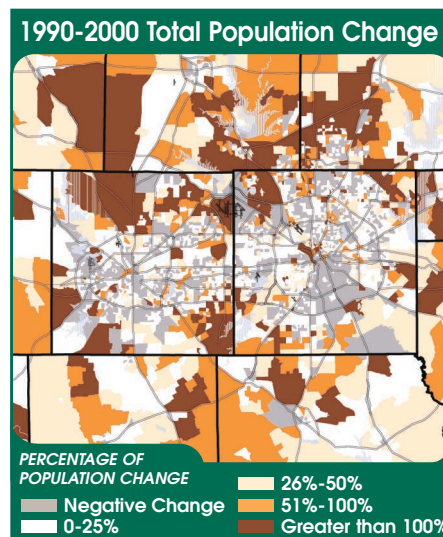
Recently, demographic information was released which includes statistics on the labor force, poverty levels, ethnicity and race, income, modes of transportation used on a regular basis, trip lengths, and commute times. Much of this information is used in projecting demand and planning transportation facilities and services.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization, NCTCOG is required to prepare a 25-year metropolitan transportation plan. According to Dan Lamers, Principal Transportation Planner responsible for the Mobility 2025 Update, "The new Census information helps us to better understand where citizens are traveling and what future travel patterns might be. The data will be incorporated into NCTCOG's computer model to estimate where areas of

congestion will be during the next 25 years and where improvements to the transportation system will need to be made."

The model is useful in many planning areas. In transit planning, the model can show "warrants" where commuter-rail and light-rail lines are feasible due to the demand from potential riders. By considering socioeconomic factors, the model can show where concentrations of elderly, low-income, or handicapped persons live in order to provide the specialized services they may need.

Understanding the magnitude of the growth that is coming can also help policy makers devise creative solutions to accommodate the 3 million people who are expected to move to the DFW area by 2025.



If you would like to do some census research of your own, visit [www.census.dfwinfo.com](http://www.census.dfwinfo.com). You can create reports and maps of data for your neighborhood and city and learn other valuable information.

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## Regional Transportation Council

### Member Profile

John Heiman, Jr. has represented citizens of Mesquite as a City Councilmember since 1991. He also has represented them on the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) for years, but John's interest in transportation began much earlier than that. John's father acquired a degree in Transportation in the 1940s and worked for the Santa Fe Railroad. During Dad's career, the "future" was airplanes and aviation. John Jr. always thought that how people and things got around was interesting. Once elected to public office, a colleague told him, "The future is in transportation. That's where things are happening."

As an RTC member, John likes to be where big things are happening. He is interested in big projects, big challenges, and their solutions. His favorite RTC program is the Partnership Program with the Texas Transportation Commission. The RTC is deliberating a partnership package that could leverage \$250 million into \$2.5 billion! These funds would be used to construct between 10 and 20 regionally-significant projects. John states the program enables cities to accomplish things they could never do alone. On a personal note, he is looking forward to being part of the solution to "The Funnel," a section of State Highway 114 north of Dallas/Fort



John Heiman, Jr.  
Councilmember, City of Mesquite

Worth International Airport where it flows into State Highway 121. Portions of State Highway 360 and Interstate Highway 635 need improvements as well.

John is proud of the way Mesquite was able to move up the construction of their portion of the LBJ Freeway. The parties involved agreed on various issues early and continued to overcome hurdles to stay on track. John says his role was to make sure everyone "shared their toys and shared the credit." It comes as no surprise that he chairs the RTC's Transportation Project Mediation Subcommittee.

For John, one particular project is especially memorable. Up until 1999, at least a half dozen people perished on Highway 80 in Mesquite. The RTC recognized and responded to the safety need that was there, and John was especially impressed with the speed with which funding, planning and construction occurred. "I would never have dreamed I'd be in a position to help save lives and have fun at the same time."

## NEW Transportation Information Coming to the Web

The North Central Texas Council of Governments is conducting a study of the transportation needs of low-income persons, the elderly, and those with disabilities in the 16-county North Central Texas



region. In preparation for this study, NCTCOG staff has developed a database of urban, rural, and specialized transportation providers in the region. The database, known as the Transportation Provider Inventory, includes provider contact information, a description of

the area served, and detailed information on the service provided.

In the near future, individuals throughout the region will be able to access the Transportation Provider Inventory electronically via our website. Users will have the ability to search the database to access information to address their transportation needs. Additionally, local governments, workforce development professionals, and social and human services agencies will have the information readily available to assist their citizens and clients.

For more information on this program, please contact Michelle Bloomer at (817) 608-2329.



### Focus on our Partners

Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) International Airport, the North Central Texas Council of Governments and the Cities of Fort Worth and Dallas are looking at the make-up of taxi, shared-ride van, limousine and shuttle bus fleets

LEV Shuttles.  
Do U LEV Taxis?



and developing a plan to encourage ground transportation operators to use low-emitting vehicles. Currently, more than 35 percent of the taxis in service at DFW Airport meet the Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) standard as certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) standard goes even further in reducing emissions of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, which combine to create ozone.

The proposed policy will require ground transportation providers in the region to operate LEV-certified vehicles and, ultimately, ULEV-certified vehicles. The strategy is designed to help the DFW region meet the federal air quality standards by 2007. Since taxis and shared-ride vans drive 50,000 miles per year or more, their

Ground transportation providers were invited to comment on the proposed Clean Vehicle Plan and drive ULEV-certified vehicles recently.

use of low-emitting vehicles can make a measurable improvement in air quality.

The first round of public hearings was held recently on the proposed policy. In support of the hearings, Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities hosted a Clean Vehicle Demonstration and "Ride and

### Currently, more than 35% of the taxis in service at DFW Airport meet the Low Emission Vehicle standard

Drive" event. Vehicles of interest to taxi, shuttle bus and shared-ride van operators were highlighted, in addition to an assortment of light-duty vehicles. Attendees could see propane and natural gas buses, natural gas vans, and full-size and mid-size natural gas sedans. Propane and natural gas pickups and hybrid-electric sedans were also included in the vehicles available for test drives.

The Regional Airport Ground Transportation Clean Vehicle Transition Policy will undergo an additional period of refinement and public hearings prior to its scheduled adoption next spring.

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### What is NCTCOG?

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of local governments within the 16-county North Central Texas region. The agency was established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit, and coordinating for sound regional development. North Central Texas is a 16-county region with a population of 5.6 million and an area of approximately 12,800 square miles. NCTCOG has 231 member governments, including all 16 counties, 164 cities, 23 independent school districts, and 28 special districts.

Since 1974, NCTCOG has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area. The Regional Transportation Council is the policy body for the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Regional Transportation Council consists of 39 members, predominantly local elected officials, overseeing the regional transportation planning process. NCTCOG's Department of Transportation is responsible for support and staff assistance to the Regional Transportation Council and its technical committees, which comprise the MPO policy-making structure.

**We would like your comments. . .**  
If you have questions or comments regarding the transportation and air quality programs of NCTCOG and the RTC or need additional information, please contact the NCTCOG Transportation Department at (817) 695-9240, by fax at (817) 640-3028, via e-mail: [transinfo@nctcog.dst.tx.us](mailto:transinfo@nctcog.dst.tx.us), or visit our website at [www.nctcog.dst.tx.us](http://www.nctcog.dst.tx.us).

*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, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.*

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