Aviation

Mobility 2035 Supported Goal
Improve the availability of transportation options for people and goods.

The Importance of Regional Aviation Planning
As the nation’s largest inland port and the fourth largest metropolitan area, North Central Texas relies heavily on aviation facilities to sustain growth and economic prosperity. Through connectivity to global markets, the region’s aviation facilities provide economic development opportunities, the ability to engage in business activities related to aviation and movement of cargo, and leisure and tourism opportunities throughout the world. As such, our airports serve as a non-conventional inland port system, providing global access, thus enhancing the regional economy. Improving and maintaining surface access and land use compatibility is crucial to preserving the regional system of aviation facilities.

Due to the over $4 billion of estimated economic impact of aviation, the Regional Transportation Council has the planning goal that landside access not be a limiting factor for growth at the region’s airports. Ideally these airports should be able to grow to their airside limit without delays due to roadway congestion. This includes intermodal connectors as defined by the National Highway System which provide access for intermodal shipments to airports.

Mobility 2035 Policies and Programs
Policies are an important element in the planning for and implementation of programs and projects. Mobility 2035 supports the following policies associated with aviation:

AV3-001: Improve efficiency, safety, air quality, and access related to aviation.

Aviation at a Glance:
The goal of regional aviation planning in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is to promote, maximize, protect, and advance regional aviation infrastructure to accommodate future growth in North Central Texas.

NCTCOG Aviation Initiative Goals
1. Update general aviation and heliport regional plans.
2. Maintain the Air Transportation Technical Advisory Committee.
3. Develop new policies, partnerships, plans, and programs for aviation.
4. Examine the market and timing for:
   ▪ Additional air carrier aviation facilities
   ▪ Additional air cargo facilities
   ▪ New intercity high-speed rail access to aviation
   ▪ Improving reliever, general aviation, and heliport assets
5. Determine needs related to:
   ▪ Long-term airspace demands
   ▪ Maintaining international competitiveness
   ▪ Surface access to and land use around airports/heliports
   ▪ Improving air quality

Air Transportation Technical Advisory Committee
The Air Transportation Technical Advisory Committee is comprised of airport managers, city managers, aviation industry representatives, and aviation experts from throughout the region. This committee provides a regional forum for discussion of aviation needs related to general aviation and heliports. During the Regional General Aviation and Heliport System Plan process, the Air Transportation Technical Advisory Committee serves as the Project Review Committee and performs technical review functions on behalf of the North Central Texas Council of Governments’ Executive Board and Regional Transportation Council on an as-needed basis.

Regional aviation planning at the North Central Texas Council of Governments will NOT address the following: selection of projects for entitlement funding/block grants/Airport Improvement Program funding, airport closures, interference with activities of private commercial pilots, or the performance of air carrier system planning.
**AVIATION TERMS TO KNOW**

**AIRSIDE:** The part of an airport directly involved in the arrival and departure of aircraft.

**LANDSIDE:** The part of an airport farthest from the aircraft, the boundary of which is the security check, customs, passport control, etc. and involves passenger arrival via ground transportation.

**AV3-002:** Provide input to the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems and the Texas Airport System Plan.

**AV3-003:** Encourage compatible land-use planning surrounding airports in the region.

**AV3-004:** Establish a comprehensive and integrated Aviation Education System in North Central Texas.

Mobility 2035 supports the following programs associated with aviation:

**AV2-005:** Aviation Surface Access Planning

**AV2-006:** Data Collection and Performance Tracking

**AV2-007:** Continuous System Planning

**AV2-009:** Encroachment Prevention and Compatible Land Use Planning

**Aviation Program Performance Measures**

Performance measures allow progress to be tracked and help identify areas for future improvement. In order to improve regional aviation planning, the following items are suggested for future evaluation:

- Increase compatible land use surrounding airports.
- Add additional airside and landside capacity at regional airports to meet future demand.
- Reduce airport and airspace congestion.
- Maintain acceptable level of service for airport ground transportation accessibility.

**Aviation Planning in Context**

There are various levels of planning needed in order to meet the demands on our airport systems. The following explains system planning efforts at all levels of government and the role they play in maintaining our airports.

- At the federal level, the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) provides an overview of national aviation capacity needs and funding requirements. The NPIAS identifies more than 3,300 airports that are of national significance and thus are eligible for federal funding under the Airport Improvement Program. Twenty-nine of these facilities are located in the 16-county region of North Central Texas.

In addition, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Dallas-Fort Worth region, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is responsible for providing surface access and air quality improvement services to aviation facilities, processing data summary requests related to the Airport Improvement Program and Environmental Protection Agency programs, and monitoring capacity and use at the region’s major airports to include air cargo and Foreign Trade Zone activity.

**Aviation Facilities in North Central Texas**

The 16-county region of North Central Texas is home to a variety of public and private aviation facilities including the following:

- 2 primary commercial service airports
- 11 reliever airports
- 14 general aviation airports
- 1 existing military training airfield
- Over 200 private use facilities
- Over 100 heliports

These facilities are shown on the map in Exhibit 6.1.

Data Collection and Performance Tracking

One of NCTCOG’s roles is that of monitoring aviation trends at the region’s commercial and cargo airports. These trends depict the level of activity in the region and highlight the importance of aviation as North Central Texas’ connection to national and global markets. The data shown in the following two graphs (Exhibits 6.2 and 6.3) illustrates recent trends in passenger volumes and cargo volumes at the region’s major aviation facilities. These trends generally show a decline associated with the events of September 11, 2001 and the recent economic recession of 2008. However, recent growth indicates that the industry may be showing signs of recovery, prompting the need to keep a close eye on future demands. NCTCOG staff will continue to monitor this data on an ongoing basis and assess associated impacts on infrastructure needs at the regional level.

Surface Access to Aviation

The efficiency of air passenger and cargo mobility is affected by capacity at airports and on the surrounding highway system. Congestion in the air or on the ground can significantly impact air cargo operations and efficiency. How well the surface transportation network connects with the region’s air passenger and cargo facilities is vital to the needs of both national and international trade. The map in Exhibit 6.4 displays the travel times to/from Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Similar maps for Dallas Love Field and Fort Worth Alliance Airport are located in Appendix E. This analysis was performed based on an average peak-period traffic scenario as represented by the travel demand models under year 2035 conditions, taking into account current plan recommendations.

Fulfilling the role of the MPO, NCTCOG performs this analysis of surface access to regional aviation facilities. Future iterations of this plan will include an inventory of specific improvements on the roadways surrounding the region’s aviation facilities. These inventories will be created to assist decision makers in prioritizing and funding these important connectors.
Continuous System Planning

In addition to traditional MPO roles described above, NCTCOG has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration to finalize a multi-year effort to produce a Regional General Aviation and Heliport System Plan for the 16-county NCTCOG region and surrounding areas. This effort will include a thorough update to the regional inventory, development of an aviation data management system, and analysis of current and forecast system demand. It is also anticipated that this study will include an exploration of market demand, system deficiencies, needed improvements, and economic impacts of the regional general aviation and heliport system. This work will entail increased coordination with federal and state level planning agencies to ensure that regional priorities are being considered in planning and funding decisions at those levels.

In addition, the most recent North Central Texas aviation system plans were performed prior to the construction of Fort Worth Alliance Airport and the closure of Naval Air Station Dallas, implying further impacts on the region’s aviation system which need to be incorporated into regional planning documents.

Increases in passenger and air cargo activity, as well as the advent of business jets as viable travel options, raise the question of regional airspace constraints and highlight the need to capture an accurate picture of the region’s aviation system so that growth constraints and industry trends are fully understood, both landside and airside. In particular, the impacts of new technologies on the aviation system have yet to be studied and understood on a regional level.

Findings will be defined and recommendations will be formulated on how to improve the aviation system in North Central Texas. Strategic coordination with city officials, the public, and aviation stakeholders can then occur to ensure that recommendations are implemented and the regional aviation system continues to be enhanced. This work will be accomplished under the Regional General Aviation and Heliport System Plan effort previously described.
As urban development pressures continue to increase, land use compatibility will continue to be of critical importance to the region’s aviation facilities. Because of noise associated with airfields, some land uses are not compatible in close proximity to aviation facilities. These land uses include housing, schools, offices, and other public gathering places. Noise disrupts the quality of life for airport neighbors, and safety is also a concern – particularly in close proximity to the ends of the runways. When noise and safety concerns are voiced by airport neighbors, the results can sometimes include restrictions on flight schedules, costly modifications by airports, and in extreme cases, political pressure to close airports.

Due to the high level of public investment in aviation facilities, it is the goal of regional government to promote compatible land use planning and land development controls which will assist in the long-term preservation of the region’s aviation system. This effort will be of particular interest as the region continues to experience rapid population growth.

### Regional Military Compatible Land Use Planning

In 2006, the Naval Air Station Fort Worth, Joint Reserve Base (NAS Fort Worth, JRB), surrounding communities, and NCTCOG initiated the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) to identify actions to ensure the long-term viability of the base. NAS Fort Worth, JRB Regional Coordination Committee (RCC) is an initiative by the cities of Benbrook, Fort Worth, Lake Worth, River Oaks, Westworth Village, and White Settlement, in conjunction with Tarrant County, to implement the recommendations of the JLUS. The RCC is a collaborative effort to develop, implement, and monitor programs and projects to ensure that future development in the region around the installation is compatible with current and future operations of the base. The RCC enables enhanced communication and cooperation among the participants and constant monitoring of proposed development in the area. The committee reviews current development, as well as future land use plans, for compatibility with the installation’s mission. RCC participants work together to identify and solve issues shared among the communities surrounding the installation including transportation topics such as transit, safety, and infrastructure improvements; emergency preparedness; storm water management; and community education. The goal of the committee is to encourage compatible development that may improve opportunities to expand operations at NAS Fort Worth, JRB in the next Base Realignment and Closure process.

### Integrated Aviation Education System

Despite its preeminence in the aviation industry and the demonstrated need to train additional aviation professionals, the region lacks a public university with a comprehensive four-year college program for students who would like to pursue an aviation career. This was first documented by a Texas Transportation Institute report (2003) and later by NCTCOG’s New Technology and Industry Trends Report.
Planning to coordinate with regional industry and academic partners to form a complete and thorough aviation academic program in the region is being conducted. It will address the needs at the university, community college, trade school, high school, and junior high levels to create a strong regional aviation education system.

Summary
As regional aviation planning activities continue to grow at NCTCOG, there will be a need for new projects, programs, and policies to support these efforts. These projects, programs, and policies will allow NCTCOG’s Executive Board and the Regional Transportation Council to continue to support important regional aviation goals throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

See Appendix E for a complete listing of policies, programs, projects, and maps related to aviation.