A Transportation System Response to Super Bowl XLV

Overview of Results in Providing Transportation Services for Super Bowl XLV and Beyond

Transportation Action Team: North Central Texas Council of Governments
November 2011


Background

The Transportation Plan developed for Super Bowl XLV had its roots in the region’s 2012 Olympic plans. University of North Texas Chancellor Lee Jackson, then Dallas County judge, and NCTCOG representatives Michael Morris and Vickie Alexander created the vision for that process. That vision was transformed and presented in a series of peer reviews to the National Football League (NFL), Gameday Management and local technical representatives from Super Bowls in Miami in 2007, Phoenix in 2008, Tampa Bay in 2009, and again in Miami in 2010. This plan benefited from feedback from those events as well as having the same representatives on the Super Bowl XLV Bid Committee, Super Bowl XLV Host Committee and the Transportation Action Team. This document records the importance of this synergy.

Purpose of this Documentation

The documentation serves four purposes. The first is to record the successful plan execution for Super Bowl XLV. Specifically, it was important to plan for contingencies (e.g., weather) and be prepared to execute strategically. The second purpose is to have this report available for any future Super Bowls to assist their implementation. The third is to record Super Bowl XLV events for when our region will apply again for future Super Bowls. And the fourth is to document for our families and show them the results of thousands of donated hours to make Super Bowl XLV a success. Professionally, working on the Super Bowl is a terrific opportunity to apply one’s craft on a national stage. It is also important to share these results with the community so they can understand the commitment made on their behalf.

Outline of the Report

This Executive Summary contains six sections. The first section, Context and Acknowledgements, reinforces the importance of a strong set of partners. The Transportation Action Team extended across technical disciplines and also included important policy support. The next section, Building on Our Strengths, highlights the elements of our existing transportation system and demonstrates how they could be focused for the success of the Super Bowl. The third section, Strategic Partnership and Communication, highlights the importance of dialogue with the NFL, the Host Committee, regional institutions, residents of the region, visitors to the region and the media. The Logistics section presents the major elements of the Super Bowl Plan and reinforces the need for contingencies and the ability to execute them. The Legacy section reinforces the elements of the Super Bowl Plan that will continue in our region and help us with regular transportation-related opportunities. The sixth section contains Lessons Learned.

As was stated dozens of times during the planning process, Super Bowl XLV was an excuse to do the things the region should be doing anyway. As you can see from this summary, we look forward to an opportunity to do it again.
Context and Acknowledgements

The following is an email sent by Michael Morris, Transportation Action Team Chairman, to Frank Supovitz, NFL VP, Super Bowl Planning on Saturday, February 5, 2011 following the second weather event during the week of Super Bowl XLV and the day before Super Bowl Sunday: “The weather this week has given us an opportunity to actually be in our own Super Bowl, our “Team” vs. Mother Nature. The “game” started earlier this week as scheduled with Mother Nature coming out very aggressively and our “Team” demonstrating a very tough defense. At half-time, Mother Nature came out with a different offensive scheme. Our “Team” made adjustments, brought in fresh players from TxDOT and again withstood the challenge. The “game” plan was working. With Mother Nature tiring, our “Team” is now going on the offensive with other transit related elements of our “game” plan. We are approaching the very important fourth quarter, with a great appreciation that Mother Nature is not yet finished. We know that she cannot be fully controlled, only mitigated. As we all know, when you play in the Super Bowl, you play all out and to the final horn because you never know if it will be your last. We know it is not time to be complacent. Mother Nature, thank you, for making this our Super Bowl as well.”

It is at this point that the Transportation Team realized that the four years of plan development was worth every minute. This section highlights key members of the Transportation Action Team. This group successfully executed a comprehensive transportation plan.

The “players” on the Transportation Action Team approached 150 professionals. There are also a lot of individuals to acknowledge who were very helpful in implementing our portion of the Host Committee’s responsibilities. Summarized below are those key individuals.

Acknowledgements:

Frank Supovitz, NFL VP, Super Bowl Planning
Roger Staubach, Chairman, Host Committee
Bill Lively, President & CEO, Host Committee
Tara Green, Vice President, Host Committee
Glenn Menard, Operations, Host Committee
Lesli Little, Operations, Host Committee
Mike Witte, NFL Gameday Management
Cristine Paull, NFL Gameday Management
Ben Nix, NFL Security
Craig Taylor, Arlington Police Department
Jud Heflin, Dallas Cowboys
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Brian Wilson, Security Liaison

Natalie Bettger, Freeway Operations
Vickie Alexander, Logistics
Tom Shelton, Transit
Michael Mallonee, Aviation
Amanda Wilson, Media
Lori Clark, Transportation Bid
Jahnae Stout, Web site

The following information highlights the transportation plan components and documents the performance measures related to their implementation. Super Bowl XLV transportation planning was built on a foundation of key institutional partnerships symbolized by the installation of Super Bowl Highway signs on Tom Landry Highway. The event itself leaves a stronger foundation and legacy to more seamlessly implement transportation actions because of the experiences gained.

Building on Our Strengths

The Dallas-Fort Worth region has been successful in developing mature transportation systems. In hosting a Super Bowl, it is critical to emphasize the transportation elements within the region and associate them with critical market needs. For example, the air carrier and general aviation system is important in getting customers to and from the region. This is evident with DFW International Airport, Love Field and the numerous reliever general aviation airports. With a significant number of people traveling by commercial airlines, as well as by corporate jets, this asset is critical. In addition to a strong aviation system, the region has a mature roadway network.

This is critical in getting users to several hundred events held during the week. Getting around the region on a gridded freeway system increased reliability and minimized door-to-door travel time. Routes varied by time of day and day of week. The region has a strong analytical foundation as part of its regular planning process because of the policy support within the region for technical information. It was a natural opportunity to computer simulate hundreds of routing options months before Super Bowl XLV to help optimize the roadway system. NFL Gameday Management then optimized these routes further.
Strategic Partnership and Communication

Support from across the transportation community included the Denton County Transportation Authority, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, North Texas Tollway Authority and the Texas Department of Transportation. Joining in the efforts were our aviation partners, utility companies, the various local governments within North Texas and our private-sector partners.

Information on routes to Cowboys Stadium, NFL events, public transit routes, navigating traffic and vehicles for hire was made available through the North Texas Super Bowl Host Committee Web site (www.northtexassuperbowl.com). A copy of the site map of the website is attached to this report.

A “call ladder” was developed to expedite communication among senior personnel, public information officers and representatives from transportation management centers, cities, utility companies, police departments, transportation partners and the NFL. Even though it was anticipated that transportation partners would be communicating among themselves, the first critical use of the “call ladder” was to ONCOR energy. This communication involved electric-power and weather-related impacts to the light rail system.

In addition, several press conferences and press releases were used to communicate directly to both the media and the public. Media contacts in advance of anticipated bad weather was instrumental in communicating components of the weather related plan.

Passenger Rail System

The third transportation system that was heavily used was the existing passenger rail system. Light rail service was instrumental in serving the NFL Experience at the Dallas Convention Center, as well as visitors in downtown Dallas. The Trinity Railway Express, used to move people across the region between Dallas and Fort Worth, set record ridership levels on Super Bowl Saturday. The same corridor was used on Super Bowl Sunday to provide an additional option for ticket holders to experience the game. Because the Super Bowl Sunday transportation plan discouraged drop-offs around the stadium, the TRE’s Centreport/DFW Airport Station became a drop-off location with shuttle bus service to the game.
Press conferences were also instrumental in communicating last-minute reminders regarding the prohibition of drop-offs and golf carts, the importance of a reserved parking space and routing directions as well as transit accessibility to the game. Special weather-related press conferences helped convey a dual purpose, deicing/snow removal plan that focused on the general public and special events for each particular day. Accomplishing mobility for both commuters and visitors was communicated regularly to the local media outlets.

**Souvenir Transit Pass**

If there was one thing that exemplified the strategic partnership and communication with our customers, it was the creation of a three-day transit pass for Super Bowl weekend. This $30 fare was good on all transportation modes in the region, including Fort Worth shuttles, and was printed in a manner that created a collector’s item for users of our rail system. There were 3,845 transit passes distributed for Super Bowl weekend, with nearly 3,000 users on Super Bowl Sunday.

**Logistics**

An event of this magnitude requires the coordination of all elements in an integrated fashion. This section contains the major elements involved in the planning for the Super Bowl. Based on the more than 240 known events scheduled from January 27 through February 6, a series of maps showing these events were created and distributed to transportation partners and elected officials to help identify potential passenger loads and effects of the integrated transportation system.

Because of the size of the region, six zones were established to cover different sections of the area. Each day represented a different set of events. The map to the left represents all the events on Friday, February 4, 2011. Special coordination was necessary in downtown Dallas and Fair Park on Friday and Saturday and downtown Fort Worth on Saturday. Coordination of these activities as a system ensured that parking, rail capacity, dynamic message signs and signal timing were not controlled by one event but the collection of events occurring in the same vicinity. This approach was also used on the Trinity Railway Express on Super Bowl Sunday where the game and the NFL Experience were coordinated.
NFL Gameday Management initiated a parking reservation system, which included a routing plan to and from Super Bowl XLV. The key to the success of this program was for those individuals seeking parking at the venue to reserve parking in advance, therefore balancing the traffic flows on the thoroughfare system using the pre-assigned routes. In addition, the use of pre-assigned routes for those parking in entrepreneurial lots was encouraged. A key success of Super Bowl XLV was that 95 percent of the automobiles arriving at NFL-related parking lots used the reservation system. Regular communication led to greater compliance of the parking permit system.

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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buses</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Game Day Freeway Speeds to Cowboy Stadium**

Average roadway speeds to the Super Bowl exceeded 60 mph. For some hours of the day, roadway speeds were approaching 70 mph. One incident occurred on Southbound SH 360 in the early afternoon resulting in 30 mph speeds. Incident crews quickly responded resulting in a return to uncongested roadway speeds.
North Central Texas has strong ties to the aviation industry. Jeff Fegan and the Aviation Action Team had the responsibility of coordinating aviation needs to and from our region. The Transportation Action Team supported their efforts and marketed other aviation assets. Military bases, military and civilian aircraft manufacturers, home of American and Southwest Airlines, and the site of one of the world’s largest airports testify to this rich history. During Super Bowl Week, the Transportation Action Team held a number of events in order to highlight regional aviation assets.

Congresswoman Kay Granger participated in a press conference held during Super Bowl Week to talk about the highlights of the area's aviation resources. Following the event, local helicopter service operators conducted flyovers near Cowboys Stadium.

Flagship Detroit, one of the first among the DC-3 aircraft commissioned by American Airlines, also conducted a flyover event. American and Douglas Aircraft pioneered the development of the DC-3 into a commercially viable mode of transportation in the late 1930s.

In all, North Central Texas’ general aviation airports logged 1,194 aircraft arrivals to the region during Super Bowl Week. The marketing of our aviation assets will remain as an important element in the implementation of any future Super Bowl opportunities.

Traffic and Emergency Management Centers

Five cities in the region extended their hours of operation for transportation management centers (TMC) to cover events throughout the week. TxDOT and the North Texas Tollway Authority TMCs operated 24 hours a day during the ten-day Super Bowl period. Communication between the traffic control centers, the mobility assistance patrols, the wrecker services and the Super Bowl Sunday Transportation Control Center was instrumental in providing necessary reliability for events within the region.
The Snow and Ice Plan developed by the Transportation Action Team and led by TxDOT was executed to great success after storms and freezing temperatures hit North Central Texas during Super Bowl Week. Crews from Amarillo, Atlanta (Texas), Brownwood, Childress, Lubbock, Tyler and Waco, along with the Dallas-Fort Worth crews, maintained reliable capacity for NFL Media Day and for more than 240 events during the week.

TxDOT contributed 3.2 million pounds of granular magnesium chloride and 34,000 gallons of liquid magnesium chloride. These materials were used as the high-tech alternative to sand on the roads to combat icing. Plans were to minimize gravel and dust after the events, minimizing safety concerns for motorcycle escorts.

The plan had two contingencies, one for an ice event, which would use TxDOT assets from East Texas, equipment specializing in deicing conditions, and a second that involved assets from West Texas that specialized in snow removal. The week of Super Bowl XLV had both events. Early in the week, equipment and crews were brought in from East Texas to combat a major ice storm. This equipment led to a successful Media Day at the stadium and included teams being escorted by snow-removal equipment. Later in the week and approaching the weekend, there was a significant snow storm requiring TxDOT equipment from West Texas. Several press conferences were held to keep both the sports media and the public updated. The Transportation Action Team plan was to focus on both the public at large and the scheduled events for each particular day of the week. Detailed plans and routes were determined months ahead of actual scheduled events. In fact, and quite ironically, crews came in weeks ahead of time to pre-drive their scheduled routes and encountered inclement weather requiring them to actually provide deicing services for the region and not simply test-drive anticipated routes. TxDOT employees numbering 610 received special recognition at the Texas Transportation Commission meeting on February 23, 2011 to recognize the commitment, execution and success of the Super Bowl XLV Snow and Ice Plan.
One of the primary objectives of the National Football League in hosting a Super Bowl is to create a legacy. This is best evident with the establishment of the Youth Education Town (YET) Center in Arlington as a result of Super Bowl XLV. The Transportation Action Team also developed legacy elements to assist in future Super Bowls here or elsewhere.

The NFL Experience

Estimates for the NFL Experience were developed by NFL Gameday Management. This information was critical in planning transportation services. Light rail transportation was a major mode to this venue and these projections were very important. Observed data was collected by the NFL. The corresponding figure demonstrates how accurate the initial projections were by NFL Gameday Management. This information is part of our legacy to assist other Super Bowls in planning for their “NFL experience.”

The Importance of Rail

The Dallas-Fort Worth region has the most extensive light rail system in the United States, as well as a major workhorse in the Trinity Railway Express. These systems were instrumental in providing accessibility to the NFL Experience, to major events over the duration of the three-day transit pass to Fort Worth and Dallas over Super Bowl weekend. The Trinity Railway Express was also part of our legacy by providing accessibility for 3,000 people to and from Cowboys Stadium on Super Bowl Sunday. To minimize drop-offs at the stadium, over 600 people went to the CentrePort Station and took the feeder bus system to the game. More people used the rail system afterward as planned due to the anticipated shortage in taxicab service. As seen in the information below, the Trinity Railway Express set a Saturday record and required two additional late-night trains to accommodate large downtown crowds.
Regional Temporary Limousine License

| 1,990 Vehicles licensed | 2,011 Drivers licensed | 8.3% Vehicles failed inspection | 42% Vehicles inspected in the last week before the Super Bowl |

The Dallas-Fort Worth area established the first regional limousine permit in order to create seamless service throughout the more than 250 local governments within the region. About 2,000 vehicles and 2,000 drivers were licensed for activities during the ten-day Super Bowl period. This activity has become a major legacy component as the region is moving forward with permanent regional licenses for limousines, taxicabs and shuttle vans.

Management of the Regional Intelligent Transportation System Fiber Network

Utilizing the TxDOT fiber backbone, the region connected the cities of Arlington, Dallas, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie and Irving to the regional network to exchange transportation data and video during the Super Bowl activities. Not only did this enhance traffic management and emergency operations, but it left a shared regional resource for North Texas for the future. This transportation-related information system was instrumental in coordinating logistical maneuvers involving team moves, media events, special events, transportation reliability and emergency-personnel communication. The Super Bowl created the momentum to get these relationships, agreements and infrastructure in place. This information network is currently being used to coordinate regular commuter travel needs, as well as other special events in our region. Emergency Operations Centers have been established and linked to provide regular communication.

The Super Bowl created the opportunity to improve data-collection methods for the benefit of future Super Bowl events in the United States. A second legacy benefit involved the use of the passenger rail system in being an effective transportation tool and moving large numbers of people in a timely and efficient manner. Future rail investments in the region will be advanced knowing the benefits of this form of reliable transportation delivery. Institutional barriers that resulted in dozens of permits being required to perform “for hire” services will be streamlined in our region as a result of the benefits demonstrated during Super Bowl XLV. Taxi shortages can be overcome with integrated regional licensing. And last, a regional intelligent transportation system fiber network is in place to assist with both special and regular commuter transportation needs. The Super Bowl and the NFL’s goal associated with the importance of legacy outcomes certainly found its way in the plans associated with the Transportation Action Team.
Lessons Learned

A successful endeavor the size of a Super Bowl—especially in a region the size of North Central Texas—requires not only good planning and regional cooperation, but also a review of what could have gone even better had different steps been taken. Largely centering on a refinement of logistics, the Transportation Action Team learned lessons about the planning process. The success of the Transportation Action Team was the result of detailed planning and execution, especially related to the contingencies contained in the Snow and Ice Plan. The number one lesson for those who come behind us is you cannot execute what you did not plan for. Practicing what you plan leads to more effective execution.

The following ten items are areas where greater attention should be placed for the next Super Bowl planning effort here or in Indianapolis, New Orleans or New York:

1) TxDOT personnel were accommodated in TxDOT district maintenance buildings in order to provide snow and ice removal. Improved housing for contingency crews is necessary.

2) There always seems to be a shortage of taxicabs after major events; our Super Bowl was no different. While collocating the feeder bus to rail (and to DFW International Airport) with the taxi-stand was a benefit, additional taxicab capacity is still necessary.

3) On Super Bowl Sunday, volunteers and employees were instructed to arrive at Lone Star Park at a specific time in order to be checked in and bused to the stadium. The magnitude of employees and volunteers was so significant, it actually congested the ramps on Interstate 30 at Belt Line. Officials should consider phasing these arrivals to minimize disruption on the freeway system.

4) Some congestion was observed on the freeway system after the Super Bowl. Minimal disruption occurred before the game, with access-routing plans maximizing the use of the express managed lanes. Egress patterns after the game need to be reviewed in order to ensure the full use of the express lanes, leading to a better balance of freeway-lane and managed-lane usage.

5) With the growing success of the NFL Super Bowl and the extensive draw of ancillary activities, contingencies for larger pedestrian flows need to be developed.

6) Downtown parking will be a premium on Saturday and, potentially, Friday night. Advanced parking management is necessary in order to ensure scheduled events later in the day on Saturday, have adequate parking from what will be a high demand of visitors wishing to participate in downtown activities.

7) Media and press communication is critical to ensure that residents and guests have the latest information with regard to weather, the importance of no drop-offs at the game, the lack of public golf cart access near the stadium and the importance of obtaining an NFL parking permit/routing plan. Procedures need to be in place for the Host Committee and Action Teams to have streamlined approval of media messages in order to provide the correct balance of information to the public and guests.

8) Greater coordination is necessary between the roles and responsibilities of the Host Committee focused on NFL-supported venue functions and the activities being conducted within the region for non-sponsored events and functions. This is especially true on Friday and Saturday in downtown areas.

9) Although there was a high degree of coordination with routing patterns to the entrepreneurial parking lots, early coordination and regular communication cannot be overemphasized.

10) Web sites should be reviewed for their bandwidth capability to ensure all customers can access information. This is especially true during major weather events. Ways to purchase or rent additional bandwidth capacity should be considered for future major events.

This summary was prepared by NCTCOG staff members from the Transportation Action Team. These observations are reflections from these staff members only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NFL or the Super Bowl XLV Host Committee.