

II. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND VISION

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and its Regional Transportation Council (RTC), in partnership with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA) began work on a comprehensive Regional Rail Corridor Study (RRCS) in May 2003. The study focused on eight passenger rail corridors throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area, as defined in Mobility 2025 Update: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan and in the subsequent Mobility 2025: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2004 Update. The RRCS effort included a review, inventory, and assessment of the transit needs throughout the eight rail corridor areas. The overall goal was to provide sound data and recommendations to decision makers regarding the region's transit needs. Study results refined recommendations for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, guided decisions regarding regional rail staging and implementation, and outlined financial and institutional structures for consideration by regional policy makers.

The RRCS efforts were conducted in parallel with the Regional Transit Initiative (RTI) and included committees consisting of policy officials and representatives with technical expertise. The RRCS committees were charged with assessing the region's "transit needs" and inventorying the capital and operating costs for appropriate improvements in each passenger rail corridor. The RTI committees were charged with assessing the financial, institutional, and legislative processes required to move toward implementation of the transit recommendations. Therefore, the combined RRCS/RTI effort developed a

plan, method of funding, implementation organization and guidelines for draft legislation to accomplish the mission of seamless transit delivery throughout North Central Texas. Working in this “bottom up” environment, involving ten RRCS/RTI committees, accompanying staff, and transit authority support and public outreach, no one was left behind. The detailed evaluation of transit needs in the various rail corridors became the fundamental basis for the financial, institutional, and legislative discussions.

Congestion/Air Quality Relief

Over the next 30 years, the North Central Texas region will see an influx of nearly three million people, and all modes of transportation will need to be enhanced just to keep up with growth. Increases in population and job creation are expected to put additional strain on an already congested transportation system, create additional air quality concerns, and exacerbate an already anticipated lack of funding. Identifying the appropriate tools to improve mobility is critical as congestion continues to grow. Passenger rail offers an alternative that reduces emission by reducing the number of vehicles on the roadways.

Institutional Structures/Funding

Working with the existing three public transit authorities in the region and elected and appointed officials, it became clear that there is a need for an additional fourth transit authority to “fill the gap” of coverage. The committees of local officials agreed that wherever possible, the extension of the existing transit authorities is preferred. In geographic areas where that is not possible or desirable, the development of a regional passenger rail district is to be pursued. Initial steps towards further consideration of this

institutional structure took place in the Texas Legislative Session in 2005 as a result of the study.

Funding for the expansion of passenger rail services was evaluated in the study, and an increase in sales and use tax was the clear preference of the local elected and appointed officials. The recommendation is that the Texas Legislature provide permission to the local area for increasing the dedicated transit sales and use tax in the service area of the T by one-half percent, and allow consideration of a one-half percent tax in the new service area of a regional passenger rail district. The service area of DART would remain at the current one percent sales and use tax. Because of other priorities in the 2005 Texas Legislative session, the legislature created a study committee to further examine institutional and funding methods. Composition and duties of the special committee are described in Chapter VII.

SUMMARY OF CORRIDORS

The corridors selected for inclusion in the Regional Rail Corridor Study were identified in the Mobility 2025 Update: the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and all included existing freight railroad right-of-way. The eight corridors, shown in Exhibit II-1, were evaluated based on a variety of performance indicators, as outlined in subsequent sections of this report. Each has the potential to provide rail transit service in growing areas of the region.

The existing Trinity Railway Express (TRE) corridor was also discussed as part of the future network of regional rail service and is shown on the map. Suggestions for TRE use and improvements were provided by the TRE organization. The TRE corridor is

represented as E-1 and W-3 in Exhibit II-1, and is an operational commuter rail corridor with service between Dallas and Fort Worth. As work on the RRCS got underway, it became clear that TRE improvements would be addressed through the RTC Partnership Program, and therefore additional evaluation of the corridor in the RRCS effort was not warranted.

The remaining eight corridors were included in the full feasibility analysis conducted for the project. The eastern portion of the region included five corridors; E-2 DART/MKT Carrollton to Denton Corridor; E-3 DART Plano to McKinney; E-4 BNSF Carrollton to Frisco; E-5 BNSF Duncanville to Midlothian; and E-6 BNSF Dallas to Waxahachie. The western portion of the region had three corridors for evaluation; W-1 UP Fort Worth to Dallas, W-2 FW&W / Cotton Belt, and W-4 BNSF Fort Worth to Cleburne.

EXHIBIT II-1




REGIONAL RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY – RAIL CORRIDORS

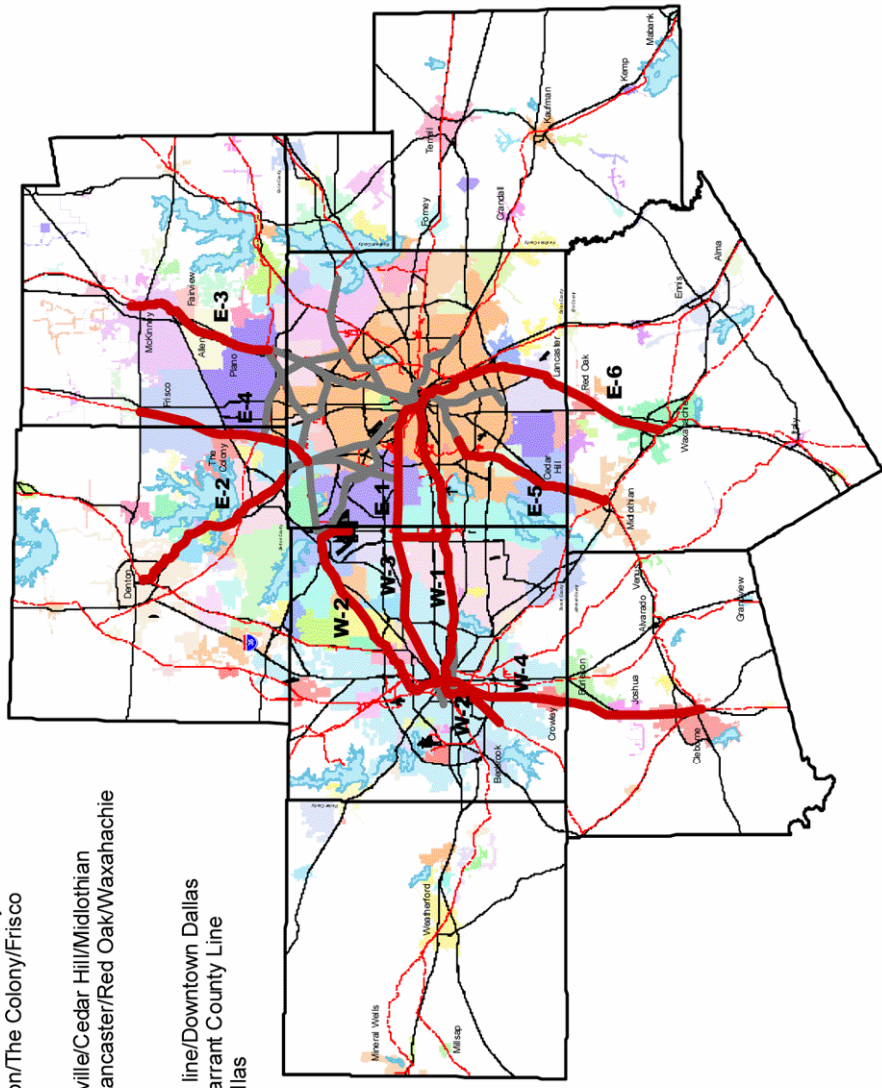
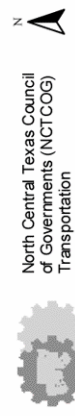
Regional Rail Corridor Study

Rail Corridors

- Northeast:
 - E-3: Dallas Area Rapid Transit: Plano/Allen/Fairview/McKinney
 - E-4: Burlington Northern Santa Fe: Carrollton/The Colony/Frisco
- Southeast:
 - E-5: Burlington Northern Santa Fe: Duncanville/Cedar Hill/Midlothian
 - E-6: Burlington Northern Santa Fe: Dallas/Lancaster/Red Oak/Waxahachie
- Central:
 - E-1: Trinity Railway Express: Dallas County line/Downtown Dallas
 - W-3: Trinity Railway Express: Fort Worth/Tarrant County Line
 - W-1: Union Pacific Mainline: Fort Worth/Dallas (includes Dorothy Spur)
- W-4: Burlington Northern Santa Fe: Fort Worth/Burleson/Joshua/Cleburne
- W-2: Fort Worth & Western/Cotton Belt: Southwest Fort Worth/Tarrant County Line
- E-2: Union Pacific: Carrollton/Denton

Legend

-  Rail Corridors Under Study
-  Existing Rail Corridors
-  Roadway
- E = East/URS Corporation
- W = West/Carter-Burgess, Inc.



NEXT STEPS

The information outlined in this report was presented at the Regional Transportation Summit in August 2004. Nearly 300 elected and appointed officials unanimously embraced a statement of principles for seamless public transit in North Central Texas, complete with a local proposed financing plan and governance structure. The Statement of Principles calls for additional funding mechanisms, perhaps through the formation of a Regional Passenger Rail District. The steps leading to implementation of regional rail service include further refinement of the details regarding a regional rail authority, gathering support for necessary state legislative change, and developing the organizational structure to plan and implement the new system.

Suggestions for Inclusion in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The recommendations resulting from the analysis of each of the RRCS corridors were included in Mobility 2025: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Amended April 2005. All of the rail corridors were part of previous Metropolitan Transportation Plans, but more specific details resulting from the RRCS analysis were included in the 2005 amendment and resulting conformity analysis. These details included mode/technology options, approximate station locations, operating characteristics, and feeder bus assumptions. These corridor details will act as placeholders in the Metropolitan Plan until any corridor is further evaluated for implementation as part of an Alternatives Analysis or similarly detailed effort.

Suggested Staged Implementation of Corridor Improvements

To assist regional decision makers with the staged implementation of improvements in each of the corridors, the detailed performance information described in subsequent

chapters of this report and the roadway capacity needs by the year 2025 were considered. The map shown in Exhibit II-2 depicts those corridors where capacity deficiencies for the year 2025 will not be satisfied with currently planned roadway capacity improvements. Also shown on this map are the Regional Rail Corridor Study corridors. Clearly, the corridors where there will be unmet transportation capacity needs are the best candidates for implementation of alternative modes of transportation.





A combined review of rail performance and future capacity needs prompted the recommended phasing of corridors. Exhibit II-3 shows near- and long-term recommendations for implementation. Although not tied to a specific timeframe, “near term” can be considered a two-ten year timeframe, and “long term” a ten-twenty year timeframe. This is presented to guide regional decision makers and transportation providers in the continued planning and eventual implementation of a region-wide rail system in North Central Texas.

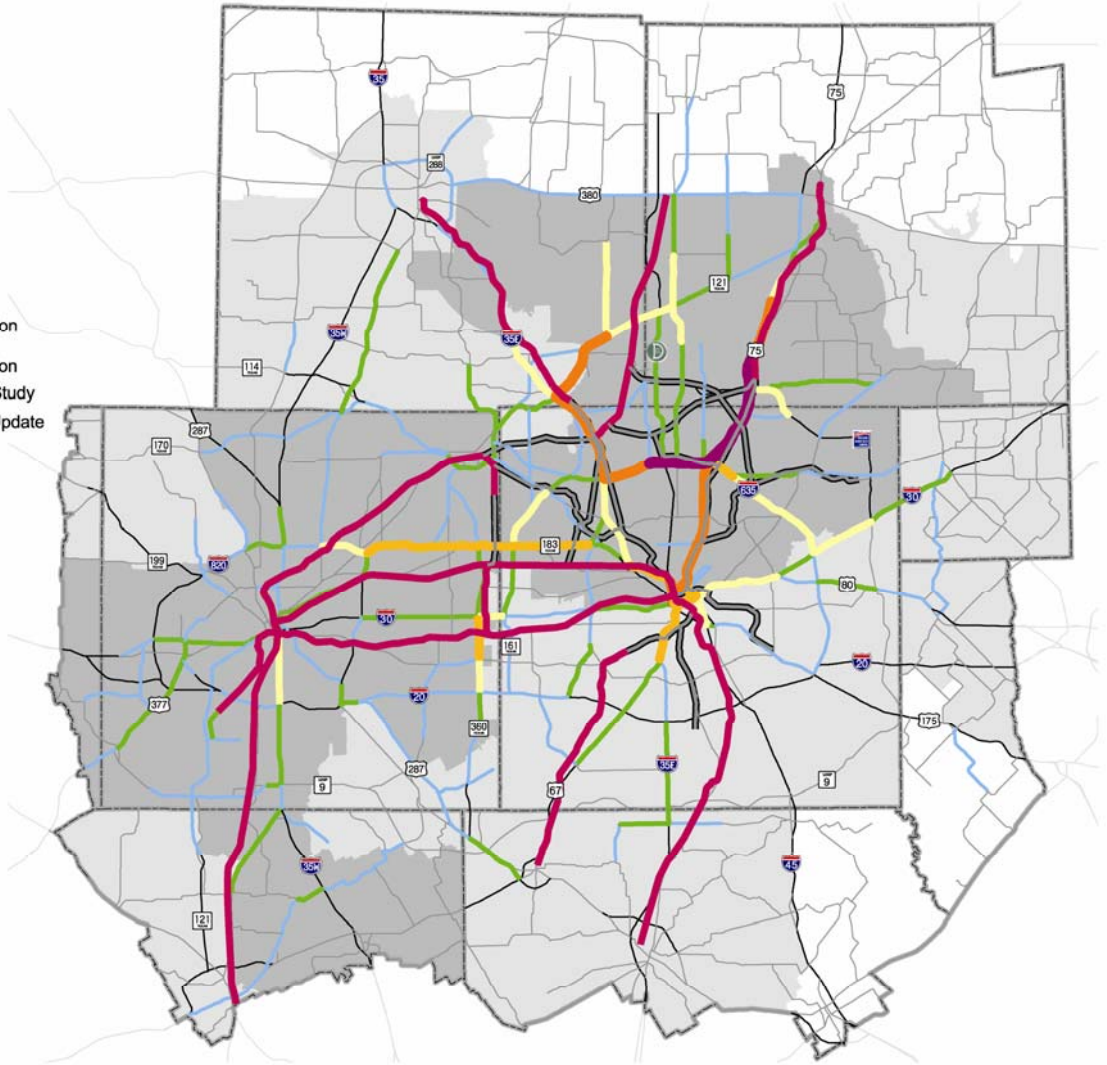
EXHIBIT II-2

**RANGE OF ROADWAY CAPACITY DEFICIENCIES MAP
TEXAS METROPOLITAN PLAN 2025 NEEDS**

Range of Capacity Deficiencies



-  Areas of Moderate Peak-Period Congestion
-  Areas of Severe Peak-Period Congestion
-  Rail Corridors Under Study
-  Mobility 2025 - 2004 Update Rail Network



Source: Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan – Breaking the Gridlock, NCTCOG, August 12, 2004

EXHIBIT II-3

DEMAND FOR RAIL SERVICE

Corridor	Near-Term	Long-Term
E-2 – Denton/Carrollton	Yes	Yes
E-3 – McKinney/Dallas	Yes	Yes
E-4 – Frisco/Carrollton	Yes	Yes
E-5 – Dallas/Midlothian	Yes, with phased service in Ellis County	Yes
E-6 – Dallas/Waxahachie	Yes, with phased service in Ellis County	Yes
W-1 – Fort Worth/Dallas	Yes	Yes
W-2 – Fort Worth to D/FW Airport	Yes	Yes
W-4 – Fort Worth/Cleburne	Yes, with phased service south of Sycamore School Road	Yes