

IV. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As the Regional Rail Corridor Study got underway, the joint staff for the project, comprised of NCTCOG Public Transportation personnel; staff representatives from DART, FWTA, and DCTA; and members of the consultant team, developed guiding principles for the project. These principles were presented to the Policy and Technical Committees at the outset of the project and used to guide the work effort throughout.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following goals served as guiding principles for developing and evaluating alternatives.

Enhance Mobility

- Enhance mobility by providing more travel choices. Reduce congestion by reducing dependence on the automobile for travel to and within major activity centers.
- Assist in the identification of technical issues or concerns associated with the range of corridors.
- Encourage a multi-modal transportation system, while considering the impact of various transportation modes on the environment and community.

Consider Appropriate Technologies

- Evaluate a wide range of technologies and strategic investments and travel modes to meet the identified mobility needs.

- Consider appropriate modal and alignment options for addressing mobility needs in the commuter and staged rail corridors, as identified in Mobility 2025 Update: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
- Recommend a Locally Preferred Investment Strategy (LPIS) with input from the public and locally involved entities, as well as rank corridors in improvement priority.

Public Participation

- Educate the public about transportation issues and impacts, and encourage public involvement in the decision-making process.
- Establish a collaborative effort among all entities to include a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring the study is conducted in a technically sound manner.

Consider Environmental Effects

- Capture the potential for mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhoods, (such as development potential, transit-supportive intensities, street connectivity and design, revitalization potential, infill and redevelopment opportunities, new growth areas, feeder bus, park-and-ride, etc.).

Achieve Regional Consensus

- Take a leading role in addressing regional transit issues.
- Coordinate the study's scope of work, purpose and need, description of alternatives, and technical methodologies, as to best keep the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) informed throughout the study process.
- Submit study recommendations to an implementing agency for pursuit of FTA discretionary Section 5309 "New Start" funding.

ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS

Enhance Mobility – The study brought the issue of mobility and travel choices to the forefront. This was done through the involvement of local governments in the Technical and Policy Committees, reports to the Regional Transportation Council, increased discussions among the existing regional transit agencies, and increased media coverage and advocacy. In addition, the study identified technical issues and concerns for each of the corridors examined. The evaluation criteria used in the project considered the impact of each corridor alternative on other transportation modes, the environment, and community.

Consider Appropriate Technologies – The RRCS effort evaluated the full range of technologies for the regional rail system and individual corridors. Technologies included: commuter or regional rail (both Federal Railroad Administration-compliant and non-compliant vehicles), light rail, heavy rail, bus rapid transit, and monorail. Comparative detailed information for each of those technologies was prepared. Heavy rail and monorail were judged to not be applicable to the alternatives based on cost, regional compatibility, or availability. Specific corridor alternatives were evaluated for regional rail, bus rapid transit, and light rail technologies where possible. Several corridors offered no opportunity for bus rapid transit.

Public Participation – The RRCS consulting team supported outreach efforts of the NCTCOG Transportation staff in regularly scheduled meetings of study technical and policy advisory groups organized around corridors. Some groups included more than one corridor, others were single-corridor groups. In addition to the advisory groups, each quarterly public involvement meeting conducted by the NCTCOG Transportation

Department during the study period included information on the Regional Rail Corridor Study. Three meetings were conducted each quarter, with locations rotating throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.

Consider Environmental Effects – The opportunity for consideration of sustainable development was also emphasized throughout the study effort, most often at meetings of the technical and policy advisory groups. Members of the NCTCOG Transportation Department staff were directly involved in preparing and presenting these materials that emphasized the possibilities for transit oriented development. Staff members also presented information on municipal regulations for zoning and development and other mechanisms to spur infill and redevelopment opportunities.

The study also included the possibilities for feeder bus and park-and-ride facilities in each corridor though some lack of acceptance to local feeder bus was encountered in some communities.

Achieve Regional Consensus – As directed in the study goals, an alignment and technology recommendation was made for each corridor. While recommendations for an implementation strategy were to be considered at the outset, the Regional Transit Initiative became prominent and, consequently, the became the forum where implementation strategies were considered. With the support of the Regional Transportation Council and a challenge by the editorial boards of the two major newspapers (the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Star-Telegram*) the institutional issues and financing of service received a great deal of attention. Special committees of elected and appointed officials and staff were formed to address these issues, with an

Institutional Committee, Financial Committee, and Legislative Committee chaired by local leaders. This effort was referred to as the Regional Transit Initiative (RTI). The three committees sometimes met jointly, and at other times deliberated individually. Committee research and technical support was provided by the RRCS study staff.

In addition to the two region-wide summit meetings occurring during the RRCS timeframe that brought together representatives of local governments (cities, counties, regional transit authorities) throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, there were also other meetings conducted with the area's legislative delegation.

Study recommendations were also discussed thoroughly with the existing three transit agencies (DART, FUTA, and DCTA) in multiple meetings that concentrated on institutional and implementation issues. One of the study corridors, serving the area from Carrollton to Denton, is now in the implementation stage by the newly formed DCTA. While rail service in that corridor was always the goal of the new agency, the technical information developed in the RRCS effort has been helpful in furthering the project's development. Additionally, the FUTA is using the information provided by the RRCS effort to evaluate in greater detail the possibilities of other passenger rail services both within its service areas and beyond.