INTRODUCTION

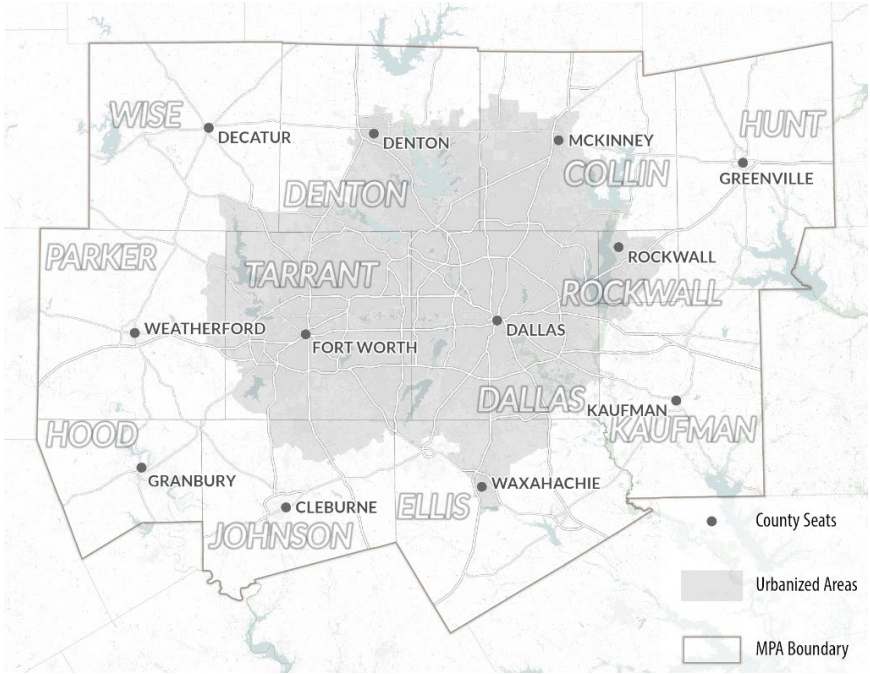
1. INTRODUCTION

Mobility 2050: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for North Central Texas is the defining vision for the multimodal transportation system in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Planning Area. The plan was adopted on June 12, 2025 by the Regional Transportation Council, which serves as the policy body for the North Central Texas Council of Governments. The Regional Transportation Council is a 45-member independent transportation policy body composed of elected and appointed officials from the metropolitan area, and transportation provider representatives. Mobility 2050 guides the implementation of multimodal transportation improvements, policies, and programs in the 12-county Metropolitan Planning Area through the year 2050. **Figure 1-1** illustrates the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Planning Area.

MOBILITY 2050: CONNECTING NORTH TEXAS

North Central Texas is a dynamic and rapidly growing region centered around the urban cores of Dallas and Fort Worth. The 12-county Metropolitan Planning Area, comprised of Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise counties, serves as the intersection of a diverse range of communities and land uses—from booming central business districts and suburbs to historic town centers, nature preserves, and ranchlands. As the region continues to grow, from approximately 8.6 million residents today to an estimated 12.3 million by 2050, the urgency to meet the demands of this growth and ensure all North Texans have access to vital resources, such as jobs, healthcare, healthy food, and education, becomes critical. This will require an efficient transportation system, including roads, rail, public transit, and active mobility facilities, along with local policies that drive infrastructure improvements.

Figure 1-1: 12-County Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Planning Area and County Seats



Mobility 2050 is a financially conservative and prudent blueprint for the region's long-term multimodal transportation needs. In an effort to support the region's continued growth, while improving the quality of life of its residents, Mobility 2050 details regional strategies to leverage modern technology and develop transportation solutions that connect residents to essential resources.

LEGISLATIVE BASIS FOR THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Metropolitan Planning Organization

To facilitate a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process, federal law requires states to establish Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for urban areas with more than 50,000 residents. Since 1974, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has served as the MPO for the Dallas-Fort Worth area, with the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) serving as its policy board.

NCTCOG's Executive Board sets policy for regional comprehensive planning and coordination within North Central Texas and serves as the MPO's fiscal agent. The RTC sets transportation policy for the MPO and guides the decision-making process. The RTC works with technical committees consisting of staff representatives from area governments and transportation agencies to review, critique, and prepare recommendations for transportation improvements.

Within NCTCOG, the Transportation Department provides support and staff assistance to the RTC and its technical committees.

Legislative Framework and Evolving Transportation Priorities

Since the 1970s, MPOs have been responsible for developing and maintaining a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The role of the MTP was significantly strengthened with the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which emphasized a regional, multimodal approach to transportation planning. Subsequent legislation built on this foundation, refining priorities and expanding investment strategies.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century in 1998 and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users in 2005 continued ISTEA's principles while increasing funding for surface transportation. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act in 2012 introduced performance-based planning requirements, focusing on safety, congestion, and system efficiency. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015 reinforced these goals and incorporated new priorities such as system resiliency, stormwater mitigation, and the integration of intermodal facilities.

Most recently, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, significantly increased federal transportation funding. IIJA introduced new programs targeting carbon emissions reduction, system resilience, community reconnection, and the expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure.

KEY THEMES SHAPING MOBILITY 2050

Mobility 2050 responds to transportation legislation and emerging transportation needs through data-driven planning, regional collaboration, and public input. Key policy priorities identified by the RTC, local governments, and transportation providers shape the plan's direction. Public feedback, demographic forecasting, and travel demand modeling ensure the plan anticipates future growth and mobility trends, addressing challenges while positioning the region for a sustainable, efficient transportation future.

A Growing Region: Demographic Shifts and Expansion

For many years, the North Central Texas region has sustained a robust economy and an affordable cost of living. These factors, among others, combined with the absence of a state income tax, make the Dallas-Fort Worth area a desirable place to live. The North Central Texas region has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years and is projected to expand by 43 percent from 2026 to 2050.[1] More information on population growth can be found in the **Regional Population and Employment** section in the **Social Considerations** chapter. Growth of this rate poses complex challenges on infrastructure systems such as housing and transportation. Mobility 2050 faces the critical challenge of maintaining the existing transportation system while developing strategies to meet the demand of this growth.

Strengthening the Economy Through Mobility

The North Central Texas region is a major economic, social, and political hub of both Texas and the United States. The region represents 30 percent of Texas' gross domestic product and is the eighth largest export market in the US. North Central Texas also supports the most diverse economy in Texas and is home to 23 Fortune 500 companies.[2] Between 2026 and 2050, the region is expected to experience a 45 percent increase in employment.[3] The transportation system is central to this growth because it allows for the efficient movement of people and goods. Without adequate transportation infrastructure to ensure a high level of mobility, the region will face challenges in sustaining economic growth. This is an important reality for the region and should be a priority for the state.

To sustain and improve regional economic growth, NCTCOG developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the North Texas region. The CEDS process is a national program sponsored by the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. CEDS is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. With the North Texas transportation system providing the foundation for the region's economy, many components of the Mobility 2050 goals and policies are also mirrored in the goals and objectives of the CEDS.

The subject of economic development can be found throughout Mobility 2050, underscoring the importance of the relationship between the region's transportation system and its economy. To support economic growth and development, as well as provide/enhance connectivity between communities, it is essential for the region to both upgrade and maintain its transportation infrastructure, including its multimodal facilities.

Challenges of Suburban Growth

The rapid suburban expansion in the Dallas-Fort Worth region presents significant challenges and opportunities for long-range transportation planning. From 2026 to 2050, 74 percent of population growth is projected to be outside core urban counties.[4] Suburban sprawl increases vehicle miles traveled, exacerbates traffic congestion, and strains public infrastructure, particularly in areas located beyond existing transit systems. In fact, the population living inside a transit

[1] North Central Texas Council of Governments. *2050 Demographic Forecast*. November 25, 2024. https://data-nctcoggis.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/NCTCOGGIS::2050-nctcog-demographic-forecast-city/about

[2] North Texas Commission, *Profile of North Texas 2024* https://www.ntc-dfw.org/

[3] NCTCOG, *2050 Demographic Forecast*

[4] *Ibid*

authority service area is expected to fall from 47 percent in 2026 to only 38 percent by 2050.[5]

This presents an opportunity for strategic infill development and higher-density, mixed-use projects that reduce reliance on automobiles and foster more sustainable land use patterns. By focusing on increasing density near transit hubs and encouraging compact growth in suburban downtowns, the region can support a better balance between housing and jobs, shorten commutes, and reduce transportation costs. This approach not only enhances mobility options but also improves air quality and overall quality of life, making the region more resilient and prepared for future growth.

Financial Constraint

The NCTCOG Transportation Department faces financial constraints when developing its long-range transportation plan due to the necessity of balancing projected revenues with anticipated costs. This constraint ensures that the plan remains realistic and achievable. NCTCOG cannot plan for more projects or services than it expects to receive funding for, as this would lead to budget shortfalls and uncompleted projects. The planning process involves detailed forecasting of future revenues from various sources such as federal and state funds, local taxes, and other financial instruments. These forecasts must be matched against the estimated costs of proposed transportation projects and maintenance needs. Additionally, inflation has significantly increased highway construction costs, further complicating budget planning.

To maintain this balance, NCTCOG prioritizes projects based on criteria such as urgency, impact, and feasibility. Extensive public and stakeholder consultations are conducted to align the plan with community needs and expectations. By ensuring that the total cost of planned projects does not exceed the expected revenue, NCTCOG can create a sustainable and effective transportation system that meets the region's long-term needs. This careful financial planning is crucial for the successful implementation of transportation initiatives and the overall economic health of North Central Texas. The major expenditures are summarized in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Mobility 2050 Expenditures

Mobility 2050 Planning Approach	
Infrastructure Maintenance*	$29.8
Management and Operations	$25.7
Growth, Development, and Land Use Strategies	$6.4
Rail and Bus**	$57.9
HOV/Managed Lanes + Freeways/Tollways and Arterials	$97.5
Total, Actual $, Billions	**$217.3**

Values may not sum due to independent rounding
* Includes transit system maintenance
** Transit capital expenditures, including those using innovative revenue sources such as public-private partnerships
HOV – high-occupancy vehicle

MOBILITY 2050 GOALS

The purpose of Mobility 2050 is to guide and facilitate the implementation of multimodal infrastructure throughout the growing North Central Texas region. Centered around this purpose, the plan's goals are to improve mobility, enhance the regional quality of life, ensure system sustainability, and support program implementation.

[5] *Ibid*

MOBILITY

Improve the availability of transportation options for people and goods.

Support travel efficiency measures and system enhancements targeted at congestion reduction and management.

Ensure all communities are provided access to the regional transportation system and planning process.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Preserve and enhance the natural environment, improve air quality, and promote active lifestyles.

Encourage livable communities which support sustainability and economic vitality.

SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure adequate maintenance and enhance the safety and reliability of the existing transportation system.

Pursue long-term sustainable revenue sources to address regional transportation system needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Provide for timely project planning and implementation.

Develop cost-effective projects and programs aimed at reducing the costs associated with constructing, operating, and maintaining the regional transportation system.

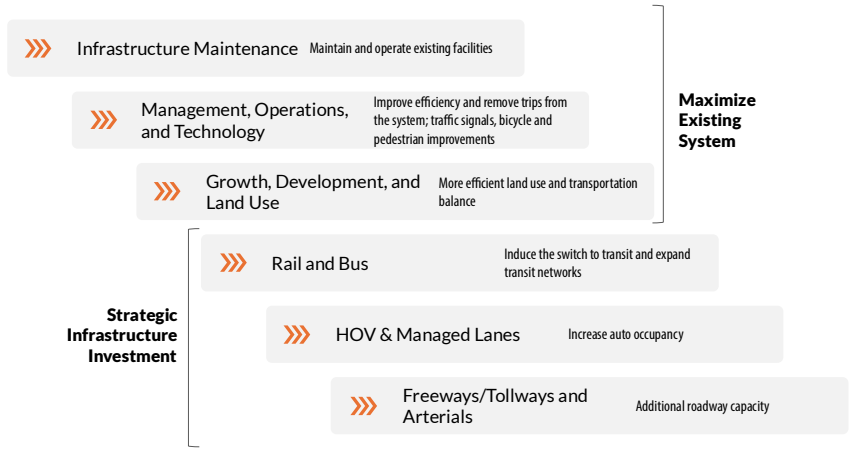
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Mobility 2050 prepares for future growth by addressing congestion, regional transit governance, and balanced transportation investments. Prioritizing fiscal responsibility, the plan focuses first on enhancing the existing system before investing in new infrastructure. The principles used to allocate financial resources include:

- Maintain and operate existing facilities
- Improve efficiency of existing facilities
- Improve land use-transportation connection
- Increase transit trips
- Increase auto occupancy and system capacity for autos

Additional considerations include impacts to system safety and security, nondiscrimination efforts, environmental hazard mitigation, and intermodal planning. This process is detailed in **Figure 1-2**.

Figure 1-2: Mobility Plan Development Process



POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PROJECTS

The key recommendation types in Mobility 2050 consist of policies, programs, and projects that reflect regional priorities and support the continued development of a robust transportation system. The plan recognizes that the construction of infrastructure projects alone cannot achieve its stated goals. Thus, to encourage the development of alternative, strategic solutions, Mobility 2050 includes a program to encourage local governments and transportation agencies to adopt and/or implement policies of the plan. These policies may address a range of issues affecting transportation, such as safe access to schools, land-use strategies, and transit support, among others. By voluntarily adopting their choice of applicable policies, participating agencies will receive an offset of local funds in federal transportation projects. Additional information about this initiative can be found in the **Regional Performance** chapter.

PUBLIC AND PARTNER INVOLVEMENT

Outreach for Mobility 2050 began in fall 2023 and continued through all phases of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan's development. During this period, several techniques were used to educate and involve the public. This consisted of soliciting feedback and educating the public by way of public meetings, community events, presentations, interactive online tools, and print and digital media. This input was essential in developing a long-range transportation plan that aligns with the region's priorities.

A summary of public input received, and strategies deployed, are detailed in the **Public Involvement** section of the **Social Considerations** chapter. Regional transportation and non-transportation partners were also consulted through development of the policy, program, and project recommendations in Mobility 2050. These partners were involved through committee, public, and project-specific meetings, as well as other correspondence, to coordinate long-range regional transportation efforts.

SUMMARY

Mobility 2050 is the product of a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuous planning effort. The plan's recommendations seek to meet the transportation demands of the estimated 12.3 million people who will call North Central Texas home by 2050. The Regional Transportation Council Resolution adopting Mobility 2050 and the North Central Texas Council of Governments' Executive Board Resolution endorsing Mobility 2050 are included in the **Resolutions, Letter of Conformity** appendix.