



Safe Routes to School Regional Action Plan

June 2025



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

What is NCTCOG?

The **North Central Texas Council of Governments** (NCTCOG) is a voluntary association of, by, and for **local governments** within the 16-county North Central Texas Region. The agency was established by state enabling legislation in 1966 to assist local governments in **planning** for common needs, **cooperating** for mutual benefit, and **coordinating** for sound regional development. Its purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments, and to help them recognize regional opportunities, resolve regional problems, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint regional decisions – as well as to develop the means to implement those decisions.

North Central Texas is a 16-county **metropolitan region** centered around Dallas and Fort Worth. The region has a population of more than 7 million (which is larger than 38 states), and an area of approximately 12,800 square miles (which is larger than nine states). NCTCOG has 235 member governments, including all 16 counties, 170 cities, 20 independent school districts, and 29 special districts.

NCTCOG's **structure** is relatively simple. An elected or appointed public official from each member government makes up the **General Assembly** which annually elects NCTCOG's **Executive Board**. The Executive Board is composed of 17 locally elected officials and one ex-officio non-voting member of the legislature. The Executive Board is the policy-making body for all activities undertaken by NCTCOG, including program activities and decisions, regional plans, and fiscal and budgetary policies. The Board is supported by policy development, technical advisory and study **committees** – and a professional staff led by **R. Michael Eastland**, Executive Director.



NCTCOG's offices are located in Arlington in the Centerpoint Two Building at 616 Six Flags Drive (approximately one-half mile south of the main entrance to Six Flags Over Texas).

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NCTCOG's Department of Transportation

Since 1974 NCTCOG has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation for the Dallas-Fort Worth area. NCTCOG's Department of Transportation is responsible for the regional planning process for all modes of transportation. The department provides technical support and staff assistance to the Regional Transportation Council and its technical committees, which compose the MPO policy-making structure. In addition, the department provides technical assistance to the local governments of North Central Texas in planning, coordinating, and implementing transportation decisions.

Prepared in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, US Department of Transportation, and the Texas Department of Transportation.

The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the opinions, findings, and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, or the Texas Department of Transportation.



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Executive Summary

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Regional Action Plan (RAP) is intended as a resource for local governments, independent school districts (ISDs), and the public to support existing and future SRTS planning and implementation activities. The RAP was conceived as a response to the challenges faced by local governments and ISDs with providing safe and accessible schools in the face of rapid growth and a complicated jurisdictional landscape. These challenges make early and intentional cooperation for schools planning vital to support school-aged children's ability to walk and bicycle safely to school. Key conclusions from each chapter in the SRTS RAP include:

Chapter I - Introduction:

- Rapid growth, the complexity of the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) jurisdictional boundaries, and the need for coordination among local governments, ISDs, and other agencies for schools planning result in a challenging landscape for enabling and encouraging school-aged children to walk and bicycle safely to school.
- Since 2011, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) has encouraged SRTS interventions in the region through a wide variety of education, encouragement, technical assistance, guidance, and funding actions. This includes programming a total of \$42.8 million for 47 SRTS projects in 21 DFW cities and 23 ISDs since 2014 through four NCTCOG Transportation Alternatives Calls for Projects.

Chapter II - State of the Schools in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region:

- In the 2021-2022 school year, the DFW region contained 2,187 traditional public schools and 236 charter schools spanning 233 cities and 143 ISDs across the 12-county Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).
- Most students in the DFW region are driven to school, with 65 percent of students driven to school in a personal vehicle as of 2017.
- Modern school siting practices place schools in areas that are more difficult to walk and/or bicycle to, including wide, fast roads that are dangerous for young children to cross safely.
- There is a need for increased and formalized efforts for school campuses, ISDs, and local governments to collaborate and communicate early and continuously regarding student pedestrian safety and school siting.

Chapter III - Safe Routes to School Plans for Existing Schools:

- SRTS plans help local governments and schools identify and address SRTS issues and interventions needed to enable school-aged children to walk and bicycle safely to school. SRTS planning also makes SRTS funding applications more competitive.
- Recommendations for SRTS plans include comprehensively addressing: community engagement, agency coordination, existing conditions, the variety of land use and

roadway contexts, road user behavior, barriers to walking and bicycling to school, student pick up and drop off, and potential bicycle and pedestrian safety countermeasures to remedy identified safety issues.

Chapter IV - New School Siting:

- Rapid growth in the region underscores the need for comprehensive approaches and regular collaboration among schools, ISDs, local governments, and other stakeholders.
- Early collaboration is essential to ensure potential new sites can be served by infrastructure that will help create a safe environment for students to walk and bicycle to and from school.
- NCTCOG's [*Planning for Community Schools: A Guide to School Siting in North Texas*](#) includes a detailed roadmap for collaboration between ISDs and local planning stakeholders at the city and county level.

Chapter V - Identifying Areas of Potential Need for SRTS Improvements:

- Half of the top 20 urban schools that were identified as potentially having the highest need for SRTS interventions were located in Dallas or Fort Worth.
- Schools in urban areas scored higher than schools in rural areas for need of SRTS interventions.
- Half of the urban schools in the top 20 were charter schools.
- There is a need to further investigate charter schools and their implications for SRTS planning and interventions as well as school siting.

Chapter VI - Regional Strategy for Safe Routes to School

- The comprehensive regional strategy for SRTS includes an emphasis on joint coordination among local agencies, technical assistance to local governments, education and training, encouragement activities, and outreach and promotion.
- NCTCOG will continue to assist the region with SRTS data collection and evaluation, project facilitation, planning, funding, education and training opportunities, encouragement activities, and outreach and promotion.
- New initiatives from NCTCOG include developing a regional crossing guard implementation process and exploring the changing landscape of schools in the region with the rise of charter schools and acceleration of school closures.

The SRTS RAP was developed by the NCTCOG Community Schools and Transportation Program, which is part of the Land Use and Mobility Options team housed in the Transportation Department.