

MINUTES

Regional Transportation Council PUBLIC MEETING

Broadband as a Transportation Service

Recent Grant Awards for Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects

Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan (DFW AQIP)

Bike to School Day

Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery

Modifications to the FY2024 and FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program

Start of 2024 Ozone Season

Meeting Date and Location

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) held a hybrid public meeting Monday, March 11, 2024, at noon in Arlington. Patrons could attend in person, via phone or view the live stream at www.publicinput.com/nctcogMarch24. Amanda Wilson, Senior Program Manager, moderated the meeting attended by 52 people.

Public Meeting Purpose and Topics

The public meeting was held in accordance with the NCTCOG Transportation Department Public Participation Plan, which became effective June 1, 1994, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the metropolitan planning organization, and amended on November 8, 2018. Staff presented information about:

- Broadband as a Transportation Service – **presented by Connor Sadro**
- Recent Grant Awards for Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects – **presented by Joslyn Billings**
- Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan (DFW AQIP) – **presented by Savana Nance**
- Bike to School Day – **presented by Shawn Conrad**
- Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery – **presented by Amanda Wilson**

The public meeting was held to educate, inform and seek comments from the public. Comments were solicited from those attending who wished to speak for the record. The presentations made during the meeting as well as a video recording were posted online at www.publicinput.com/nctcogMarch24.

Summary of Presentations

Broadband as a Transportation Service presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/3e4d9249-ec5e-45a0-9bcd-00bf61e84dbd/Broadband-as-a-Transportation-Service.pdf>

Digital equity efforts strive to enhance internet access, particularly in underserved areas. This not only improves access to crucial services like workforce, education and healthcare but also fosters economic development. Texas is actively investing in broadband infrastructure, with the Broadband Development Office receiving substantial federal funding. Municipalities like Mont Belvieu have challenged regulations to establish local broadband services, while others have focused on middle-mile fiber optics to enhance connectivity.

The NCTCOG Transportation Department held a broadband roundtable discussion with key stakeholders to discuss plans for fiber optic infrastructure and digital training programs. Recommended action items include coordinating data collection, creating a policy committee and developing outreach and educational strategies. Moreover, a pilot project with the City of Fort Worth aims to enhance broadband infrastructure, adoption and digital skills training in underserved communities.

Recent Grant Awards for Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/b85a9266-b62c-4891-aa6d-51b02f25b81e/Recent-Grant-Awards-for-Hydrogen-and-Electric-Vehicle-Infrastructure-Projects.pdf>

Several initiatives have recently received funding to advance clean transportation technologies for infrastructure projects involving hydrogen and electric vehicles.

Through financing and education, clean vehicle initiatives seek to encourage the use of alternative fuel and zero-emission vehicle technologies. The goal of infrastructure readiness and planning is to guarantee inexpensive and easily accessible infrastructure, especially for charging electric vehicles. Initiatives focusing on Energy Integration & Community Readiness seek to inform local authorities about the importance of promoting clean transportation and reducing adverse grid effects.

The North Texas Equitable Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project (NTx-EEVI), which intends to construct up to 100 charging ports with an emphasis on Justice40 areas, is one notable project. Five medium- to heavy-duty hydrogen refueling stations are to be built as part of the Texas Hydrogen and Electric Freight Infrastructure Project (Tx-HEFTI). These and other projects demonstrate the dedication to developing clean transportation and infrastructure across the country.

For information on electrification, funding sources and ways to get involved, visit www.dfwcleancities.org.

Dallas-Fort Worth Air Quality Improvement Plan (DFW AQIP) presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/bcb8a25f-ac81-4f65-a696-6d125bbe92ef/DFW-Air-Quality-Improvement-Plan.pdf>

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Planning Grants Program has allocated \$1 million to develop and implement plans to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) and other pollutants. NCTCOG is leading this effort for the Dallas-

Fort Worth region, with the CPRG Implementation Grants Application due by April 1, 2024, and a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) due by summer 2025.

The tasks involved in the planning process include a GHG emissions inventory, identification of GHG reduction measures, an analysis of benefits to disadvantaged communities, a review of implementation authority and a funding analysis.

The CPRG Implementation Grants will fund strategies included in the PCAPs submitted under the Planning Grants, with a focus on measures that improve air quality. The grants are competitive, with scoring based on the cumulative benefits of proposed initiatives. The EPA will not award multiple grants for the same initiative in the same area.

Visit www.publicinput.com/dfwaqip to learn more about DFW AQIP and explore public input opportunities.

Bike to School Day presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/891189bb-b53e-44f2-ba72-54635a13c512/Bike-2-School-Day.pdf>

Bike & Roll to School Day will be held on May 8, 2024. This event aims to promote active transportation to school by emphasizing the importance of bicycles and other rolling modes of transportation. Schools can increase participation by organizing activities, such as bicycle trains, bike rodeos and park-and-ride programs. Students can take part in safety pledges and raffles to win prizes designed to encourage them to continue biking to school. Schools can register on the Safe Routes to School National Partnership website to receive support from NCTCOG: www.nctcog.org/walkbikeroll.

Changing Mobility: Data, Insights, and Delivering Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/61586f37-0d8b-439b-9912-9136c2c5acea/Changing-Mobility.pdf>

Changing Mobility is an effort to compare transportation trends during the pandemic to the previous 12 months. While the majority of transportation modes have returned to or exceeded pre-pandemic levels, transit is still recovering slowly. Changes in travel behavior, such as more flexible schedules and more midday travel, point to a shift in commuting patterns that will be monitored and analyzed to inform transportation planning and policy decisions. These trends will continue to be monitored and reported to the Regional Transportation Council twice a year.

Summary of Online Review and Comment Topics

Modifications to the FY2024 and FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program handout:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/3503e50d-407d-442b-803d-73730e2129ab/Modifications-to-the-FY2024-and-FY2025-Unified-Planning-Work-Program.pdf>

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) summarizes transportation activities for NCTCOG's metropolitan planning area, which covers a 12-county region. It is divided into five major task areas:

- Administration and Management
- Transportation Data Development and Maintenance

- Short-Range Planning and Programming and Air Quality and Transit Operations
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Special Studies and System Operations

The proposed modifications to the Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 UPWP address project updates and funding adjustments. The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) will take action on the FY2024 and FY2025 UPWP modifications on Friday, March 22, 2024.

Start of 2024 Ozone Season handout:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/acf9b1fb-e63e-4718-acb9-ee2a757d7e16/Start-of-2024-Ozone-Season.pdf>

Ozone is a gas composed of three atoms of oxygen and occurs both in the Earth’s upper atmosphere and at ground level. Ground-level ozone is commonly referred to as “bad ozone” and forms when emission sources emit nitrogen oxides and/or volatile organic compounds that react in the presence of sunlight. Ozone can make it more difficult to breathe, aggravate lung diseases, and inflame and damage the airway.

North Texas is currently under two ozone standards, one for 2008 and one for 2015. Because the region did not meet attainment for either standard, NCTCOG staff is preparing for the region to be reclassified from marginal to moderate under the 2015 standard and from serious to severe under the 2008 standard. Staff expects the attainment deadline for the new classifications to be no later than July 20, 2027 for the 2008 standard and no later than August 3, 2024 for the 2015 standard.

For more information on regional air quality, visit <https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/ozone>.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE MEETING

Recent Grant Awards for Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects

Wyatt Paradise, Citizen

- A. Hydrogen/electric vehicle (EV) fueling stations

Comment: For Texas to stay at the forefront of innovation, especially due to its rapid growth, the implementation of hydrogen fueling stations and EV stations are a necessity. This would also provide an incentive for Texas natives to remain in Texas.

Summary of response by Joslyn Billings: Thank you for your comment. The large amount of hydrogen manufacturing in Houston played an important role in our decision to choose hydrogen. We’re trying to keep as much revenue as possible within the State of Texas

Samuel, Citizen

- A. Funding Allocations for alternative fuel vehicles

Question: Why would we waste money on hydrogen infrastructure when it has proven useless so far and doesn’t have a reasonable chance of competing with electric vehicles?

Summary of response by Joslyn Billings: Thank you for your comment. The hydrogen refueling stations are for medium to heavy-duty vehicles. As EVs become more difficult to transition to in those areas due to the weight and size of the batteries, the industry is turning to hydrogen to meet that demand. We are still investing heavily in EVs, but for medium and heavy-duty vehicles, we are switching to hydrogen. This is all very new, so there isn't much information available. It will take about five years to complete this project.

Ron Royer, Citizen

A. Hydrogen fueling station funding

Question: After reading: "About \$70 million will be used to build five hydrogen fueling stations across DFW, Houston, Austin and San Antonio.", I was stunned to see the large investment in hydrogen stations which must cost \$14 million each (!! at \$70m/5). What number of hydrogen-powered vehicles will this support vs. the much smaller investment in EV chargers? Are hydrogen vehicles school buses? garbage trucks? local delivery trucks? I have owned an EV for the last 5 years and am solidly behind moving away from fossil fuels for transportation to provide cleaner air for my children and grandchildren. Just questioning the apportionment of funds to the various technologies.

Summary of response by Joslyn Billings: Thank you for your comment and support for alternative fuels. Hydrogen refueling stations are significantly more expensive to build than EV charging stations, at least for the time being, which is why there is more available funding for hydrogen. This federal program is open to both EVs and hydrogen. We applied for the maximum amount possible. I have yet to hear of any hydrogen-powered school buses, but local delivery trucks are being manufactured and sold. Nikola is a recent example, but there are other manufacturers as well. This is all very new, and we're attempting to develop it while the vehicles are being developed. We are applying for as many alternative fuels funding opportunities as possible.

**COMMENTS SUBMITTED DURING THE COMMENT PERIOD VIA WEBSITE,
EMAIL, SOCIAL MEDIA & MAIL**

Mail

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

Please see Attachment 1 for comments submitted via postal mail.

Website

Oscar Alvarez, Citizen

Require developers to deliver a bio diversity net gain on all projects. Build green corridors that cool our cities. Invest more in walkable infrastructure, including building more light rail.

Extend texrail to cover much of Tarrant County, working to mobilize North Texas while reducing our carbon footprint. North Texas should follow the dutch intercity train model. The intercity trains deliver the convenience of traveling by public transport similar to driving.

North Central Texas Council of GovernmentsPublic Meeting - March 11, 2024Comments and Questions - Phyllis SilverNCTCOG Broadband As Transportation Peer ReviewComment: that is an interesting concept - relating broadband to transportation.Question: Slide #7 - what does the word "Silenced" mean in the two bullet points on that page?Recent Grant Awards for Hydrogen and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure ProjectsComment: that is favorable that approximately 80% of the U.S. population is in an area covered by a Clean Cities Coalition.Questions: Slide #5
 ① What is Justice 40?
 ② What is NEPA?DFW AQIPQuestion - Slide #8 - During the 3/11/2024 meeting, Savona noted that the top concerns were: Public Health, Local Air Quality, and Climate Change. My black and white pie chart shows all segments of the chart to be either gray or black. I would be interested to know the percentages for all 9 (including "other") elements listed (ie extreme weather events, etc.)Bike + Rail to School DayComment:

I have already publicized and will continue to publicize both Bike + Rail to School and Walk to School Day. I consider these to be healthy initiatives to introduce to children - foster more physical activity!

Over →

Changing Mobility = Data, Insights, and Delivery

Innovative Projects During COVID Recovery

Comments and Recommendations.

It is unfortunate that transit ridership is still down during COVID recovery. If transit agencies paid attention to more details in keeping riders safe and comfortable, ridership should improve more than it has been. For example, with DART, sometimes riders have to navigate obstacles, such as walking over round stones in order to board a bus. Also, when you arrive at your destination (hospital, shopping mall, etc) by bus or train, getting to the building is not easily accessible. You may have to go through a busy parking lot or navigate other obstacles. Also, there are insufficient shelters and benches at bus stops. Many riders do not want to encounter these inconveniences. Sometimes I feel as though one has to be rugged and strong to take public transportation. Not everyone is up to these challenges.

Phyllis Silver
3/25/2024