

MINUTES

Regional Transportation Council PUBLIC MEETING

Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program and Legislative Update

Car Care Awareness and Vehicle Temporary Tags Update

Start of 2023 Ozone Season

Creation of DFW Clean Cities Advisory Committee

Walk to School Day 2023

Meeting Date and Location

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) held a hybrid public meeting Monday, April 10, 2023 at noon in Arlington. Patrons could attend in person, via phone or view the live stream at www.publicinput.com/nctcogApril23. Chris Klaus, Senior Program Manager, moderated the meeting attended by 74 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:

- Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program and Legislative Update – **presented by Brendon Wheeler and Rebekah Gongora**
- Car Care Awareness and Vehicle Temporary Tags Update – **presented by Anthony Moffa**
- Start of 2023 Ozone Season – **presented by Nicholas Van Haasen**
- Creation of DFW Clean Cities Advisory Committee – **presented by Joslyn Billings**
- Walk to School Day 2023 – **presented by Erin Curry**

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/nctcogApril23.

Summary of Presentations

Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program and Legislative Update presentation:
<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/3644edd3-b89e-4355-94a5-636428c6f7f3/Federal-Railroad-Administration-Grant-Program-and-Legislative-Update.pdf>

In November 2021, the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill was passed, allocating approximately \$1.2 trillion for transportation initiatives, with most of the funding being provided through USDOT formula programs and competitive grants.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has two grant programs that impact the Dallas-Fort Worth region. The first program is the Corridor Identification and Development (ID) Program, which aims to establish a pipeline of projects to receive funding through the second program, the Federal State Partnership (FSP) and Intercity Passenger Rail program. The FSP program is designed to support projects in the planning and development phase. The goal is to obtain a spot in the FRA's National Intercity Passenger Rail Registry of Projects, which will eventually allow the project to qualify for funding through the FSP and Intercity Passenger Rail program. The Heartland Flyer, Amtrak's intercity passenger rail service operating between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, is currently in operation and has the support of the RTC, the Kansas Department of Transportation, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Texas Department of Transportation.

An intercity passenger rail corridor application from Dallas-Fort Worth to Atlanta has been submitted to the Corridor ID Program, and Amtrak is taking the lead on the application process while NCTCOG is leading the Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation Connections Study. The purpose of the application is to unite corridors, register them and establish partnerships with the State of Texas and Amtrak. TxDOT, NCTCOG and CTCOG have submitted applications to the Corridor ID Program for a high-speed rail grade-separated network between Fort Worth, Dallas and Houston.

Car Care Awareness and Vehicle Temporary Tags Update presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/5a421f0b-7728-4545-be5c-ba3217a8ebc4/Car-Care-Awareness-and-Vehicle-Temporary-Tags-Update.pdf>

The Car Care Awareness campaign aligns with National Car Care Awareness Month in April and October and seeks to advance air quality benefits for the region, inform owners about vehicle maintenance and build stronger community relations.

NCTCOG began hosting car care clinics in April 2013. The clinics, which have a hands-on, educational approach, provide vehicle owners the chance to speak with qualified technicians about their check engine light and any other issues they might be experiencing with their vehicle. The campaign website, which launched in 2016, offers free educational materials, vehicle maintenance tips and program updates.

Current efforts for this campaign include:

- Partnering with nonprofit organizations and vehicle repair shops throughout the region
- Providing social media toolkits and educational materials to local governments and organizations upon request
- Updating the program website
- Requesting auto repair shops and auto part retailers to provide public discounts

Additionally, fraudulent vehicle temporary tags and clean scanning, which involves hooking up a vehicle that would otherwise have failed an emissions test, are both large issues in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. Legislative solutions have been identified to help fund a regional task force that used to be active but was vetoed in 2017. Legislative bills have also been filed to address the temporary tag system. Senate Bill 718 would eliminate paper tags and replace them with metal tags while Senate Bill 970 would commission a study on temporary tags. Administrative

rule changes have been implemented, but law enforcement training and automatic verification of tags are still needed.

Start of 2023 Ozone Season presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/17946e7a-cfb9-4cbb-a5cc-0eb8822ab326/Start-of-2023-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>.

Creation of DFW Clean Cities Advisory Committee presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/6057df22-d5be-4fee-9194-19131451256f/Creation-of-Dallas-Fort-Worth-Clean-Cities-Advisory-Committee.pdf>

NCTCOG hosts the Dallas Fort Worth Clean Cities (DFWCC) Coalition, a US Department of Energy (DOE) program aimed at improving air quality through clean transportation initiatives. To ensure coalitions remain active and effective, the DOE redesignates them every five years, and a goal to establish a stakeholder advisory committee was identified in the latest redesignation. The committee will assist and advise Coalition staff by providing diverse perspectives, assisting with event publicity and networking, increasing stakeholder engagement and providing information on the adoption of a strategic plan.

The committee is seeking at least five members, with at least 51 percent of those members representing the public sector. Nominations will be accepted until May 31, and the committee hopes to hold its first meeting in the summer of 2023. For more information or to submit a nomination, visit the DFWCC website at <https://www.DFWcleancities.org>.

Walk to School Day 2023 presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/b4079169-1faa-4cf0-9505-bf90fcc3efe1/Walk-to-School-Day-2023.pdf>

Walk to School Day is an annual event promoting bicycle and pedestrian safety for students during the school day. Last year, nearly 1,000 students signed the Promise to Street Safety pledge, and the DFW region hosted over half of the Walk to School Day events in Texas. Events include everything from free prizes to breakfast offerings, and schools can organize meet-up points at churches or local parks for students, families and staff to walk to school together.

Municipalities interested in participating in this event can consult with local school districts and parent groups. This year's Walk to School Day will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 4. For more information, visit <https://nctcog.org/walktoschool>.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE MEETING

Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program and Legislative Update

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

A. Derailment research funding

Comment: I'm so pleased to hear there's some additional funding under the FAST Act. Throughout the presentation, I was reminded of the recent train derailments. There surely will be a study done on this issue, and I believe after this study is done, there's going to be improvements required on most or all rail lines. Is there enough flexibility for funding to be used for recommended improvements as a result of the study of derailments?

Summary of Response by Brendon Wheeler: This presentation focused on intercity passenger rail funding, but there is also funding for programs administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). One of these programs is the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant, which focuses on bridges that are becoming obsolete and need restoration. As a part of the bipartisan infrastructure law, these funds have been replenished and increased. While the presentation focused on the passenger rail, there is funding available for other items mentioned.

B. Local funding for improvements

Comment: I think derailments could also happen on smaller intercity passenger rail. Is there flexibility with local funding?

Summary of Response by Brendon Wheeler: The current federal bill has flexibility with class one railroads and other railroads having their own private funds to focus on rail efficiency. If a rail line is deemed deficient, there is funding on both the private and public side to address it.

Summary of Response by Rebekah Gongora: Congress is taking up the next fiscal year appropriations bill and has proposed additional funding for railroad safety but has not yet debated it.

C. Congressional action on railroad safety

Comment: Congress is still debating railroad safety. Has anything been decided?

Summary of Response by Brendon Wheeler: There may be a continuing resolution on this current fiscal year so it may be extended, but Congress has not debated railroad safety yet.

Car Care Awareness and Vehicle Temporary Tags Update

Councilmember Cherry Bryant, City of Alvarado

A: Car Care Awareness partnerships

Question: Does the city have to be signed up to receive the Car Care Awareness digital toolkits and educational resources? Is this program a partnership with cities?

Summary of Response by Anthony Moffa: There is no formal agreement between cities and NCTCOG and no signup is required to receive the social media toolkit. The toolkits and educational materials can be used and distributed by cities however they see fit.

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: If a city wants to promote and host an event, NCTCOG would work with local repair facilities in the area. The city or the local chamber of commerce may have connections with repair facilities that could facilitate the event as well.

Other

Hexel Colorado, Citizen

A. DART support

Comment: DART recently completed a series of community meetings about their future projects, including Zoom 2.0 and upgrades to the bus network. I was impressed with their tier two of mobility, which had headways of 15 minutes system wide. However, I understand tier two is further away than tier one. I would like to see NCTCOG and the region support DART and advocate for tier two as soon as possible. Higher frequency and higher levels of service are needed to get more people using world class transit. This is especially important in a sprawling metroplex where making last mile connections is important. I encourage NCTCOG to pursue this and other partners to help them with it.

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: The statistics and data suggest transit ridership dropped during the pandemic. The Regional Transportation Council and NCTCOG staff are working closely with the transit agencies to try to get that ridership back up. We will pass your comment along to our transit staff.

B. Transit training for riders

Comment: NCTCOG should consider the defensive driver model, where there is assistance from private institutions in the promotion and training of general transit riders.

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: We will pass your comment along to our transit staff so they can coordinate as needed with our transit partners.

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

Email

Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program and Legislative Update

Marcus Wood, Citizen

Page 8 of the presentation regards the FRA's Corridor ID Program: Fort Worth to Houston High-Speed Rail Corridor stating the "Desire to combine both segments* into one corridor". As stated these alternatives are:

- TxDOT submitted Texas Triangle of Traditional Amtrak service (including Dallas to Houston)
- NCTCOG submitted Fort Worth to Houston High-Speed Rail Corridor (shown on the drawing as having stations in Fort Worth, Arlington and Dallas, but without indication of route south and no mention of College Station)
- Texas Central submitted Dallas to Houston High-Speed Rail Corridor
- *Dallas to Fort Worth (actually Fort Worth to Dallas) and Dallas Eddie Bernice Johnson Union Station to Houston Amtrak Station

I am opposed to the TxDOT proposed traditional Amtrak service using Class 1 freight line tracks. What a waste of money and impediment to freight train movement!

It is my belief the Fort Worth and Houston Corridor should be high-speed rail service on dedicated passenger train tracks between Fort Worth and Houston consisting of two sections:

- Fort Worth and Dallas Section (FW/D) with Fort Worth and Dallas HSR stations and a station serving Arlington/Mid-Cities
- Dallas and Houston section (D/H) with Dallas and Houston HSR stations and a station serving College Station/Bryan

Because of the prior successful efforts by Texas Central Railway (TCR) the D/H section is well beyond the FRA grant programs development stages and ready for implementation stages. FRA and local partners should move forward with actual implementation funding for all aspects of this D/H section as developed by Texas Central. It is now time for Dallas and Houston section construction without years of further delay, which combining the two sections at the track 1 development project planning level would result in. Years of effort and money should not be spent on trying to force a high-speed rail route to the current Houston Amtrak Station, 902 Washington Avenue.

Can't FRA actually move forward on the D/H section or will DOT and Congress remain in today's era of "analysis paralysis"? I'm of an age to recall congressional action quickly creating and constructing the interstate highway system. Let's move forward expeditiously again with this High-Speed Rail Project! This is the perfect setting.

Summary of Response by Taylor Benjamin, NCTCOG:

Good morning, Mr. Woods

Thank you for your comments. In our presentation, we outlined all of the applications we knew at that time. We completely agree with you that the Dallas-Houston segment is ready for implementation. It is our understanding that to be considered for Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) funding, the entire corridor must be included in the Corridor ID Program, hence why we are submitting the entire corridor from Fort Worth to Houston. We will work with the FRA and the other application submitters to coordinate our efforts. We have already had preliminary discussions with Texas Central, TxDOT and Amtrak and will continue those efforts. We are also trying to determine if Texas Central will be submitting an application for funding

under the Federal State Partnership Program. We agree the corridor should be for high-speed rail and will continue our efforts in this regard.

Other

Marcus Wood, Citizen

I have the black on white paper handout of your presentation and viewed the posted video. I have not located a color version of your actual presentation for downloading and saving. Might you be able to send me that?

Summary of Response by Rebekah Gongora, NCTCOG:

Good morning Mr. Woods,

You can find our presentation online at: www.publicinput.com/nctcogApril23 at the bottom of the page under "files". I've attached a copy too.

Mail

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

Please see Attachment 1 for comments submitted via postal mail.

Federal Railroad Administration Grant Program + Legislative Update

Question - Page 4 - §3B Railroad Crossing Elimination -
Why are railroad crossings being eliminated?

Car Care Awareness and Vehicle Temporary Tags Update

General Comment - I sometimes see smoking vehicles on the road, I think that an alternative to the temporary paper tags may prevent some of the fraudulently passing vehicle emissions tests.

Comment - Page 8 - Regarding the news coverage, I viewed several of the news spots listed on page 8 on CBS-TV. I think this awareness campaign is vital. We need to be aware of this fraud and how it leads to inappropriately passed vehicle emissions tests.

Creation of Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Technical Advisory Committee

Comment - I think this initiative and Technical Advisory Committee will have a positive impact on resolving our air pollution issues.

Walk to School Day

Question - Page 9 - 3rd bullet point - accessible event if it's too far to walk the whole way to school -

What are examples of events/initiatives where the children are not walking all the way to school on Walk to School Day

Comment - The Town of Addison, where I live, has one public school within its boundaries. I plan on promoting the walk to school event so that perhaps this school will be willing to participate.

Administrative Revisions to Mobility 2045: the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for North Central Texas - 2022 Update

Regionally Significant Arterials Improvements Summary

Pg. 3 - 1.570,250 - Question - matrix shows project on Midway Rd. From Belt Line Road to north of Spring Valley Road - Belt Line Road is north of Spring Valley Rd. - specifically what is the 'to' point? Where on Midway Road does this project end?

Phyllis Silver

Comments About An Idea Brought Forth By a
Participant After the April 10, 2023 Public Meeting

After the April 10, 2023 meeting, participant Hazel Colorado introduced the idea of transit rider training. I support this idea. Many of my friends who do not take public transportation often remark to me that they are in awe of how I get around with public transportation. These are well-educated people. They tell me they would not know where to begin in planning and taking a trip to a destination that they would want to visit.

DART has a brochure on how to ride. I think in-person classes would have greater impact. In order to increase ridership, we need to better educate the public on how to plan a trip and what is involved in taking the trip (including paying the fare). It is important that the public become more comfortable with the process. It seems that the process is a mystery to many potential riders.

Phyllis Silver
Phyllis Silver
4/28/2023

Phyllis H. Silver