

MINUTES

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE June 26, 2020

The Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) held a meeting on Friday, June 26, 2020, at 1:30 pm, by videoconference. The Regional Transportation Council Bylaws establish that the Technical Committee approved membership in attendance at a meeting shall constitute a quorum for action to be taken, therefore individual attendance was not taken for committee members or other attendees.

1. **Approval of May 22, 2020, Minutes:** The minutes of the May 22, 2020, meeting were approved as submitted in Electronic Item 1. Daniel Vedral (M); Alonzo Liñán (S). The motion passed unanimously.
2. **Consent Agenda:** The following item was included on the Consent Agenda.

- 2.1. **FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program Modifications:** A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approval of modifications to the FY2020 and FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program, provided in Electronic Item 2.1.1, including the addition of \$3 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds with Transportation Development Credits as a match to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Integrated Planning for Regional Transportation, Urban Development, and Stormwater Management project. Action also included a recommendation that the RTC direct staff to administratively amend the TIP and other administrative/planning documents, as appropriate, to reflect the approved modifications. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 2.1.2.

A motion was made to approve the item on the Consent Agenda. Chad Edwards (M); Tim Palermo (S). The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Effect of COVID-19 Restrictions on Transportation and Endorsement of Economic Opportunities:** Michael Morris provided an update on the effects of COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, he discussed economic opportunities in the region and requested endorsement of a financial backstop approved at the June 9, 2020, Regional Transportation Council (RTC) meeting. He noted North Central Texas Council of Governments staff is continuing efforts to develop an information system of COVID-19 impacts on transportation. The region no longer has the luxury to do what it wants but must do what is needed. In response to the existing funding constraints, the region should return to the efforts of the financial crisis response from 2009 and take advantage of lower construction costs. Other options to implement projects include a potential federal infrastructure bill, public-private partnerships as part of the RTC Legislative Program, taking advantage of low interest rate, new technologies, and formula allocations. He highlighted four policy metrics being tracked by staff. The first metric is related to travel behavior in response to COVID-19. Staff is monitoring freeway volumes, transit ridership, and airport travel and monitoring changes resulting from COVID-19. The second policy metric is the financial implications to traditional revenue sources. Reductions in vehicles sales tax, motor vehicles sales and use, and motor fuel tax were highlighted, all of which have experienced significant reductions. Policy metric three is the benefits of travel behavior responses. Staff continues to gather data on crash rates and fatalities, as well as air quality impacts. Despite a 30-40 percent reduction in emission levels due to lower vehicle miles traveled, ozone exceedance days continue to be

experienced in the region. This indicates there is an issue with the boundary/boundary conditions and the thought that implementing intensive air quality initiatives in the core counties will allow the region to come into compliance of the ozone standard is no longer the correct assumption. He discussed potential options to reduce single occupant vehicle travel from larger employers to help continue the reduction in emissions seen because of COVID-19 travel behaviors, as well as other options to maintain air quality benefits. The final metric is the implementation of innovative transportation projects that may provide economic opportunities in the COVID-19 environment, including the approximate \$20 billion private-sector, high-speed rail investment between Dallas and Houston and the advancement of the environmental document for high-speed technology between Dallas and Fort Worth. Other candidate projects include the next phase of the Hyperloop Certification Center, autonomous transit, freeway induction loops, SH 183 improvements by the private sector, and the Y Connector. He noted that staff has been working to advance smaller projects that will be documented through the COVID-19 #00X Program to track how the region moved forward with projects through innovation. Mr. Morris also presented a funding backstop for Committee endorsement. Cintra is the private-sector provider for the North Tarrant Express/SH 183 project south of the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Approximately \$162 million in capacity improvements from Cintra for SH 183 are anticipated. The improvements will create a lane imbalance near the DFW Airport, and Cintra has proposed an additional \$860 million to fund Section 2E to balance lanes between SH 121 and SH 161. This project is similar to IH 35W 3C that was grandfathered in and able to be built. In addition, \$270 million is proposed for payment to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for lane balance improvements east of SH 161 for a total of \$1.3 billion in private sector funds to the region. Staff proposed a \$3 million financial backstop to give confidence to Cintra to begin engineering on Section 2E of the project. It is anticipated that the funding will be repaid to the RTC once TxDOT formally requests Cintra to begin the design of the project. Mr. Morris noted that he believed there is minimal risk to the financial backstop. In addition, he highlighted projects to be included in the COVID-19 inventory:

- 1) Loop 9 cost overrun, 2) IH 35E at Frankford Road, 3) IH 45 at Dowdy Ferry Road, and 4) Tripp Road.

He also discussed a recent proposal to support and provide a financial commitment of \$750,000 to offset the transportation costs as part of a bid to host the National Hockey League Hub City Tournament in the region. A copy of the commitment letter was provided in Electronic Item 3.1. Staff has learned that the region was not selected to host the event, so Committee endorsement of the proposal is not needed. However, he noted staff will be working to develop guidelines for instances in which staff actions are needed in the interim and RTC ratification will be requested. Additional details of the items presented were provided in Electronic Item 3.2. John Polster discussed air quality impacts during COVID-19 and noted he did not believe there is a boundary issue. When there is a 40 percent reduction in human activity and minimal changes to vehicle emissions, there is a significant background level of ozone and nitrogen oxide emission that contribute to the air quality. He added the region has reached a point of diminishing returns on air quality improvements. In addition, he recommended approval of the item, but requested additional information be presented at a later time to the Committee related to background levels versus boundary changes. Mr. Morris noted the medical community sets the level in order to preserve the health effects on the population. Mr. Polster discussed what is referred to from a medical standpoint, as a bright line difference between the impacts of levels and suggested that staff review that argument. Committee Chair Bryan Beck discussed the \$3 million financial backstop and asked if ownership of the design plans if the \$3 million backstop if needed, is part of the agreement. Mr. Morris noted that if the backstop is needed, this could be included as part of the agreement. A motion was made to endorse Regional Transportation Council approval of a \$3 million financial backstop to advance the

next phase of the North Tarrant Express/SH 183 project in Tarrant and Dallas Counties. John Polster (M); Walter Shumac III (S). The motion passed unanimously.

4. **2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects-Updated Recommendations:** Camille Fountain presented updated staff recommendations for the 2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects, originally approved at the May 22, 2020, Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) meeting. Since that time, the following updates have been made to the recommended projects: 1) Town of Flower Mound funding was moved from western subregion recommendations to the eastern subregion recommendations, 2) Opticom System and drone project recommendations were removed from the final recommendations list due to eligibility requirements, and 3) project recommendations were reranked based on the changes. Ms. Fountain noted that all other previously recommended projects remained funded. In addition, staff is requesting to allocate Regional Toll Revenue funds to implement the Incident Management Blocking Equipment Pilot Project. An overview of the 2020 Traffic Incident Management Equipment Purchase Call for Projects was provided, including eligible recipients and activities, as well as ineligible activities. Approximately \$1.5 million was available and a total of 21 applications totaling approximately \$2.67 million were received. Of the 21 applications, 6 were ineligible. It was noted that 3 applications were received requesting blocking equipment, which will be funded using a local funding source as part of the Incident Management Equipment Blocking Pilot Project. Details of the applications received in each subregion, as well as the scoring criteria and methodology were provided in Electronic Item 4.2. Projects recommendations for the eastern subregion total \$939,140 and \$303,802 in the western subregion for a total funding recommendation of \$1,242,942. Ms. Fountain noted that where appropriate, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) may lead procurement activities for some of the smaller equipment purchases and procure in bulk through consolidated purchases or through cooperative purchase organizations. Ineligible projects were also highlighted. In the eastern subregion, these include: City of Frisco, drones (due to federal restrictions on drones made in China); City of Lucas, emergency traffic incident management vehicle (due to Buy America Compliancy); Flower Mound, two GPS Opticom System upgrades and Richardson, Opticom System upgrade (due to CMAQ funding requirements); and Prosper, drones (due to federal restrictions on drones made in China). Western subregion ineligible projects include four City of Fort Worth projects for a portable traffic signal, advanced traffic signal detector, battery back-up unit (should be submitted in Regional Traffic Signal Program), and a camera equipment project for which funding was reduced due to system redundancy. Ms. Fountain noted project recommendation tables were provided in Electronic Item 4.1. The schedule for this effort was reviewed. Regional Transportation Council (RTC) action is anticipated in July, followed by action of the Executive Board. Interlocal agreement coordination activities are also expected to begin in July. As part of the call for projects, requests for blocking equipment to protect first responders at crash sites were received. Staff proposed to fund the equipment using Regional Toll Revenue funds, if approved by the RTC. Projects were submitted by the Cities of Mesquite, Grand Prairie, and Flower Mound totaling \$132,000. Matthew Hotelling discussed the Opticom System projects that were considered ineligible and noted that it seemed efforts that would aid in responders arriving to the scene quickly to clear accidents would be ranked well, but noted that he understood slower traffic flow likely was an air quality issue. Ms. Fountain noted that he was correct, impacts to traffic signal synchronization are an air quality issue. Michael Morris discussed the incremental benefits of emergency vehicles being able to proceed through a traffic signal using Opticom software, which negatively impacts traffic signal progression, versus the use of sirens and lights. He suggested a review of systems that maximize safety benefits without negatively impacting the air quality benefits, what types of technologies are implemented by

agencies in the region, and how to mature the region with consistent technologies. Chris Klaus noted that the Texas Department of Transportation is currently soliciting ideas for its annual Research Program and that staff could develop a research proposal on the GPS technologies discussed. Mr. Morris noted that if unsuccessful, a project could be proposed for the Unified Planning Work Program to create a subcommittee of STTC members interested in advancing the equity of technologies in the region. A motion was made to recommend Regional Transportation Council approval of the updated project recommendations for the 2020 incident management Equipment Purchase Call for projects, and staff to administratively switch out Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds with Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds for projects that are not eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funding, and allocation of \$132,000 in Regional Toll Revenue funding to implement the incident management blocking equipment pilot project. John Polster (M); Katherine Beck (S). The motion passed unanimously.

5. **Endorsement of Action Approving \$300,000 in Temporary Interim Funding for Air Quality Initiatives:** Michael Morris noted that selected North Central Texas Council of Governments air quality staff are funded through the Management and Operations Program. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) previously approved \$4 million for air quality initiatives. However, the transition between the multiyear agreements with the Texas Department of Transportation was not completed in time. NCTCOG staff proposed \$300,000 in RTC Local funds be temporarily programmed as an interim measure in advance of the anticipated formal funding agreement to support air quality initiatives. It is anticipated the multiyear agreement will be completed by September 2, 2020. The RTC will be asked to ratify staff's action at its July 9, 2020, meeting. Details were provided in Electronic Item 5. A motion was made to endorse North Central Texas Council of Governments staff action to utilize \$300,000 in Regional Transportation Council Local funds as interim funding to support air quality initiatives. John Polster (M); Daniel Vedral (S). The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Interstate Highway 45 Zero-Emissions Vehicle Corridor Plan Update:** Bethany Hyatt provided an update on the IH 45 Zero-Emission Vehicle Deployment Plan. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that departments of transportation designate alternative fuel corridors as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. These alternative fuels include electric, hydrogen, compressed natural gas (CNG), liquified natural gas (LNG), and propane and help familiarize consumers with alternative fuels by signage placement and create reliability among these developing technologies. This effort is in response to an FHWA solicitation for an Alternative Fuels Corridor Deployment plan in August 2019 with a goal to strategically place electric and hydrogen fuel stations along IH 45 focused on freight vehicles. IH 45 is a 290-mile corridor from Dallas to the Galveston Port. Nearly half of the truck freight in Texas is moved through this corridor which is about 10,000 ton-miles of cargo. The corridor currently has a 111-mile gap between Ennis and Madisonville deeming it pending instead of ready for electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE). For the corridor to be classified as ready, a station must be placed every 50 miles within 5 miles of IH 45. Focusing in on this section, there are four possible focus areas for additional sites which include Corsicana, Fairfield, buffalo, and Centerville Texas. These areas are the more traveled cities of the corridor and warrant potential development. Building electric vehicle infrastructure in two-to-three of these possible locations will transition this corridor from pending to ready for EVSE. Regarding hydrogen, Texas currently has no publicly available stations. To transition to ready, around three-to-four hydrogen stations will need to be built within 100 miles of each other within 5 miles of IH 45. Through the IH 45 Zero-Emission Vehicle Deployment Plan, NCTCOG will identify best

technologies for end user groups, identify best market development opportunities, develop and convene stakeholder groups, and solicit infrastructure needs from industries. In May 2021, NCTCOG will have developed a robust list of stakeholders, convened at least 10 stakeholder meetings, held 1-2 corridor workshops, developed 1-2 case studies, and the infrastructure deployment plan will be finalized. In order to accomplish this, staff is seeking support on both battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell initiatives. Stakeholders will be divided into four subgroups: 1) infrastructure deployment, 2) vehicle availability, 3) customer identification, and 4) policy/incentives. Members interested in providing assistance through one of the stakeholder groups was asked to submit a stakeholder survey, provided through a link on page 9 of Electronic Item 6.

7. **Local Government Energy Reporting Update:** Bailey Muller presented information on North Central Texas Council of Governments efforts to increase the rate of local government energy reporting submitted to the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO). She highlighted the emissions impacts from electricity generation to the region, as well as the emissions attributed from building and facility energy use and efforts to mitigate potential emissions impacts. The Energy Management project is a collaborative partnership with the Air Quality staff of the Transportation Department and Environment and Development Department staff to expand local government staff capabilities in energy management topics, increase compliance with the state mandated energy reporting requirements, and improve accuracy of emissions reduction data associated with reduced energy use. Ultimately, the goals of this project will demonstrate the value added of increasing this efficiency education and accessing the impact of the regional outreach into the State. The Texas Health and Safety Code §388.005(c), originally passed in 2001, was established to aid efforts to attain federal air quality standards by reducing demand for electricity generation. It requires each political subdivision, institute or higher education, and state agency in a non-attainment area or an affected county to establish a goal to reduce electric consumption by at least five percent each calendar years and to submit an annual report to SECO. In 2019, the requirements were extended for another seven years. One of the main issues of energy report efforts is the lack of awareness and inconsistency in reporting year-to-year. Ms. Muller provided an overview of the reporting requirement, cities and counties who submitted reports in previous years, as well as staff efforts to increase compliance with and awareness of the requirement. Staff is also working to develop resources, training, and technical assistance to help increase local government efforts to implement the actions to meet energy goals. A local government energy toolkit has been created and available at www.conservenorthtexas.org. Additionally, free individualized assistance to entities interested in learning more about the local government energy reporting requirements is available. A working group of interested stakeholders has also been created to help staff identify barriers in preventing compliance so it is able determine the best resources for those in the region. Members interested in being part of the working group were asked to contact staff. Also highlighted were recent workshops and training available online, as well as a webinar on Procurement Strategies for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy scheduled for July 16, 2020. Additional information was provided in Electronic Item 7.
8. **Surface Transportation Technical Committee Officers and Announcement of New Regional Transportation Council Officers:** Dan Kessler noted the Surface Transportation Technical Committee officers for the 2020-2021 term were approved at the North Central Texas Council of Governments Executive Board's June 25, 2020, meeting: Chair Brian Moen, Assistant Director of Transportation, City of Frisco; Vice Chair Tanya Brooks, Assistant Director, Traffic Management Division, Transportation and Public Works, City of Fort Worth; and Secretary Ceason Clemens, P.E., Deputy District Engineer, TxDOT Dallas. In addition, Mr. Kessler noted Regional Transportation Council (RTC) officers approved at

the June 11, 2020, RTC meeting: Chair Roger Harmon, County Judge, Johnson County; Vice Chair Theresa Daniel, Ph.D., Commissioner, Dallas County; and Secretary Ann Zadeh, Councilmember, City of Fort Worth.

9. **Fast Facts:** Staff presentations were not given. Information was provided to members electronically for the following items.
 1. Auto Occupancy/High-Occupancy Vehicle Quarterly Subsidy Report (Electronic Item 9.1)
 2. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Policy Bundle Round 4 (Electronic Item 9.2)
 3. Regional Safety Advisory Committee New Member Appointments (Electronic Item 9.3)
 4. Air Quality Funding Opportunities for Vehicles (<https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/funding-and-resources/fundingvehicle>)
 5. Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Upcoming Events (<https://www.dfwcleancities.org/dfw-clean-cities-meetings>)
 6. Status Report on Ozone (Electronic Item 9.4)
 7. North Central Texas Council of Governments as SmartWay Affiliate in Action (<https://www.epa.gov/smartway/smartway-affiliates-action>)
 8. Progress North Texas (www.nctcog.org/ourregion)
 9. May Online Input Opportunity Minutes (Electronic Item 9.5)
 10. Public Comments Report (Electronic Item 9.6)
 11. Written Progress Reports:
 - Local Motion (Electronic Item 9.7)
 - Partner Progress Reports (Electronic Item 9.8)
10. **Other Business (Old and New):** There was no discussion on this item.
11. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the Surface Transportation Technical Committee is scheduled for 1:30 pm on July 24, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.