MINUTES
Regional Transportation Council
PUBLIC MEETING

Strategic Partnerships Round 3/Intersection Improvements/MTP Policy Bundle TDC Funding Program

Air Quality: Year in Review

High-Speed Rail Update

Meeting Dates and Locations

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) held a public meeting Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at 6:00 pm at the North Central Texas Council of Governments (Arlington); Christie Gotti, Senior Program Manager, moderated the meeting, attended by seven 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 (MPO) and amended on November 8, 2018. Staff presented information about:

1. Strategic Partnerships Round 3/Intersection Improvements/MTP Policy Bundle TDC Funding Program – presented by Brian Dell
2. Air Quality: Year in Review – presented by Jenny Narvaez
3. High-Speed Rail Update – presented by Kevin Feldt

The NCTCOG public meeting was held to educate, inform and seek comments from the public. Comments were solicited from those present who wished to speak for the record. The presentations made at the meeting are available at www.nctcog.org/input, and a video recording was posted at www.nctcog.org/video.

Each person who attended the public meeting received a packet with a meeting agenda, a sheet on which to submit written comments and copies of the presentations.

Summary of Presentations

Strategic Partnerships Round 3/Intersection Improvements/MTP Policy Bundle TDC Funding Program presentation:
Handout:

In April 2017, a process to select projects via several funding programs was presented to the RTC. Projects were categorized into 11 programs, and project selection has occurred in stages throughout 2017 and 2018.
The purpose of the strategic partnerships portion of the Strategic Partnerships Round 3/Intersection Improvements/MTP Policy Bundle TDC Funding Program is to coordinate and develop partnerships with local agencies and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to help fund high-priority projects, leverage non-RTC funds and advance project development. Eligible projects for this portion must have local partners contributing more than a 20 percent match, and the project must be of strategic importance to the region.

The purpose of intersection improvements is to coordinate with local agencies and TxDOT to identify intersections that need safety and traffic flow improvements. Selection criteria considered for this portion of the program include air quality benefits, cost effectiveness and current traffic volumes.

The purpose of the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) policy bundle transportation development credit (TDC) funding is to provide agencies with an opportunity to use MTP policy bundle TDCs on federally eligible local projects. Projects must be new and eligible to receive federal funds under Title 23 (Highway Program) or Title 49 (Transit Program) of the US Code. Selection criteria considered include current traffic volumes, air quality benefits, cost effectiveness and whether or not additional lanes are warranted.

Staff is proposing to allocate more than $225 million in funding through this program to various projects in the region. All details will be finalized before the RTC takes action on the Strategic Partnerships Round 3/Intersection Improvements/MTP Policy Bundle TDC Funding Program in December 2018.

**Air Quality: Year in Review presentation:**

Ten counties in North Texas violate federal standards for having high concentration of ground-level ozone, according to designations set forth by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This designation is known as nonattainment.

North Texas is currently under two ozone standards, one for 2008 and one for 2015. The attainment deadline for the 2008 standard was July 20, 2018. The region did not meet the standard, and therefore, its air quality status has been reclassified as serious. The nonattainment deadline for the 2015 standard is August 3, 2021.

NCTCOG staff completed many initiatives in 2018 to help improve air quality, including contracting with the EPA to award $2 million to replace diesel vehicles and equipment, streamlining alternative fuel vehicle purchasing and facilitating collaborations and partnerships. Additionally, the AirCheckTexas Program assisted consumers in repairing and replacing more than 55,000 vehicles, while the Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition helped reduce more than 23 million gallons of petroleum use. NCTCOG also hosted its own National Drive Electric Week (NDEW) event at the Grapevine Mills, where over 169 EVs gathered. It was the 2nd largest NDEW event in the country behind San Diego.

**High-Speed Rail Update presentation:**
There are several types of high-speed rail. Regional rail and intercity rail are conventional passenger rails that operate at up to 79 mph. Higher speed rail operates at between 70 and 110 mph while high-speed rail operates at more than 110 mph.

The Hyperloop, a new mode of transportation that moves passenger and cargo vehicles through a near-vacuum tube using electric propulsion, is another technology being incorporated into high-speed rail studies throughout the region.

There are currently three major high-speed rail projects in North Texas: Dallas-to-Houston, Fort Worth-to-Dallas and Fort Worth-to-Laredo. The Dallas-to-Houston project is being managed by Texas Central. A Dallas station location has been identified for this particular project, and coordination efforts among the Texas Central project, City of Dallas Station Zone Assessment, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), TxDOT and NCTCOG are ongoing. Current activity highlights include a draft environmental impact statement and construction activity preparation.

Fort Worth and Arlington station area studies have been completed for the Fort Worth-to-Dallas project. A Dallas station area study is currently being conducted, and NCTCOG staff completed a preliminary alignment analysis. The next step for this project is consultant procurement for the federal environmental impact study, which will last approximately 36 months. The main goal of this study is to attain a record of decision from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

TxDOT attained a planning-level record of decision from the FRA for the Fort Worth-to-Laredo project. NCTCOG staff is revisiting DFW alignment alternatives, investigating Hyperloop technology applicability, refining the project for an environmental study and coordinating with all MPOs involved in the project.

ORAL COMMENTS RECEIVED AT MEETING

Air Quality: Year in Review

Gary Hennessey, Citizen

A. Factors included in air quality studies

Question: Do the air quality studies consider certain emitters such as dry cleaners? If not, is there another organization that analyzes those types of sources?

Summary of response by Jenny Narvaez: Our studies focus on modes of transportation, but yes, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) does analyze other sources of pollution.

High-Speed Rail Update

Gary Hennessey, Citizen

A. High-speed rail collaboration with airlines

Question: High-speed will be in direct competition with all the airlines. There are dozens of flights back and forth between Dallas and Houston. Is there any possibility of collaboration between high-speed rail and some of the airports?
Summary of response by Kevin Feldt: Yes, it is possible, and the airlines seem to actually prefer not to offer the shorter distance flights because they aren’t as profitable. Southwest and American Airlines seem to be in favor of the high-speed rail.

Other

Gary Hennessey, Citizen

A. Current transportation studies

Question: Do we have any current studies going on?

Summary of response by Kevin Feldt: Yes, we are conducting a study in Dallas on how to connect services. We have a section in Mobility 2045 on people movers, and we want to incorporate multimodal transportation into the region’s system. We want to be able to provide people with choices.

Nick Norman, Citizen

A. Connecting different transportation modes

Comment: The River Legacy Park trail was just extended and it’s almost to Highway 360. It would be nice to be able to ride a bike to the train terminal.

Summary of response by Christie Gotti: We have actually funded this initiative. It’s part of the Regional Trail corridor project connecting five participating cities: Arlington, Dallas, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie and Irving. They funded the last connections for the project at our October RTC meeting.

WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY WEBSITE, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA

No public comments were received via website, email or social media.