

LOCAL MOTION

February 2023

Welcome to Local Motion, a monthly email newsletter from the North Central Texas Council of Governments Transportation Department.

4 cities recognized by Air North Texas for environmental awareness

The Air North Texas Partner Awards were announced at the January 12 Regional Transportation Council meeting in recognition of partners' efforts to improve the air we breathe throughout the 2022 ozone season. Four cities – Grand Prairie, Denton, Irving and Dallas – were recognized for their dedication to a cleaner North Texas.



The City of Grand Prairie was named 2022 Air North Texas Partner of the Year. Grand Prairie used a comprehensive approach involving social media, website content, advertising and traditional newsletter articles to encourage residents to help improve air quality through involvement with Air North Texas. For example, the city's website contains a renovated page informing visitors about the importance of air quality and how to reduce air pollution in North Texas. The page provides links to Air North Texas content, including air pollution alerts, which inform subscribers when ozone levels are forecast to be unhealthy.

In addition to advertising efforts, Grand Prairie, which has taken home Partner of the Year six out of the past seven years, used community events to spread the word about cleaner air. The city attended and hosted 14 community events attracting over 4,000 people, participated in various Clean Air Action Day activities for staff, industries, and the community and encouraged participation from employers through the Clean Air Industry Challenge.

The City of Denton won two awards, being recognized for Outstanding Outreach and its use of campaign mascot Arlo the Airmadillo in its promotion of improved air quality. The city's sustainability staff participated in 13 events drawing more than 2,500 people. Among them were National Night Out and a welcoming of incoming freshman college students to Denton for the 2022 school year. Staff discussed Arlo and Air North Texas at each of the city's outreach events. Arlo's Corner was a new addition that welcomed passersby at outreach

events and encouraged them to “meet Arlo.” These interactions prompted natural conversations and helped the city take home the Arlo Ambassador Award.

The City of Irving won the award for Outstanding Advertising. Irving informed residents about air quality through regular email blasts, including on high ozone days. Irving also posted Clean Air Action Day and ozone messages to its social media platforms. Additionally, Mayor Rick Stopfer and the City Council issued a Clean Air Action Day proclamation.

Finally, the City of Dallas received the award for Outstanding Initiative for the second consecutive year. The city’s Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability continued its cooperative program with the Dallas Public Library through the Earth Day Every Day program. Each month, OEQS worked with the library to offer an online presentation of an environmental topic. Several presentations focused on topics related to air quality. Staff also worked with the library for a special Clean Air Action Day event featuring a discussion with three members of the Dallas Environmental Commission.

Air North Texas is a regional public awareness campaign that includes 38 partners pursuing environmental awareness in North Texas. It was formed by the North Central Texas Council of Governments with support of the Air North Texas Coalition. Partners support the campaign by encouraging residents to commit to actions that improve air quality, such as working from home, bicycling, or walking to the store and packing a lunch. For more information, visit www.airnorthtexas.org.

Survey: You can help DART, TRE gauge demand this spring

The second phase of a regionwide transit survey will gather data from commuters on DART and Trinity Railway Express vehicles beginning in early February to help planners determine demand on the system and potential improvements.

Funded through a partnership between the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) and Trinity Metro this is the final phase of a regionwide transit survey that began last fall. This phase will conclude on Memorial Day. In September, passengers on DCTA, Trinity Metro and Arlington Via vehicles were randomly selected and asked to participate in a voluntary ridership survey.

The 2023 survey will operate the same as it did in the first phase last fall, with on-to-off and on-demand components. The two types of transit travel surveys will be conducted to determine how traditional, fixed route and on-demand (microtransit) riders are using the expanding public transportation network and indicate what changes could be made to better accommodate the needs of the growing region.

The on-to-off survey will attempt to measure demand and passenger trip patterns on each transportation mode. Upon boarding a bus, riders will be handed cards by surveyors



wearing blue vests and asked to return the cards when they disembark. On the region's participating rail lines, passengers will simply be asked at what station they will get off.

The questionnaire will involve surveyors asking randomly selected passengers about their current trip and their socioeconomic characteristics. Some passengers will be asked to fill out paper questionnaires instead of participating in interviews. For microtransit routes, riders will be asked to participate in the survey after they complete their trips.

Both survey formats will contain the same questions. Participation in the surveys is voluntary, and answers will be kept confidential. The goal is to collect data from a random sample of 10% of transit riders.

Dallas-Fort Worth is the fourth-largest region in the nation, with a population of approximately 8 million people. As North Texas attracts thousands of new residents each year on the way to a projected population of 11 million by 2045, transit will play a significant role in ensuring the transportation system remains reliable and continues to improve into the future.

For more information about the survey, email transitsurvey@nctcoq.org or visit <https://nctcoq.org/transitsurvey>.

By the Numbers

\$188.2 billion

General revenue available to lawmakers as they began the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature in Austin. The 140-day session started January 10.



88th Texas Legislature Underway in Austin

Lawmakers headed to the state Capitol as the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature kicked off on January 10. The Regional Transportation Council approved its legislative priorities in November, in advance of the legislative session. Ensuring transportation funding is available for the growing region, increasing roadway safety and improving air quality are among

the RTC's legislative priorities.

Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick were sworn into office for their third terms during the first week of the legislative session. Both shared their priorities, which include utilizing the state's budget surplus, property tax relief, school safety, improvements to the electric grid, border security and infrastructure funding.

In addition, during the first week of the session, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar released his biennial revenue estimate. He announced the state will have \$188.2 billion available in

general revenue over the next two-year budget term, which includes an estimated \$32.7 billion budget surplus.

Following his announcement, the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate filed the preliminary state budget bills for the 2024-2025 biennium. [Senate Bill 1](#) and [House Bill 1](#) both allocate nearly \$130.1 billion in general revenue. Funding for transportation totals \$35.6 billion for the biennium, including \$6.2 billion in Prop 1 funds and \$5.4 billion in Prop 7 funds. Members of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees will soon begin to meet and eventually adopt a final version of the budget for the full House and Senate to approve.

The regular session of the Texas Legislature concludes on May 29.



Hybrid public meeting to provide updates on safety, mobility Feb. 6

Residents are invited to learn more about transportation planning initiatives and provide their input during a hybrid public meeting at noon Feb. 6 at NCTCOG's Arlington offices, 616 Six Flags Drive. North Texans can also watch the

presentations live at www.publicinput.com/nctcogFeb23 or participate via phone by dialing 855-925-2801, then code 2862.

The Regional Safety Program seeks to address the increase in fatality and serious-injury crashes across the state and Dallas-Fort Worth region. NCTCOG is collaborating with the Texas Department of Transportation and other metropolitan planning organizations to identify strategies to reduce crashes. An overview of the engineering, enforcement and educational projects being developed will be provided during the meeting.

Because 10 Dallas-Fort Worth area counties are in nonattainment for ozone pollution, the Clean Air Act of 1990 requires an air quality analysis to be performed when a new metropolitan transportation plan is developed. The US Department of Transportation granted a successful transportation conformity determination for the Mobility 2045 update in December. Staff will present effects on final project recommendations due to the Transportation Conformity review process.

Additionally, modifications to the Fiscal Year 2022 and FY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) will be posted online for review and comment. The UPWP is a guide for transportation and air quality planning activities to be conducted by the metropolitan planning organization.

The following will also be highlighted during the meeting: Regional Smoking Vehicle Program, vehicle incentive and funding opportunities, Engine Off North Texas and administrative revisions to the Mobility 2045 - 2022 Update.

For those who want to take transit to the meeting, \$6 roundtrip rides from the Centerport/DFW Airport Station to NCTCOG are available through VIA at <https://city.ridewithvia.com/arlington>.

For special accommodations due to disabilities or language interpretation, contact 817-695-9255 or email jcastillo@nctcog.org. Public comments will be accepted until March 7.

Public meetings offer residents a chance to shape transit in 2 areas of the region

North Texans will have two opportunities in February to provide input on a pair of transit studies examining how to close gaps in the transit network and create a more seamless experience for riders.

NCTCOG will host a public meeting at 5:30 p.m. February 23 at the Denton Senior Center, 509 N. Bell Ave. in Denton, to discuss preliminary outcomes from the Denton County Transit Study. This study is considering improvements needed in areas of Denton County not served by the Denton County Transportation Authority.

NCTCOG initiated the [Denton County Transit Study](#) to develop a comprehensive public transportation plan focusing on areas of the county not already members of DCTA, which serves Denton, Lewisville and Highland Village. Dallas Area Rapid Transit and Trinity Metro also provide service to parts of the county, along with prequalified, demand-response services such as Span Transit.

The transit needs of eastern Dallas, Kaufman and Rockwall counties will be the subject of a public meeting at 6 p.m. February 28 at the Rockwall County Library. For details, visit [the project webpage](#). Planners want to get a better understanding of the existing transit needs and development patterns and how they could integrate residents outside existing transit authorities into a more comprehensive system. To do so, they are seeking public comments through the upcoming meeting and a transit survey. To participate in the survey, visit <https://publicinput.com/12626>.



For more information about Local Motion topics, contact Brian Wilson at 817-704-2511 or bwilson@nctcog.org. Visit www.nctcog.org/trans for more information on the department.

--Imagery provided by NCTCOG and TxDOT.
