Monthly RTC Update
A brief summary of January RTC actions.

NCTCOG/Corps of Engineers Agreement Update
Bill Extends Authority to Enter into Additional Agreements
NCTCOG has an agreement with the US Army Corps of Engineers to fund a position to expedite permitting for regionally significant transportation projects, but the current allocation of funds is expected to be expended in May 2011.

NAS Fort Worth, JRB Regional Committee Update
Regional Coordination Committee Develops Legislative Agenda
Local governments surrounding the Naval Air Station Fort Worth, Joint Reserve Base formed the Regional Coordination Committee to promote and preserve their military mission.

Ecological Project Finalized
NCTCOG Project Integrates Ecosystem and Transportation Planning
NCTCOG is wrapping up a 31-month project to more efficiently and effectively integrate environmental considerations in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Funding for Air Quality Programs in Jeopardy
Proposed State Budget Impact on Two Air Quality Programs in North Texas
The Texas Legislature recently filed the draft state budget and proposals have the Low-Income Repair and Replacement Assistance Program and the Texas Emission Reduction Plan taking significant funding cuts.

Events
February RTC Meeting
The RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2011, at 1 p.m.

Sign up to receive e-mails about upcoming Regional Transportation Council public meetings, publications and information.
Monthly RTC Update

January RTC Action Summary

All meeting information can be found at www.nctcog.org/trans/committees/rtc/previous.asp.

- Approved project recommendations for the North Central Texas Clean School Bus Program 2010 call for projects. As funds are still available for this program, RTC approved staff to begin seeking additional applications in early 2011.

- Approved an updated project selection timeline associated with the State Highway 161 Regional Toll Revenue Funding/Strategic Partnership with TxDOT. Due to a previous delay, some project approvals must be considered in February 2011 to accommodate the availability of funding.

- Approved a plan to develop agreements with major metropolitan regions surrounding the Dallas-Fort Worth region in order to coordinate passenger rail investments that are integrated into the new Mobility 2035 plan.

NCTCOG/Corps of Engineers Agreement Update

Bill Extends Authority to Enter into Additional Agreements

The Regional Transportation Council recently solicited the region’s congressional delegation for support of HR 6184. This bill, signed into law last month, extends the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (WRDA) through 2016. NCTCOG has an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to fund a position to expedite permitting for regionally significant transportation projects. This bill eliminates possible disruptions in progress and ensures the authority to enter into additional agreements with the USACE for six more years. The USACE legislative authority to enter into this agreement is supported by WRDA which has traditionally been extended on an annual basis by the U.S. Congress. These yearly extensions make long term planning for coordination difficult.

NCTCOG and its regional transportation partners have greatly benefited from this agreement with the Corps of Engineers. Enhanced communication has led to faster permitting times, reduced impact on the aquatic environment and reduced cost for mitigation efforts. To date, 27 permits have been issued and several more have been withdrawn due to enhanced coordination. NCTCOG, partner transportation agencies and the Corps of Engineers have all expressed satisfaction with the current agreement.

NCTCOG has funded a dedicated Corps of Engineers staff person since October 2008 when the Regional Transportation Council authorized $500,000 for the project. The current allocation of funds is expected to be expended in May 2011 and NCTCOG is currently in the process of determining possible funding sources to continue the project.

Visit www.nctcog.org/traces/Resource_Agency_Coordination for additional information.
NAS Fort Worth, JRB Regional Committee Update

Regional Coordination Committee Develops Legislative Agenda

Local governments surrounding the Naval Air Station Fort Worth, Joint Reserve Base (NAS Fort Worth, JRB) formed the Regional Coordination Committee (RCC) to promote and preserve the military mission at the installation. The committee is responsible for encouraging compatible land-use planning, conducting community outreach and participating in military affairs surrounding the installation. In an effort to promote the mission, the RCC has developed a legislative agenda for the 82nd legislative session.

The RCC supports legislation that promotes compatible growth that lessens the impact on military installations and provides options for cities and counties to manage growth. The committee also supports legislation relating to land use around military installations that does not mandate activities that would remove local flexibility. Additionally, the RCC supports legislation that would enhance regulatory authority in extra-territorial jurisdictions to ensure compatible development for the health and safety of residents.

Military installations in Texas often have unique conditions regarding encroachment and compatibility surrounding their base. The RCC members believe military installations, along with the municipalities that surround them, are best equipped to develop methods to combat incompatible development.

Visit www.nctcog.org/rcc for additional information about the Regional Coordination Committee.

Ecological Project Finalized

NCTCOG Project Integrates Ecosystem and Transportation Planning

NCTCOG is wrapping up a 31-month project to more efficiently and effectively integrate environmental considerations in the metropolitan transportation planning process. This project, funded by a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant with state and local 50/50 match, sought to further an ecosystem approach for North Central Texas through development of a Regional Ecosystem Framework (REF). The goals of this project were to build and strengthen collaborative partnerships, identify and assess vital ecosystems and integrate conservation and transportation planning, all within each watershed. A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. One of the key outcomes of this project was to use sub-watersheds as the level of geography to assess a relative value of a sub-watershed to the region and indicate resources that may be sensitive to future development, including transportation or other infrastructure types.

NCTCOG is currently finalizing several deliverables to guide the use of an ecosystem approach. NCTCOG has “valued” the region’s sub-watersheds based on a number of resources thought to be important to North Central Texas. Doing so will help planners identify natural resources earlier in the transportation planning process and determine mitigation strategies that further preservation or restoration initiatives in line with the REF and regional priorities.

This project is being described in a user’s guide to give local governments, resource agencies and other interested organizations and individuals a better understanding of the ecosystem approach and how it can be used by North Central Texas communities. NCTCOG is also working to have the “valuing” resource available via an online, interactive mapping feature.

Funding for Air Quality Programs in Jeopardy

Proposed State Budget Impact on Two Air Quality Programs in North Texas

The Texas Legislature recently filed HB1/SB1, the draft state budget for fiscal years 2012 - 2013. Current budget proposals have the Low-Income Repair and Replacement Assistance Program (LIRAP) and the Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) taking significant funding cuts. LIRAP could cease to exist starting in September 2011, as there is no funding appropriated in the draft budget, and TERP is proposed to take a 51 percent funding cut. These are two of the most cost-effective programs currently being implemented to reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) in North Central Texas.

The LIRAP and TERP programs are two elements in place in North Texas to reduce high-emitting automobile and heavy-duty diesel vehicle emissions, respectively. Minimizing NOx emissions from these two vehicle sources is critical as the region struggles to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone. The proposed funding cuts will make it much more difficult for the region to reach and/or maintain federal air quality standards, provide residents with healthy air and may introduce complications to businesses currently located in or considering moving to the area.

LIRAP consists of two components, the AirCheckTexas Drive a Clean Machine Program and the Local Initiative Project (LIP). The AirCheckTexas programs offers financial incentives to repair or remove high-emitting automobiles from the roadways. Since program’s inception, repair assistance has been provided to over 20,000 noncompliant vehicles. In addition, by replacing over 24,000 passenger vehicles in North Texas since the program expanded in 2008, LIRAP has reduced NOx emissions by approximately 1.1 tons per day.

LIP consists of an emissions enforcement program combating the exploitation of counterfeit, fictitious and improper state inspection certificates for polluting vehicles in the region. In the past few years, Dallas and Ellis County have confiscated over 1,400 counterfeit certificates and made over 150 felony arrests. This effort not only minimizes the illegal operation of motor vehicles, but also ensures that the estimated local and state revenue streams from the inspection/maintenance program are collected.

LIRAP and LIP are self-funded programs in that funds are collected from the residents of nonattainment counties who pay an additional $6 for each emissions inspection. These dedicated funds are collected by the state and held in a clean air account for distribution back to the counties from which they were collected. LIRAP and LIP revenues cannot be used for any other purpose.

The TERP program is also a self-funded program which includes a number of voluntary financial incentive and assistance programs that help improve the air quality in Texas. Incentives include grants to eligible projects to offset the cost associated with reducing emissions of NOx from high-emitting heavy-duty diesel on-road, non-road, locomotive and stationary emission sources. Since its inception, 4,887 projects have been awarded funding in North Central Texas, totaling to $265 million. The TERP program has reduced NOx emissions by approximately 18.8 tons per day, averaging under $5,000 per ton of NOx reduced.

Events

February RTC Meeting

The RTC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2011, at 1 p.m. Agenda material will be posted one week before the meeting at: www.nctcog.org/trans/committees/rtc.