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NCTCOG celebrates 40 years of transportation planning

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The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and Regional Transportation Council this year are celebrating the 40th anniversary of their designation by Gov. Dolph Briscoe as the metropolitan planning organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Much has changed since Briscoe's April 1974 decision. Throughout 2014, the NCTCOG Transportation Department is marking the decades of accomplishment by focusing on how transportation planning has enhanced life in DFW.

Forty years ago, the region looked much different from today. Many of the freeways were in place, but the transit agencies that now provide an alternative mode of transportation did not exist.

In 1974, the population stood at 2.6 million, a fraction of the 6.7 million who now call the region home. Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, one of the nation's busiest aviation facilities and a regional magnet for jobs, had just opened. And much of the population was concentrated in two counties — Dallas and Tarrant.

Since then, the transportation system has matured to meet the needs of a larger, denser region. Today, NCTCOG guides planning for 12 counties and faces the challenge of meeting the air-quality goals set by the federal government while addressing the transportation needs of

Key regional markers over the past 40 years

• April 18, 1974 – Governor Briscoe designates NCTCOG as the region's metropolitan planning organization.

• 1974 – Total Transportation 1990, the first long-range transportation plan, is approved, calling for $3 billion in transportation spending through 1990. By comparison, the latest long-range transportation plan, Mobility 2035 – 2013 Update, calls for $98.7 billion in improvements through 2035.

• 1978 – Regional Transportation Council is formed with 21 members. Today, its membership stands at 43.

• 1983 – Dallas Area Rapid Transit and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority are formed to serve as transit agencies for the eastern and western sub-regions, respectively.

• 1991 – Congress passes ISTEA, increasing responsibilities of the RTC to include programming funding for specific projects.

• 1996 – DART introduces light rail starter

system.

• 1996 – First segment of the Trinity Railway Express commuter rail line opens in Dallas. By 2001, it connects Dallas to Fort Worth.

• 1998 – President George Bush Turnpike opens between Midway and Preston roads.

• 2001 – Texas Legislature creates AirCheckTexas Drive a Clean Machine to assist qualifying motorists with repair and replacement of high-emitting vehicles.

• 2005 – RTC approves Sustainable Development Funding Program to encourage public-private partnerships that enhance the capacity of the transportation system, rail access and mixed-use development, as well as address air quality.

• 2007 – North Texas Tollway Authority makes $3.2 billion payment to the region for the right to develop and maintain State Highway 121 (now Sam Rayburn Tollway).

• 2009 – Metropolitan planning area is expanded to 12 counties with the addition of Hood, Hunt and Wise.

• 2011 – Denton County Transportation Authority debuts 21-mile A-train commuter line between Denton and Carrollton.

• 2014 – NCTCOG, NTTA and the Texas Department of Transportation reach an agreement to build SH 360 extension to US Highway 287. The extension, which was part of the region's first long-range transportation plan, could open in 2018.

an ever-changing area.

The Regional Transportation Council will mark the anniversary during its meeting Thursday, celebrating the successes of transportation planning. The meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. in Arlington.

As transportation options have been added and air-quality concerns have persisted, NCTCOG and the RTC have worked side by side with regional, state and federal partners to ensure the transportation system stays up to date.

For further highlights and developments throughout the year, visit www.nctcog.org/dfwmpo40.

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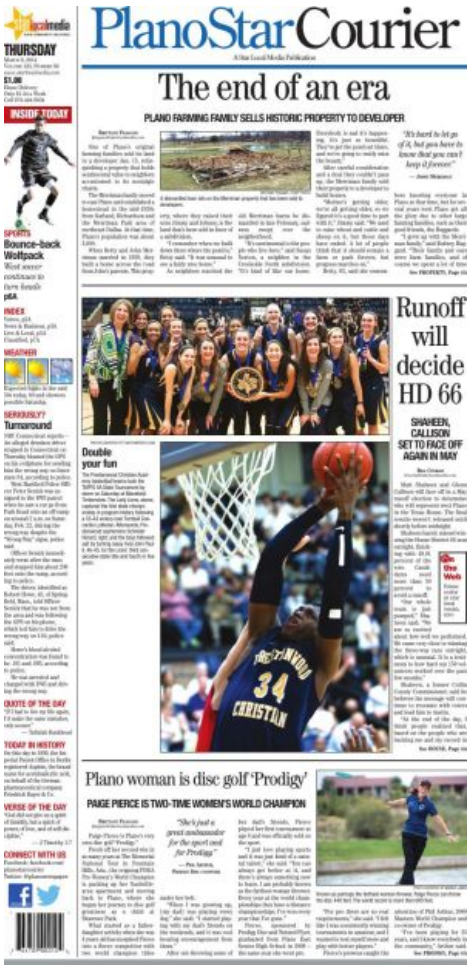
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