

A City on the Move

Fort Worth Transportation and Public Works' Kelly Porter
lays the track for the next 25 years. BY SALLY VERRANDO

Kelly Porter has a thing for signals, signs, maps and geography. It's an interest he developed as a kid.

"I'm kind of an odd one in the sense that I've wanted to be a planner since I was 6 years old," he says, citing his early years as the catalyst for a lifelong interest in city planning and land use.

Porter is one of the assistant directors of Fort Worth Transportation and Public Works, managing the Regional Transportation and Innovation Division for two-and-a-half years and planning the city's transportation future.

From the Southeast Connector project to alternative transportation, Porter knows that interconnecting North Texas is a team endeavor. He took time to sit with *The Lens* to discuss his vision of the future.

With Fort Worth being one of the fastest growing cities in the country, how are you keeping up with roadway demands for the near future?

We do a bond program every four years, so we've been able to build out and recapitalize a lot of our infrastructure to try to meet demands. We've also tried to be more aggressive about leveraging federal and state dollars through partnerships with our regional transportation council and the federal government. In 2026, we have our next bond program, which helps us fund another wave of capital projects.

What's the next big project in Fort Worth after the Southeast Connector is completed?

You'll see quite a few big projects happening with the Texas Department of Transportation's work on U.S. 287 North going up towards the Haslet-Saginaw-North Fort Worth area, expanding that road and adding in frontage roads. We've also been working with TXDOT on improvements to the I-30 West Freeway and East Freeway.

We've been trying to invest over the last several years not only in our roadway infrastructure for cars but also in other ways to move people and goods, such as pedestrians and bicycles in micro-mobility infrastructure. We're trying to make that infrastructure safer and more comfortable, so you'll see us adding protection between bicycles, sidewalks and cars. We're spending a lot of time working with our transit agency on various projects. The TEXRail extension into the hospital district near Southside will bring that train line into a big job center.

We've also been working with Trinity Metro on enhanced bus stops across the city with new bus pads so people have dry ground to stand on and improved shelters to make transit more comfortable for folks to use. The red bus lanes will help with operations on Jones Street to increase visibility, ease congestion and improve safety.

Fort Worth is the largest Amtrak station in Texas. We're looking at potential extensions up to Kansas City as well as a line that will go to Atlanta, in addition to the current service to Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio and Oklahoma City.

One of the biggest things we're trying to do is also look at our land use and create more walkable communities, providing more options for people living closer to where they work and offering more amenities within their neighborhoods. A good land-use plan is a good transportation plan. We're also looking at broadband high-speed internet as a form of transportation because we found out in the pandemic that it's key to people being connected to the rest of the world. That's really what transportation's about—connecting people.

What's your vision of Fort Worth 50 years from now?

Fifty years is a long time. I can tell you that right now is an exciting time to be in Fort Worth. Our horizon year is 2050.

My team is going to lead the Moving a Million Master Transportation Plan, which will be the first fully integrated multimodal transportation plan in the city. It'll help guide our transportation capital investments, coordinated with land use and our city policies, for what transportation looks like over the next 25 years.

High-speed rail would put us in a league of cities enjoying that level of connectivity. The North Central Texas Council of Governments has been the lead on the segment from Fort Worth to Dallas. We're super excited about having a station.

Taking care of our folks that live here and invest here is important to us in being a world-class city, to being a truly livable and green city going forward. Public involvement is really the cornerstone. It's important to be involved and for people to share their thoughts on what kind of city they want to live in. 🌍



Kelly Porter

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FORT WORTH TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS



Full Speed Ahead

As Dallas and Fort Worth skirmish over the anticipated high-speed rail corridor connecting its cities to Houston, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) referees to keep the decade-long project on track.

"Our interest is in finding a win-win solution to advance this project and continue moving us forward," says Brendon Wheeler, NCTCOG's program manager of transportation planning and metropolitan transportation plan.

"These kinds of conversations from Dallas and Fort Worth are very timely as part of this transparent process. We're trying to address the concerns as we go."

NCTCOG supports the "one-seat ride" so travelers don't change seats or trains while making the trip from Fort Worth to Houston in about two hours.

Besides the benefits of convenience and service, the number of vehicles taken off congested roadways would be significant, he says. Reducing road traffic can only help as forecasts predict North Texas' population will grow from eight million to 12 million by 2050.

The Texas project is in the middle of an extensive 12-month review of the National Environmental Policy Act, involving several federal and state agencies. At the conclusion of the study, Wheeler estimates affected communities will hold public meetings by the end of this year or the beginning of 2025.