

CHAPTER 2

# STATE OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM



Like most Americans, residents in Central Oklahoma rely heavily on the automobile as their primary means of travel. In 2010, the average daily vehicle miles traveled in the OCARTS area was about 30 million miles, which equates to each person traveling about 26.5 miles per day. In 2040, the OCARTS area average daily vehicle miles of travel is expected to grow to roughly 46 million—a 54 percent increase.

This increased growth in travel will likely result in more congestion, and traffic incidents, which may lead to higher levels of auto emissions. Although Central Oklahoma is one of the more heavily developed urban areas in the state, its large geographic area and relatively low density results in almost exclusive reliance on automobile travel. If current development patterns continue, commute times will worsen in coming years as a result of increased travel distances and increased congestion.

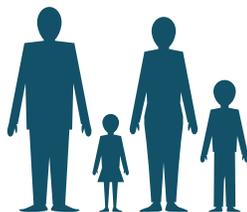
The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 set the stage for highway travel being the nation's primary means of mobility and goods movement. This Act called for the completion of a 40,000-mile national system of interstate and national defense highways. With the interstate system, nearly complete by the late 1980s, Congress began to focus on a more multimodal approach to transportation with the passage

of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. ISTEA emphasized the need for more alternatives to private automobile travel—public transportation, bicycle networks and sidewalk systems—and established the statewide and metropolitan planning requirements to accomplish those goals. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 1998 and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 built upon the foundation of ISTEA. They continued the focus on multimodal transportation options, while also promoting system maintenance, air quality, safety and security. During the development of the Encompass 2040 long-range transportation plan, two additional federal surface transportation bills were passed, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act of 2012 and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015. Each continued to emphasize the creation of a more safe, equitable, and efficient transportation system while also increasing accountability by implementing transportation system performance measures.

The following sections provide a brief snapshot of each travel mode that makes up Central Oklahoma's regional transportation system. Each of these will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this report.

### Population

2010 Estimate – 1,142,338  
 2040 Estimate – 1,595,168  
 Percent Change – 40%



### Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Daily

2010 Estimate – 30,266,000  
 2040 Estimate – 46,550,000  
 Percent Change – 54%



### Employment

2010 Estimate – 601,839  
 2040 Estimate – 875,402  
 Percent Change – 45%



### Freight Tonnage (annual)

2010 Estimate – 101,845,268  
 2040 Estimate – 137,859,602  
 Percent Change – 35%



## STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

In 2010, the base year of Encompass 2040, the OCARTS area street and highway system consisted of 201 linear miles of interstates, freeways and expressways; 59 linear miles of turnpikes; and 1,899 linear miles of arterials. The remainder of the network is comprised of numerous miles of local and collector streets. Improvement and maintenance of these facilities generally fall under the jurisdiction of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (OTA), and local city and county governments, respectively.

The street and highway system provides the foundation for all modes of transportation. In addition to serving automobile and truck traffic, it provides the infrastructure upon which public and private transit services are operated and provides direct access to the region's airports, trucking terminals, freight and passenger rail services, and recreational trails. Safe and efficient operation of the metropolitan street and highway system, therefore, strengthens the productivity, safety, and efficiency of all transportation modes.

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## TRANSIT

Total transit ridership within the OCARTS area in 2010 was 15,800 trips per day. This represents less than half of one percent of the total daily trips made throughout the region. With these figures, it goes without saying that Central Oklahoma is woefully deficient in use of public transportation for a metropolitan area of its size. The amount of public transportation services available is directly tied to the level of funding spent on it from all sources—federal, state, and local. Currently, about \$35 per capita is spent within our region for transit, compared to an average of \$80 per capita for similar sized metro areas. Central Oklahoma currently has no dedicated local funding source for transit, unlike most other major metropolitan areas. Therefore, the public bus services that do exist are funded, in part, from local general revenues that must compete with other local needs such as roads, parks, and fire and police protection.

However, public desire for broader and better public transportation has been steadily growing within Central Oklahoma in recent years. In 2005, the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority (COTPA) commissioned the Regional Fixed Guideway Study (FGS) that resulted in

a system plan for the year 2030. The FGS examined eleven corridors throughout the OCARTS area and recommended transit technologies for each that, as a whole, would create a regional public transportation system, connecting the downtown core with various suburban communities. Following the Fixed Guideway Study, ACOG conducted an independent study to examine various corridors and their potential for hosting enhanced and expanded public transit options. Titled CentralOK!go, this Commuter Corridors Study of Central Oklahoma highlighted several major corridors and access points within the region that could benefit from enhanced transit services and a commuter rail system linking the region from Edmond to Norman.

Building upon the recommendations of the Fixed Guideway Study, ACOG initiated a visioning process known as the Regional Transit Dialogue (RTD) in 2009. Its purpose was to engage locally elected officials, policy stakeholders, private sector leaders, and the general public in a discussion about how the region could develop a more comprehensive public transportation system in the years and decades to come. Utilizing a steering committee and several working subcommittees, the RTD also explored potential governing concepts, funding strategies, and transit supportive land use policies. Following the Commuter Corridors Study in 2015, a Task Force was established between six stakeholder cities (Edmond, Del City, Midwest City, Moore, Norman, and Oklahoma City) in Central Oklahoma to push forward with the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The Task Force has conducted public outreach and polling efforts, and plans to use local funding options to create and establish a commuter rail transit line for the region.

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## REGIONAL BIKE NETWORK

Communities within Central Oklahoma have become increasingly engaged in planning for and implementing bicycle facilities over the past two decades. This coincides with the federal emphasis placed on bicycle planning as part of ISTEA in 1991 and in subsequent federal surface transportation laws. New requirements were put in place for MPOs to include regional bicycle plans as part of their long-range transportation plans and each state department of transportation was required to hire a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator to help implement this federal priority.

During the development of Encompass 2040, ACOG adopted a regional bike master plan and seven OCARTS area communities adopted trails master plans, including a 450-mile system adopted by the City of Oklahoma City. In total, the region has about 428 miles of existing bike facilities, and another 866 planned miles. Several federal-aid funding categories traditionally used for road projects now include bicycle and pedestrian improvements as eligible projects. In addition to these federal sources, several of Central Oklahoma’s local governments have provided significant local funds to implement their bike networks. For example, a general obligation bond issue approved by Oklahoma City voters in 2007 included funding for bicycle improvements and the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area Projects 3 (MAPS 3) sales tax package includes \$40 million to continue implementation of the City’s planned bike trails.

As part of each long-range plan update, ACOG provides a forum for its member communities to evaluate regional connections that will enhance their individual trails plans and establish a regional network that will eventually provide a transportation alternative.

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**PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM**

While there is no regional network of planned sidewalks and walking trails, all OCARTS area communities are encouraged to provide sidewalks to enhance the walkability of their communities and the region. Currently, ten communities have ordinances that require sidewalk construction along arterial streets as part of the subdivision or building permit process.

The City of Oklahoma City developed a sidewalk master plan, passed in 2012, that builds upon an analysis of existing, under construction, and funded sidewalks within the City. The Oklahoma City MAPS 3 sales tax vote included a budget of \$10 million to construct sidewalks in priority locations throughout the city. One of the key considerations will be locations that provide access to bus stops. The lack of sidewalks near bus stops has been a recurring complaint among area residents for years, especially those with a disability.

Sidewalks are a federal priority and most federal-aid funding categories include construction of sidewalks and other pedestrian walkways as eligible activities. The MPO criteria for evaluating and distributing the federal funds provided to ACOG for local government projects also reflect an emphasis on sidewalks constructed both independently and in conjunction with roadway improvements.

**GOODS MOVEMENT**

Transportation of freight is often considered the lifeline of a region because of the essential need for movement of goods and products. Our local and national economies rely on efficient, safe, and secure freight transportation to connect businesses, suppliers, markets, and consumers. Goods movement generally involves the shipment of products by truck, rail, water, air and pipeline, or a combination of two or more of these modes.

The OCARTS area includes about 443 trucking companies, two Class I and two Class III freight rail lines, four rail terminals, and seven public airports. In 2012, 69.32 percent of all OCARTS area freight tonnage was transported by truck, another 3.5 percent was shipped by rail and less than one percent by air. As evidenced by these numbers, and typical for most metropolitan areas, truck traffic dominates the inbound, outbound, and intra-freight movements in Central Oklahoma, and this trend is expected to continue.

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**AIRPORT ACCESS**

The OCARTS area includes seven public airports: Will Rogers World Airport, Wiley Post Airport, and Clarence E. Page Airport in Oklahoma City, Max Westheimer Airport in Norman, Guthrie-Edmond Regional Airport in Guthrie, David Jay Perry Airport in Goldsby, and Purcell Municipal Airport. Additionally, Central Oklahoma is home to Tinker Air Force Base, one of the nation’s three Air Logistics Centers, located about eight miles southeast of downtown Oklahoma City. Opened originally in 1941 as the Midwest Depot, Tinker AFB now employs roughly 25,000 military personnel, federal civilians, and contractors, making it the largest single-site employer in Oklahoma.

The focus of Encompass 2040 in relation to air cargo, passenger air travel, and military operations is to address improvements that will enhance airport access by other modes—streets and highways, transit, and rail. This Plan does not address airport operations, development, or land use within the individual airport properties. Each airport operator maintains an airport master plan to focus on its future needs and to guide growth and development within the individual airport “fence lines.”