

Interagency Transportation Report RTC / TxDOT / NTTA / DART / DRMC / DFW Airport / HSR February 2018

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

RTC Update on IH 635 LBJ East. After the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) failed to act on the procurement of a design-build contract for the LBJ East project (see recap in TxDOT section), the RTC was briefed on a potential funding scenario that would pull together funds from several sources, including the delay of several projects in the region. The RTC did not take any action on the funding but did approve a letter to the TTC reaffirming the region's commitment to the project and willingness to work out the funding issues.

Council member McGough hosted a community meeting in his district on Thursday, February 15th that was attended by more than 250 citizens. The meeting was intended to present the project elements and answer questions, reaffirm community support for the project including the optional toll managed lanes, and encourage citizens to become active in pushing for project implementation.

Workshop on Mobility 2045 Plan. NCTCOG staff held a workshop for the RTC prior to their regular business meeting on February 8th. The workshop presented draft recommendations for each component of the plan, discussed available funding, and summarized key policies that are being suggested. In particular, the plan will more aggressively address the role of advances in vehicle technology and automation. It will also include a recommendation to establish a core area that is recommended for continued development and implementation of toll managed lanes as a tool to fund improvements and provide an option for reliable travel times. The Plan will be made available for public comment in April/May with final approval by the RTC on June 14th. Additional information is available online at: <http://www.nctcog.org/mobility2045>.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Update Includes Dallas Projects. The UPWP is the federally-required work program for the transportation planning program at NCTCOG. It is comprehensively updated every two years and modified as needed between major updates. The RTC approved the following modifications affecting City of Dallas planning studies:

- The section identifying North Texas Tollway Authority Feasibility Studies and Strategic Corridor Initiatives was modified to remove references to the "Trinity Parkway" from the list of potential corridors to be studied.
- The Harry Hines Boulevard Corridor Study from Loop 12 to Downtown Dallas removed the reference to a \$200,000 local funding match and replaced it with the use of Transportation Development Credits (TDC) as the local match.
- The M-Line Extension Feasibility Study removed the reference to a \$200,000 local funding match and replaced it with the use of TDCs as the local match.

Blue-Green-Grey Program Awards. The "Blue-Green-Grey" grant program came out of the 2017 Irving Transportation Summit and was first presented to the RTC at their September 2017 meeting. It is a small program intended to encourage innovative ideas that simultaneously address water (blue), environment (green), and transportation infrastructure (grey) issues. Grants provide up to \$50,000 as seed money to develop ideas for future full funding

consideration. Three projects were approved by the RTC – one within the City of Dallas – DART’s Community Gardens Hatcher Station Pilot for \$29,170.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

TxDOT Update on IH 635 LBJ East. When the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) met on January 25th, the design-build procurement for the LBJ East project was on their agenda as an action item, and it was anticipated that the procurement would be approved. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the meeting, TTC Chairman Bruce Bugg announced that the Commission would have a presentation on the item and take public comment but would not take action. Mr. Kleinman joined other RTC members in speaking in support of the project and emphasizing the need to approve the procurement to keep the project on schedule. Mr. McGough spoke on behalf of the community and was joined by several citizens who voiced their support for the project.

It appeared that Mr. Bugg’s main concern was that a funding package had not been sufficiently worked out to ensure that the project could be built (without a toll element), and he did not want to proceed with the design-build procurement without a better understanding of the funding. The cost estimate for LBJ East is \$1.8 billion.

Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) Resignations. A new development that could add more uncertainty to TTC decision-making on the LBJ East project is that Tyron Lewis (Odessa) and Victor Vandergriff (DFW) have resigned from the five-member Commission. Mr. Lewis will continue to serve until the Governor names a replacement. Mr. Vandergriff has been a champion for project funding in our region and guided the CityMAP study. His resignation is effective immediately.

Southern Gateway Groundbreaking. The Southern Gateway groundbreaking ceremony will be held on Wednesday, February 28th at 1:00 p.m. at 1200 East Jefferson Boulevard (DART’s Fleet Services Facility). Mayor Rawlings and Council members Griggs and Carraway are expected to speak at the event. State and regional participants will include TTC Chair Bruce Bugg, Senator Royce West, County Judge Clay Jenkins, Commissioner John Wiley Price, and RTC Chair Rob Franke.

North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

SH 360 Extension Project Nearing Completion. The 9.7-mile extension of SH 360, which will be called “360 Tollway”, is a joint project between TxDOT and the NTTA. TxDOT is financing and building the project, while the NTTA will own, operate and maintain it once construction is complete. Phase 1 of the project from Green Oaks Boulevard to U.S. 287 will be open to traffic this spring; the second phase, which will extend the project to US 67, is not funded.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

Transit Fare Structure and Increases Approved. At their February 13th meeting, the DART Board approved the agency’s first fare increase since 2012 by a narrow 8-7 vote. Most fare categories will increase about 20 percent. The fare increase was built-in to DART’s 2018 budget and represented about \$10 million in revenue. Current Board policy calls for a fare study and increase every five years. However, the Board committed to reexamining this approach during 2019 budget discussions this summer. There seems to be interest in making

smaller fare increases on a more frequent basis, linking the increase to an index of inflation, and considering some additional reduced fare options for low-income persons.

Board Briefed on Service Standards: Route Type and Structure. This was the second in a planned series of Board briefings on DART service standards. It explained the current structure of DART's rail/bus route system and the initial recommendations from the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) that included simplified bus network design, more regional crosstown service, development of a "rapid ride" bus network, and a core high frequency bus network. The briefing also included a discussion of the pros and cons of converting to a grid system of bus routes. Future briefings will focus on the hours of service and service frequency.

Employment of Former Board Members Discussed. The hiring of recent former Board member Jerry Christian as a part-time contract employee prompted an extended discussion by the Board's Administrative Committee on February 13th. The discussion generally revolved around several key points: (1) need for a waiting period of 1-2 years before a former Board member can be hired by DART, (2) application of the waiting period to all hires – part-time or full-time, employee or contract, (3) provision of a waiver process, requiring a 2/3rds vote of the Board, that would allow a hire before the waiting period has expired, and (4) employment positions should be advertised so that any person may apply. Staff will develop some draft wording to update the Board's Code of Ethical Conduct and distribute it before the next Administrative Committee meeting.

Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

The DRMC held its annual joint meeting with the Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition (TRTC) on February 1st at NOAH'S Event Center in Irving. The TRTC advocates for transportation projects and funding in the western side of the region.

The featured speaker at the meeting was Texas State Representative Ron Simmons, who represents District 65 in southeast Denton County (primarily Lewisville, Carrollton, and a small part of Far North Dallas). Mr. Simmons has been an advocate for taking the politics out of project selection at the state and regional level. He believes that there is not enough funding going to urban areas, and while he would prefer that toll roads are not used as a funding mechanism, he recognizes that they may be necessary to meet the needs of the region. He stressed the need for local decision-makers to be on-the-record in regard to their support for projects that contain toll elements.

Next meeting. The March 2nd DRMC meeting will feature remarks by Ross Ramsey, the executive editor and co-founder of The Texas Tribune.

Irving Transportation Investment Summit. Irving has announced that it is partnering with the Texas Transportation Institute to develop the program for their annual transportation summit. This year's meeting will be held August 23-24 at the Irving Convention Center.

Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW Airport)

DFW Airport Board Welcomes New Board Members and Elects Leadership. At their February 2nd meeting, the DFW Airport Board welcomed two new board members appointed by the Dallas City Council – Madeleine Johnson and Raj Narayanan. Following the swearing-in of the officers, the Board unanimously voted for William Meadows to serve as Board Chair, Regina Montoya to serve as Vice Chair, and Henry Borbolla to serve as Secretary. Officers serve two

one-year terms, and alternate between Dallas and Fort Worth. Mr. Meadows will continue to service as the airport's primary representative to the RTC, and Eddie Reeves will serve as the alternate.

High Speed Rail (HSR)

Comments Due by March 9th on Dallas-Houston HSR DEIS. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has completed ten public hearings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed high-speed rail route between Dallas and Houston. The Dallas County meeting was held on Monday, January 29th at Wilmer-Hutchins High School. The time period to provide comments and raise issues on the DEIS has been extended to March 9th. The City will provide comments as presented to the Council's MSIS Committee on February 12th. Texas Central, the private developer of the project, is encouraging positive comments based on the preferred route, safety record of the technology, use of clean electric energy, job creation, and other economic impacts. Comments can be submitted directly to the FRA online at: <http://dallashoustonhsr.commentinput.com>.