

# Interagency Transportation Report RTC / TxDOT / NTTA / DART / DRMC / DFW Airport / HSR July-August 2017

## Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

New RTC Officers Elected. The RTC approved its slate of officers for their 2017-18 term. Rob Franke, P.E., Cedar Hill Mayor, will serve as Chair; Gary Fickes, Tarrant County Commissioner, will be the Vice Chair; and Andy Eads, Denton County Commissioner, will be the Secretary.

New Funding Strategy Needed for IH 635 LBJ East. Since the Texas Legislature did not authorize IH 635 LBJ East as a Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA) project, the RTC took the first steps at its August 10th meeting toward the development of a new funding strategy for the project. They approved the application of \$469 million from Category 2 (Urban Mobility Corridors) to fully fund the section between Central Expressway and Royal/Miller because this is the only funding category that can be used to build the tolled managed lanes planned for this segment. This leaves \$293.7 million in Category 4 and 12 funds for the remainder of the project from Royal/Miller to IH 30. The RTC discussed potential strategies for the additional funding needed to build the whole project, including the IH 635/IH 30 interchange:

- Use 100% of toll revenues from the US 75 to Royal/Miller section
- Apply \$300 million in Dallas County contingency funding
- Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan
- Additional funding from the Texas Transportation Commission
- Participation in a federal infrastructure funding initiative
- Extending the tolled managed lanes to IH 30

RTC Approves CMAQ and STBG Funding for Transit Programs. The RTC is in the process of allocating Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding for a variety of program categories. At its July meeting, the RTC approved funding for several transit projects:

- Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project from DFW Airport to Shiloh Station in Plano – \$100 million in CMAQ and STBG funding spread out over four years. This item would replace a \$100 million placeholder in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with the actual project.
- IH 30 High-Intensity Bus Pilot Service from the western terminus of the managed lanes to Downtown Dallas - \$13 million in CMAQ funding.
- Support for the Legacy Transportation Management Association in Plano - \$700,000 in CMAQ funding.
- Construction of the DART Carpenter Ranch LRT Station on the Orange Line in Irving - \$8.8 million in CMAQ funding.

FY2018-19 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Approved. The UPWP is the federally-required work program for the transportation planning staff at NCTCOG. The document is adopted in full every two years and amended from time to time. The RTC approved the FY2018-19 UPWP that will go into effect on October 1, 2017. There are several studies and support tasks included in the draft document that were requested by the City of Dallas:

- A regional conceptual study of the Harry Hines Corridor to identify opportunities to provide multimodal transportation options and enhance sustainability/livability of the corridor.
- A feasibility study for extending the MATA M-Line to Knox Street to recommend alignment, stops, evaluate capital and O&M costs, and identify funding sources and a potential project schedule.
- Technical assistance for development of a City of Dallas Comprehensive Citywide Transportation Plan which would integrate various City and partner agency plans into a long-term transportation vision.
- Develop a neighborhood transportation plan for the Bishop Arts District.
- Evaluate the potential to improve access to Love Field, and reduce congestion at the Mockingbird Lane entrance.

Request for Transportation Consideration during Texas Special Legislative Session. The RTC sent a letter to Governor Abbott urging him to add a transportation funding topic to the Special Session of the Legislature that began July 18th. Since the Trump Administration and Congress appear to be moving in the direction of public-private partnerships to build major infrastructure projects, the RTC letter asks the state legislature to address this issue by allowing the use of public-private financing tools in response to any federal infrastructure initiatives.

#### Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Contract Awarded for Lowest Stemmons Project. The Texas Transportation Commission approved a \$78.8 million design-bid-build contract to construct operational improvements in the “Lowest Stemmons” section of I-35E from I-30 to north of Oak Lawn Avenue. The project will add northbound and southbound collector-distributor lanes that will significantly reduce the amount of weaving traffic between Woodall Rodgers and the Dallas North Tollway ramps. Construction will begin in the early fall and is scheduled for completion by the end of 2019.

Milestone on SM Wright Project. Construction crews are setting bridge beams over I-45 this month that will provide the direct connection from southbound I-45 to US 175. This work is part of Phase I of the SM Wright project. Once completed in early 2019, TxDOT will be able to proceed with Phase II of the project which will reconstruct SM Wright freeway as a low speed, signalized, pedestrian-friendly, landscaped arterial thoroughfare. Phase II construction is scheduled to begin in the second quarter of 2019 and be completed in early 2022.

#### North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

New Assistant Director of Government Affairs. The NTTA has hired Lindsey Baker as their new Assistant Director of Government Affairs. Ms. Baker will be responsible for managing communications with local entities, including counties, cities, and chambers of commerce. She was previously the public information officer for the City of Denton for nine years and worked closely with the City of Dallas’ Intergovernmental Services staff in that role.

Mountain Creek Bridge Upgrade. The NTTA Board approved construction and management contracts in August to replace the toll gantry and resurface the pavement on the Mountain Creek Lake Bridge that connects Kiest Boulevard in Dallas with Pioneer Parkway in Grand Prairie. The project is scheduled for completion by May 2018.

Contract Approved for CCTV Cameras. The NTTA Board approved a \$3.34 million contract to install CCTV cameras at an additional 42 locations on its system, including eight on the Dallas North Tollway south of LBJ Freeway. The cameras allow the NTTA to monitor their system for accidents and disabled vehicles, and to provide an expedited response. The NTTA has a goal of 100 percent coverage of its facilities with video cameras – this contract will raise their coverage to 85 percent.

### Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

Draft FY2018 Annual Budget and 20-Year Financial Plan. The DART Board adopts an annual budget and update of its 20-year Financial Plan each year. The Board was briefed on the draft plans at its July 11th and August 8th meetings, and approved distribution of the draft plans to member cities. A key element of the Financial Plan is how it will address the cost, timing and financing of the second downtown LRT line (D2 subway), and an expanded streetcar system. DART staff has presented several alternative scenarios to address concerns that the D2 subway would be delayed in the event that DART failed to secure a federal grant for the project. The FY2018 Budget and Financial Plan are scheduled for approval on September 26th.

D2 Subway Alignment Alternatives Narrowed. DART staff has continued to work with stakeholders regarding a preferred alignment for the D2 subway through downtown. Three corridors are continuing to be discussed and evaluated – Pacific, Elm, and Commerce. At its August 8th meeting, the DART Board’s Planning Committee made a recommendation in support of the “Commerce” alignment and forwarded that recommendation to their Committee-of-the-Whole for consideration.

Next Cotton Belt Commuter Rail Meetings. DART will be announcing another round of Area Focus Group (AFG) meetings for late August. The AFGs are intended to allow project staff and consultants to interact with a regular group of stakeholders from various subareas along the corridor – e.g., there is a North Dallas Area Focus Group comprised of stakeholders from the City of Dallas. The AFG meetings will be followed by a round of public meetings.

DART Delays 2040 Transit System Plan. The DART Board had been expected at its June 27th meeting to approve distribution of the draft 2040 Transit System Plan for review by member cities and the public. However, the agency has delayed release of the draft until at least October so that they can focus on development of financing plans for the second LRT line downtown (D2 subway) and the Cotton Belt commuter rail line, as well as approval of the 2018 budget and 20-Year Financial Plan.

DART Delays Final Consideration of Fare Increases. The DART Board had been scheduled to approve a new fare structure at its August 8th meeting, but deferred action to provide time for the four new Board members appointed by the City of Dallas to study the proposal. A vote is not expected until October.

### Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

Senator Johnson Scheduled to Speak in September. Like the Dallas City Council, the DRMC Executive Committee does not meet in July, however, due to the Legislature’s Special Session, they were not able to secure a speaker and cancelled the August meeting too. The next meeting will be September 8th at 11:00 a.m. State Senator Van Johnson, representing District 8 (Plano, Richardson, Frisco, McKinney, Allen, and portions of Far North Dallas and Northeast Dallas), is the scheduled speaker.

### Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW Airport)

DFW Airport Awards Eight New Concessions. At the June 29th meeting the DFW Airport Board approved the award of eight new concessions which will be located in Terminals B, C, and D. The concessions, which include three spas, a sports apparel shop, and other travel essentials, will open over the next year and will improve the shopping and travel experience for DFW's customers.

### High-Speed Rail (HSR)

Recap of HSR Legislation from 85<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature. There were two bills approved during the regular session of the legislature that affect high speed rail. S.B. 975 requires operators of high-speed rail service to meet strict security requirements to ensure safety. It also requires private operators to pay governmental law enforcement officers who may be hired to fulfill the requirements of the bill. S.B. 977 prohibits the use of state funds to plan, build or operate high speed rail operated by a private entity. There are certain exceptions related to federally-required environmental analyses. Texas Central Partners, developer of the proposed HSR line between Dallas and Fort Worth supported the bills.