

Interagency Transportation Report

RTC / TxDOT / NTTA / DART / DRMC / DFW Airport / HSR

February 2016

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

RTC Takes Action on Southern Gateway/Lowest Stemmons and LBJ I-635 East. Taking advantage of new money from the TxDOT Congestion Relief Initiative (see TxDOT section), the RTC took action at their January 14th meeting to approve a funding approach to expedite the Southern Gateway/Lowest Stemmons and LBJ I-635 East projects. In particular, their approval of Southern Gateway confirms plans to improve access from US 67 to the Southwest Center Mall area, build a pedestrian deck park over I-35E north of the Dallas Zoo provided that the City of Dallas commits \$10 million to its construction and funds ongoing maintenance, and eliminates the toll component on the project's express lanes. Regarding the LBJ I-635 East project, the RTC committed to the addition of continuous frontage roads, and early implementation of the Skillman-Audelia bridge and noise walls to protect residential areas.

Final Public Meetings for Mobility 2040 Plan. The RTC is holding its last round of public meetings on the new Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the region, called "Mobility 2040." The last opportunity for public input in the eastern side of the region will be on Tuesday, February 9th at 6:30 p.m. at the Richardson Civic Center, 411 W. Arapaho Road. The RTC will consider final approval of the plan at their regular business meeting on March 10th.

AirCheckTexas Helps Repair or Replace High Emitting Vehicles. The NCTCOG Transportation staff has published a fact sheet highlighting the popular "AirCheckTexas Drive a Clean Machine" Program. AirCheckTexas provides vouchers to qualifying motorists to repair or replace vehicles with emissions problems – if those vehicles also meet certain criteria. The fact sheet is available at 'www.nctcog.org/factsheets', and provides information in both English and Spanish.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Congestion Relief Initiative. In response to a challenge from Governor Greg Abbott last September, the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) is considering a \$1.0 to \$1.3 billion congestion relief program targeted to the five largest urban areas of Texas. Funding for the program is primarily coming from state highway funds that were previously appropriated to Department of Public Safety operations. The state legislature took action in their last session to stop this diversion and redirect the funding back to transportation improvements. The funding would be distributed to the urban areas based on a formula allocation. The DFW region would receive 40% of the funding, which would then be sub-allocated on approximately a 70-30 basis between the east and west sides of the region.

Commissioner J. Bruce Bugg (San Antonio) was appointed to lead the initiative, and came to DFW to conduct "listening" sessions with local elected officials and transportation service providers to build consensus on priority congestion projects. One of the meetings was held at the Dallas Convention Center on January 19th and was attended by Mayor Rawlings and Lee Kleinman. A second meeting with the RTC was held the following day in Arlington. Participants in both meetings united in support of using the Congestion Relief funds in the eastern side of the region to complete a funding package for the Southern Gateway and Lowest Stemmons projects.

The TTC held a workshop in Austin on January 27th where TTC members were briefed on the overall Congestion Relief Program strategy, and local district engineers (Kelly Selman from Dallas) were given the opportunity to present their recommended projects. Michael Morris attended this meeting to speak on behalf of the RTC in support of the DFW projects. On January 28th, at their regular business meeting, the TTC heard from county judges and mayors from each of the urban areas – Mr. Kleinman attended and spoke on behalf of Mayor Rawlings. Mr. McGough also attended the meeting. The Commission appeared to be solidly behind the program and is expected to take action to approve it at their February meeting.

New TxDOT Executive Director. Mr. James Bass, TxDOT's Chief Financial Officer since 2005, was named as their new Executive Director effective January 1, 2016. Mr. Bass succeeds Lt. General Joe Weber, who announced his retirement last October.

Central Expressway Gets a Fresh Coat of Paint. TxDOT approved a \$3 million contract in December to paint the structures on US 75 between Woodall Rodgers and I-635.

North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

Contracts Approved for DNT Project. On January 20th, the NTTA Board approved a two-year construction contract to Austin Bridge and Road (\$17.2 million), and a construction management contract to HDR Inc. (\$1.29 million) for the Dallas North Tollway (DNT) project from the President George Bush Turnpike (PGBT) to LBJ Freeway. The project will add a continuous fourth lane between PGBT and Belt Line, move lighting out of the median, and resurface and restripe the entire length of the project. The Board also took action to reduce speed limits to 55 mph during construction to improve safety.

NTTA Roadside Assistance Rebranded. The NTTA has provided roadside assistance on its facilities since 2008. The program changes flat tires, adds water to radiators, provides a gallon of gas, jumpstarts dead batteries, pushes and pulls vehicles out of the roadway and makes minor vehicle repairs. The roadside assistance team kicked off 2016 with a new name – Roadside Safety Services. While the program is essential to ensuring safety for stranded motorists, it is also critical to reducing travel delay since more than 50% of highway congestion results from roadway incidents.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

LRT Extension to University of North Texas Campus. The SOC3 (South Oak Cliff) project is a nearly 2.6 mile extension of the LRT Blue Line that includes the addition of two stations and the redesign of the Ledbetter Station. Community meetings have been held quarterly to provide updates for residents and riders. The project will be completed by December 2016. As a result of the LRT extension, DART will be making adjustments to bus service in the area. A pre-hearing meeting to share the recommended changes with the community is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23rd at 6:30 p.m., at Highland Hills Library, 6200 Bonnie View Road. The public hearing will be held on March 8th during the regularly scheduled DART Board meeting.

Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

Updated Bylaws Approved. The DRMC Executive Committee approved a comprehensive update of the organization's bylaws at its January 8th meeting. The new bylaws clarify that the

City of Dallas has four representatives that must all be elected officials – no citizen representatives. The City's membership fee is set at \$50,000 per year, but if other members' fees are lowered in any given year, then Dallas will get the same percentage reduction. The Chair of the City's Transportation Committee, or one of the other City representatives, is guaranteed to be designated as the Vice Chair. The new bylaws allow for a Dallas representative to be elected as one of the Co-Chairs, in which the case the Vice Chair position will go to someone else, presumably not a City of Dallas representative.

DRMC/TRTC Joint Meeting. The DRMC and its sister organization from the western side of the region, the Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition (TRTC), held their annual joint meeting on Thursday, February 4th, in Irving. Mr. Tim Keith, the CEO for Texas Central Partners, discussed the DFW to Houston high-speed rail project.

Dallas Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)

Board Elects New Officers for the 2016-17 Term. The DFW Airport Board elected new officers at its February Board Meeting. Sam Coats (Dallas) was elected Chair of the Board, William Meadows (Fort Worth) as Vice-Chair, and Bernice J. Washington (Dallas) as Secretary of the Board. The nominations were made by Mayor Mike Rawlings and supported by Mayor Betsy Price of Fort Worth. The Board also swore in its newest member, Amir A. Rupani, from Dallas.

New Domestic Destinations. American Airlines has announced that they will launch new service to Boise (Idaho), Bozeman (Montana), and Sioux City (Iowa) from DFW later this year. This will increase DFW Airport's domestic destinations to 152, and brings the overall total of direct destinations to 209.

New Airline Coming to DFW. Interjet, a Mexican-based low fare carrier, will introduce twelve flights per week between Mexico City and DFW Airport. This new route will include double daily service Monday through Friday, and one flight on both Saturday and Sunday.

High-Speed Rail (HSR)

RTC Subcommittee Updated on HSR. The Multimodal / Intermodal / High Speed Rail / Freight Subcommittee met for a series of presentations to keep them up-to-date on high speed rail (HSR) development. They were briefed on the recommendations for HSR in the Mobility 2040 Plan, TxDOT Rail Division studies including the proposed core express service between Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas Central Partners' Dallas to Houston high speed rail project, and a summary of a meeting with USDOT Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx.