

Interagency Transportation Report

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

April 2016

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

Mobility 2040 Plan Approved. After more than a year of effort, the RTC approved a new Regional Transportation Plan at their March meeting. The plan is constrained to the anticipated funding available during the next 25 years and addresses all modes of transportation. In particular, the plan incorporates the consensus designs for the Southern Gateway and I-635 LBJ East projects that are top City and regional priorities, and are scheduled for implementation in the next few years. It also includes a new policy element that offers rewards, in the form of Transportation Development Credits, to local agencies that support regional transportation policies and programs. It is anticipated that the City of Dallas already supports enough regional efforts to qualify for the transportation credits which can be used in lieu of local funds to match federal and state funding for projects in Dallas.

Legislative Committee Meeting. The RTC Legislative Committee met in March to get an early start on preparation for the 85th session of the Texas State Legislature in 2017. The overall tone of the meeting was that the region needs to (1) send a message that we are thankful for the work that the Legislature has done to address transportation funding through Proposition 1 in 2014 and Proposition 7 in 2015, and to (2) continue to educate them that additional funding is needed to meet DFW's transportation needs – either through additional public funds or by providing local decision-makers with additional tools, such as the selective use of toll facilities.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

TxDOT Reorganization. TxDOT has recently undergone a reorganization under its new Executive Director, James Bass. In particular, Design-Build and Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA) projects that were previously being handled by the Strategic Projects Division in Austin will now be managed by the Dallas District. In addition, right-of-way acquisition responsibilities will be moved from Austin to the district level for the large metropolitan districts. Both of these changes represent a positive move toward greater local control and accountability on important TxDOT projects. Bill Hale, formerly the Dallas District Engineer, is now the TxDOT's Chief Engineer which oversees all twenty-five of the Districts offices, as well as Engineering/Safety Operations and Project Planning/Development.

S.M. Wright Project Update. A construction contract for Phase 1 of the S.M. Wright project was approved by the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) in February. Phase 1 includes the construction of new ramps from C.F. Hawn Freeway to I-45, and the widening of I-45 toward the median, which will eliminate the “dead man’s curve” connection between C.F. Hawn and S.M. Wright. Construction should begin in May and be completed in January 2019. Phase II of the project which will reconstruct S.M. Wright as a low-speed landscaped thoroughfare is scheduled to begin construction in early 2019.

I-635 LBJ East HOV Lanes Reopened. The HOV lanes on LBJ East have been closed to facilitate their conversion to tolled managed lanes as an interim measure until permanent improvements begin. TxDOT reopened the lanes in March for high-occupancy vehicles, and expects to complete their conversion to toll managed lanes by July.

I-635 LBJ East Public Meeting. Now that a concept plan for permanent improvements on LBJ East (US 75 to I-30) has been approved as a part of the recently adopted Regional Mobility Plan, TxDOT has begun an update of the Environmental Assessment for the project. They have announced a public meeting to present the project to the community and receive comments. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 19th at the Highland Oaks Church of Christ, 10805 Walnut Hill Lane from 5-7 p.m. A public hearing will be scheduled later this year and environmental clearance is expected by the spring of 2017.

I-30 West Toll Managed Lanes Opening Soon. TxDOT is converting the HOV lanes on I-30 West to toll managed lanes. The first phase of this project from SH 161 into North Oak Cliff, between Cockrell Hill and Westmoreland, is expected to open in May. The remainder of the managed lane, to Sylvan, will open next year when the Horseshoe project is completed. One of the benefits of the toll managed lanes over HOV lanes is that they can be utilized by more drivers while still providing a reliable travel time. HOVs still receive a discounted price and the lane can be used to provide premium bus services.

North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

Construction Begins on Dallas North Tollway (DNT). Construction has begun on the DNT project between the President George Bush Turnpike and LBJ Freeway. The elements of this project include restriping to add a fourth lane on southbound DNT between the Bush Turnpike and the Belt Line Road exit, restriping to extend the existing fourth lane on northbound DNT between Trinity Mills Road exit and the Bush Turnpike, overlaying a new surface on the existing pavement, and relocating the existing light poles from the center median to the outside of the roadway. The southbound DNT entrance ramp from Trinity Mills Road has recently been closed to traffic so that construction crews can demolish and rebuild a portion of the wall and ramp to make room for a fourth lane in that area.

Graduating Class of "ROAD" Program Honored at Board Meeting. The NTTA established the Relationships and Opportunities Advancing Diversity (ROAD) Program in 2010 to increase and diversify participation in NTTA contracting by enabling disadvantaged, minority and women-owned business enterprises (D/M/WBEs) to build capacity and compete for larger contracts. The program pairs D/M/WBEs with prime contractor firms that offer similar services. This partnering relationship provides D/M/WBEs with training to expand business operations and technical capabilities, and develop strategies to strengthen their businesses.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

Early Opening for LRT to University of North Texas Campus. DART has announced that the SOC-3 (South Oak Cliff) project will be open for service in October, about 2-1/2 months early!

Funding Progress on D2. DART's plan for a second LRT line through downtown (D2) received a "medium-high" rating from the Federal Transit Administration for their Core Capacity funding. This rating should allow DART to compete effectively with Chicago, their main competition for this funding. Platform extensions on the Red and Blue LRT lines to accommodate three-car trains will be completed by 2020 – providing 33% more capacity on those lines.

Temporary Transit Service in Collin County. In response to the collapse of the Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS), DART has stepped in utilizing its nonmember cities policy to

provide transit services targeted to senior citizens and the disabled in Allen, Wylie and Fairview for a 90-day period. The RTC previously approved funding to support this effort and provide time to work out a long-term solution.

LRT and TRE Service Anniversaries! DART will be celebrating two twenty-year anniversaries this year. In June 1996, the first 11.2 miles of DART's 20-mile light rail transit starter system opened on time and within budget, with weekend festivities followed by a week of free rides. Later that year, in December, DART opened the first 10-mile segment of the Trinity Railway Express commuter rail service linking Dallas and Irving with a stop at the Medical/Market Center.

DART Considers Relocating their HQ. The DART Board has taken action to explore the sale of their headquarters building at 1401 Pacific Avenue, and to identify options to relocate those functions to another location in downtown Dallas.

Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

New Officers. Mr. Kleinman has been elected as a Co-Chair of the DRMC Executive Committee. In the past, the City's Transportation Committee Chair has automatically served as the Vice-Chair. The new bylaws, approved in January, allowed a Dallas representative to be considered for the Co-Chair position.

April Meeting. Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar was the featured speaker at the April DRMC meeting.

Dallas Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)

DFW Airport Employees Help Clean the Trinity River Audubon Center. During the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Annual Summit, members of the Environmental Affairs Department of DFW Airport joined the WTTC to volunteer time at the Trinity River Audubon Center. Volunteers helped clear and expand existing trails, remove invasive species, restore native prairies and wetland habitats and plant native grasses and trees. About 18 employees of DFW Airport participated in the event on April 4th as part of the Tourism Cares component of the WTTC Annual Summit.

High-Speed Rail (HSR)

TCR Wins "Next Big Idea" Award. The Urban Land Institute's North Texas chapter recognized the Texas Central Railway's (TCR) proposed high-speed rail project between Dallas and Houston as winner of its annual Impact Awards competition for the "Next Big Idea." This award category honors the project, not yet completed, that has the greatest potential to positively impact the quality of life in North Texas.