

Interagency Transportation Report  
RTC / TxDOT / NTTA / DART / DRMC / DFW Airport / HSR  
May 2017

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

Texas Transportation Commissioner (TTC) Laura Ryan. Commissioner Laura Ryan spent a day with NCTCOG staff learning about transportation planning in our region, and then was introduced to the RTC at their April 13th meeting. Ms. Ryan is from the Houston area and is currently a vice president for Gulf States Toyota, a private distributor for Toyota Motor Sales. She has more than 25 years working in the automotive industry.

Movers Three-Phase Approach. The concept of people “movers” to serve high-density urban activity centers the DFW region has been evolving over the past two years. It was first envisioned as a system similar to the Skylink at DFW Airport, but has recently been recast as a guideway that would utilize automated vehicle technology. Depending on the location, it could transport goods as well as people within an area. NCTCOG staff is undertaking three consultant efforts related to the “movers”: (1) prototype the elements of a mover system, (2) examine the potential to use movers to distribute trips from a centralized garage, and (3) develop a plan and preliminary engineering for a mover that could serve Dallas Midtown.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program/Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program Funding. The RTC was briefed on a proposed process for programming CMAQ and STBG transportation funding approved by the federal FAST Act. Both funding sources are flexible regarding the types of transportation projects that can be funded, however, the CMAQ program requires that the project or program can be demonstrated to reduce air pollution.

I-30 Insider Challenge Ends. The “I-30 Insider Challenge” was a pilot program intended to test the viability of using incentives to encourage commuters to switch from single-occupant cars to alternative modes such as transit, carpooling and telecommuting. The program, which began October 1st and ended on April 28th, awarded points which could be exchanged for gift cards. The Insider Challenge is part of an ongoing effort to use IH 30 as a test corridor for innovative value pricing strategies.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Dallas Horseshoe Project Update. The replacement of the I-30 and I-35E Trinity River Bridges and associated modifications to the Mixmaster are nearing completion. At the end of April, all vehicular main lanes were in their final configuration. Work is continuing the pedestrian elements of the project, as well as various clean-up and punch list items.

S.M. Wright Clears Final Environmental Hurdle. TxDOT has issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the proposed S.M. Wright Phase IIB. This part of the project will convert the existing freeway-to-freeway connections between I-45 and S.M. Wright to a diamond-type interchange involving two cross streets – MLK Boulevard and Al Lipscomb Way (formerly Grand Avenue). The reconstruction of S.M. Wright as a six-lane divided thoroughfare is fully funded and expected to begin in 2019.

TxDOT Restarts EIS for SH 190 “East Branch”. The TxDOT Dallas District has restarted the environmental review process for the section of SH 190 from IH 30 south to IH 20. Although the

proposed alignments run predominantly through Sunnyvale and Mesquite, they touch sections of the City of Dallas near Lake Ray Hubbard. Current plans are for a six-lane tollroad with frontage roads. The last public meeting on this project was held in 2014; construction is not anticipated until 2026.

#### North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

Work Gets Underway on DNT Update. On April 10th, the NTTA began work a facelift for the Dallas North Tollway (DNT) between Harvest Hill Road (near LBJ) and IH 35E. The 18-month project includes replacing the tollway's center barrier, resurfacing the pavement and restriping all lanes. The NTTA Board reduced speeds on the DNT from 65 to 55 mph for the duration of the project to enhance safety. To minimize traffic impacts, the majority of the work will be scheduled during off-peak hours – 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. – and on some weekends. Nightly lane closures will be performed under the guidance of local law enforcement.

#### Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

2040 Transit System Plan – First and Last Mile Connections. On April 11th, DART staff briefed their Board on the status of the Draft 2040 Transit System Plan. This briefing focused on how DART can maximize first and last mile connections, take advantage of emerging technologies, and evolve its streetcar partnership with the City of Dallas. The goal would be to expand the reach of transit through infrastructure improvements, wayfinding, innovative services, and connections with other providers such as Uber, Lyft and taxi services. It is anticipated that the DART Board will be asked to approve the release of the draft plan for review by member cities and the public in June.

MOD Sandbox Demonstration Federal Grant. DART received a \$1.2 million Mobility on Demand (MOD) federal grant that will be used to make improvements to its GoPass mobile application. GoPass will be modified to offer transit riders choices among several first and last mile options and to pay for those services within the application. Options targeted by the grant would include Transportation Network Companies (e.g., Uber and Lyft), on-demand public transit services (e.g., DART On Call), taxi companies, and vanpooling/carpooling.

#### Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

Update on Texas Legislative Session. Drew Campbell, Executive Director of the DRMC, provided a legislative update at their April 7th meeting. He reported that both houses had passed budgets that left transportation funding intact. He also indicated that the leadership in Austin recognized there was still not sufficient funding to complete some of the mega-projects around the state, and that TxDOT would need to use leverage (i.e., tolled lanes) to get them done. Our region is seeking authority to pursue the IH 635 East project with a Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA) that would include tolling a portion of the managed lanes on that project.

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

DFW Airport Board Swears-in New Member. Eddie Reeves was sworn in on April 13th as the newest member of the DFW Airport Board. Mr. Reeves was appointed by the Dallas City Council to Place 04 which was in holdover status. Place 04 was previously held by Board member Bernice Washington, who served in the seat until a replacement was named by the City. Ms. Washington will be recognized and celebrated at the May 4th Board meeting.

Airport Names New RTC Representatives. DFW Airport appoints one representative to serve on the Regional Transportation Council. The Board recently named William Meadows, the DFW Board Vice Chair as their representative to the RTC. Matrice Ellis-Kirk was named as the alternate member.

### High-Speed Rail (HSR)

Challenges to HSR at Texas Legislature. Although a few of the 20+ bills HSR-related bills filed during the 85<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature were passed out of the Senate Transportation Committee, only one had been approved by the Senate, and could be considered by the House. S.B. 977 would prohibit TxDOT from using state funding on a private high-speed rail project, and was amended to clarify that TxDOT can perform any federally-required administrative or technical actions needed to move a HSR project forward. Since Texas Central has steadfastly claimed that it will not ask for public funding to support their HSR project between Dallas and Houston, this bill should not adversely affect the project.

Texas Central Land Option Program. Texas Central, developer of the 240-mile high-speed train project between Dallas and Houston, has reached option agreements on about thirty percent of the parcels estimated to be needed for the bullet train's route. The option program compensates owners today in exchange for the right to acquire a parcel at a future date at an agreed price. They have option agreements for fifty percent of the parcels in Grimes County, the site of a midway passenger station in the Brazos Valley.