

Interagency Transportation Report

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

January 2016

Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

Mobility 2040 Plan Public Meetings. The RTC held a workshop on the development of the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan on November 12th prior to their regular business meeting. Some of the guiding principles for the plan include:

- Improvements for major travel corridors are comprehensively evaluated and fall into four categories: (1) incremental improvements that take advantage of existing pavement that is still serviceable, (2) total reconstruction/widening of an existing corridor, (3) new corridors in developing areas, and (4) identification of projects for future study.
- Based on the availability of new state funding for transportation, the balance between toll roads and tax-funded roads will be reevaluated.
- In addition to regional rail, transit improvement strategies will focus on the opportunity to implement “premium bus” service in managed lane and future rail corridors.
- Consideration for a program that encourages local agencies to actively support regional transportation policy initiatives in exchange for “transportation development credits” that can be used to fund the local match on federally funded projects.

At their December meeting, the RTC authorized NCTCOG staff to present the draft plan at public meetings in December and January. The RTC will adopt the new plan in March 2016.

Regional School Coordination Task Force. As a follow-up to the RTC workshop on schools and transportation, NCTCOG has formed a Regional School Coordination Task Force that will pull together key staff from local agencies and schools to promote better coordination. The first task force meeting was held on December 9, 2015. City staff from Street Services (Traffic Operations) and Planning and Urban Design are participating in the task force.

EPA Lowers Ozone Limit. The Environmental Protection Agency has approved a new ozone standard in an effort to better protect the health of residents in North Texas and across the nation. The EPA published the final rule on October 26 lowering the design value from 75 parts per billion to 70 ppb. By October 1, 2017, the EPA is expected to determine how Dallas-Fort Worth will be classified and if the new standard will change the number of counties in the nonattainment area. Ten DFW counties are in moderate nonattainment for the 75 ppb ozone standard and have until 2017 to comply. If the EPA gives the region a moderate designation, it will have six years to meet the new standard.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Update on Central Expressway north of LBJ Freeway. Improvements to US 75, north of LBJ Freeway are the RTC’s third highest priority project behind the Southern Gateway and LBJ East projects. A proposal to convert the existing HOV lanes to tolled managed lanes as an interim measure was abandoned after concerns were raised about the number of tolled facilities in Collin County. The TxDOT Dallas District has recently proposed that the existing HOV lanes, which utilize the original inside shoulder of the facility, be converted to general purpose lanes that would be open only during peak travel periods as was recently done as a pilot project on a section of SH 161 in Irving.

North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA)

Construction Update on President George Bush Turnpike (I-35E to SH 78). Construction is continuing on this 26-mile project to add a fourth lane in each direction. Workers are beginning construction of the center median between Coit Road and the Dallas North Tollway. Construction is primarily in the median areas between the main lanes. There will be sporadic single lane closures during the day to allow trucks to enter and exit the construction area.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)

First Public Meeting for D2 Project Development Phase. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and DART have initiated the Project Development (PD) phase for the D2 project, which includes preparation of a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) and Preliminary Engineering. The purpose of the SDEIS is to evaluate the impacts of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) alignment and of additional design options. Two public meetings were held on December 17th, one at DART Headquarters and the other at First Presbyterian Church. The meetings were well attended. The Project Development phase will take about 18 months, and must be completed within two years according to Federal Transit Administration requirements.

2040 Transit System Plan Development Briefing. The DART Board Planning Committee was briefed on Phase 1 of the 2040 Transit System Plan which focuses on a comprehensive operations analysis of DART's non-rail services. After several months of data collection and public input, the DART staff is focusing on development of a service plan that yields the largest potential ridership gains. The framework presented contains "layers" of bus service types that address particular travel needs:

- Core Frequent Route network – addresses regional travel movements with crosstown routes that complement the rail network and improves the bus network serving the core areas of Dallas connecting downtown with nearby neighborhoods.
- High-frequency Rapid Ride network – routes that offer faster travel times and enhanced passenger amenities.
- Crosstown / Airport Express network – provides limited access express service for longer trips that are not served by the rail network.
- Local and neighborhood routes.
- Activity Center routes such as the Medical District and SMU.
- On-Call Zones.

These service improvements would be implemented in a phased approach that is integrated with DART's financial plan – short-term projects in less than five years, medium-term projects in 5-15 years, and long-term projects beyond 15 years.

Phase 2 of the 2040 Transit System Plan will focus on long-term capital improvements for the rail transit system.

Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC)

Senator Van Taylor from District 8 was the speaker for the December 4th DRMC meeting.

Update of Bylaws. Council member Greyson is working with other members of the DRMC Executive Committee to do a comprehensive update of the organization's bylaws.

Dallas Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)

Japan Airlines Returns. DFW International Airport recently celebrated the launch of nonstop service to Tokyo-Narita on Japan Airlines. Japan Airlines, a oneworld alliance partner, is returning to DFW Airport after halting service in 2001. This route will compliment American Airlines' two daily flights to Tokyo-Narita from DFW and will bring a total of three flights a day.

Flights to International Cites Increases. Over the past two years, DFW has launched nonstop service to several international cities including Sydney, Dubai, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, Tokyo, and several cities in Mexico and Central America increasing the total number of nonstop international destinations to 58. In 2016, Airberlin will begin flying four times a week to Düsseldorf, Germany and Qantas Airways will increase their Sydney service to daily beginning in April. These new air service options are in line with the Board's Strategic Objective of growing their Core Business.

High-Speed Rail (HSR)

FRA Identifies Draft EIS Alignment Alternatives for the Dallas to Houston High-Speed Rail Project. On November 6th, the Federal Railroad Administration released its "Alignment Alternatives Analysis Report" which identifies six potential alignments that will be carried forward for evaluation in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the high-speed rail project proposed by Texas Central High-Speed Railway. The analysis began with 22 route alternatives, which were evaluated using National Environmental Policy Act screening criteria to compare their potential impacts to the human and natural environment. The Draft EIS is expected to be available for public review in the fall of 2016.