

Meeting Summary (DRAFT 09-07-10)
Advancing Rail in North Texas Stakeholder Meeting
Cotton Belt Rail Corridor
Friday, September 3, 2010

Attendance

There were 76 participants signed in, with representation from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Regional Transportation Council (RTC); the municipalities of Addison, Carrollton, Colleyville, Coppell, Dallas, Grapevine, Greenville, Irving, North Richland Hills, Plano and Richardson; Dallas County, Tarrant County, Hunt County; Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART); Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA); The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T); Dallas Fort Worth International Airport (DFWIA); the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA); the Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition; the Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition; Texas Rep. Kelly Hancock's and Texas Sen. Florence Shapiro's offices; the University of Texas at Dallas; Preston Green Homeowners Association; Go21 and INCAP Fund; and consultants from URS Corporation, Parsons, Schrader & Cline, Blaydes Consulting, Matthews Southwest, LTK Engineering, Jeff West Consulting, Public Information Associates, Partnership for Livable Communities, Public Finance Management, JBJ Marketing, and Dean International. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached.

The meeting took place at the Addison Conference Center in the Town of Addison. Handouts included an agenda, copies of three of the presentations made at the meeting, a list of Cotton Belt Innovative Finance Initiative Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions Sheet, and a Cotton Belt corridor map.

No amendments to the April 2, 2010 meeting summary were noted.

Welcome and Introductions – Michael Morris, NCTCOG

Following welcomes and round-robin introductions, Michael noted the broad spectrum of attendees and the entities represented in the room. He noted participants have the opportunity to be a part of one of the most unique programs in the country being kicked off at this meeting – the Innovative Finance Initiative (IFI). Michael also reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Current Status of The T Southwest-to-Northeast Rail Commuter Rail Project – Curvie Hawkins, Jr., Director of Planning, The T

Mr. Hawkins gave a brief description and update on the current status of the SW2NE Commuter Rail Corridor project, which extends 40 miles from southwest Fort Worth, travels through downtown Fort Worth, and utilizing the Cotton Belt Corridor travels into DFWIA.

For more information on the SW2NE Commuter Rail Project please visit: www.sw2nerail.com

Highlights:

- The Environmental Impact Statement is being finalized for the project
- Schedule moving forward is:
 - Submit New Starts Funding application Winter 2010
 - Begin Preliminary Engineering Spring 2011
 - Receive a Record of Decision Spring 2012

- Construct using a Design-Build delivery process 2012-2014 (Design-Build process needs approval from The T Board of Directors)
 - Begin service 2014
- The T has advanced land purchases at four future station locations – Grapevine, TCU/Berry, I-20/Granbury and Sycamore School Road – to build bus facilities that later will be converted to rail stations
- The T is working closely with non-member cities to ensure a rail station is part of a long-term corridor plan
- The DFW North station could be eliminated if a better interface is found with the Cotton Belt line at this location

Questions/Comments

None

Current Status of the DART Cotton Belt Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – John Hoppie, Project Manager, DART

Mr. Hoppie presented an overview of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Cotton Belt corridor from DFWIA to Richardson/Plano.

Highlights:

- EIS is building on the Cotton Belt study completed by NCTCOG
- Federal process is being followed so that federal funding application may be submitted if necessary
- Target completion date for receiving a Record of Decision is the end of 2011
- Scoping meetings recently completed and comment period recently closed
- More than 200 comments were received, mostly from North Dallas residents
- Lead agencies are DART and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), but close coordination will occur with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Current project activities include
 - Scoping summary report
 - Identify design constraints
 - Develop public involvement plan
 - Gather data
 - Obtain aerial photography
- Assumed corridor development conditions (the “Natinsky Plan”) include
 - Removal of freight in the corridor from the Dallas North Tollway to Renner Junction
 - Mitigate impacts to the level of Light Rail New Technology (LRNT) – place passenger rail in trench in North Dallas
 - No locomotive-hauled vehicles
 - Size of the cars used will be consistent with light rail train vehicles
 - Emissions will meet or beat Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards
 - City of Dallas station preferences will be pursued

- To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the EIS must look at all feasible alternatives, which means options other than the assumed corridor development conditions will be included in the EIS

Questions/Comments

Michael Morris observed the following:

- There is activity taking place to plan reconstruction work on IH 35E and those activities should be coordinated with DART activities on the Cotton Belt EIS
- Downtown Carrollton offers the best intermodal opportunity in the region

Innovative Finance Initiative Project Initiation – Michael Morris, NCTCOG and Scott Polikov, Partnership for Livable Communities

Michael and Scott Polikov, consultant team project manager conducting the IFI, presented a project overview, the process to be used, and the anticipated project outcomes. Michael noted this meeting officially kicks off the Innovative Finance Initiative for the Cotton Belt rail line.

Highlights:

- Michael noted there are no pre-determined outcomes from the IFI. He explained the effort intends to look at a range of funding strategies to determine which ones have the most potential. He said a total of 138 ideas have been developed so far, and he suggested that perhaps a coffee or conference call could be hosted by NCTCOG to obtain more ideas
- The goal is to develop a viable, integrated funding plan to pay for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Cotton Belt passenger rail line
- Michael noted that ultimately the transit agencies in the region must approve the funding plan as those agencies will need to implement the financing strategies
- Mr. Polikov explained the process of the IFI, noting that this phase is an analytical phase which identifies all possible funding strategies, analyzes those strategies for their ability to fund the rail system, compare the strategies and make recommendations for implementation
- He noted that more importantly, this phase of the IFI sets up a new business model for capitalizing rail funding that will require regional ownership
- The new business model is based on local communities and land owners being willing to partner to attract corporate investment in the rail line
- This will require new relationships and working together differently – which will result in higher returns over time
- The consultant team working on the IFI has made a pledge to close the funding gap without needing new funding sources from legislation. However, some enabling legislation may be needed in order to make some financing strategies to work
- External coordination with cities, counties, development interests and others will occur as the IFI proceeds
- Stakeholder meetings are anticipated to occur every other month for the duration of the IFI effort
- Examples of funding streams were presented, including more traditional funding such as transit taxes, to smart card and smart grid technologies
- Failure is not an option with this effort

Questions/Comments

Michael Morris observed the following:

- State Highway 161 and NTTA's Southwest Parkway were languishing last year because of lack of funding. By thinking differently and linking the two projects together, revenue was created through a better bond rating and reduced costs
- Imagine what landowners could be realizing if they had partnered with roadway agencies when the Dallas North Tollway was built
- This is a new dynamic for creating funding for transportation projects and could set a precedent for the entire country

Light Rail New Technology Vehicle Development Update and DCTA Stadler Vehicle Update – Wayne Friesner, DART and Tom LeBeau, DCTA

Mr. Friesner and Mr. LeBeau teamed up to provide an update on the status of DART's attempts to seek approval of a new technology vehicle and DCTA's acquisition of new technology vehicles.

Highlights

- Mr. Friesner announced there is movement toward an alternative compliant vehicle as a result of many meetings with FRA, vehicle manufacturers and commuter rail industry officials
- He noted FRA approval of a set of technical evaluation criteria and procedures for passenger rail equipment built to alternative designs expected late September
- Mr. Friesner explained that the new DART vehicle will be compliant with FRA safety regulations including the alternative criteria and procedures and it will meet commitments made by DART Board of Directors and meet EPA Tier 4 non-road engine standards
- He said performance specifications for the new vehicle currently are being drafted by Interfleet Technology, Inc.
- Mr. Friesner said the new DART vehicle is the next technology in rail vehicles
- Mr. LeBeau noted the new vehicle being procured by DCTA is expected to serve other rail corridors in Denton County that have been identified through the agency's long-range plan efforts
- He noted the Stadler Rail Group is expected to begin delivering new vehicles in Summer 2011 with completion of delivery by Fall 2011
- The base vehicle is the same as the car being manufactured for the Cap Metro system in Austin, with some modifications to meet FRA, EPA and Americans with Disabilities Act regulations (with appropriate waivers)
- Will require a FRA waiver, but have been working with FRA to obtain

Questions/Comments

None

Meeting Schedule/Summary/Action Items

- Michael Morris noted that everyone attending the meeting would receive an email with the list of 138 funding sources for review and consideration

- He also noted there may be a need to provide meeting participants with a status report in December of IFI activities. This may not be a meeting, but would provide an end-of-the-year status report
- He also noted the North Texas region remains in a very tight financial situation, particularly with the recent rescinding of \$190 million from the US DOT of Texas Department of Transportation funding.

Michael opened the floor to any comments, ideas, discussion, etc.

- Addison Mayor Joe Chow noted the Smart Card technology should definitely be considered. This technology is in full use in Hong Kong and Taiwan and works well.

Action Items

- Distribute list of IFI funding sources to all participants
- Participants submit any additional funding source ideas
- Set up conference call or coffee to solicit other funding ideas
- Coordinate IH 35E activities with DART Cotton Belt EIS