V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The RRCS consulting team supported outreach efforts of the NCTCOG Transportation staff in regularly scheduled meetings of study technical and policy advisory groups organized around corridors. Some groups included more than one corridor, others were single-corridor groups. In addition to the advisory groups, each quarterly public involvement meeting conducted by the NCTCOG Transportation Department during the study period included an update on the Regional Rail Corridor Study status. Three meetings were conducted each quarter, with locations rotating throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.

POLICY/TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

The RRCS Policy and Technical Committees were created to advise the technical team and aid in building regional consensus for the recommendations resulting from the project. The Policy Committees consisted of local elected officials, district engineers, private sector leaders and transportation authority board members, while the Technical Committee consisted of private and public (local, regional, state and federal agencies) transportation professionals.

Twenty-eight Policy/Technical Committee meetings were held throughout the project from 2003 to 2004.

Meeting Schedule

Exhibit V-1 lists the date and location of the Policy and Technical Committee meetings.
Additionally, there were other meetings during the study process where information was shared and comments sought. For example, the Fort Worth and Dallas chapters of the Texas Institute of Transportation Engineers (TexITE) met jointly on April 15, 2004, for a luncheon meeting at the NCTCOG offices where a presentation on the status on the RRCS was made by NCTCOG staff and consultants.
PUBLIC MEETINGS

NCTCOG staff presented information on the RRCS effort at regularly scheduled RTC public meetings in 2002, 2003, and 2004.

Meeting Schedules

Exhibit V-2 lists the date and location of the public meetings where the RRCS project was an agenda item.

**EXHIBIT V-2**

**RTC PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 2002</td>
<td>Dallas West Branch Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 2002</td>
<td>Plano City Council Chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9, 2002</td>
<td>East Regional Library, Fort Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31, 2003</td>
<td>Bachman Recreation Center, Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 2003</td>
<td>Intermodal Transportation Center, Fort Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2003</td>
<td>Carrollton City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14, 2003</td>
<td>Grapevine City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15, 2003</td>
<td>Dallas City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15, 2003</td>
<td>Fort Worth Southwest Regional Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 11, 2003</td>
<td>Charles V. England Public Safety Center, Grand Prairie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 2003</td>
<td>North Richland Hills City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 2003</td>
<td>Dallas County Commissioners’ Court Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2003</td>
<td>Fort Worth East Regional Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9, 2003</td>
<td>Duncanville City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9, 2003</td>
<td>Carpenter Park Recreation Center, Plano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 2004</td>
<td>Lewisville City Council Chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 2004</td>
<td>Dallas City Hall, L1 Auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 2004</td>
<td>Intermodal Transportation Center, Fort Worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7, 2004</td>
<td>Addison Conference Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 2004</td>
<td>Dallas West Branch Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 2004</td>
<td>Intermodal Transportation Center, Fort Worth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCTCOG
REGIONAL TRANSIT INITIATIVE MEETINGS AND SUPPORT

During 2003-2004, the Regional Transportation Council provided leadership to the region in addressing institutional, financial, and legislative issues key to providing passenger rail service throughout the entire region. This effort, known as the Regional Transit Initiative (RTI) included committees of local elected and appointed officials, regional transit authority staff, other local government staff, and the NCTCOG and consultant staff already at work on the RRCS effort.

Irving Summit Sponsored by Local Newspapers

The Regional Transit Initiative began at the Regional Transportation Summit on August 15, 2003. This summit was at the end of the annual Texas Transportation Summit in Irving, Texas. The two major newspapers in the region, the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Star-Telegram*, joined forces in an unprecedented move to challenge the region to pursue development of transit throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth region. The newspapers worked with the Regional Transportation Council to develop a summit program. Elected officials from throughout the region were invited. The summit featured speakers that discussed regional transit issues and outlined a schedule for achieving a consensus on the topic. The chairs of the three existing transit authorities and the Regional Transportation Council spoke on the following subjects.

- Success and Vision – Robert W. Pope, DART Board Chair
- Transit Needs and Constraints – Charles Emery, DCTA Board Chair
- Process for Inclusion – Gyna Bivens-Mathis, FWTA Chair
- Schedule for Future Participation – Tarrant County Commissioner B. Glen Whitley, RTC Chair
There was recognition that the RTC has been the facilitator for local decision making that has assisted the path to transit system successes and continues to offer the forum for ongoing regional planning.

The vision statement for the RTI offered at the summit was:

“To provide a bottom-up process for the exchange of information and ideas among elected representatives, policy officials, and the general public regarding options for the implementation of a seamless transit system for North Central Texas.”

To address the financial and institutional structures, the plan of action called for the creation of regional task forces to both review suggestions for the corridors in the RRCS study (using the existing Policy/Technical Committees) and to evaluate overall issues. These committees were established as follows:

Committees 1 – 6 Refining transit needs as outlined in the Mobility 2025 Update using RRCS results. [The membership for these committees was identical to the RRCS Policy/Technical Committees.]
Committee 7 Identifying additional transit needs for Mobility 2030
Committee 8 Evaluating financing options
Committee 9 Evaluating institutional structures
Committee 10 Evaluating required legislative changes and communicating options to the legislature
Regional Committees on Institutional, Financial, and Legislative Issues

Membership lists for Committees 8, 9, and 10 were developed through coordination of the two newspapers, RTC, and leadership of the three existing regional transit authorities. There were four joint committee meetings in addition to three Institutional Committee meetings, three Financial Committee meetings, and one Legislative Issues Committee meeting, all in 2004. Most were convened in Arlington, TX. Exhibit V-3 lists the meetings.

EXHIBIT V-3

RTI COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2004</td>
<td>Arlington Convention Center</td>
<td>Joint Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices, Arlington, TX</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices, Arlington, TX</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 4, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices, Arlington, TX</td>
<td>Legislative (cancelled due to inclement weather)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices, Arlington, TX</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices, Arlington, TX</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 2004</td>
<td>Omni Mandalay Hotel, Irving, Texas</td>
<td>Joint Mid-Course Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices</td>
<td>Legislative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 29, 2004</td>
<td>NCTCOG Offices</td>
<td>Joint Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 13, 2004</td>
<td>Omni Mandalay Hotel, Irving, Texas</td>
<td>Joint Attendance of Regional Transit Summit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCTCOG

On August 13, 2004 at the Regional Summit, the region’s representatives agreed upon guiding principles for providing regional passenger rail service. The detailed guidelines are included in Chapter VII, beginning on page VII-8. Newspaper coverage of the August 13, 2004 Summit is included at the end of this chapter, beginning on page V-8.
Regional Transportation Council Actions

The Regional Transportation Council authorized the initiation and funding of the Regional Rail Corridor Study and continued its support throughout the project. RTC Chairman Glen Whitley provided leadership in working with the editorial boards of the two newspapers and the RTI joint meetings.
North Texas officials OK rail plan
Half-percent sales tax increase suggested to fund regional network

09:56 AM CDT on Saturday, August 14, 2004
By TONY HARTZEL / The Dallas Morning News

IRVING - For the first time in its history, North Texas has a formal plan to build a six-county regional rail network that will stretch from Denton to Waxahachie and McKinney to Cleburne.

Now comes the difficult part of selling it to state lawmakers and ultimately to voters.

Dozens of local leaders formally agreed Friday to a $3.5 billion, 260-mile commuter rail blueprint that will require an increase in the sales tax by half a percentage point. Their unanimous approval during a meeting at the seventh annual Texas Transportation Summit comes just one year after many of the same leaders gathered and signed a pledge to work on solving some of the region's transit problems.

"It's been a short year," said former state Sen. David Cain, whose job will be to persuade the Legislature and Gov. Rick Perry to allow North Texans to vote to expand their sales tax cap by half a percentage point for mass transit. "Our work has really just begun."

The rail effort kicked into high gear last year when the editorial pages of The Dallas Morning News and the Fort Worth Star-Telegram first encouraged local leaders to come up with a plan for expanding mass transit into rapidly growing suburban areas not served by a transit agency.

With one goal reached, "one of our jobs from this point it so make sure transit stays as a top-of-mind issue," said Paul Harral, Star-Telegram editorial page editor. "As far as I'm concerned, it's an absolute win."

Policymakers considered many options for funding a rail network, including a regional gas tax increase or expanding the motor vehicle sales tax. But none of the other measures proved to be as efficient as a sales tax increase.

"The recommendation to the Legislature is that we need their help, and the best way to implement a regional rail system is to raise the sales tax cap," said Michael Morris, director of transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The emphasis on the sales tax has drawn some concern because of the uncertainties over public school finance. Lawmakers could increase the sales tax by a half a percentage point for public schools, which would make it difficult to also raise the sales tax for transit. Many cities in North Texas already charge an 8.25 percent sales tax. Adding a new transit sales tax and a school sales tax would put many cities at or above what many consider an acceptable threshold for sales tax rates.

"We have to solve school finance, or it's my humble opinion that we won't have to worry about traffic congestion," said Collin County Judge Ron Harris. "Nobody will be coming to Texas."

The Dallas Morning News editorial page will continue to focus attention on regional rail plans, said Keven Ann Willey, vice president and editorial page editor.
"We will also help explain to Austin that education and transit are not conflicting priorities," she said.

In reviewing the funding scenarios, local leaders decided to emphasize only the sales tax to show how serious they were about that option. State officials have taken some notice of the region's unified stance, but they will not yet guarantee endorsement of a new sales tax for transit.

Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Ric Williamson said Mr. Perry soon will "reassess" his stance against a sales tax increase and other major state issues, something he does as a matter of routine.

"It doesn't mean he's going to change his position," said Mr. Williamson, who hinted that the governor would have some of his own proposals for regional rail networks this fall.

Many questions still remain about a regional rail network. Mesquite leaders voiced concerns about not having any new commuter rail lines to eastern Dallas County, Rockwall County or Kaufman County. Ellis County leaders are concerned about the regional rail's lack of benefits for residents in the southern half of that county. And leaders still must decide whether to hold a single, five- or six-county election that could be carried by Dallas and Fort Worth or have each county vote independently and risk creation of a fractured network.

One person spoke against the rail efforts. John Dewey of Flower Mound argued that the existing Trinity Railway Express commuter line from Dallas to Fort Worth carries roughly 2 percent of the traffic on nearby highways.

"You've got to ask yourself what impact does that have on pollution and congestion. It doesn't have any," he said. "It's going to be a boondoggle."

The day's accomplishments illustrate how far North Texas has come since the first transportation summit seven years ago, said U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Dallas. That summit was called in part to get Fort Worth and Dallas leaders in the same room during their fevered battle over the future of D/FW International Airport.

"I knew the only way to plan a good transportation system was to have them together again," Ms. Johnson said. "I'm delighted we have come to this point. We will never be separated again."
Leaders agree on rail system plan

Posted on Sat, Aug. 14, 2004
By Gordon Dickson

Star-Telegram Staff Writer

IRVING - If residents of Grapevine, Arlington and other area cities lacking public transportation could put their ears to the railroad tracks, they might hear the faint rumble of commuter trains coming. Elected leaders agreed Friday to create an agency -- a regional rail authority -- to supervise the extension of commuter rail lines to some parts of North Texas not already by the transit system.

At least six rail corridors would be developed by 2025, connecting dozens of cities such as Cleburne to Carrollton, Fort Worth to Frisco.

Supporters congratulated themselves Friday for arriving at a unified rail vision after only a year of negotiations, but they made no bones about the difficult task ahead.

Namely, they've got to find a way to pay for the system -- about $167 million per year.

"We've made tremendous progress, but now comes what I call the grunt work," Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief said at the meeting, held on the final day of the Texas Transportation Summit in Irving. "Now it is up to us to go back to our entities and convince the people it's a good idea."

Area leaders agreed to make their funding pitch to the Legislature when the next session begins in January. The Metroplex's "strong preference" will be for an election to raise the 8.25-cent sales tax limit by a half-cent, according to a statement of principles approved by regional leaders on a voice vote.

Under that plan, cities that do not belong to either the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T) or do not have access to Dallas Area Rapid Transit would pay an extra half-cent sales tax. Fort Worth and Richland Hills, which belong to the T, would pay a full cent, up from the current half-cent.

DART cities, which already pay a full cent, would see no increase. The three cities belonging to the Denton County Transportation Authority would continue to pay a half-cent, and the rest of that county would be asked -- but not required -- to join.

State leaders have said the sales tax proposal is a long shot. Still, Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Ric Williamson of Weatherford was so impressed by Friday's turn of events that he predicted that state and local officials will find a way to compromise in 2005.

"It's going to happen. Too many people are for it," said Williamson, who watched from a back-row seat but did not address the crowd of about 200. "It's just a matter of how it's going to be paid for."

Support was not unanimous. Officials from Mesquite, a Dallas County city that does not have DART access, protested that they would be forced to pay a sales tax even though they won't get a rail line.
John Dewey, a Flower Mound resident, argued at the meeting that trains are too expensive. He also distributed protest fliers to the crowd.

"It's going to be $3.2 billion collected over 20 years, and that would be fine if it worked," Dewey said. "But trains are not going to reduce congestion or improve air quality."

The initiative was heavily discussed throughout the year by the editorial boards of *The Dallas Morning News* and the *Star-Telegram*, although regional planners said that for years they had been working on such a system behind the scenes.
North Texas Transit Vision
Message to Austin: respect and deliver

August 15, 2004 - Dallas Morning News

Austin often tells cities and regions within Texas to shape their own futures.

We applaud that philosophy.

We especially applaud it today, in the afterglow of a shining example of North Texas leadership. Nearly 300 elected and appointed leaders came together in Irving last week and unanimously embraced a statement of principles for seamless public transit in North Texas, complete with a local financing plan and governance structure. Such broad accord on so complicated a topic is indeed historic.

When Wendy Davis of the Fort Worth City Council, Lee Jackson of the University of North Texas and former Texas Sen. David Cain signed the statement on the assembly's behalf, the room at the Omni Mandalay Hotel exploded in applause. It wasn't the constitutional convention in Philadelphia, but there was something of the event in the momentous signing. The region's disparate, occasionally quarreling political and civic entities were committing themselves to a common destiny.

"Yes, [transit] is the answer, to give people alternatives ... to encourage some of us in Texas to get out of our cars, out of our trucks, and get on the train," said Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief.

It wasn't easy. Hundreds of local leaders met more than 70 times over the past year to discuss how to create seamless public transit for Dallas, Collin, Denton, Ellis, Johnson and Tarrant counties. The 10-point resolution carefully balances competing interests from across the region. Its call for allowing a regional election to raise sales taxes a half-cent is a prime example. It would allow cities that already tax their residents for transit to increase the tax for economic development purposes, while allowing cities that currently tax for economic development to tax for transit. This would allow transit cities that feel shortchanged in economic development spending an opportunity to level the playing field, while allowing cities that could benefit from rail to get into the game.

This newspaper's editorial board and that of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram helped. The two rivals last year set aside their differences long enough encourage local leaders to develop a regional plan. In addition to inviting 1,600 leaders to last week's transit summit and the one a year earlier, the two newspapers collectively published nearly 100 editorials, op-ed columns and letters to the editor on the topic of regional transit since last August.

Now it's time for Austin to pay attention.

"If we don't stand up now and provide for our region, we are absolutely remiss in our duties as officials and citizens," said former Denton Mayor Jack Miller.

Paradoxically, the Legislature doesn't fund the region's existing transit agencies but has the ability to block the region's progress. Some insiders expect it to frown because it covets any new sales taxes to finance public schools. But the state can meet its school financing targets by broadening business taxes and making them more equitable. In other words, school reform shouldn't keep the Legislature from allowing voters to approve a half-cent sales tax increase in cities not already served by Dallas Area Rapid Transit.

The wisdom of what the region did will become apparent in 10 years, when business people take rail to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport or when workers easily commute from homes in
South Dallas to jobs in Farmers Branch or Plano - not just because it's faster, but also because it's cheaper, safer and more reliable than driving, and better for the environment and public health.

We celebrate the collaborative effort that has brought the transit vision to this hopeful point. Austin must now help - or get out of the way.

KEY LEADERSHIP

A diverse set of leaders on Friday endorsed a statement of principles drafted by three blue-ribbon committees operating under the auspices of the North Central Texas Council of Governments. The principles include:

*Establishing a rail authority for areas in North Texas not served by Dallas Area Rapid Transit or the Fort Worth or Denton County transit authorities.

*Integrating that rail authority with DART, the T and Denton County.

*Asking the state Legislature to allow North Texas to hold a regional election to increase the sales tax by a half-cent in areas not already served by DART.

WHOM TO CONTACT

Now that there's a broad consensus for public transit in Dallas-Fort Worth, encourage the Legislature to let it happen.


*House Speaker Tom Craddick, 512-463-1000.


E-mail address formats

Texas House - firstname.lastname@house.state.tx.us

Texas Senate - firstname.lastname@senate.state.tx.us