



The federal action for FTA would be funding related. The project is proposed to be partly funded with federal dollars through the NCTCOG's **Transit Strategic Funding Program** (Partnership Program 2). Pursuant to FTA regulations, the FTA Administrator must verify that NEPA requirements have been met in order to approve use of federal funding.

The federal action for FAA would be approval of a revision to the DFW International Airport Layout Plan (ALP). Pursuant to 49 USC § 47107(a)(16), the FAA Administrator (under authority delegated from the Secretary of Transportation) must approve any revision or modification to an ALP before the revision or modification takes effect. Any FAA determination to approve revision of the ALP to accommodate the proposed alterations to the airport for the LRT project will have to take into consideration the effect such changes would have on the safety, utility, or efficiency of the airport.

1.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

DART is the Dallas area's regional transit agency providing service within a 700-square mile area comprised of 13 member cities. The DART Board of Directors established a set of goals for transportation improvements in the Northwest Corridor during the MIS study process. The goals and objectives respond to the underlying transportation needs defined in this chapter. They are based on the goals adopted in May 1983 to guide development of the **DART Transit System Plan** and goals stated in the DART Mission Statement:

The mission of Dallas Area Rapid Transit is to build and operate an efficient and effective transportation system that, within the DART Service Area, provides mobility, improves the quality of life, and stimulates economic development through the implementation of the DART Service Plan as adopted by the voters on August 13, 1983, and as amended from time to time.

The primary objective of the Northwest Corridor MIS was to identify an LPIS for transportation improvements in the corridor. This study identified the following purposes for transportation improvements in the Northwest Corridor:

- **Enhance Mobility** by offering travel choices to and from, and through, the corridor;
- **Provide Additional Capacity** for heavily-traveled radial directions;
- **Reduce Congestion** by reducing automobile dependence;
- **Enhance the Quality and Reliability of Transit Service** for existing and potential riders;
- **Improve Safety and Operating Efficiency** of roadways; and
- **Strengthen Economic Conditions** in the corridor.

1.2 RELEVANT SYSTEM PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The two branches of the Northwest Corridor (formerly known as the Stemmons Corridor) have been included in DART's and other regional transportation improvement plans for more than 20 years. A summary of these plans is presented in this section.

- DART's **1983 Final Service Plan** included a 160-mile fixed guideway transit system. The Northwest Corridor was to be built in two phases along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line, first to LBJ Freeway, then to Belt Line Road with an extension west to Las Colinas in Irving. Phase II also included a commuter rail extension north from the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) line to Texas Stadium and Las Colinas, along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line.
- The **2010 Service Plan** (1988) reduced the fixed guideway system to 93 miles. The Northwest Corridor showed fixed guideway transit from downtown Dallas to LBJ Freeway with extensions to Belt Line Road along the UPRR line and west to Las Colinas in Irving along the Mañana spur. With the failure of the 1988 bond election, DART re-evaluated the rail system and developed a new cost-effective program in 1989.



- The **1989 Transit System Plan** showed a light rail line along the UPRR right-of-way from downtown Dallas to Valley View Lane in Farmers Branch, and future expansion north to the North Carrollton Transit Center. A branch west from the UPRR right-of-way to the North Irving Transit Center along the Mañana spur was also included. DART purchased the UPRR line in 1990 for future use as a rail transit line.
- The **1995 Transit System Plan** updated the 1989 plan to improve both affordability and cost-effectiveness. The plan changed the Northwest Corridor rail alignments from LRT to commuter rail and identified a line along the UPRR from downtown Dallas to the North Carrollton Transit Center and a branch west along the Mañana spur to the North Irving Transit Center. DFW airport was served by a spur north from the TRE commuter rail line.
- The **Northwest Corridor Needs Assessment** (December 1997) identified travel needs in the Northwest Corridor, resulting in the identification of two subareas within the Northwest Corridor: the Carrollton – Farmers Branch Subarea, which generally parallels IH 35E from downtown Dallas and into Carrollton; and the North Irving Subarea, which generally follows the IH 35E/SH 114 corridor through North Irving. This Needs Assessment identified northwest-southeast travel as the primary need in the North Irving Subarea. This includes travel from residential origins in the northwest to employment destinations along the corridor and in downtown Dallas. It also includes travel from residential origins south of downtown Dallas to employment destinations along the corridor and elsewhere in the region (reverse commute).
- The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) developed the **Mobility 2025 Plan** (January 2000) using demographic projections for the year 2025. The plan generally reflected the **DART 1995 Transit System Plan**, with the exception that it showed LRT instead of commuter rail in the Northwest Corridor, based on the MIS results, with two alternative alignments near DFW International Airport. One alignment brought rail into the northern end of the airport, while the other alignment brought rail into the central terminal area of the airport. **The Mobility 2025 Plan** was updated in May 2001, June 2004 and April 2005.
- The **Northwest Corridor Major Investment Study** was initiated in early 1998 and completed in early 2000. It identified LRT on the UPRR alignment from downtown Dallas to Frankford Road in Carrollton, with a section along Harry Hines Boulevard in the Medical Center area. It also identified a branch at Northwest Highway through Irving and DFW Airport. The DART Board approved the LPIS for the Northwest Corridor on February 22, 2000, and amended the **1995 Transit System Plan** to reflect these changes. The two lines were to be treated as separate projects, with an EIS to be prepared for each.
- In August 2000, DART conducted a special election requesting voter approval for the agency to issue long-term bonds to finance capital improvements. Previously, DART had funded projects on a “pay-as-you-go” basis. The issue passed overwhelmingly, and permitted DART to accelerate implementation of several projects, including the proposed project. Under the schedule currently published by DART, the proposed project is expected to begin operation in December of 2012. The extension from Belt Line Road to DFW Airport is proposed to begin operation in December of 2013.
- In 2002 the **Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport Rail Planning and Implementation Study** was completed. This study, sponsored by NCTCOG, DFW Airport, DART, The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Fort Worth Transit Authority, explored future rail service options to the airport. The Study’s goal was “to provide a seamless, customer sensitive, affordable, clearly achievable rail interface between the regional rail system and the DFW Airport Central Terminal Area.” The selected alternative identified three possible options for accessing the Central Terminal Area with LRT. The northern and southern options were elevated or at-grade,



while the central option was a tunnel under DFW Airport. As of now, the northern access option appears to be favored. However, airport access options will continue to be studied and evaluated, and are not proposed to be part of this EIS.

- In October 2006, DART updated its **1995 Transit System Plan** in accordance with the DART **2030 Transit System Plan**. This plan reflects the latest year 2030 demographic projects from NCTCOG and identifies projects to be undertaken by DART through the year 2030.

The **LRT Line to Farmers Branch and Carrollton Final Environmental Impact Statement** was completed in October 2003. The project received a Record of Decision (ROD) in February 2004. Final design has been completed on this 17.6 mile, double-tracked light rail extension from downtown Dallas to Carrollton. DART began construction in 2006 with operations scheduled to be phased in from 2009 through 2010. The Irving/DFW LRT Line begins north of Bachman Station on this line.

- The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) developed the **Mobility 2030 Plan** (January 2007) using demographic projections for the year 2030. **Mobility 2030** describes the Northwest/Irving Rail Corridor as a light rail system from Northwest Highway (Bachman Lake) to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the same as the Build Alternative considered in this FEIS.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE CORRIDOR

The transportation system in the Irving/DFW LRT Line Corridor includes a major international airport; several freeways; a tollway; a network of arterial roadways and local streets; a bus system operating daily on surface streets and freeways; a portion of a commuter rail line; two freight rail lines; and a people mover system serving the Las Colinas Urban Center.

DFW International Airport, which is foreseen as the ultimate terminus of the Irving/DFW LRT Line, is one of the busiest airports in the world. According to information provided by the airport, DFW handles nearly 2,000 flights per day and serves 57 million passengers per year. The airline serves as a hub for Fort Worth-based American Airlines. The airport also has the newly-opened Skylink System automated people mover serving passengers and employees traveling between the six existing terminals. The bi-directional system has two stations at each terminal and operates during airport operating hours. A connection with this system is intended in the later phase of the LRT line.

Several freeways interconnect within the project corridor. Texas Stadium serves as a focal point of the confluence of four freeways (SH 114, Loop 12, SH 183, and Spur 482). In addition, IH 35E crosses the eastern end of the alignment and SH 161 (the President George Bush Turnpike) crosses the western end of the alignment. The principal freeway in the area, SH 114 (John Carpenter Freeway), is part of a system of highways that radiates from the Dallas CBD freeway loop, and runs in a general northwest direction through the study area to the north edge of DFW Airport and rapidly-growing suburban communities such as Grapevine, Southlake, Coppell and Flower Mound. The proposed LRT line would parallel this freeway for much of its alignment. The busiest freeway within the project corridor is SH 183 (Airport Freeway), which connects north Dallas with north Fort Worth and provides access to the south entrance of DFW Airport. At the eastern end of the Irving/DFW LRT corridor, there are few arterial roadways due to the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. Towards the western end of the corridor there are more arterial roadways. A regular, grid street pattern does not exist within the corridor.

The bus system currently includes two express, eight suburban circulator, one rail-feeder, and three cross-town routes in the corridor. Typically, express routes provide service to downtown Dallas, but one of the express routes is a cross-town route that provides east-west service on IH 635. The suburban circulator routes operate between transit centers in outer Dallas and in the