

3.2 Safety and Security

This section provides an assessment of impacts to safety and security related to the implementation of LRT service in the proposed DART Downtown Rowlett Corridor. Safety and security procedures for the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett would follow those procedures outlined in the *DART LRT Transit System Safety Program Plan* (February 1996, 2003) and the *LRT Patrol Plan for DART Transit Police* (April 1996).

3.2.1 DART Rail to Rowlett Alignment

Impact Assessment

Operations. Introducing the LRT operations on the existing railroad alignment along the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Corridor would present safety and security concerns for residents and businesses along the alignment. Corridor residents often cross the proposed DART Downtown Rowlett alignment at informal locations. Safety barriers near the LRT track would channel pedestrian traffic toward formal street crossings, altering the travel path for some residents. LRT operations also have the potential to impact vehicular and pedestrian safety where the alignment crosses streets at-grade.

DART practice is to separate the LRT alignment from both vehicles and pedestrians where the trains operate at 45 mph or greater. The speed for the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett would be greater than 45 mph so, a safety barrier along both sides of the ROW would be constructed. Coordination between DART and the cities of Garland and Rowlett would continue through the final design to determine the extent of the safety barriers. If necessary, additional safety signage, such as no trespassing signs, would be used.

Near grade crossing locations, safety features would be utilized to formalize pedestrian and vehicular crossings and minimize potential conflicts. All federal, state, and local laws regulating safety and design, as well as DART Rail operating procedures, would be followed.

The safety features listed above are associated with LRT operations on the existing rail alignment and would reduce any potential safety impacts to less than significant levels.

Passenger Safety. Safety, in terms of both physical safety and safety from criminal elements, is imperative for DART employees as well as customers riding or waiting for vehicles. This section reviews safety procedures for areas near LRT stations and aboard trains.

According to the *LRT Transit Safety and Security Program Plan*, the primary responsibility for DART police is safety and to “provide security throughout the DART system including threat and vulnerability management”. The *LRT Patrol Plan for DART Transit Police* outlines procedures for providing protection to transit passengers. Transit police would ride both outbound and inbound vehicles during operating hours and would exit at selected stations along the line. The Transit police officers would also board different vehicles to maximize their visibility. In order to secure the safety of its passengers and system, DART maintains its own police agency.

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LRT vehicles are also equipped with safety features for customer protection. Trains are automatically prevented from entering areas occupied by other trains. If the operator releases the master controller, the automatic features will stop the train. Trains are also equipped with emergency communication systems between train operators and passengers. Finally, vehicles are equipped with flame and shatter resistant materials to minimize harm to passengers during emergencies. DART has developed a *Failure Management Plan* and an *Emergency Procedures Plan* in the event that normal operation of LRVs within the LRT alignment are interrupted.

Mitigation Treatments

In order to hinder informal pedestrian crossings, DART would construct a six-foot chain link fence along the alignment on both sides of the ROW and a four-foot fence at grade crossings. These fences would formalize crossings and assist DART in protecting pedestrians as they cross or access vehicles at controlled intersections. These fences would not significantly impact the surrounding environment because this corridor has been used for freight transport and many barriers already exist; however, officials from the cities of Garland and Rowlett would review plans and be informed of any potential problems. Additionally, city officials would also review all crossings and plans to determine if mitigation is necessary.

3.2.2 LRT Stations

Impact Assessment

Safety at transit stations is a concern for transit riders using the numerous modes of transportation that interface with DART LRT stations. This includes the safety of transit riders and others at associated station parking lots. These security risks would be addressed prior to the implementation of DART LRT services. Additionally, DART has developed policies that would be followed to ensure that safety and security at DART LRT stations would be maximized. The DART *Safety System Program Plan* addresses safety and security issues at LRT stations. Elements of the program include the following:

- LRT station design that incorporates architectural design elements which maximize safety and security (e.g. adequate lighting to discourage criminal activity in the parking lots)
- LRT station circulation patterns that separate the various modes from one another and minimize pedestrian intrusion into vehicular or bus access areas
- Crossing protection would be provided at designated pedestrian and bicycle crossings

DART has also developed a *Failure Management Plan* and an *Emergency Procedures Plan* in the event that normal operation of light rail services are interrupted at a station. In addition, Transit Police Officers would patrol trains and officers in police cars would monitor station area activities. The City of Garland, City of Rowlett and the Dallas County Sheriff's office would also routinely patrol station areas. No significant adverse impacts related to safety and security would result at LRT stations.

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Mitigation Treatments

No significant adverse impacts would result to operations or passenger safety with the above-mentioned safety features. As a result, no mitigation treatments are required.

3.3 Visual and Aesthetic Resources

NEPA requires that consideration be given to determine the effects proposed projects are likely to have on the quality of life of the human environment. However, according to DART's *Environmental Impact Assessment and Mitigation Guidelines for Transit Projects*, "there are no federal or state visual regulatory requirements that apply to DART transit projects." Municipal governments regulate screening, landscaping, and neighborhood protection through their ordinances. Therefore, the cities of Garland and Rowlett would review development plans to ensure compliance with zoning and development code requirements. Additionally, mitigation within the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Corridor would be considered when the following occurs:

- Construction requires removal of features that are important to the community's visual character
- LRT features disrupt locally or regionally significant views
- LRT components would contrast with the existing setting in terms of introducing a distracting character to the physical environment
- Placement of the track opens views from transit vehicles into spaces that were previously private
- Community activity is disrupted by introducing a rail line into the activity's views or settings

The following assessment determines if the visual quality of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett would be compatible with existing surroundings. Subjective observation, professional judgment, and input from the affected cities and the public were used to determine the nature and extent of potential visual impacts. As described in previous sections, this assessment takes into consideration the existing railroad and the historic use of this ROW as a transportation corridor.

3.3.1 Landform Quality/Visual Resources

Impact Assessment

The proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Corridor would be constructed in an existing transportation corridor. Structures associated with LRT would add new visual elements into the proposed DART Downtown Rowlett Alignment. Therefore, visual impacts to landform quality and visual resources would most likely be limited to the following new physical elements associated with the project:

- Catenary poles and wires
- LRT vehicles in operation on track
- Proposed DART Downtown Rowlett LRT Station
- Grade-separated structures

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