

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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- Aerial bridge structure along Rowlett Creek floodplain
- Additional physical elements constructed for LRT

These elements would be constructed to maintain consistency with previous transportation uses. As a result, overall visual impacts to the corridor would be minimal.

Rankings for visual quality and visual sensitivity were assigned to each landscape unit in the study area (Section 2.2.3) and were used, in part, as the basis for determining potentially significant visual impacts. The visual quality is low in all units except for Unit 3 and 4, where moderate visual impacts exist, due to the Rowlett Creek crossing and intrusion into open spaces with dense shrubs, trees and water features.

In order to determine the nature and significance of visual impacts to the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Corridor, the potential impact of each of the project characteristics was rated as significant, potentially significant, insignificant (**Table 3-2**). The visual sensitivity of the unit, based on existing conditions, provided the basis for the overall impact. However, structures built as a result of DART Rail-to-Rowlett determined the significance of the change that would occur if the proposed line is constructed.

Table 3-2: DART Rail to Rowlett Visual Impacts Summary

Unit	Name	Visual Sensitivity	Primary Viewer	Overall Impact
1	Garland Station/Highway 66	Low	Arterial drivers, single-family housing residents, and workers employed near rail alignment	PS
2	Highway 66/East Centerville Road	Low	Arterial drivers, single-family housing residents, and workers employed near rail alignment	NS
3	East Centerville Road/Dexham Road	Moderate	Users of the Rowlett Creek Preserve, and workers from the nearby Rowlett Creek WWTP, construction workers for Platted Dexham Creek Estates	PS
4	Dexham Road/Main Street	Moderate	Single family residents and industrial workers employed near rail alignment	S
5	Main Street/Proposed DART Downtown Rowlett LRT Station	Low	Arterial drivers, workers employed near rail alignment, and single-family and multi-family housing unit residents	S

Source: LOPEZGARCIA GROUP, 2007

Note: Significant – (S)
 Potentially Significant – (PS)
 Not Significant – (NS)



The following describes landform quality and visual impacts to each unit.

- **Landscape Unit 1 - Garland Station/Highway 66.** The visual impact of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett on Landscape Unit 1 would be potentially significant. Visual impacts would occur as a result of a new bridge structure that would be constructed to accommodate LRT passage over the existing KCS freight line. Currently, there are existing areas near the alignment with shrubs, fencing, and transmission lines. The new bridge structure would add a new visual element for primary viewers near Downtown Garland which could affect the visual quality. The City of Garland is in the process of implementing a redevelopment plan of the downtown area. Therefore, DART is working with the City of Garland to identify design enhancements for the bridge structure which would be compatible with the existing visual quality and the City's redevelopment plans.
- **Landscape Unit 2 - SH 66/East Centerville Road.** The visual impact of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett on Landscape Unit 2 would be not significant. This unit is primarily characterized by areas of open space with trees along the majority of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Alignment. Some trees and shrubs may need to be removed during construction, but would be replaced according to City of Garland landscape and screening guidelines.
- **Landscape Unit 3 - East Centerville Road/Dexham Road.** The visual impact of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett on Landscape Unit 3 would be potentially significant. Current rail structures exist along this unit. A new bridge structure and overhead catenary system would add new visual elements that could affect the visual quality. Additionally, dense vegetation exists within the MKT ROW. Portions of this vegetation would have to be removed as a result of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Alignment. The removal of these important features would open up views to both transit riders and primary viewers. DART would work with the cities of Garland and Rowlett to moderate the loss of vegetation and design new structures to be compatible with existing visual quality.
- **Landscape Unit 4 - Dexham Road/Main Street.** The visual impact of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett on Landscape Unit 4 would be significant. This unit is primarily characterized by dense vegetation adjacent to majority of the alignment. Some trees and shrubs may need to be removed during construction which could impact the visual character of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Alignment. Additionally, sound and retaining walls are planned along portions of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett Alignment. These structures would add a new visual element and would impact transit riders and primary viewers. Impacts would be mitigated in accordance with the City of Rowlett
- **Landscape Unit 5 - Main Street/Proposed DART Downtown Rowlett LRT Station.** The visual impact of the proposed DART Rail to Rowlett and Landscape Unit 5 would be significant. The proposed DART Rowlett LRT Station would alter existing views for primary viewers; however, this added facility would be built to be consistent with current visual qualities. Significant impacts would also occur as a result of an expansive bridge



that would cross over Main Street and Rowlett Road. This bridge would significantly alter existing views for primary viewers. DART would work closely with the City of Rowlett to minimize the impact and visual changes to this landscape unit in order to maintain connectivity to this important and visible location within the City.

Mitigation Treatments

Potential visual impacts resulting from the proposed aerial structures through the Rowlett Creek floodplain, in downtown Garland and in the City of Rowlett would be reduced by designing the structure to be consistent with the overall settings. The Rowlett Creek structure would be designed and built as to avoid impacts to the wetlands and floodplains. DART would coordinate with the cities of Rowlett and Garland pertaining to visual treatments to the new bridge structures to create bridge designs that are aesthetically complementary to their surroundings. Any visual additions or resulting mitigation to this corridor would be approved by the cities of Rowlett and Garland prior to construction.

3.4 Historic, Cultural, and Archeological Resources

Impact Assessment

Projects involving federal funding or permitting, or that are carried out on federal land are subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. This states that federal agencies take into consideration the effects that an undertaking would have on cultural resources. Projects involving a political subdivision of the State of Texas are subject to the conditions of the Antiquities Code of Texas. The Antiquities Code protects cultural resources that are designated as State Archeological Landmarks (SALs).

Coordination with the THC was undertaken to create an archeological Area of Potential Effects (APE), which was limited to the area of proposed ground disturbance and expanded accordingly as design, engineering, and plans progressed. Currently, the APE is recommended to be the current MKT ROW and areas where new ROW is being considered. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and SAL eligibility status was assessed for historic resources within the architectural APE.

Mitigation Treatments

Archeological resources are being assessed by the THC for the proposed project. Mitigation treatments for historic resources would be developed in consultation with the THC through a Memorandum of Agreement during final design.

3.4.1 Coordination with State Office of Historic Preservation and Local Groups

DART has initiated consultation with the THC and has proposed a methodology for conducting archeological and historical investigations for this project. An archeological permit to conduct reconnaissance investigations was received on April 26, 2005. An archeological APE has been recommended based on the results of the archeological reconnaissance survey. An

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