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For immediate release

**CEREMONY SIGNALS TARRANT COUNTY PHASE
OF TRINITY RAILWAY EXPRESS CONSTRUCTION**

FORT WORTH, Texas – Local, regional and state officials gathered at the historic Texas & Pacific Railroad terminal in downtown Fort Worth today (Monday, March 29) to officially mark construction of the Tarrant County portion of the Trinity Railway Express commuter line connecting major cities in Tarrant and Dallas counties.

Commuter rail service from Fort Worth to downtown Dallas will begin in fall of **2000**. The Trinity Railway Express, a joint venture of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T) and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), is the first commuter rail service in Tarrant County in more than 50 years.

“Today represents a milestone in public transportation for Tarrant County residents,” said John Bartosiewicz, general manager of the T. “Two years from now, the Trinity Railway Express will be up and running with thousands of commuters each day taking the train to work, to school and to events across the Metroplex. Designing and building this rail line has been a massive undertaking. Yet, we have received tremendous support and cooperation at numerous levels. We are about to see the dream become a reality.”

Fort Worth Mayor Kenneth Barr said the new commuter rail line will invigorate an already booming downtown Fort Worth with its two rail stations and the renovation of the historic T&P terminal.

“Once the Trinity Railway Express is on the tracks, more people than ever can see for themselves the exciting and vibrant development in downtown Fort

Worth,” Barr said. “Meanwhile the restored T&P terminal will play a key role in the redevelopment of the Lancaster Avenue corridor and the revitalization of the southern downtown area.”

In a statement, Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-Fort Worth) said the commuter rail line is a key element of the region’s plan for reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. Granger was out of the country with a congressional delegation and unable to attend the groundbreaking ceremony.

“It is exciting to see the Trinity Railway Express becoming a reality. This has been a long, yet important process for Tarrant County residents. In the end, we will find it has been worth all the hard work. The impact to Fort Worth, Tarrant County and the North Texas region will be tremendous, from the economic development generated near the downtown stations to the reduction of traffic congestion and improved air quality,” Granger said.

The Trinity Railway Express project represents more than 15 years of planning between the cities of Fort Worth and Dallas. Rail service connecting the two cities was first discussed with the purchase in 1984 of the old Chicago-Rock Island-Pacific line running between Fort Worth, the Mid Cities and Dallas. However, definitive plans for the commuter rail did not surface until after a 1992 North Central Texas Council of Governments study determining the feasibility of initiating commuter rail service.

In 1994, the T and DART signed an interlocal agreement with the cities of Fort Worth and Dallas to use the Railtran line for the commuter service. The two transit authorities later agreed on operating procedures and the Trinity Railway Express was conceived.

The first phase of the project was opened by DART in December 1996 with service from Dallas’ Union Station to south Irving, a distance of 10 miles. The second phase of the project, serving Tarrant County, will run 25 miles from downtown Fort Worth to CentrePort, south of D/FW Airport at Highway 360.

The five rail stations included in the Tarrant County segment of the Trinity Railway Express are: the T&P terminal, near the Interstate 30 overpass and Lancaster Avenue; the Ninth Street station, located at Ninth and Jones streets on the eastern edge of downtown Fort Worth; the Richland Hills station, located at State Highway 121 and Handley-Ederville Road; the Hurst-Bell station, located near the Bell plant south of Highway 10; and the 360/CentrePort station, near Trinity Boulevard and State Highway 360, south of D/FW Airport.

Construction at the T&P terminal is underway, with restoration of the lobby and passenger terminal and the construction of a park-and-ride facility south of the terminal building. A tunnel will be built to move passengers from the parking area to the station.

The Ninth Street station design will be completed by July 1, with construction to begin in late in September. This location will also serve as the Intermodal Transportation Center, with a bus transfer facility for the T located just south of the station, and space inside the station for Amtrak and Greyhound offices.

Placement of the commuter rail line near the ITC requires the demolition of the Axtell warehouse building. Work will begin in July and take approximately six weeks. Work on the Alarm Supply building near the ITC station will begin in July as crews construct wall supports for the rail tunnel that will run through the building's first three floors. Construction will be completed in November.

Completion date for the ITC is expected in late summer 2000, with rail service to begin in the fall. Service to the T&P station, the final stop at this time for the Trinity Railway Express, is expected to begin before July 1, 2000, following demolition of the I-30 overpass.

Construction and site work has begun at the Hurst-Bell station, with work to begin soon on the Richland Hills and the Highway 360/CentrePort locations. The stations will be completed in early 2000.

The Hurst-Bell station will serve commuters in Hurst, Euless, Bedford and eastern Fort Worth. The Richland Hills station will serve Richland Hills, Haltom City, North Richland Hills and Fort Worth. The CentrePort station is expected to draw riders from Euless, Colleyville, Grand Prairie, Grapevine, Arlington, Irving and far east Fort Worth.

Rehabilitation of the Trinity Railway Express locomotives by Amtrak is underway at its facility in Indiana. The cars will be delivered in summer 2000 in preparation for activation a few months later.

The double-decker Trinity Railway Express rail cars rolling through Tarrant County in two years will feature a red and blue Lone Star logo on the side of each engine and passenger car. The cars, with a capacity of 144 people each, are currently being refurbished at the Amtrak facility in Indiana.

Ridership on the first phase of the Trinity Railway Express is increasing each month, with officials at DART adding Saturday service to its highly successful Irving route. Saturday service to the South Irving station began in December.

Daily average ridership has increased over the last year from 1,792 in January 1998 to 2,023 in December 1998. That's five times, or a 165 percent increase in, the number of riders when the Trinity Railway Express began Phase One service in December 1996.