



COTTON BELT

Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Scoping Summary Report

January 2011



Prepared for Dallas Area Rapid Transit
General Planning Consultant Managed by URS Corporation



COTTON BELT

Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Scoping Summary Report

January 2011

Version 3

Prepared by URS Corporation



Prepared for Dallas Area Rapid Transit
General Planning Consultant Managed by URS Corporation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1-1
1.1	Project Area	1-2
1.2	Project Alternatives	1-3
	1.2.1 No-Build Alternative	1-3
	1.2.2 Build Alternatives.....	1-3
1.3	Purpose and Need	1-4
1.4	Project Participants	1-4
1.5	Purpose of Report	1-5
2.0	SCOPING PROCESS	2-1
2.1	Scoping Purpose and Process	2-1
2.2	FTA Project Development Process	2-1
2.3	Draft Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Activities	2-2
	2.3.1 Initiation of Scoping - Notice of Intent	2-2
	2.3.2 Public Involvement Plan.....	2-2
	2.3.3 Coordination Plan	2-3
2.4	Agency Scoping	2-3
	2.4.1 Participating Agencies.....	2-3
	2.4.2 Cooperating Agencies	2-4
	2.4.3 Agency Scoping Meeting.....	2-4
2.5	Public Scoping	2-5
	2.5.1 Public Meeting Publicity.....	2-5
	2.5.2 Public Meeting Format.....	2-6
	2.5.3 Public Meeting Attendance.....	2-6
3.0	COMMENT SUMMARY	3-1
3.1	Public Scoping Comment Summary	3-1
3.2	Comments Related to Purpose and Need	3-2
3.3	Comments Related to Proposed Alternatives.....	3-3
3.4	Comments Related to Design Elements	3-3
3.5	Comments Related to Other Alternatives	3-4
3.6	Comments Related to Potential Impacts	3-4
	3.6.1 Noise and Vibration	3-4
	3.6.2 Air Quality.....	3-5
	3.6.3 Visual and Aesthetic.....	3-5
	3.6.4 Safety and Security	3-5
	3.6.5 Transportation and Traffic	3-5
	3.6.6 Community and Neighborhood	3-6
	3.6.7 Economic and Fiscal.....	3-6
3.7	Comments Submitted by Federal, State and Local Agencies.....	3-7
4.0	RESPONSES TO COMMENTS	4-1
4.1	Comments Related to the Purpose and Need	4-1
4.2	Comments Related to Alternatives	4-1
4.3	Comments Related to Design Elements	4-2
4.4	Comments Related to Potential Impacts	4-2
	4.4.1 Noise and Vibration	4-2
	4.4.2 Air Quality.....	4-2

4.4.3	Visual and Aesthetic.....	4-2
4.4.4	Safety and Security	4-3
4.4.5	Transportation and Traffic Impacts	4-3
4.4.6	Community and Neighborhood Impacts.....	4-3
4.4.7	Economic and Fiscal.....	4-3

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1	Public Scoping Comment Summary	3-2
-----------	--------------------------------------	-----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1	Project Location Map	1-2
Figure 2-1	Federal NEPA Process.....	2-2

APPENDICES (Under Separate Cover)

- Appendix A -- Scoping Meeting Notices
- Appendix B -- Public Comments Received on Draft 2030 TSP Technical Report
- Appendix C -- Scoping Meeting Materials
- Appendix D -- Oral Comments
- Appendix E -- Written Comments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will evaluate the potential impacts of a proposed 26-mile regional rail alignment between Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW Airport) and the DART Red Line in the Plano/Richardson area of Texas. This proposed project corridor is part of a larger alignment between Wylie, Texas and Fort Worth, known as the Cotton Belt Corridor, 52 miles of which is owned by DART.

The Cotton Belt Corridor has been included in both regional and local transportation plans since 1983, when a passenger rail corridor concept from the DART Red Line in the Richardson/Plano area to the Green Line in Carrollton was included in the original DART Service Plan. In 1989, the DART Transit System Plan recommended the purchase and preservation of the Cotton Belt Corridor right-of-way from Wylie, Texas to north Fort Worth; the 52-mile corridor purchase was completed in 1990. During the development of the 1995 DART Transit System Plan, this corridor was combined with others as an alternative for further study to serve an expanded North Crosstown Corridor.

DART conducted a high level alternatives analysis and completed an existing conditions report on the North Crosstown Corridor as part of its *2030 Transit System Plan (TSP)*, adopted in 2006. The 2030 TSP identified the Cotton Belt Corridor as a focus area and concluded that by 2030, the North Crosstown Corridor area would experience notable insufficient roadway capacity equivalent of more than 10 freeway lanes. The report indicated that rail service on the Cotton Belt Corridor (from DFW Airport to the DART Red Line), using 20 minute peak and 60 minute off-peak service, was the most cost-effective and direct route to serve this east-west crosstown corridor.

On a regional level, the Cotton Belt Corridor has been included in the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) regional transportation plan since 1986. The western portion of the Cotton Belt Corridor, between DFW Airport and Fort Worth is being evaluated by the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T). In October 2008, The T completed a Draft EIS for the western section of the Cotton Belt from DFW Airport to Fort Worth as part of their Southwest-to-Northeast (SW2NE) project (work is under way to prepare responses to the comments received on the Draft EIS and complete the Final EIS). The SW2NE project is anticipated to receive environmental clearance for the section of the Cotton Belt from north of DFW Airport to Fort Worth, and for a new rail corridor extending from the Cotton Belt south into DFW Airport Terminal B. The NCTCOG also completed the *Conceptual Engineering and Funding Study* on the Cotton Belt Corridor from DFW Airport to the DART Red Line in April 2010 and this report will serve as a foundation for this study.

The DART 2030 TSP identified the Cotton Belt Corridor as a priority project with implementation in the year 2025-2030 timeframe. However, with the advancement of the SW2NE project, the regional desire to accelerate the segment from DFW Airport to the DART Red Line has increased. As a result, the NCTCOG's regional transportation plan, *Mobility 2030: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Dallas-Fort Worth Area* identified this project, and portions of the SW2NE project, as a candidate for a public-private partnership (PPP) to design, build, operate, maintain and/or finance the corridor.

DART initiated the PPP effort in May 2009 with a Request for Information (RFI). Based on early input during the RFI, potential private partners noted that a more detailed project definition and environmental clearance would be needed before advancing the project. On May 11, 2010 the DART Board of Directors authorized the President/Executive Director to execute the Memorandum of

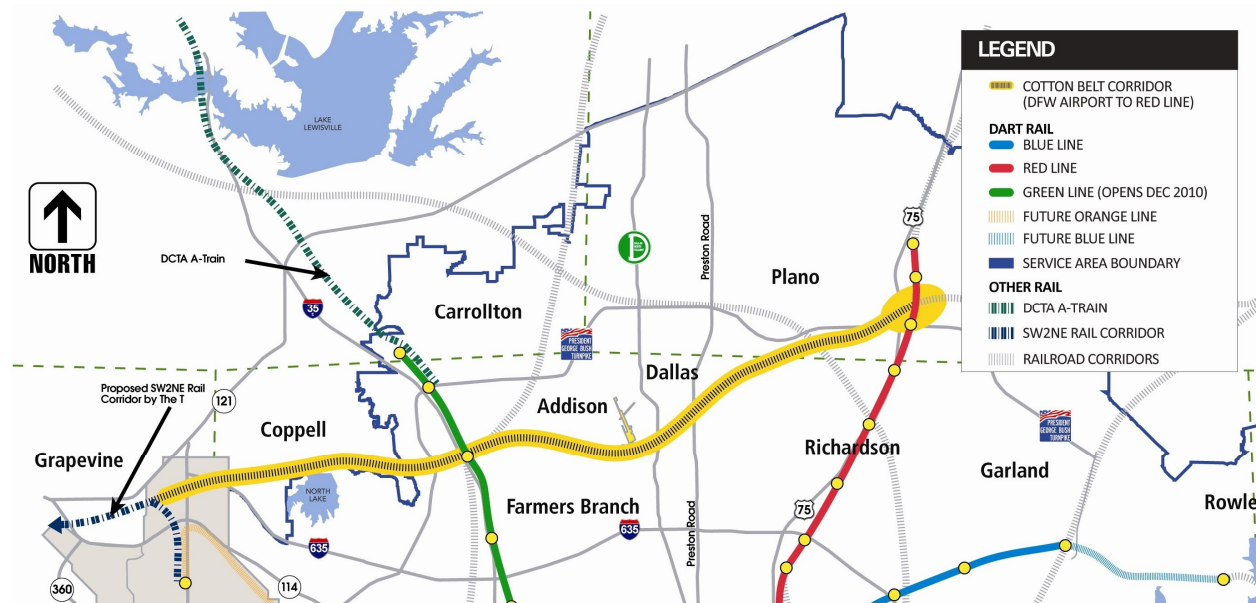
Understanding (MOU) between DART and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) concerning the identification of funding sources to implement rail service on the Cotton Belt Corridor. The purpose of the MOU was to outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. DART would be responsible for advancing the preliminary engineering and conducting an EIS for the 26-mile Cotton Belt Corridor, which includes identification of environmental impacts, design considerations and cost estimates to inform the innovative finance effort. NCTCOG would be responsible for identification of a financial plan sufficient to design, build, and implement regional rail service on the Cotton Belt Corridor.

Various funding alternatives are under consideration. The proposed project may be funded through a combination of local funds and funds apportioned to the NCTCOG from the FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program (UAFF) funding under 49 U.S.C. 5307 (Section 15). This program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation-related planning. NCTCOG may consider requesting additional funding to help construct the project through various state and federal programs. NCTCOG is also seeking innovative financing alternatives that may include private sector partners.

1.1 Project Area

The 26-mile DART Cotton Belt Corridor is located between DFW Airport and the DART Red Line Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor in Plano and Richardson, Texas (Figure 1-1). The proposed project would lie within right-of-way purchased by DART in 1990 and designated as a preserved corridor for future passenger rail service. The right-of-way width varies throughout the corridor, but is generally 100 feet. The alignment traverses through three counties: Tarrant, Dallas, and Collin; and seven cities: Grapevine, Coppell, Dallas, Carrollton, Addison, Richardson, and Plano. Land use varies along the corridor and includes residential, commercial, government/institutional, transportation, and industrial, as well as underdeveloped areas.

Figure 1-1
Project Location Map



Three freight companies operate within the corridor through agreements on tracks owned by DART: The Fort Worth and Western Railroad (FWWR), the Kansas City Southern (KCS) Railroad, and the Dallas Garland Northeastern (DGNO) short-line freight rail service. The Union Pacific (UP) Railroad has overhead rights but does not currently operate within the corridor. On January 22, 2010, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) approved freight abandonment in the North Dallas area from Knoll Trail in Dallas, Texas to Renner Junction in Richardson, Texas.

1.2 Project Alternatives

Alternatives to be reviewed in the EIS include a No-Build Alternative and two Build Alternatives, which may include design options and various station locations.

1.2.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative assumes a 2030 condition of land use and demographics. It includes transit capital and service improvements that are programmed to be implemented by DART and other transit providers in the study area, as well as all other planned, programmed, and funded transportation projects for the planning year 2030. The No-Build Alternative is included as a benchmark against which the potentially significant environmental benefits and impacts of the proposed build alternatives will be measured.

1.2.2 Build Alternatives

The project is evaluating two Build Alternatives. Both alternatives would consist of regional rail service within the Cotton Belt Corridor using a rail vehicle that complies with the requirements of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) safety standards (FRA-compliant vehicle).

- Primarily At-Grade Alternative: One build alternative to be evaluated in the Draft EIS would include trenching the alignment through North Dallas, otherwise known as the “Natinsky Plan.”
- At-Grade Alternative: A second build alternative that would operate at-grade through North Dallas will also be analyzed in the Draft EIS to satisfy federal regulations governing the preparation of EISs for transit projects.¹

Service for both build alternatives would be provided every 20 minutes during the peak periods and every 60 minutes during the off-peak periods. Station locations will be examined along with various options for the eastern terminus, passing siding/double-track locations, and possible horizontal and vertical alignment deviations at strategic locations.

¹The regulations dictate that “The draft EIS (DEIS) shall evaluate all reasonable alternatives to the action and discuss the reason why other alternatives which may have been considered were eliminated from detailed study” (23 CFR 771.123). The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the federal commission responsible for coordinating federal environmental efforts, further address reasonable alternatives as “those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense, rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant” (46 Fed. Reg. 18026, question 2a).

Both of the build alternatives would extend eastward from DFW Airport within existing railroad right-of-way approximately 26 miles to DART's Red Line LRT corridor to the Plano/Richardson area. At the western terminus, the project would interface with DART's future Orange Line LRT service, which extends from DFW Airport through Irving to downtown Dallas, and with the proposed SW2NE Regional Rail Corridor service from southwest Fort Worth to DFW Airport.

At the eastern terminus, the corridor assumes an interface with the existing DART Red Line at the intersection of the two corridors, which would require a new LRT station at the location. Options for the Cotton Belt Corridor eastern terminus include: turning south to connect to the existing DART Red Line Bush Turnpike Station, turning north to connect to the existing Red Line Downtown Plano, 12th Street Station (which would allow an option for service to continue farther north into Plano or McKinney), or extending farther east on the Cotton Belt to terminate near Shiloh Road in Plano.

Several new rail stations would be provided, depending upon the build alternative selected. Station platforms would be approximately 300 to 500 feet in length. Potential station locations include: DFW Airport, North Lake, Downtown Carrollton (Green Line interface), Addison (existing Transit Center), Knoll Trail, Preston Road (State Highway 289), Renner Village, UTD – Synergy Park, the Red Line Interface, and Shiloh Road. A maintenance facility and its location will also be examined under the build alternatives.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of the Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project is to provide regional rail connections that will improve mobility, accessibility and system linkages to major employment, population and activity centers in the northern part of the DART Service Area. The implementation of regional rail within the Cotton Belt Corridor would also provide an alternative to traffic congestion within the planning area. The connection of three LRT lines and two planned regional rail lines (Denton County Transportation Authority [DCTA] A-Train and The T's SW2NE Project) makes regional connectivity a key component of the Cotton Belt Corridor. The Cotton Belt Corridor also offers opportunities to connect with the proposed Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) regional rail corridor between Frisco and Irving, with a connection in downtown Carrollton.

Regional demand for travel in the planning area is projected to increase along with congestion. Implementation would improve transit performance in the planning area by offering a new, more reliable service. By providing a new transportation option, peak period congestion would be reduced, providing improvements to regional air quality.

1.4 Project Participants

The project participants include DART, the local lead agency, and the FTA, the federal lead agency. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the FRA have been invited to participate as cooperating agencies based on their jurisdiction within the study area. Other project participants include the general public; federal, state and local participating agencies; and stakeholders.

1.5 Purpose of Report

The following sections of this report document the scoping process for the Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project. This report includes a summary of the public participation process and the public comments received during the scoping comment period between July 8, 2010 and August 30, 2010. The scoping process also provided opportunity for the participating agencies to comment on the purpose and need, the proposed alternatives and indicate areas of particular concern.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

2.0 SCOPING PROCESS

2.1 Scoping Purpose and Process

The first step in the project development process is to involve the community in outlining the “scope” of the project. The scoping process ensures that citizens, elected officials, and appropriate government review agencies are involved early in the decision-making process and in outlining the scope of the study so comments and concerns can be addressed during the project development phase. Throughout the scoping process, the general public and agencies had an opportunity to review information and offer their comments either orally at the public and agency scoping meetings or in writing.

The purpose of scoping is to inform the public that the environmental review process is beginning. In addition to initiating dialogue on the proposed alternatives, scoping is instrumental in identifying issues to be considered and/or resolved during the project development process. At the scoping meetings, the project team explained the scoping process and environmental review process, described the alternatives currently being considered, and asked for the public’s ideas and comments. The public was invited to comment on the alternatives to be addressed; the alignments and station locations to be considered; and the environmental, social, and economic concerns to be analyzed. Interested individuals, organizations, or agencies were given the opportunity to propose additional alternatives or propose the study of a specific potential environmental effect associated with an alternative. At the conclusion of the scoping comment period, comments received will be taken into consideration by DART to make project decisions that are in the best overall public interest.

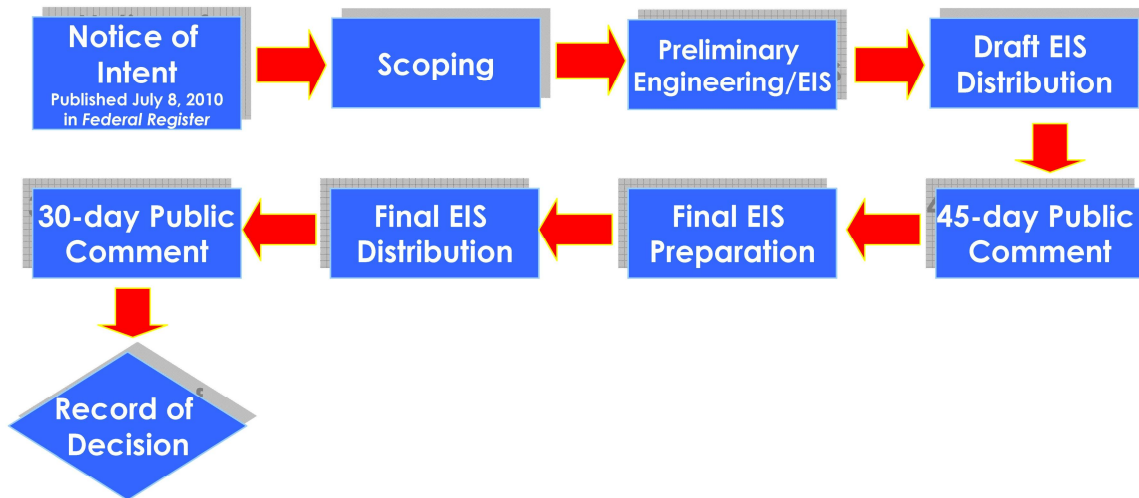
2.2 FTA Project Development Process

The Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project is being evaluated by a process set forth by the FTA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA: 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) of 1969 and the regulations implementing NEPA set forth in 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508 and 23 CFR Part 771, as well as provisions of the enacted Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Compliance with NEPA and SAFETEA-LU’s implementing regulations is necessary for a project to be eligible for federal capital funds. DART is complying with all federal, state and local regulations regarding the evaluation of alternatives to provide needed transit services within the study area. The EIS process allows for careful consideration of the design, costs, and benefits of transportation alternatives and will document probable effects and potentially significant impacts to social, economic and environmental factors associated with the proposed alternatives. Preliminary engineering will define physical and operational aspects of the proposed project in sufficient detail to assess environmental effects. The proposed project may generate environmental benefits, so the EIS will document positive impacts as well.

After its approval, the Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment. A public hearing will be held on the Draft EIS. Following the comment period on the Draft EIS, a Final EIS will be prepared that will respond to comments received during the circulation of the Draft EIS, identify additional analyses that will be required to adequately respond to public comment or resolve issues in the Draft EIS, identify the preferred alternative and identify mitigation measures. Following the publication of the Final EIS, the FTA determines if a Record of Decision (ROD) can be issued, which indicates acceptance of the environmental document.

The ROD will include a list of mitigation measures. These measures represent commitments to respond to impacts and will be tracked through a mitigation monitoring program. Opportunity for additional public comment will be provided throughout all phases of project development including post-EIS phases of design and construction. Figure 2-1 illustrates the EIS process from the Notice of Intent to the Record of Decision.

Figure 2-1
Federal NEPA Process



2.3 Draft Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Activities

2.3.1 Initiation of Scoping - Notice of Intent

The FTA and DART announced the decision to prepare an EIS for the Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project with publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on July 8, 2010. The NOI invited the general public and agencies to attend the scoping meetings and listed the scoping meeting dates and locations. It also included a summary of the project's background, the purpose and need, the project location, potential alternatives and possible effects. Publication of the NOI marked the beginning of the scoping comment period, which terminated on August 30, 2010. The NOI is included in Appendix A (Appendices provided under separate cover).

2.3.2 Public Involvement Plan

DART is required to provide opportunities for public participation under the legislation of NEPA and SAFETEA-LU Section 6002. A comprehensive *Public Involvement Plan* (PIP) has been developed and will be implemented as part of the Draft EIS. The PIP will fulfill and expand upon the requirements under NEPA for an EIS and will comply with SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 requirements for public coordination. The PIP will also comply with the 1994 Executive Order on Environmental Justice by ensuring that populations of concern, including minority and low-income populations, are provided with adequate opportunities to participate and Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 by ensuring that all citizens regardless of race, income, or physical limitations have the opportunity to participate.

The purpose of the PIP is to effectively communicate the project scope, issues, and potential impacts and benefits while collecting valuable public, agency and stakeholder input. This input will assist the project team with developing a cost-effective regional rail solution that is supported by the broad range of interests along the corridor. The PIP builds upon prior activities conducted for the Cotton Belt Corridor from the DART *2030 Transit System Plan*. Public comments received relative to the Cotton Belt Corridor during the preparation of the 2030 TSP will also be considered during this study. A summary table of those comments, as of October 3, 2006, is included in Appendix B.

The PIP includes agency and public scoping meetings; community-wide public information meetings; public hearings; informational briefings to stakeholder groups, elected officials, and other local and regional officials; and information dissemination via a project website and newsletters. The PIP will also involve focus groups, a technical work group and other stakeholder groups to obtain input on issues, concerns, and advise on neighborhood and transit-oriented development issues.

2.3.3 Coordination Plan

In addition, SAFETEA-LU requires that a Coordination Plan be prepared, as indicated in 23 U.S.C. 139. This plan demonstrates how the lead agencies will coordinate public and agency participation and comments at key points during the environmental review process. A *SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 Draft Coordination Plan* has been prepared and it details the opportunities for input by the agencies and the public.

2.4 Agency Scoping

2.4.1 Participating Agencies

As part of SAFETEA-LU, lead agencies are required to identify and invite participating agencies to participate in the project. Participating agencies are federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project. Designation as a participating agency does not imply that the participating agency has any jurisdiction or special expertise concerning the proposed project or its potential impacts. Nongovernmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as participating agencies. Agencies invited to attend the Interagency Scoping Meeting on July 28, 2010 are listed in Appendix A. It is anticipated that these agencies will be invited to formally join the project as a participating agency. Invited participating agencies will have 30 days to accept or decline the invitation.

The roles and responsibilities of participating agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Participating in the scoping process. The scoping process is designed so that agencies whose interest in the project comes to light as a result of initial scoping activities will be invited to participate and still have an opportunity for involvement.
- Participating in the NEPA process starting at the earliest possible time, especially with regard to the development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, methodologies, coordination plan, and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives.
- Identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Participating agencies also may participate in the issue resolution process.
- Providing meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues.

2.4.2 Cooperating Agencies

In addition, SAFETEA-LU requires lead agencies to identify and invite Cooperating Agencies to participate in the project. According to CEQ (40 CFR 1508.5), "cooperating agency" means any Federal agency, other than a lead agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a cooperating agency. Nongovernmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as cooperating agencies.

The roles and responsibilities of cooperating and participating agencies are similar, but cooperating agencies have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process. Cooperating agencies share responsibility for developing information and environmental analyses related to their respective areas of expertise. Cooperating agencies are, by definition, also participating agencies. As such, cooperating agencies share the responsibilities of SAFETEA-LU participating agencies, including responsibility to participate in the NEPA process at the earliest possible time and to participate in the scoping process.

Both FAA and FRA have been invited by FTA to participate in the project as a Cooperating Agency due to their jurisdiction within the study area. Both agencies were invited to attend the agency scoping meeting on July 28, 2010.

2.4.3 Agency Scoping Meeting

As part of scoping, DART held an Interagency Scoping Meeting. Federal, state, tribal, regional and local agencies were invited to provide input during the scoping process. The meeting was held on:

Wednesday, July 28, 2010, 10:00 AM
DART Headquarters - Board Room
1401 Pacific Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75266-7232

There were a total of 21 attendees and the following agencies were represented:

- City of Coppell
- City of Dallas
- City of Irving
- City of Farmers Branch
- City of Plano
- Town of Addison
- DFW Airport
- Office of Senator Hutchinson
- Federal Railroad Administration
- The T
- NCTCOG

The meeting sign-in sheets are included in Appendix C.

The interagency scoping meeting included a formal presentation from DART staff. The slide show presentation is included in Appendix C. Presentation boards excerpted from the slide show were displayed around the room and DART staff was on hand to answer questions regarding the project. In addition, a full color aerial corridor map was presented that indicated the Cotton Belt alignment, potential station location areas and the existing roadway and transit network. During the formal presentation, DART provided a detailed overview of the project history, purpose and need, goals and objectives, NEPA process, proposed alternatives, areas of concern, key issues and scoping process.

The presentation was followed by a comment session. The agencies were invited to provide their comments orally at the meeting. Comment cards were also collected at the meeting. DART indicated that comments would be accepted at the meeting, online, by mail, fax or email. DART staff was on hand at the conclusion of the meeting to address additional questions. Comments from the meeting are summarized in Section 3.7 and the meeting minutes are included in Appendix D.

2.5 Public Scoping

As part of scoping, DART also held a public scoping meeting in which the general public was invited to provide input during the scoping process. The meeting was held on:

Thursday, July 29, 2010, 6:30 PM
Addison Conference Center
15650 Addison Road
Addison, TX 75001

The meeting agenda was as follows:

- 6:30 PM – Open House Session
 - View Display Boards
 - Talk with Project Team Members

- 6:45 PM – Presentation
 - Overview and Update
 - Project Scoping

- 7:30 PM – Formal Public Comments
 - Oral and Written comments given equal consideration
 - Court reporter records oral comments

2.5.1 Public Meeting Publicity

The meeting was publicized through a variety of media outlets including the local paper, formal invitations, web postings and advertisements. A legal notice was published in the Dallas Morning News on July 9, 2010 indicating the date, time, location and purpose of the public scoping meeting (Appendix A). Additionally, an advertisement was placed in the Dallas Morning News on Sunday, July 11, 2010. DART sent email invitations to local elected officials (Appendix A). The meeting information was also posted on DART's website, www.dart.org.

2.5.2 Public Meeting Format

The public scoping meeting began with an open house format. Ten presentation boards excerpted from the slide show were displayed and DART staff was on hand to answer questions regarding the project. In addition, a full corridor map was presented that indicated the Cotton Belt alignment, potential station location areas and the existing roadway and transit network. The open house session provided the public an opportunity to review major issues and elements of the project, and clarify any questions prior to the formal presentation. The following informational materials were distributed to each participant and are included in Appendix C:

- Scoping Information Booklet
- Scoping comment cards
- Scoping meeting brochures (in English and Spanish)

The open house was followed by a formal presentation. The slide show presentation was similar to the one shown at the agency scoping meeting. DART provided a detailed overview of the project history, purpose and need, goals and objectives, NEPA process, proposed alternatives, areas of concern, key issues and scoping process. The presentation provided details on the scoping process and encouraged attendees to submit any comments prior to the deadline of August 30, 2010. DART indicated that comments would be accepted at the meeting, online, by mail, fax or email. An American Sign Language interpreter and Spanish language translator were available at the meeting.

The presentation was followed by a comment session. Attendees were invited to record their comments orally at the meeting. Oral comments were recorded by a court reporter. Comment cards were also collected at the meeting. DART staff was on hand at the conclusion of the meeting to address additional questions. A transcript of the oral comments received during the meeting can be found in Appendix D.

2.5.3 Public Meeting Attendance

A total of 99 people attended the July 29, 2010 public scoping meeting. The sign-in sheets for the meeting are included in Appendix C.

3.0 COMMENT SUMMARY

The Cotton Belt Corridor Regional Rail Project was initiated with the publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register* on July 8, 2010, which marked the start of the scoping comment period. Comments were collected through August 30, 2010, which was greater than the 30 days required by FTA rules. A total of approximately 300 comments were received from the public, agencies, stakeholders, neighborhood associations and other interested parties by the close of the scoping comment period.

The scoping comment summary (Table 3-1) provides a tally of the topics discussed in the comments. The numbers listed in the summary table exceed the total number of comments received because some comments listed multiple concerns and issues. Comments covered a range of topics including the purpose and need for the proposed project, the proposed alternatives for the Draft EIS, the design elements, other alternatives and potential impacts.

3.1 Public Scoping Comment Summary

All comments received by email, mail and orally at the scoping meetings, and through the website were recorded and summarized in a database. Information recorded included the date, time and how the comment was received (comment card, website, email, letter or orally). The comments were then summarized by purpose and key issues. Contact information was also recorded including name, address, phone, email and association. Complete comments can be found in Appendix D (oral comments) and Appendix E (written comments).

Table 3-1 provides a summary of the public comments. The majority of comments received were in regard to a community plan known as the "Natinsky Plan." In 2006, Dallas Councilmember Ron Natinsky proposed an alternative plan for the portion of the alignment that traverses North Dallas. The plan was adopted by the City of Dallas in a Council Resolution passed in June 2006. The "Natinsky Plan" includes the following elements:

- Light rail technology
- A below grade trench from at least 1,500 feet east of Meandering Way to 2,000 feet west of Preston Road
- Elimination of freight trains
- Specified neighborhood stations
- Enhanced landscaping and sound attenuation
- Integration with the hike and bike system

Table 3-1 Public Scoping Comment Summary			
Purpose and Need	Does the region have the money for the project (1) Supportive of the purpose and need of the project (1) DART has more pressing projects than the Cotton Belt, expansion should focus on Dallas (1)		
Proposed Alternatives	<u>No Build</u> Support (7) <u>"Natinsky Plan"</u> Support (181) Opposed to trench option (2) <u>Cotton Belt Corridor Project in General</u> Support (61)		
Design Elements	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><u>Stations (20)</u> Addison station with TOD Good bicycle and pedestrian access Provide on-call/flex service from Addison Station Supports a station in Coppell Supports a Bush Turnpike Station Supports a 12th Street Station</td> <td><u>Design Features (16)</u> New technology vehicles with low emissions and noise Provide adequate shelter from the elements Vehicles with clean diesel fuel Quiet self-propelled engines Visual and technology displays at stations Use of light rail vehicles Include hike and bike trails Trees in parking lots with multi-story garages Elevated tracks over crossings with dual tracks</td> </tr> </table>	<u>Stations (20)</u> Addison station with TOD Good bicycle and pedestrian access Provide on-call/flex service from Addison Station Supports a station in Coppell Supports a Bush Turnpike Station Supports a 12 th Street Station	<u>Design Features (16)</u> New technology vehicles with low emissions and noise Provide adequate shelter from the elements Vehicles with clean diesel fuel Quiet self-propelled engines Visual and technology displays at stations Use of light rail vehicles Include hike and bike trails Trees in parking lots with multi-story garages Elevated tracks over crossings with dual tracks
<u>Stations (20)</u> Addison station with TOD Good bicycle and pedestrian access Provide on-call/flex service from Addison Station Supports a station in Coppell Supports a Bush Turnpike Station Supports a 12 th Street Station	<u>Design Features (16)</u> New technology vehicles with low emissions and noise Provide adequate shelter from the elements Vehicles with clean diesel fuel Quiet self-propelled engines Visual and technology displays at stations Use of light rail vehicles Include hike and bike trails Trees in parking lots with multi-story garages Elevated tracks over crossings with dual tracks		
Other Alternatives	DART Line to Fort Worth, Texas (1) Alignment in the right-of-way of Bush Turnpike from DFW Airport (1) Alignment interfacing with 190 (George Bush) and DART Red Line (1) Busway on LBJ freeway (1) Extension of DART Red Line to Frisco (1) Alignment from Denton County to Downtown Dallas (1) Project should include Wylie and Murphy in part of this crosstown connector (1)		
Potential Impacts	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Noise and Vibration (26) Air Quality (11) Visual and Aesthetic (1) Safety and Security (22)</td> <td>Transportation/Traffic Impacts (21) Community and Neighborhood Impacts (27) Economic and Fiscal (24)</td> </tr> </table>	Noise and Vibration (26) Air Quality (11) Visual and Aesthetic (1) Safety and Security (22)	Transportation/Traffic Impacts (21) Community and Neighborhood Impacts (27) Economic and Fiscal (24)
Noise and Vibration (26) Air Quality (11) Visual and Aesthetic (1) Safety and Security (22)	Transportation/Traffic Impacts (21) Community and Neighborhood Impacts (27) Economic and Fiscal (24)		

Note: Tallies (in parentheses) are approximate

Source: Submitted comments from the Public Scoping Comment Period, July 8, 2010 to August 30, 2010.

3.2 Comments Related to Purpose and Need

Approximately three comments were submitted regarding the purpose and need. The following comments were received:

- Does the region have the money for the project?
- Supportive of the purpose and need of the project.
- DART has more pressing projects than the Cotton Belt, expansion should focus on Dallas.

3.3 Comments Related to Proposed Alternatives

Approximately 251 comments received were related to the proposed alternatives. The majority of comments, 181, were in support of the alternative that includes the “Natinsky Plan” for the North Dallas segment of the alignment. Many of the comments expressed support for the Cotton Belt Project only with the implementation of the “Natinsky Plan.” This plan includes trenching the alignment in the North Dallas area. Comments related to the “Natinsky Plan” included the following points:

- Supportive of only Light Rail vehicles.
- Provide below grade rail service adjacent to the North Dallas neighborhoods.
- Provide landscaping and sound protection.
- Provide guarded rail stations.
- Potential impacts to traffic patterns particularly for emergency vehicles at train crossings.
- Potential noise pollution to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Potential air pollution impacts from diesel locomotives.
- Potential safety impacts to neighborhoods where trains run close to residences.
- Potential safety impacts related to crime, and traffic problems at neighborhood train stations.
- Potential impacts to property values and neighborhood quality of life.
- Potential impacts to children’s safety.

Approximately 61 comments were received in support of the Cotton Belt Project in general. Comments in support of the proposed project included the following points:

- Cotton Belt provides an important link between Addison and DFW Airport.
- Cotton Belt provides a critical east-west link that connects the existing DART system.
- Cotton Belt would relieve traffic on the Bush Turnpike and I-635.
- Cotton Belt improves mobility and the environment.
- Cotton Belt will improve access to University of Texas at Dallas.

Approximately 7 comments received were not supportive of the project.

- The project is too expensive and will negatively impact neighborhoods.
- DART should improve bus service over rail service.
- Cotton Belt alignment is located too close to the jet fuel line, which is a safety hazard.
- Cotton Belt will create both noise and air pollution.
- Cotton Belt will impose traffic impacts.

3.4 Comments Related to Design Elements

Comments related to design elements were divided into two general categories: stations and design features. Approximately 20 comments received were in regard to stations. Many comments submitted were in support of a station at Addison, which would enhance the existing transit-oriented development. In addition, there was support for a station at Bush Turnpike on the Red Line. Other comments included:

- Request to provide good pedestrian and bicycle access to stations.
- Request to provide flex or on-call service to the Addison Station.

- Support for the Bush Turnpike Station connection, due to the transit-oriented development potential.
- Support for a station in Coppell.
- Support for 12th Street Station in Plano.

Approximately 16 comments submitted were related to design features. Comments ranged from including quiet, environmentally friendly vehicles to providing trees in parking lots. Comments included:

- New technology vehicles with low emissions and noise.
- Provide adequate shelter from the elements.
- Vehicles with clean diesel fuel.
- Quiet self-propelled engines.
- Visual and technology displays at stations.
- Use of light rail vehicles.
- Include hike and bike trails.
- Trees in parking lots with multi-story garages.
- Elevated tracks over crossings with dual tracks.

3.5 Comments Related to Other Alternatives

A total of 7 comments were submitted in support of other alternatives. Suggestions included the following:

- Extend DART services to Fort Worth.
- Alignment should use the right-of-way along the Bush Turnpike from DFW Airport.
- Alignment interfacing with 190 (George Bush) and Dart Red Line
- Provide a busway on LBJ freeway.
- Extend the DART Red Line.
- Provide an alignment between Denton County and downtown Dallas.
- The project should include Wylie and Murphy in part of this crosstown connector.

3.6 Comments Related to Potential Impacts

Approximately 132 comments were received related to potential impacts. Areas of concern ranged from noise and vibration to community and neighborhood impacts. The following provides a summary of the major concerns voiced during the scoping comment period.

3.6.1 Noise and Vibration

Approximately 26 comments were received related to noise and vibration concerns. Many comments submitted were in support of the “Natinsky Plan” which trenches the alignment with sound attenuation through the North Dallas section to reduce noise and vibration concerns during operation. Other issues raised include the following:

- DART trains are noisy.
- Sound walls should be considered.
- Noise pollution control required.
- Neighborhoods should be protected from the noise impacts.

- Without noise pollution control, quality of life and property values will degrade.
- The elimination of freight and the use of a light rail vehicle will maintain a quiet, pleasant atmosphere.
- The frequency of trains will create noise pollution.
- Extensive landscaping requested to reduce noise levels.

3.6.2 Air Quality

Approximately 11 comments received related to air quality concerns. The majority of comments received related to air quality were a part of the overall support for the “Natinsky Plan.” Commenters were concerned about increased pollution and emissions levels:

- Need to reduce emissions levels.
- Increased air pollution from diesel locomotives.

3.6.3 Visual and Aesthetic

One comment was received stating the importance of implementing each aspect of the “Natinsky Plan” including the aesthetic recommendations.

3.6.4 Safety and Security

Approximately 22 comments were received regarding safety and security concerns. Comments included:

- Trains will impact children’s safety in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Locations where the alignment is near schools and where small children walk to school
- Grade crossings create a safety issue for school children and parents.
- Implement the “Natinsky Plan” for the safety of the children.
- A trench will create a safer environment for children in the neighborhood.
- Neighborhood crime.
- Above grade tracks will create a safety issue.
- Concern about the existing jet fuel line parallel to the alignment and the potential for an explosion.
- Provide sound wall to protect safety of children in the neighborhood.
- The emergency response capabilities for two Dallas Fire Stations, one paramedic unit, and the entire Dallas Police Department North Central headquarters would be significantly impaired.

3.6.5 Transportation and Traffic Impacts

Approximately 21 comments were received on transportation and traffic impacts.

- Already too much automobile traffic traveling through intersection of Campbell and Davenport.
- Existing congestion on major streets such as Campbell, Hillcrest, Coit, Meandering Way.
- Grade crossing will impact traffic flow.
- Traffic congestion associated with the project will degrade quality of life and property values.
- Provide grade separations between rail and automobile routes to maintain access to schools, fire stations, police, without repeated interruptions to traffic.

- Traffic flow will be impacted during rush hour if construction is done at grade and emergency routes will be affected.
- Train traffic will create problems at railroad crossings where emergency vehicles will have to wait for trains to pass.
- Traffic on Meandering Way is congested and getting worse, the trains will only increase the congestion.
- Meandering Way is the only entrance and exit for our neighborhood.
- Meandering Way is an ER route for emergency vehicles.
- Meandering Way serves as an alternative route when there are tie-ups or construction on Coit or Hillcrest Street.
- Stopping flow on Meandering Way would also tie up traffic at the Meandering Way/McCallum stop sign.
- Traffic backup would prevent residents from exiting their alley and street onto Meandering Way.
- Access to roads from the North Central Police Station would be inhibited.
- Because of heavy traffic in the North Dallas Corridor, it is important to keep north/south roadways moving.
- Should be constructed below grade from Coit Road west to Preston road to minimize impact to our neighborhoods and eliminate blockage.
- Reconsider crossings at intersections that are chronically high traffic.

3.6.6 Community and Neighborhood Impacts

Approximately 27 comments were received regarding community and neighborhood impacts. Many comments were concerned about the impacts to the quality of life and property values if the "Natinsky Plan" was not implemented. Additional concerns included the following:

- My home value will drop 30 percent depending on the configuration and design of the system.
- We ask you to please consider alternate routes to avoid further decreases in the market value of our homes.
- Concerned that DART will not support the "Natinsky Plan," which is the only hope of saving any kind of home property values and quality of life.
- Our neighborhood is dynamic and must be protected from the noise and appearance of overhead rail lines.
- Property values and taxes are an important revenue source for the city, so it is in DART's best interest to support the "Natinsky Plan."
- Wish to maintain our quality of life and neighborhood, support the "Natinsky Plan."
- Protect the value and safety of the resident's homes living near the proposed line.
- The proposed rail line would greatly reduce the sales price of homes in the Prestonwood area.
- A DART station will change the dynamics of our quiet neighborhood.
- A DART station could cause a disruption for the neighborhood school children.

3.6.7 Economic and Fiscal

Approximately 24 comments received were associated with the economic and fiscal aspects of the project. Most comments were related to supporting the financial plan for the "Natinsky Plan."

3.7 Comments Submitted by Federal, State and Local Agencies

The following summarizes the comments received during the interagency scoping meeting:

- Is there a preferred alternative for the Cotton Belt?
- Will there be quarterly update meetings with local governments?
- Coordinate opportunities for the Cotton Belt environmental and financial studies to present the project updates together to the public and agencies.
- Ridership will be affected by the efficiency of the system operation.
- DART needs to create a marketing plan that educates the public on the importance of implementing rail for the region.

Written comments were received from two federal agencies and one state agency as listed below. Their comments are included in Appendix E.

- National Park Service – comment indicated that no parks within their jurisdiction will be affected.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – comment letter identified regulatory project manager for the project and assigned a Corps project number for future correspondence.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife – comment letter provided recommendations for consideration in the EIS process in the matter of station locations and route alternatives at the eastern terminus, stream crossings and riparian habitat, rare resources, landscaping and water conservation, and parks and recreation areas.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

4.0 RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The purpose of scoping is to provide an opportunity for the public and agencies to comment on the project's purpose and need, the proposed alternatives and potential areas of concern. The comments received help identify potential benefits and impacts and guide the scope of the Draft EIS analysis. Substantive comments received will be addressed during major milestones of the EIS process, including the conceptual and final design phases and in the Draft EIS. DART will work closely with affected communities, neighborhood associations, key stakeholders, agencies and the public to resolve identified issues throughout the project.

4.1 Comments Related to the Purpose and Need

Three comments were directly related to the project's purpose and need. One comment specifically stated support for the purpose and need. Other comments questioned whether there was money for the project and that DART expansion should focus on Dallas.

The purpose and need will continue to be refined and clarified during the preparation of the Draft EIS. The Cotton Belt Corridor has been included in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan planning organization, NCTCOG, regional transportation plan since 1986. The DART *2030 Transit System Plan* identifies the Cotton Belt Corridor as a priority project with implementation in the year 2025-2030 timeframe. In October 2008, The T completed a Draft EIS for the section of the Cotton Belt Corridor from DFW Airport to Fort Worth as part of their SW2NE project. A key element of both projects is funding. Given the regional desire to accelerate the schedule of both projects, the NCTCOG is leading a parallel study, an Innovative Finance Initiative (iFi) effort, to fund all or a portion of the capital and operating components of both projects.

4.2 Comments Related to Alternatives

Many comments related to alternatives expressed support for the proposed "Natinsky Plan," which trenches the alignment in North Dallas. Based on scoping results, a build alternative that includes a trench option through North Dallas will be analyzed in the Draft EIS. A second build alternative that would operate at-grade through North Dallas will also be analyzed in the Draft EIS to satisfy federal regulations governing the preparation of EISs for transit projects. Several comments received were in support of the No-Build Alternative.

Other comments proposed alternative alignments on LBJ freeway and the Bush Turnpike. There were also comments related to extending DART to Fort Worth and providing train service between Denton County and downtown Dallas. As part of its 2030 TSP, DART conducted a high level alternatives analysis and completed an existing conditions report on the North Crosstown Corridor. The 2030 TSP identified the Cotton Belt Corridor as a focus area and concluded that by 2030, the North Crosstown Corridor area would experience notable insufficient roadway capacity equivalent to more than 10 freeway lanes. The report indicated that "express" passenger rail service on the Cotton Belt Corridor (from DFW Airport to the DART Red Line), with service provided every 20 minutes during the peak periods and every 60 minutes during the off-peak, was the most cost-effective and direct route to serve this east-west crosstown corridor.

These comments will help guide the analysis of the alternatives in the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will determine which alternatives do not meet the purpose and need and therefore will not be analyzed further.

4.3 Comments Related to Design Elements

Many comments received were related to design elements including station design. Several comments expressed support for an Addison Station to support the existing transit-oriented development. In addition, there were comments in support of a Bush Turnpike Station at the Red Line interface. It is anticipated that there will be a station in Addison and a station at Bush Turnpike is one of several design options at the DART Red Line to be analyzed in the Draft EIS.

Design features such as quiet, low-emission, clean-fuel vehicles were supported by many. These comments will help guide the design of the stations and the system. The Draft EIS will determine which are feasible and reasonable and support the purpose and need.

4.4 Comments Related to Potential Impacts

The comments related to potential impacts included concerns regarding noise and vibration, air quality, visual and aesthetics, safety and security, transportation/traffic impacts, community and neighborhood impacts, and economic and fiscal impacts. Each of these concerns will be addressed and analyzed in the Draft EIS as discussed below. The Draft EIS will also address environmental benefits and impacts related to cultural resources, parks and recreational facilities, environmental justice, soils and geology, water resources and water quality, biological and natural resources, hazardous and regulated materials and utilities.

4.4.1 Noise and Vibration

For each alternative, the noise and vibration impact assessment for the proposed project will be based on the procedures established in the FTA guidance manual "Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment" (Report FTA-VA-90-1003-06). The Draft EIS will characterize existing conditions along the corridor and future projections. Temporary noise and vibration impacts from construction activities will also be discussed.

4.4.2 Air Quality

For each alternative, the potential impacts to air quality and emissions including proposed mitigation will be evaluated in the Draft EIS. The air quality impact analysis for this project will be based on the criteria as defined in the FTA environmental process. The analysis will provide an overview of the airborne pollutants of interest; air quality standards and the regulatory setting; existing air quality and National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) compliance; regional attainment and conformity status; and transit air quality criteria. Sensitive receptors including sensitive population groups and land uses will be identified along the corridor. Temporary air quality impacts from construction activities will also be discussed.

4.4.3 Visual and Aesthetics

For the build alternatives, the Draft EIS will describe the visual setting, views, and sensitive viewers in the study area and identify key views and resources. A visual resources inventory of the corridor will be

taken. The Draft EIS will describe the visual appearance of the project alternatives and how the project components, such as the alignment, station options and the vehicle maintenance and storage facility site, would affect the visual setting and view for each sensitive viewer group. "Before" photos and "after" photo simulations of potential station facilities will be included in the environmental document to enable the reader to see the proposed modifications to the corridor.

4.4.4 Safety and Security

The Draft EIS will analyze existing safety and security along the corridor and will discuss the minimum design objectives for the proposed project, as they relate to safety and security. Specific safety or security issues will be identified for each future potential station. The Draft EIS will discuss the proposed project's compliance with Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks, which mandates that federal agencies identify and assess environmental safety risks that may disproportionately affect children as a result of implementation of federal policies, programs, activities, and standards.

4.4.5 Transportation and Traffic

The proposed implementation of regional rail within the corridor will interface with the existing transportation system of roadways, highways, railroads, pedestrian/bicycle facilities, bus routes, and transit centers. The Draft EIS will document the existing conditions of the transportation system and will lay the groundwork for determining what changes would need to be made to accommodate regional rail and what impacts that would have. The analysis will focus on the proposed alignment of the regional rail facility and the transportation facilities that parallel or cross it. The existing conditions of the transportation system within the Cotton Belt Corridor will be documented by collecting existing data from various transportation agencies and taking inventory of conditions within the corridor itself. This documentation will include a summary of regional traffic patterns and traffic volumes, intersection conditions, parking usage, bus and rail service, and freight railroad operations. Due to the corridor's proximity to two airports, aviation will also be discussed in the Draft EIS.

4.4.6 Community and Neighborhood

The Draft EIS will describe community boundaries and neighborhood or subdivision boundaries in the study area. The analysis will focus on the effects of each alternative on "community" character and on the cohesiveness of the community and/or segments within a community. Demographic characteristics, economic base, location of community facilities, and other relevant characteristics will be documented. Businesses, homes and activity centers of potential impact, especially those bordering the alignment alternatives and those near potential stations, will be discussed along with mitigation measures. The Draft EIS will also pay particular attention to areas of the community that have elderly and young persons, disabled persons, and transit-dependent individuals.

4.4.7 Economic and Fiscal

Capital and operating funding strategies including cost estimates, funding secured to date, and the capital and operating financing approach will be considered during the course of the study.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

URS

Alliance Transportation Group
Arredondo, Zepeda & Brunz
Bowman Engineering
Connetics Transportation Group
Cox | McLain Environmental Consulting
CP&Y
Criado & Associates
Dunbar Transportation Consulting
HMMH
KAI Texas
K Strategies Group
Legacy Resource Group
Mas-Tek Engineering & Associates
Nathan D. Maier Consulting Engineers
Pacheco Koch Consulting Engineers
Parsons
Schrader & Cline
Spartan Solutions
Stantec Consulting Services Inc.



COTTON BELT