Connecting Communities
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The Rowlett Extension
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For more information about the Rowlett Light Rail Transit Extension, please check our website – www.dart.org – or contact:
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DART Community Affairs
jmeshack@dart.org
Or send comments directly to:
DART Community Affairs
Dallas Area Rapid Transit
P.O. Box 660163
Dallas, TX 75266-0163
214-749-2543

Public Meeting #1
The first public meeting, held at Rowlett City Hall on the May 12, 2005 was attended by over 40 members of the community. The Project Team gave a presentation describing the study. Several key issues were presented, and include:
- Crossing KCS tracks east of Downtown Garland;
- Rowlett Creek and floodplain issues;
- Noise and vibration issues;
- Historical issues; and
- Coordination efforts with Downtown Garland Planning Initiatives and the Rowlett Main Street Improvements project.

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Extending LRT from Downtown Garland Station

One of the challenges discussed during the May public meeting was DART Light Rail Transit (LRT) crossing over the Kansas City Southern (KCS) line just east of the Downtown Garland station. This freight track carries up to seven trains daily and will continue to be a busy corridor for the freight company.

Four options to cross the KCS line were evaluated:

Option A involves relocating the Downtown Garland station to west of 5th Street. This option requires the removal of the current station and the construction of a new light rail station. This alternative also necessitates the reconstruction of the DART light rail track from Glenbrook Drive to 5th Street. The construction effort for this option would need to be phased in several stages to maintain the existing operation during construction. In addition, this option would require passengers who use the bus transfer facility, and those utilizing DART parking, to walk a longer distance and cross both Walnut Street and 5th Street. Because of the extensive rail reconstruction and new station construction required, this is potentially the most expensive option.

Option B entails the construction of an at-grade crossing of the KCS railroad. While this is seemingly the least expensive alternative, it presents the most difficult challenges. The first challenge is safety. Coordinating freight traffic with light rail traffic assumes high risks and requires close communication with freight dispatchers. The other issue is the difficulty of system element design at the crossing. The conventional catenary poles and the overhead wires used to supply electrical power to the light rail vehicle, would have to be rerouted to avoid conflicts with the freight trains. The crossing at 1st Street, a fairly busy street in Garland, would also have to be at-grade since there is not enough distance between the KCS crossing and 1st Street to build the rail with enough clearance over the road.

Option C, the initial alternative established prior to the EA/PE, requires the light rail vehicle to make a left turn and cross over Walnut Street, at-grade. The train would then ascend by looping up and over private properties at 1st Street and then descend at the Walnut Street at-grade crossing. The light rail vehicle would then reenter the existing right-of-way at the bridge area over Highway 78 (Lavon Drive). This is an expensive option that limits the speed of the train due to the at-grade crossing and multiple sharp turns. The bridge itself would extend over 2,000 feet and several properties would be impacted by this option.

Option D requires extending the current station platform into the existing 5th Street right-of-way. 5th Street would be realigned and the intersection with Walnut Street would be reconstructed with streetscape features. The improved intersection would help enhance the pedestrian connection to the existing bus station and could become one of the focal points for the Downtown Garland area, which is becoming a vibrant urban center. This is the second least expensive option available, and it requires minimal impact to not only rail operations, but also DART customers. This option would also require two properties to be purchased for the 5th Street realignment.

These options have been discussed with the City of Garland staff and will be presented at the next public meeting to be held at the end of August or the beginning of September.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are there plans to expand past Rowlett to Rockwall?
A: DART owns the rail ROW all the way to Fate, Texas. There are currently not any plans to extend to Rockwall, however, DART is working on the 2030 Transit System Plan that is evaluating needs within the DART Service Area and those areas immediately adjacent to the service area.

Q: What is Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?
A: TOD is a mix of high-density land uses that creates a vibrant community and complements or fills a need for the surrounding area(s). This also includes pedestrian/bicycle linkages to and from transit facilities, the development and the surrounding area.

Q: Can you get to Rowlett before 2012?
A: The planning and design process has many steps that DART must complete to ensure safety and efficient operating and to rush the design process typically only creates future problems. Also, DART is committed to a financial plan that limits how quickly studies and designs can be paid for and when money will be available for construction. As part of the 2030 Transit System Plan, currently being updated, the Rowlett line is compared against other planned lines and must wait for fund availability according to this plan.

Q: When can I take the train to Rowlett?
A: Revenue service is expected to begin in late 2012.

Q: Can you get to Rowlett?
A: The Preliminary Engineering process began in April and should be completed by the end of February 2006. The preparation of environmental studies also began in April, and it is anticipated that the Final Environmental Assessment should be completed at the end of March 2006.

Study Timeline

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<th>Study Phase</th>
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<td>Preliminary Engineering</td>
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<td>2000-2005</td>
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Public Involvement

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Transit patrons at Mockingbird Station

Eastside Village and Downtown Plano Station

Hampton Station Column Artwork

DART Rail to Rowlett Newsletter
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Hampton Station Column Artwork

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NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, 9/22/05 - 6:30 p.m.
Austin Academy for Excellence
1125 Beverly Drive
Garland, TX
(Mapsco Page 29A-F).

DART Rail to Rowlett Newsletter

Public Involvement Process

The objective of the public involvement process is to ensure that stakeholder concerns are heard and addressed and that the resulting project has broad public support.

Neighborhood groups, businesses, property owners, residents, public officials, the driving public, and others along the project corridor all have interests in understanding the study, the schedule, and the issues that may affect them. A Public/Agency Involvement Plan was developed to establish a process to keep these individuals and groups informed and to obtain their input about the project throughout the PE/LEA preparation process.

DART staff and the Project Team will communicate regularly with the DART Board of Directors and its committees through written reports and briefings. The city councils in the project corridor are also participating in the process through similar reports and meetings. City council members have a particular interest in issues that affect their cities and districts within and along the corridor.

The public can also stay current on the study progress and issues of concern, through project newsletters like this one, DART’s web site (www.dart.org), and public meetings.

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