



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

PRESS RELEASE

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Cotton Belt Innovative Funding Initiative Moves Forward

New type of partnership could serve as model to advance transportation projects

July 23, 2010 (Arlington, Texas) – Plans to advance construction of the Cotton Belt passenger rail corridor by 15 years took one step forward yesterday with the approval of a contract with Partnership for Livable Communities, LLC, to develop an innovative financial plan. If successful in identifying the needed funding for capital and operating costs, the innovative financial plan could serve as a model to expedite other roadway, passenger rail and streetcar transportation projects in the region.

The Cotton Belt passenger rail corridor, when added to the Southwest-to-Northeast corridor, is 62 miles long and stretches from southwest Fort Worth to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit's (DART) Red Line near Plano/Richardson. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T) is moving ahead with the Southwest-to-Northeast corridor in Tarrant County.

DART and The T requested the Regional Transportation Council take the lead role in developing the innovative financial plan. In May, the RTC agreed and directed staff to secure consultant assistance to develop the plan to identify candidate funding sources necessary to construct, operate and maintain passenger rail service along the 62-mile Cotton Belt corridor. Ten firms submitted proposals in response to a May 28, 2010 advertisement of Requests for Proposals.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments' Executive Board authorized a contract with Partnership for Livable Communities, LLC, to develop an innovative financial plan. The firm and its subconsultants include professionals with many years of national and international experience in creating innovative financial partnerships between the public and private sectors. The total contract amount is \$1,298,000, with \$390,000 being withheld as retainage until the development of a viable innovative financial plan.

DART and The T will continue to lead environmental and engineering work along the Cotton Belt corridor. Should the necessary funding be identified, DART and The T will also be responsible for design, environmental clearance and construction of the corridor. All agencies will jointly determine whether the innovative financial plan is viable. Results of the innovative financial plan are expected by the end of the year.

As funding for transportation has become scarce, leaders from across the DFW area have begun looking to innovative partnerships and funding. There has been great success on roadway projects through partnerships with the Texas Department of

Transportation (TxDOT) and the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA), such as the Sam Rayburn Tollway, SH 161, the North Tarrant Express, and IH 635 LBJ. The Regional Transportation Council is looking to repeat this success for a public transportation project. This will be the first time the private sector has been asked to develop an innovative financial plan for a passenger rail project and it could become a model of how to expedite rail corridors throughout the region.

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

NCTCOG is a voluntary association of local governments established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG's purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and make joint decisions.

NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered on the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently, NCTCOG has 233 member governments including 16 counties, 165 cities, 23 school districts and 29 special districts.

About the Regional Transportation Council:

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) of the North Central Texas Council of Governments has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for regional transportation planning in the Dallas-Fort Worth area since 1974. The MPO works in cooperation with the region's transportation providers to address the complex transportation needs of the rapidly growing metropolitan area. The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area includes Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant and Wise counties. The RTC's 43 members include local elected or appointed officials from the metropolitan area and representatives from each of the area's transportation providers. More information can be found at www.nctcog.org.

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