Attracting Development

Light rail infrastructure spurs investment

What makes DART able to attract economic development?

From the beginning, part of DART’s mission has been to build a transportation system large enough to stimulate economic development. The voter-approved 1 percent sales tax that funds DART makes that possible.

Developers generally are looking for good transportation infrastructure when they are deciding where to build that next office tower, residential complex or shopping center. Many times, people think of this infrastructure as roads. What most developers now realize is that good public transit also can provide an efficient way to move people around.

As our system grows, people see that DART is now a viable way to get from Point A to Point B. Cities, employers and developers also have realized it, and they are building near rail stations and bus routes.

Next Stop: DFW Airport

The Orange Line extension to DFW Airport Station will open Aug. 18, creating a direct rail connection between Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and downtown Dallas.
Ride past any number of DART Rail stations and you’ll notice construction. The visual clues offer anecdotal evidence: The number of privately developed structures being built within walking distance of DART Rail stations appears to be on the rise. (See story on Page 6.)

The proof came from the Center for Economic Development and Research at the University of North Texas. The center’s latest study found that more than $5.3 billion in private-capital transit-oriented development projects have been built, are under construction, or are planned near light rail stations since the debut of DART Rail in 1996.

“Even through difficult economic times, DART has demonstrated its ability to boost the North Texas economy through its daily operations, capital spending and attracting private investment,” said Terry L. Clower, Ph.D., director of the Center for Economic Development and Research.

Researchers evaluated developments located within 0.25 mile of a DART Rail station and found that the station area outperformed comparable properties farther away. New developments built between 1993 and 2013 in close proximity to light rail totaled more than $1.5 billion in valuation, compared with roughly $600 million in control areas.

Developers have announced plans to build roughly $3.8 billion in projects deliberately located near DART Rail over the next decade. If completed, more than 8,500 multifamily units, as well as several million square feet of office and retail space, will arrive near DART stations. Estimates suggest these developments will net local jurisdictions $91 million in annual real property tax revenues.

One impressive example: the 186-acre CityLine project under construction next to Richardson’s Bush Turnpike Station. Real estate developer KDC is creating the mixed-use development, which will be anchored by State Farm’s new regional campus. Raytheon recently announced it will relocate its regional office to CityLine.

“Investing in DART has expanded transportation options and attracted corporate, residential, retail and cultural facilities to our city,” said Richardson City Manager Dan Johnson.

Developer KDC is building CityLine, a transit-oriented development adjacent to the Bush Turnpike Station, which will include State Farm’s regional headquarters, as well as corporate, residential and retail properties and a 3.5-acre park.

Beyond the property value, estimated tax contributions for development located near DART stations exceed $36 million annually, surpassing the $14 million estimated in the control group areas.

MAX Program Earns National Recognition

The National Transit Institute at Rutgers University honored DART and its partners in the Multi-Agency Exchange (MAX) program with the Achievements in Transit Training Model Program Award. The MAX program is a leadership development and learning exchange offered jointly by DART, the Regional Transportation District of Denver, Colo., and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. This year, the partners added the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority.

Each year, participants attend four-day information and exchange sessions, known as MAX Conferences, at the headquarters of each partner agency. Participants learn from subject matter experts at the transit property and see how other agencies operate differently and/or more effectively.
Next Stop: DFW Airport

Testing in progress as construction concludes

DART announced in March that it would open DFW Airport Station in August, making the dream of direct rail service to the airport a reality four months ahead of schedule.

Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport built the rail station in conjunction with renovations to Terminal A. To meet the aggressive time line, the agency, DFW Airport and their contractors are busy putting the final pieces in place.

“Opening a project of this complexity early and under budget is a great testament to the work of our DART team and our colleagues at DFW Airport,” DART President/Executive Director Gary Thomas said.

DART’s design-build contractor – the joint venture of Kiewit, Stacy and Witbeck, Reyes Group, and Parsons Transportation Group (KSWRP) – has built the track from Belt Line Station. KSWRP crews will install ticket vending machines and the public address/variable messages boards.

In April, DART began live-wire testing with trains to ensure all communications are working properly. In mid-June, DART began integrated testing and operator training. Pre-revenue operations begin two weeks before opening.

Ridership: Fixed-Route and Systemwide

Fixed-route: Bus, DART Rail, Trinity Railway Express
Systemwide: Bus, DART Rail, Trinity Railway Express, Vanpool, Paratransit, HOV

Agency Celebrates Older Americans

For 20 years, DART has hosted an annual Older Americans Month Information and Health Fair as a capstone to its senior adult education outreach program. This year’s event took place on May 15 at Centennial Hall in Dallas’ Fair Park.

Nearly 1,200 people attended the event, which featured health screenings and information, DART services and vehicles, entertainment and more. Community sponsors were the city of Dallas, Age Well Live Well Dallas, and the Dallas Area Agency on Aging under the auspices of the Community Council of Greater Dallas.

DART is one of thousands of organizations that hold events in May as part of Older Americans Month. President John F. Kennedy began the national observance in 1963 to acknowledge the contributions of older people and draw attention to their needs and concerns.
Implementing Positive Train Control

Technology will help reduce accidents

In response to several fatal accidents on other rail systems between 2002 and 2008, Congress passed the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, mandating implementation of positive train control (PTC) systems on rail lines that:

• Carry at least 5 million gross tons of freight annually
• Transport any amount of poison- or toxic-by-inhalation materials
• Provide regularly scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger transportation

Positive train control systems can intervene in train operations by warning crews or causing trains to stop if they are not being operated safely because of inattention, misinterpretation of wayside signal indications, or incapacitation of the crew.

Impact on DART

The agency is taking the lead on implementing PTC on the Trinity Railway Express (TRE), which it owns jointly with the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T). The TRE shares a 34-mile corridor with Amtrak and freight railroads, including BNSF and Union Pacific.

DART also is teaming with the Denton County Transportation Authority to implement PTC on the A-train, whose 21-mile corridor is shared with the Dallas, Garland & Northeastern Railroad.

Together, the transit agencies will implement a regional solution for the two North Texas commuter railroads, basing their PTC system on technology used by the nation’s major freight carriers, including BNSF and Union Pacific.

Because DART Rail runs on dedicated track, it is not governed by the rule. Future commuter rail lines – such as The T’s TEX Rail project and DART’s Cotton Belt Corridor – will have PTC built into the design.

“Interoperability among railroads is the biggest challenge to PTC,” said Norma De La Garza-Navarro, DART’s vice president of commuter rail and railroad management.

These projects are estimated at nearly $35 million for the TRE and $23 million for the A-train. The North Central Texas Council of Governments is contributing $25 million and the three transit agencies must cover their portion of the balance. Work is anticipated to begin later this year and be complete by 2017.

Sales and Use Tax Revenue

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Apartments Rise on Maple Avenue

Two apartment communities are under construction near the Green Line’s Inwood/Love Field Station. Proximity to the station, the airport, Southwest Airlines headquarters, Parkland Hospital and the Southwestern Medical District is contributing to a residential construction boom in the area.

The Alta Maple Station apartments, developed by Atlanta-based Wood Partners and designed by architects Good Fulton & Farrell, Inc., sit adjacent to the DART station parking lot. The four-story project occupies nearly 3.5 acres and will have 249 units. The apartment community is scheduled to open in late 2014.

Just across Maple Avenue, developer Lang Partners is building its 342-unit Maple District Lofts. Crews have cleared a 6-acre site at Maple Avenue and Butler Street. The lofts also are anticipated to open in late 2014.