REFERENCE ITEM 3.2
Transit Subcommittee
August 1, 2008

Public Comment Summary

Regional Transportation Council

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Rail North Texas Funding Options

Meeting Dates and Locations

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) held public meetings as follows:

1. Wednesday, July 16, 2008 – 10 a.m. – Duncanville Library/Community Center; attendance: 28; moderated by Dan Kessler, NCTCOG Assistant Director of Transportation
2. Wednesday, July 16, 2008 – 6:30 p.m. – Fort Worth Southwest Regional Library; attendance: 46, moderated by Dan Kessler, NCTCOG Assistant Director of Transportation
3. Thursday, July 17, 2008 – 2 p.m. – Denton North Branch Library; attendance: 25; moderated by Michael Morris, NCTCOG Director of Transportation
4. Thursday, July 17, 2008 – 6:30 p.m. – Allen City Hall, attendance: 44, moderated by Michael Morris, NCTCOG Director of Transportation

Summary of Public Comments

At the public meetings, elected officials and residents:

- Supported a regional rail system.
- Supported a sales tax as a viable means of funding.
- Wanted to know the status of 4A/4B sales tax traditionally used for economic development.
- Supported a new resident impact fee.
- Worried an increase in the gasoline tax would adversely affect minimum wage workers.
- Wanted to know what happens if these funding initiatives fail in the Texas 81st Legislative Session.

Generally, elected officials and residents acknowledged their cities and counties must address current and expected growth as well as explore non-traditional sources for transportation funding.

Collin County

Alan Upchurch, City of Plano, asked what would happen to the funds if DART cities end up getting "double-taxed" for the regional rail system, since these cities currently pay a one cent sales tax for rail. (NCTCOG response: DART Transportation Infrastructure Fund).

Paul Konrad of Allen made the observation that although he does not live in a DART city, he works and shops in DART cities. He said, in effect, he is helping to pay for the rail system through the sales tax. He supported a vehicle registration fee for non-DART cities, but disagreed with establishing a DART transportation infrastructure fund from revenue possibly generated from the possible "double-taxation" of DART cities.

Dallas County

Several residents and elected officials supported a regional rail system.

Grady Smithey, Councilmember Duncanville, believes the only feasible option is a half-cent sales tax. Councilmember Smithey is concerned that those who are unable to utilize a rail transit system are being asked to subsidize it.

Kevin Bass, legislative aid to Senator Royce West expressed support for a regional rail system, but asked for various options to be expanded on:

- He was wary of the perceived theory behind a tax based on vehicle miles of travel. He does not believe people are engaged in a lot of leisure driving and those with long commutes for employment purposes would be financially burdened by this.
- He wanted to know if the local option gasoline tax would indeed be voted on by the residents' communities and how this could affect equity among taxed communities.
- Confirmed that a motor vehicle sales tax would be added to a price of a vehicle.
- Asked for clarification on the local subsidy option.
- Felt $95 was too much of a vehicle registration fee increase.
- Asked for clarification on the new resident impact fee.

William McDonald, interim city manager of Balch Springs, expressed support for a regional rail system but encouraged transportation and elected officials to pursue State and federal funding.

Misty Parker, who works in government relations at DART, commented that although Senate Bill 257 and House Bill 2084 introduced at the Texas 80th Legislative Session did not pass, she felt there was a lot of support shown for funding regional rail system.

Denton County

Becky Horn, Little Elm Chamber of Commerce, asked if cities would lose 4A/4B funds if there were a sales tax reapportionment.

Ryan Middleton of Frisco supported raising the gasoline tax, but was concerned with the effect this would have on minimum wage employees. He asked if any type of tax break for these individuals had been considered.

Bruce Nipp of Dallas asked if the legislature has historically voted against rail funding options.

Robert Pope, former chairman of DART, asked what happens if these funding initiatives fail in the Texas 81st Legislative Session. (NCTOG response: Projects are deleted from plan.)

Tarrant County

Cleveland Harris, Morning Side North Association, expressed support for the regional rail system. Due to the businesses and sports activities in the Arlington area, he proposed the rail line from Dallas to Fort Worth through Arlington be built first.

Edith Jones, League of Women Voters, asked if any legislators have expressed support of a bill for funding regional rail.

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review the table of funding options to the left.
2. In the gray row labeled "Preference," rank your top three preferences for funding a rail expansion.
   1 = MOST preferred
   2 = 2nd MOST preferred
   3 = 3rd MOST preferred
3. You may also use the online, interactive funding worksheet available at www.nctcog.org/rnt to develop your own funding option.
4. If you develop your own funding option(s), please submit your option(s) with preference in the boxes below.
5. **Submit additional comments here:**

RAIL NORTH TEXAS FUNDING OPTIONS

	Option 1: Sales Tax	Option 2: Non-Legislative Solution	Option 3: Hybrid	Option 4: Legislative Enabler	Option 5: Vehicle User	Option 6:
Sales Tax	3/8 cents		1/4 cent			
Gasoline Sales Tax	1%			1%		
Motor Vehicle Sales Tax					1.75%	
Vehicle Registration Fee		$105 per vehicle	$80 per vehicle	$80 per vehicle	$65 per vehicle	$95 per vehicle
Local Option Gas Tax						4 cents
VMT Tax						
New Resident Impact Fee	$100 per vehicle	$100 per vehicle	$100 per vehicle	$100 per vehicle	$100 per vehicle	$100 per vehicle
Transportation Property Tax		2 cents per $100 value				
Preference [Rank your top 3]						

OTHER FUNDING COMBINATION:

Revenue Source(s) **Rate(s)** [one rate per source]

Geography Used:

Preference [circle one]:
Most Preferred 2nd Most Preferred 3rd Most Preferred

OTHER FUNDING COMBINATION:

Revenue Source(s) **Rate(s)** [one rate per source]

Geography Used:

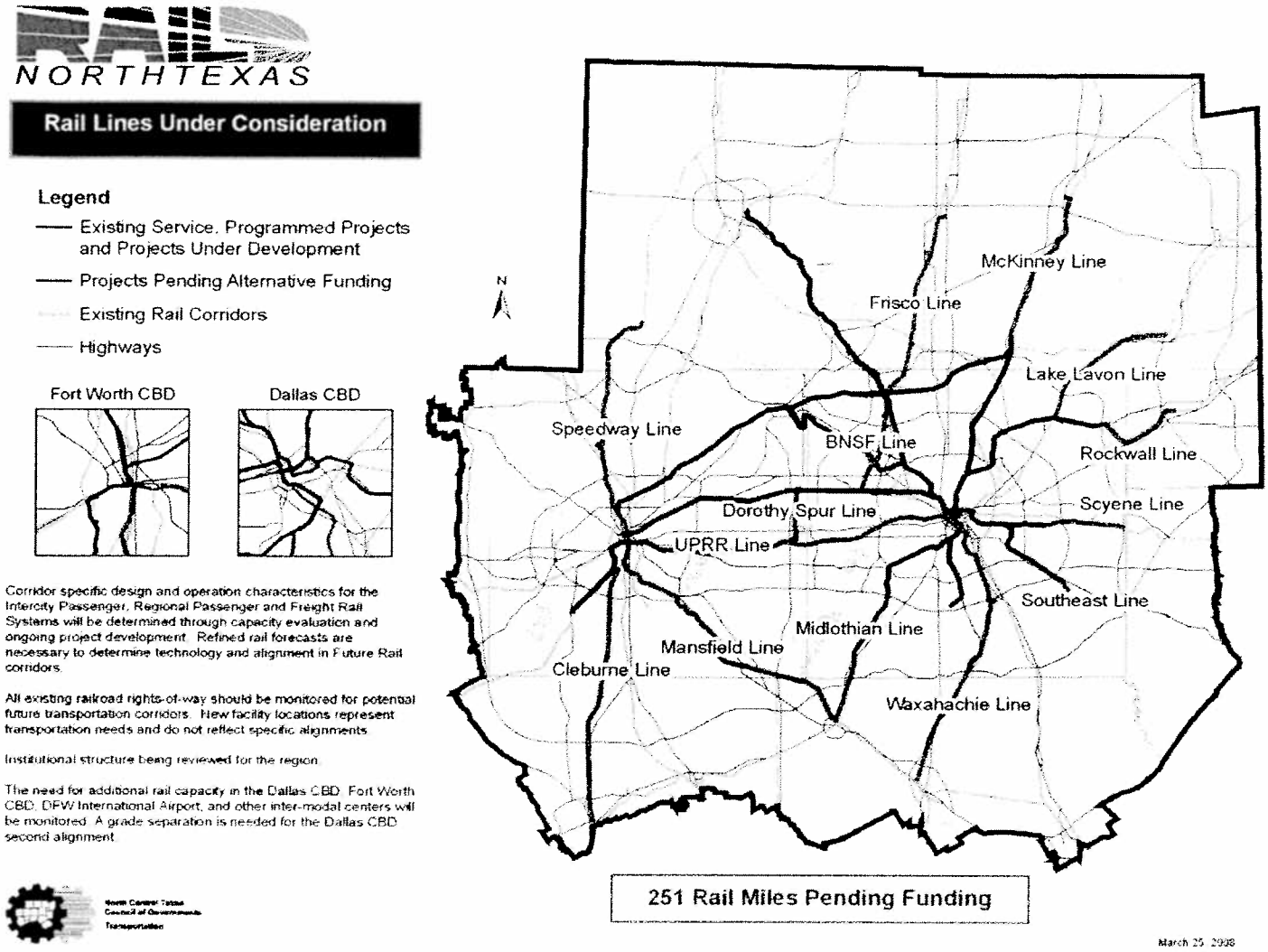
Preference [circle one]:
Most Preferred 2nd Most Preferred 3rd Most Preferred

OTHER FUNDING COMBINATION:

Revenue Source(s) **Rate(s)** [one rate per source]

Geography Used:

Preference [circle one]:
Most Preferred 2nd Most Preferred 3rd Most Preferred



SUMMARY OF RAIL NORTH TEXAS PASSENGER RAIL EXPANSION AND FUNDING OPTIONS

The Regional Transportation Council, elected officials, transportation partners, business leaders and others formed a transit subcommittee to explore potential funding sources to build an additional 250 miles of rail over the next 25 years. The RTC previously approved the rail expansion which is shown on the map above and seeks to have regional consensus about funding sources. Six funding options are listed in the back of this page.

The RTC and subcommittee members developed a list of potential funding options. Public and/or State legislative approval would be required to implement the funding options. More information about Rail North Texas funding options, transit expansion and an interactive funding worksheet is available at **www.nctcog.org/rnt**.

TOTAL COST for rail expansion, including maintenance and operation: $457 million annually.

Please complete the short survey about rail funding options which is on the back of this page. Please return the survey at the public meeting or by 5 p.m., August 11, 2008, by mail, fax or e-mail sent to:

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The survey is also available online at www.nctcog.org/railsurvey. An interactive funding worksheet is available at www.nctcog.org/rnt.

Preliminary Survey Summary

Rail North Texas Funding Options

Overview

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) is conducting a survey in order to gage public support of potential funding sources for implementing the 250-mile rail expansion plan previously approved by the Regional Transportation Council.

The survey was available at public meetings July 16 – 17, 2008 and online. Individuals who have attended a public meeting or expressed interest in transportation issues and provided an e-mail address were sent a link to the survey posted on the NCTCOG Web site. A link to the survey was also included in an article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, "Arlington residents asked for input on rail proposal," on July 30, 2008. The survey is open to all North Texans and will be available at www.nctcog.org/rnt until Tuesday, August 12, 2008.

Preliminary Results (as of July 31, 2008; 71 responses)

MOST Preferred Funding Options		
Funding Option	**Number of Respondents**	**Percentage of Respondents**
Option 1	14	20%
Option 2	1	1%
Option 3	9	13%
Option 4	11	15%
Option 5	**19**	**27%**
Option 6	6	8%
None of the above	11	15%

[Percentages rounded up or down to nearest whole number.]

SECOND-MOST Preferred Funding Options		
Funding Option	**Number of Respondents**	**Percentage of Respondents**
Option 1	7	10%
Option 2	7	10%
Option 3	16	23%
Option 4	**19**	**27%**
Option 5	6	8%
Option 6	6	8%
None of the above	10	14%

[Percentages rounded up or down to nearest whole number.]

Considering the sum of all three questions which asked respondents to select first, second and third preferences among funding options, the following funding options were most preferred and ranked as either a first, second or third preference:

OVERALL Preferred Funding Options		
Funding Option	**Number of Total Respondents Who Selected the Option as a Preference**	**Percentage of Total Respondents**
Option 1	33	15%
Option 2	13	6%
Option 3	**34**	**16%**
Option 4	**38**	**18%**
Option 5	**38**	**18%**
Option 6	6	8%
None of the above	**35**	**16%**

[Percentages rounded up or down to nearest whole number.]

Additional Funding Options and Written Comments Submitted

Open-Ended Responses for MOST Preferred Funding Option

1. 10% gas tax + $100 vehicle registration fee + local congestion fees similar to London. Urban centers such as Dallas CBD already subsidize suburban area infrastructure and maintenance costs, so drivers need to pay for those costs in the form of public transportation infrastructure. If the cost of driving becomes too high then people will take advantage of public transit options.
2. 2.5% gas sales tax (regional, nine counties)
3. My conclusion is there is too much dependency on public funding. This should be funded, or at least largely funded, via loans to be paid off by ticket sales. Consideration should also be given to this being run a for profit, commercial business.
4. 1/4 cent sales tax
   1% motor vehicle sales tax
   $5 registration fee
   $0.03 local option gas tax
5. 2% gasoline sales tax, $25 reqistration, and $100 new resident impact fee should be used. Bonds should be issued to cover the $152mm capital shortfall and the debt should be paid off in 10 years with the $169mm O&M surplus. The gasoline sales tax should be reduced after the bonds are paid to an amount necessary to fund the O&M at that time.
6. no
7. If it requires more taxes then NO. It has been voted down what part of NO don't you understand ?
8. Do not build it

Open-Ended Responses for SECOND-MOST Preferred Funding Option

1. FUNDING FOR ANY RAIL IN NORTH TEXAS SHOULD COME FROM EXISTING TRANSPORTATION TAXES AND NOT INCREASED TAXES OR FEES TO THE PUBLIC. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT A GREAT DEAL OF MISMANAGEMENT HAS GONE ON WITH STATE FUNDING OF OUR HIGHWAY SYSTEM(S), WHY WOULD WE WANT TO INCREASE TAXES TO THE PUBLIC WHEN OUR LEADERS HAVE NOT BEEN RESPONSIBLE WITH THE FUNDING IT CURRENTLY HAS?
2. 1.5% gas sales tax (regional)
   4¢ Transportation Property Tax per $100 value
3. 1/4 cent sales tax
   1% motor vehicle sales tax
   $5 registration fee
   0.75% gas sales tax
4. let the people that use it, pay for it. charge an amount to cover operation and part of the capital.
5. no
6. SEE answer to 4. Answer is still NO.
7. Do not waste tax dollars

Open-Ended Responses for THIRD-MOST Preferred Funding Option

1. FUNDING FOR ANY RAIL IN NORTH TEXAS SHOULD COME FROM EXISTING TRANSPORTATION TAXES AND NOT INCREASED TAXES OR FEES TO THE PUBLIC. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT A GREAT DEAL OF MISMANAGEMENT HAS GONE ON WITH STATE FUNDING OF OUR HIGHWAY SYSTEM(S), WHY WOULD WE WANT TO INCREASE TAXES TO THE PUBLIC WHEN OUR LEADERS HAVE NOT BEEN RESPONSIBLE WITH THE FUNDING IT CURRENTLY HAS?
2. 1/4 cent sales tax
   1% motor vehicle sales tax
   $10 registration fee
   0.5% gas sales tax
3. I do not agree with using a property tax, or sales tax (vehicle or general).
4. let the people that want it, pay for it. charge a voluntary tax for those that want it, and leave the rest of us alone.
5. no
6. SEE answer to 4. Answer is still NO.
7. Do not build the sytem or waste tax dollars

Additional Written Comments (see attached)

North Central Texas Council of Governments

Survey Results -- Details

Results Overview

North Texas Rail Expansion & Funding Options

Respondents: 71 **Status:** Open

Launched Date: 07/22/2008 **Closed Date:** N/A

7. Please submit any additional comments.

		Full Response
1.	Whatever funding option is selected(or are selected), the public shoould be aware that many more steps are required in order to implement the options at local level. Further if multiple solutions are chaosen, multiple agencies will be involved with mutiple opportunities for evaporation. I believe an even greater obstacle to achieving the commuter rail goal is to obtain the unequivocal cooperation of the frieght railroads. No matter how successful we are in getting funding, so long as the railroads hold a monopooly on access, shared ROW and dispatching that funding will blow in the wind!	view
2.	Gas sales tax is best, Sales tax is too general, motor vehicle sales tax shouldn't penalize non-commute vehicles, vehicle registration is the least worst method, local option gas tax could work as a component, VMT tax is too hard to administer and too easy to fake, we don't want to offend new residents with an impact fee, property tax doesn't make sense, what makes sense is knowing where you live v. where you work and taxing that accordingly, and no local subsidies. I would fund this the same way I fund roads.....a railROAD is a road. What you're looking for is maximum population density with minimal environmental effect. The change in mixed-use housing standards will actually drive more people to live in the city and along transit oriented developments, thus car commuters from outlying areas will actually decrease naturally. Do you have any potential rider statistics? How many people have single location jobs versus jobs that require a vehicle in the areas you project to serve?	view
3.	I HAVE NO RESERVATIONS THAT YOU WILL SIMPLY DELETE ANY NEGATIVE COMMENTS THAT WOULD NOT ALLOW SOME SORT OF INCREASE IN TAXES OR FEES EVEN THOUGH PAST SURVEYS HAVE INDICATED THAT THE PUBLIC IS NOT IN FAVOR OF INCREASING ANYTHING TO COMPLETE RAIL SERVICE FOR NORTH TEXAS. I HAVE A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM IN CASE YOU NEED PROOF.	view
4.	Do this - do not wait - there needs to be a real sense of urgency about this !!	view
5.	Look forward to the additional rail.	view
6.	WHY DOES THERE ALWAYS HAVE TO BE AN ADDITIONAL TAX? CAN'T THE RAIL SYSTEM GENERATE MORE OF ITS OWN PROFITABILITY? KEEP ALL OF THE GAS TAX FUNDS HERE! OR USE SOME OF THE INCOME FROM THE TOLL PAYMENT TO THE STATE.	view
7.	Taxing drivers to pay fro roads and rail is too much of a burden. Why isn't the revenue from rider use on any of the options? I think it would be good to enter it on the table so that we can see the impact. Why are the only options to raise addiitional taxes and fees? Why isn't there an option to reduce spending taxes in one area to help fund the transportation?	view
8.	What about public-private partnerships using a nonprofit organization the way DART or NTTA are structured?	view

9. seems like the tough but logical way to fund is gas tax, b/c it encourages less auto more rail, and to tax new people moving in ...reasonable, property tax has nothing to do with rail,why go there... view

10. stop cities from taxing citizens to build stupid football or other sports stadiums, but tax us from light rail view

11. Please consider more sidewalk and bike trails for the citizens to reach rail access points. Make buses the LAST PRIORITY in mass transportation! view

12. I strongly support investment in regional mass transit. It will help the air quality, give those of us in NE Tarrant County an option beyond driving, and help us reduce the need for petroleum products whose prices will continue to remain high as supplies dwindle. I encourage you to consider adding routes that go into the Keller and Watauga along 377 area or to create/expand regional bus service into those areas, so residents can ride to the closest light rail station. The planning for this should have happened 30 years ago, but since it didn't, it's time to do it now. I hope our elected leaders have the vision and leadership to do what is right for our community rahter than hide behind those who gripe about its cost for the rewards will be great. view

13. Funding that punishes us for driving but comes less from the government would be the most ideal form of funding. Money that is brought in based upon the purchase habits and power of the consumer. For example a fee on purchase of new vehicles. A %of the sale price should go to funding based upon the MPG of the vehicle. view

Funding should come from sources used to reduce overall demand for gasoline. Taxes should be placed on gasoline only, and not diesel. Further, no taxes should be placed on general goods for the purpose of funding public transportation.

14. The transportation property tax and new vehicle sales tax will penalize people for buying new, more fuel efficient vehicles. Therefore, they should not be used for funding this project. I would rather see the penalty being raised for people driving with expired inspection stickers, or heavily fining businesses that issue stickers to cars that fail the inspection, and using those funds to help fund this project. view

15. I hope Arlington hasn't waited too long for this. It is gonna be expensive. They should have done it 20 years ago. view

16. We must make the Legislature understand we have no time left to make a decision to enable local option funding. They have to act this session. Sending it back to the region for another two year study will not be acceptable. Removal of rail alternatives from the regional air quality plans due to lack of funding methods, and the resulting loss of federal funds, will result in demands for new, effective leadership in Austin. view

17. Arlington needs to be included in North Tx Rail Expansion. The citizens need this to travel for now and in the future. Arlington is no longer the small community that some of the older citizens remember and long for. We also needed this yesterday to help bring people into our entertainment centers for money to help off set other taxes and to continue to help this city grow. view

18. North Arlington to North Beach Street and 820 needs a faster route. view

19. A plan with a Sale tax is most sustainable. I believe the push for alternative fuel will enable us in the future to become less dependent on gasoline. Therefore if we tied ourselves to future income from gasoline our budget income will be hampered for operating Rail North Texas. Sale tax income which includes food and clothing is always going to be around. Definitely need rail coming to all the sport complexes and colleges if possible. You built it they will ride it. view

20. let the people that use it, pay for it. charge an amout to cover operation and part of the capital. don't drop the charge below that level, should I ever get on it, I don't want to be mugged by low-lives. charge an amount to cover operation and a part of the capital. view

I would make an assumption that many individuals that use rail also rent as well and therefore are not subject to direct taxation via property. As I property owner this is a non-starter for me as I do not wish to subsidize others commuting ability through taxation on my property. A sales tax is a less appealing approach as well but it is a shared burden by all, however it still provides uneven distribution as to who is funding the mass transit program as the wealthy is faced with yet another

tax burden, being punished again for prosperity and good money management ability.

21. What the options boil down to is a car tax penalty if you drive a vehicle as each option has "penalties" for individuals that operate a vehicle. Option 5 seems to lessen the burden over the other options that require an ongoing property, gas and/or sales tax. This program in its current form appears to be another plan that diverts funds to mass transit and in doing so opens the door for more toll roads to be built, which is basically a driving tax. view

22. this belongs in the private sector. view

23. How many times does this have to be voted down until you understand the word NO ? view

24. I think this a great idea. The DFW area is incredibly behind when it comes to mass transit view

25. Would like to see a rail line running the full length of 360. Need more North South Lines east of Dallas view

26. Speaking from a middle class perspective, I can see the benefit in increasing taxes for a railway system; however, with gas prices being so high, I don't know that raising gas taxes or even increasing new vehicle taxes will help. view

Is there any government grant money that can go into this system, or will this be completely up to the taxpayers?

27. A brief search of the internet reveals the cost over runs, abuse and fraud invloved with light rail and transit systems. view

This is wrong and a waste of money

North Central Texas Council of Governments
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