

## MINUTES

### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL ONLINE INPUT OPPORTUNITY

#### High-Speed Transportation Update

#### Proposed Modifications to the List of Funded Projects

##### Online Public Input Opportunity Dates

Monday, February 8, 2021 - Tuesday March 9, 2021 – The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) posted information at [www.nctcog.org/input](http://www.nctcog.org/input) for public review and comment.

##### Purpose and Topics

The online public input opportunity was provided in accordance with the NCTCOG Transportation Department Public Participation Plan, which became effective June 1, 1994, as approved by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), the transportation policy board for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and amended on November 8, 2018. Staff posted information regarding:

1. High-Speed Transportation Update
2. Proposed Modifications to the List of Funded Projects

The NCTCOG online public input opportunity was provided to inform and seek comments from the public. Comments and questions were submitted by email at [transinfo@nctcog.org](mailto:transinfo@nctcog.org), online at [www.nctcog.org/input](http://www.nctcog.org/input), by mail at PO Box 5888, Arlington, TX 76005 and by fax at 817-640-3028. Printed copies of the online materials were also made available by calling 817-608-2365 or emailing [transinfo@nctcog.org](mailto:transinfo@nctcog.org).

##### Summary of Presentations

###### ***High-Speed Transportation Update presentation:***

<https://www.nctcog.org/nctcg/media/Transportation/DocsMaps/Involve/InputMeetings/2021/02/HSTCS.pdf>

The High-Speed Transportation Connections Study (HSTCS) traverses Dallas, Irving, Cockrell Hill, Grand Prairie, Arlington, Pantego, Dalworthington Gardens, Hurst, Euless, Bedford, Richland Hills, North Richland Hills, Haltom City and Fort Worth. The study's purpose is to evaluate high-speed transportation alternatives, both alignments and technology, to connect Dallas-Fort Worth to other proposed high-performance passenger systems in Texas as well as obtain federal environmental approval of the viable alternative.

The study is divided into two phases. The first phase will analyze all reasonable alternatives regarding alignment and travel technology. The wide range of alternatives will be pared down to a small number of recommended travel technologies and a small number of alignment options through a multiple-level screening process. Staff anticipates the first phase to take approximately twelve months and conclude in spring 2021. During the first phase, there will be three opportunities for the region to participate in the study via public meeting events. Meetings

were held in September 2020 and January 2021. The next series is tentatively scheduled for April 2021.

The second phase will be an engineering and environmental analysis as prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act. This phase will include conceptual and preliminary engineering tasks, and work efforts are expected to begin in early summer 2021 and conclude in late spring 2023. This 24-month schedule includes two primary public engagement events in early fall 2021 and late summer 2022.

The project team is using a three-level screening process to pare down the initial vast number of possible options to a select few by the end of the first study phase. This process begins with identifying all reasonable alternatives. The first level of evaluation for the alternatives is to determine if the alternative meets the project purpose and the project need. The alternatives that meet the project purpose and the project need then move to the second level of evaluation. The second level of evaluation focuses on identifying any flaws which may preclude the alternative from being built. This is where the project team is currently. The goal is to complete the third level of evaluation with a limited number of technologies and alignments or corridors to be evaluated in the project's second phase.

Using previous transportation studies that examined corridors between Dallas and Fort Worth, the project team identified many possible alignments and corridors to analyze. In general, the project team identified alignments and corridors along existing transportation routes as much as possible to minimize the need to acquire additional property. Each alignment and corridor option will connect the central station in downtown Fort Worth to the proposed high-speed rail station in downtown Dallas. In all, 43 distinct alignments and corridors were identified for study. The initial 43 distinct alignments and corridors were grouped into five families of options:

- Trinity Railway Express alignments
- Trinity River alignments
- IH 30 alignments
- SH 180 alignments
- SH 303 alignments

These are the alignments and corridors the project team analyzed during the level one screening.

There are several high-speed transportation technologies or modes of travel to be examined for their use to meet the region's travel needs. These initial modes of travel include conventional passenger rail trains, higher-speed trains, high-speed rail trains, magnetic levitation, (maglev for short), train technology, hyperloop technology and other emerging high-speed transportation technologies. Looking more closely at the design characteristics for each technology, it is important to understand how the footprint and profile could affect the surrounding environment, including the amount of right-of-way width needed. Typical sections of each technology give a view of the technology and its associated infrastructure required. A typical section is what could be expected to be generally built throughout the corridor. Conventional and higher-speed rail typical sections are generally constructed on the ground. The technologies with the highest speeds require the vehicles to operate on bridge structures throughout a corridor to separate them from other roadways and rail lines.

The level one evaluation was aimed at determining if the alternative would meet the project purpose and need and was conducted using two screening evaluations. The primary evaluation determined if the alternative would serve both downtown Fort Worth and downtown Dallas with a travel time faster than existing modes. The secondary evaluation in level one determined if the alternative would be safe, reliable, convenient, linked to other high-speed transportation systems serving Texas, connected to existing regional passenger systems and improve access to major activity centers in the study area.

Using the primary criteria, all alignments serve both downtown areas. The next part of this primary criteria screens out alignment and mode combinations that have a longer travel time between the Dallas and Fort Worth stations than the 20 minute threshold. Using this travel time criteria, none of the 43 alignments pass the test for conventional rail. Higher-speed technology has 8 alignments that pass the travel time test while high-speed rail passes on 39 alignments. Maglev and hyperloop technologies pass on all 43 alignments for travel time. Using the secondary level 1 screening criteria identified, many alignments should not be considered further in the second level of screening analysis. In total, 23 alignments were identified for consideration in the level 2 screening process.

Turning to the level 1 screening analysis regarding transportation technologies, as mentioned previously, the conventional rail technology did not pass the level one primary screening analysis and was eliminated from further consideration. The higher-speed, high-speed, maglev and hyperloop transportation technologies were recommended to be further evaluated in level 2.

Moving on to the level two evaluation process, level 2 centered on determining if the alternative has any fatal flaws, meaning a concern that would prevent further development of the project using that alignment. Various conditions are examined for each alternative, including proximity to environmentally sensitive areas, potential community impacts, technology maturity, compatibility with existing infrastructure and operational characteristics.

The level 2 screening results identified both alignment options and transportation technology options to move forward into the more detailed level 3 screening analysis. The results for the IH 30 alignments indicated 7 of 12 alignment options should be analyzed further. Additionally, three of 11 SH 180 alignment options are identified as needing additional analysis. Regarding transportation technologies or modes, the level 2 screening suggested the higher-speed technology not be analyzed further while high-speed rail, maglev and hyperloop technologies should be analyzed further. The new and emerging technologies initially analyzed were not recommended for consideration in the level 3 screening process.

The level 3 screening process will focus on a more detailed evaluation of the remaining alignments and transportation technology alternatives, including a conceptual design process for each. Criteria for this final evaluation level will include cost estimates, potential impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, other potential community impacts and the ability to construct the proposed project in the future. In conjunction with the level 3 screening process, the project team will be conducting an initial design for each alternative that has advanced to level 3 screening. This initial design will be used to support and provide information for the level 3 screening process. The project team anticipates the initial design process to be completed by the end of March 2021.

Public and agency engagement strategies occurring throughout the study include but are not limited to the following:

- Elected official meetings
- Federal Transit Administration/Federal Railroad Administration progress meetings
- Technical work group meetings
- Technology forum
- Project public meetings
- NCTCOG public meeting
- Resource agency meeting

For more information on the High-Speed Transportation Connections Study and to sign up for project notices, visit [www.nctcog.org/dfw-hstcs](http://www.nctcog.org/dfw-hstcs).

***Work Program Modifications (no audio presentation; handouts posted online for review and comment):***

<https://www.nctcog.org/nctcog/media/Transportation/DocsMaps/Involve/InputMeetings/2021/02/UWPP-Mods.pdf>

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) summarizes transportation activities for NCTCOG's metropolitan planning area, which covers a 12-county region. The UPWP is divided into five major task areas:

- Administration and Management
- Transportation Data Development and Maintenance
- Short-Range Planning and Programming and Air Quality and Transit Operations
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Special Studies and System Operations

The modifications in this fifth round of proposed modifications to the FY 2020 and FY 2021 UPWP address new initiatives, project updates and funding adjustments.

The RTC will take action on the FY2020 and FY2021 UPWP modifications in March 2021.

## **COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY WEBSITE, MAIL, EMAIL and SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **Email**

#### **Work Program Modifications**

**Michael Morris**

Cedars Project should be \$4 million in federal funds and \$1M RTC transportation development credits (TDC's). This is a very important project but does not need RTC local funds.

### **Mail**

### **Other**

Please see attachment for comment submitted via mail.

March 3, 2021

March 3, 2021

Carli Baylor  
North <sup>Central</sup> Texas Council of Government's  
Transportation Department  
P O Box 5888  
Arlington, TX 76005-5888

Dear Carli:

I have received your recent mailing due March 9, 2021. I am not commenting on the contents of the two presentations, however I want to make some positive comments regarding each:

For Amendment #5 to the FY 2020, FY 2021, Unifed Planning <sup>with</sup> Program for Regional Transportation Planning - I am pleased to see that acronyms and their definitions are spelled out in this document.

I will have to study the presentation on High-Speed Transportation. Dallas-Fort Worth more closely, it appears to be a comprehensive document covering many aspects of the project. I appreciate the opportunity to review this.

RECEIVED

MAR 7 2021

TRANSPORTATION

Sincerely,  
Phyllis Silver