

MINUTES

Regional Transportation Council PUBLIC MEETING

Federal and Local Partnerships with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and City of Dallas

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2)

State Implementation Plan and Section 185 Requirements

Proposed Modifications to the List of Funded Projects

Meeting Date and Location

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) held a hybrid public meeting Monday, March 13, 2023, at noon in Arlington. Patrons could attend in person, via phone or view the live stream at www.nctcog.publicinput.com/nctcogMar23. Chris Klaus, Senior Program Manager, moderated the meeting, attended by 82 people.

Public Meeting Purpose and Topics

The public meeting was held 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, and amended on November 8, 2018. Staff presented information about:

- Federal and Local Partnerships with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and City of Dallas – **presented by Brian Dell**
- COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2) – **presented by Brian Dell**
- State Implementation Plan and Section 185 Requirements – **presented by Nicholas Van Haasen**

The public meeting was held to educate, inform and seek comments from the public. Comments were solicited from those attending who wished to speak for the record. The presentations made during the meeting as well as a video recording were posted online at www.nctcog.publicinput.com/nctcogMar23.

Summary of Presentations

Federal and Local Partnerships with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and City of Dallas presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/61c01b5f-bc05-4ac7-b175-a60ae581228a/Federal-Local-Partnerships-with-DART-and-Dallas.pdf>

NCTCOG and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) are required to pay for expenses associated with projects and programs they implement before federal reimbursement can be requested. With the recent award of numerous federal discretionary grants, the amount of funding needed to cash flow projects has increased significantly. NCTCOG would like to expand

the pool of RTC Local funds available to implement projects outside of the restrictive federal process.

In July 2022, the RTC directed staff to pursue a funding partnership with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) or the City of Dallas to expand the Revolver Fund to cash flow federal grant projects and replenish the RTC Local funding pool. Two federal and local partnerships are being finalized to accomplish these goals: an MPO Revolver and RTC Local Partnership with DART and a Five Mile Creek Partnership with City of Dallas. Additionally, a partnership with DART was approved in December 2022 to facilitate the construction of two parking garages, one at the Dallas Zoo Station and one at the SMU/Mockingbird Station.

The DART Board recently approved a program to send approximately \$234 million back to its member cities. Two methods yielding different amounts were considered for how to disburse those funds: population and the proportion of sales tax paid to DART. To allow DART to return the higher of the two amounts to each city, a proposal was made for the RTC to provide federal funds to offset the difference between the two methods at a cost of \$19.674 million. In return for providing this solution and funding, an exchange of \$44 million in federal funds for \$40 million of local funds from DART was proposed and approved by the RTC in December 2022.

The City of Dallas approached NCTCOG regarding funding for part of the Five Mile Creek Trail and expressed interest in helping create local funds for the “MPO Revolver”. In return for \$15.4 million of federal funding for the project, the City proposed sending \$10 million in local funds to the RTC. Several sections of the Five Mile Creek Trail would be designed and constructed with this funding, and the partnership is contingent upon final action from the City of Dallas.

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2) presentation:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/79a909e9-5263-43dc-b18f-25dbe919be52/COVID-19-Infrastructure-Program-Transit-Partnership-Round-2.pdf>

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2) handout:

<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/33554035-2b7f-485d-8b20-973bd19aa9ad/COVID-19-Infrastructure-Program-Transit-Partnership-Round-2-Project-List.pdf>

In response to a decline in transit ridership due to COVID-19, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) approved a \$25 million placeholder of funds for transit investments in November 2020. In March 2021, the RTC awarded several projects:

- Regional Transit Education Campaign
- Insurance for Passenger Rail Integration
- Regional Railroad Design Review
- Regional Bus Stop Improvements

In October 2021, an additional \$620,000 was awarded for a first/last mile connection between the Trinity Railway Express Centreport Station and DFW Airport. Additional projects are being proposed to utilize the remaining funding to complete this initiative, including regional bus stop improvements, service expansion for the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) A-Train and the implementation of both a regional coordination program and a transit driver workforce development and training initiative.

The RTC will take action on the COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2) on Thursday, April 13, 2023.

State Implementation Plan and Section 185 Requirements presentation:
<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/27cf6e5e-0100-4fdb-8e8b-139334a91b48/State-Implementation-Plan-and-Section-185-Requirements.pdf>

With the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) reclassification of the Dallas-Fort Worth ozone nonattainment area from serious to severe, a Section 185 fee may be imposed on the region in the future. Part of the Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA), the fee is an annual penalty for failure to meet the severe air quality attainment deadline. If the region does not meet attainment by July 20, 2027, the fee could be as much as \$45 million and may begin as early as 2028, until attainment is met.

For more information on regional air quality, visit <https://www.nctcog.org/trans/quality/air/ozone>.

Summary of Online Review and Comment Topic

Proposed Modifications to the List of Funded Projects handout:
<https://www.nctcog.org/getmedia/cc8520ac-c72c-4ba0-a580-ffdd8aacf074/Proposed-Modifications-to-the-List-of-Funded-Projects.pdf>

A comprehensive list of funded transportation projects through 2026 is maintained in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Projects with committed funds from federal, State and local sources are included in the TIP. To maintain an accurate project listing, this document is updated on a regular basis.

The current modification cycle includes project updates and funding adjustments for transportation initiatives in Collin, Dallas, Denton, Hood, Ellis and Tarrant Counties.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE MEETING

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2)

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

A. Transit funding

Comment: I applaud the regional bus stop improvements because I'm a frequent bus rider. Trinity Metro is receiving \$2.87 million in funding and DART is receiving \$2.1 million, but DART covers a larger geographic area. Is DART receiving less funding because the agency has better bus stops?

Summary of Response by Brian Dell: The RTC awarded \$2.78 million for Trinity Metro bus stops and \$2.1 million for DART bus stops. The RTC had already awarded funding to DART for other projects, which left less funding in this particular subset of projects for the transit agency.

State Implementation Plan and Section 185

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

A: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) fee

Question: Who pays the TCEQ fee if the region does not reach attainment?

Summary of Response by Nicholas Van Haasen: The TCEQ will be imposing the Section 185 fees from the Federal Clean Air Act. The fee will be paid by the individuals who own/operate the point sources. Non-mobile emission sources, such as power plants, electric generating units, cement kilns, boilers and paper mills, are typical point sources that may be subject to the 185 fee. NCTCOG will provide more information to the public as information is received.

Mark Martin, Citizen

A. Ellis County

Comment: Ellis County releases more emissions than any other county in the region. Is this due to due to leaky valves or pumps or emissions?

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: The cement kilns in Ellis County are the largest emitters of nitrogen oxides in the region, but they have made improvements. There is a lot of funding available to further improve the industry, and NCTCOG staff can coordinate with partners to see if there are opportunities to incentivize these funding opportunities.

Question: Will NCTCOG include consulting firms in their partner coordination?

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: The RTC's primary focus is transportation, but point sources such as cement kilns, are also important. The State is updating their air quality plans due to the failure of two standards and there are opportunities to have direct conversations with them. The State's SIP website will provide better inventories of where their current projections are as well as forecasts for oil and gas activity.

B. Green energy and power generation

Question: With the discussion of green energy and different modes of transportation, is NCTCOG involved in figuring out where the root of the power comes from?

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: The Dallas-Fort Worth Clean Cities Coalition is supporting the use of alternative fuels, and a study has been conducted to put hydrogen along the IH 45 corridor between Houston and Dallas. The focus is on electric vehicles on the light-duty side and hydrogen on the heavy-duty side. NCTCOG staff is also monitoring the electric generation because we know there is some demand there. We're trying to diversify energy sources so that if one thing fails and we have no electricity, we have power from other sources.

Other

Dianne Beck, Citizen

A: SPAN, Inc.

Comment: I was recently fired from Span and treated very unfairly. And if they can do it to me, they can do it to anyone.

Summary of response by Chris Klaus: We appreciate you coming out today to provide your thoughts and input.

Hexel Colorado, Citizen

A. Road diets

Comment: Jeff Speck's book "Walkable City Rules: 101 Steps to Making Better Places" argues streets with more lanes than they need cause more injury and death than they otherwise would. This logic also applies to the need to reduce the width of individual lanes, as most streets in Dallas and across the metroplex have lanes wider than 12 feet. Studies from around the world report that 10 feet is the widest lane width for safe streets shared by cars and people, yet on Garrett Ave, each lane is 14 feet wide. On my blog, I observed streets with lanes 20-feet wide during a walk audit in Arlington around the UTA campus.

Summary of Response by Chris Klaus: We have received feedback about the lane and roadway widths and will take it into consideration during further conversations.

B. On-demand transit

Comment: On-demand transit can never fully replace fixed-route bus service as a permanent solution.

Summary of Response by Shannon Stevenson: On-demand service is not necessarily the only way to address transit needs, but it does make sense in low-demand areas to offer some type of transit when a fixed route is not warranted. NCTCOG has been engaging with the City of Arlington on replacing on-demand service with some fixed routes in some corridors. We will share your letter with the City of Arlington.

C. DART's Adopt-A-Stop program

Comment: I am conducting research for a potential revival of DART's Adopt-A-Stop program. I would like to have a Zoom or phone call to find out what is working and what can be improved. I am pursuing this project as part of my role on DART's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

Summary of Response by Shannon Stevenson: We can put you in contact with those at the respective transit agencies to help with your initiative.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED DURING THE COMMENT PERIOD VIA WEBSITE, EMAIL, SOCIAL MEDIA & MAIL

Social Media

Twitter

I forgot to digitize my notes from walk audit w/ @WalkableArlington 3wks ago. Turned into blog post just in time for monthly @NCTCOGtrans Public Input Mtg at noon. Summary: NARROW THE ROADS 🗣️ DO TESTS 🗣️ STOP FORGETTING WHEELCHAIRS 🗣️ <https://t.co/CLHXUcWbHf> – Hexel Colorado (@hexel_co)

Mail

Phyllis Silver, Citizen

Please see Attachment 1 for comments submitted via postal mail.

NCTCOG Public Meeting - March 13, 2023

Comments and Questions - Phyllis Silver
Federal/Local Funding Partnerships With Dallas ^{Area} Rapid Transit
and City of Dallas

Pages 2 + 3 - Comment

I appreciate the explanation given about how programs are paid for at various stages of projects.

Pages 4 + 5 - Questions

I would be interested in clarification:

Pg. 4 - Final bullet says federal funds will be placed on the DART SilverLine - does this mean that \$44 million referred to in the prior bullet would go to the SilverLine project or is the federal funds figure for the SilverLine a figure other than \$44 million?

Pg. 5 - I understand that \$30 million of local funds will go toward the two Dallas Parking garages. The next to last bullet on page 5 refers to \$30 million being placed on the DART SilverLine project. Is this \$30 million part of the \$44 million referred to on page 4 or is this an additional \$30 million going to the SilverLine project?

State Implementation Plan and Section 185 Fee
Requirements

Comment - Page 6

Severe Classification and Section 185 Fees

I appreciate this explanation as to fees imposed in case of non-attainment. I trust that attainment will be achieved by the July 2027 deadline. If attainment is not achieved by the deadline, I would like to see more information about how TCEQ and/or the EPA determines who are the offenders are and therefore who should pay the fee (penalty).

COVID-19 Infrastructure Program Transit Partnership (Round 2)

Pg. 2 - Question

First bullet point - what is a placeholder of funds?

Pg. 4 - Comment

Regarding \$2,100,000 of STBG Funds to DART - I understand from the response to my question during the meeting that DART received previous funds for other initiatives. With the large number of bus stops in the DART system, it appears that DART would need more than the \$2,100,000 allocated for bus stop improvements. I trust that additional money will be allocated for this purpose.

For comments on this topic:

In addition to bus stop improvements, we need pedestrian walkways made of concrete or other durable materials that lead from bus stops to the final destinations of riders. This probably will involve working with developers and other parties. For example, Willow Bend Mall in Plano has good DART bus service. When riders get off the bus, though, they have to walk up and then down a hilly area. Sometimes there is not adequate traction on the muddy hill. The alternative is to walk along a driveway on the perimeter road within the mall proper. This is dangerous, as pedestrians are walking where motorists are driving their cars. Another example is Texas Health Resources Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. There is light rail and bus service to the hospital. There is no dedicated walkway, though, from public transportation modes to the hospital buildings. One must walk through parking lots and compete with cars that are travelling and backing up. We need greater safety for pedestrians.



Phyllisilver
3/31/2023