

# NOTICE OF INTENT FOR THE DART IRVING-3 LRT EXTENSION TO DFW AIRPORT

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## **SUMMARY:**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) intend to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the DART Irving-3 (DFW Extension) light rail alignment on Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW Airport) property in Dallas and Tarrant counties, Texas. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), having jurisdiction over airports, is being requested to be a cooperation agency in this study. This line segment would provide a direct connection to DFW Airport from DART's Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW alignment (also known as the Orange Line). The EA will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended.

The project will be funded through a combination of local funds and funds apportioned to DART from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Urbanized Area Formula Program (UAFP) funding under 49 USC §5307 (Section 15). This program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation related planning. While eligible purposes include a wide range of planning, design and capital investments, DART intends to use federal funding the capital investments in a new fixed guideway light rail system to extend the Orange Line to DFW Airport Terminal A.

The Irving-3 (DFW Extension) project is the third stage of the Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW LRT alignment (Orange Line). Previous studies relevant to the Northwest Corridor include the Northwest Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS), completed by DART in 2000, and the Northwest Corridor LRT Line to Irving and DFW Airport Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which was finalized in July 2008. The first segment of the Northwest Corridor, from Victory Station in Downtown Dallas to Bachman Station in Northwest Dallas, is shared by both Northwest Corridor service lines, the Green Line to Farmers Branch and Carrollton and the Orange Line to Irving/DFW. This segment, which received environmental clearance as part of the Northwest Corridor LRT Line to Farmers Branch and Carrollton FEIS (October 2003), is under construction and set to begin revenue service in December 2010. Line segment 1 (Irving-1) of the Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW, from Bachman Station to Irving Convention Center Station is set to open in December 2011 and line segment 2 (Irving-2) of the Irving line, Irving Convention Center Station to Belt Line Station in Irving, is set to open in December 2012. Line segment 3 (Irving-3) of the Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW would continue the alignment from Belt Line

Station in Irving onto DFW Airport property and into Terminal A of DFW Airport for a revenue service date of December 2013.

The identified primary travel need for the Irving-3 alignment is to enhance regional transit connections and to serve DFW airport passengers and employees with a direct public transit connection to the airport.

## **DATES:**

One public scoping meeting and one inter-agency scoping meeting will be held to help develop the scope of the proposed project. The inter-agency scoping meeting will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, October 19 at DART Headquarters located at 1401 Pacific Avenue in Dallas, TX. A separate public scoping meeting will occur at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at the Marriott Hotel-DFW North, 8440 Freeport Parkway in Irving, Texas. This meeting is located in Mapsco page 11-U and along DART bus route 310.

The scoping comment period will be open until October 30, 2009. Scoping materials will be available at the meetings and on the project web site (<http://www.dart.org/dfwextension>) beginning October 1, 2009.

## **ADDRESSES:**

Written comments should be sent to John Hoppie, Project Manager, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, P.O. Box 660163, Dallas, TX 75266-7213. Telephone: 214.749.2525. Fax: 214.749.3844. E-mail: [jhoppie@dart.org](mailto:jhoppie@dart.org).

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **Scoping**

FTA and DART invite interested individuals, organizations, businesses, and federal, state, and local agencies to participate in determining the scope of the EA on the Irving-3 LRT Line (DFW Extension). Comments should focus on identifying significant social, on identifying specific social, economic, or environmental impacts related to the alignment. Comments may focus on improving the alignment, reducing costs or reducing environmental impacts while achieving similar transportation objectives. Specific suggestions on the alignment and issues to be addressed are welcome and will be considered in the development of the final study scope. Scoping comments can be provided orally, in writing, or via e-mail through October 30, 2009. See "DATES" and "ADDRESSES" sections above. Additional information on the EA process, the alternatives, and anticipated impact issues is contained in the project scoping document. In addition, a project website has been established to provide project information to the public at <http://www.dart.org/dfwextension>.

## Project Description and Need for Project

The DART Irving-3 LRT line (DFW Extension) consists of two line segments to be constructed in two phases that would operate independently of one another. Phase I would begin at the terminus of the Irving-2 line segment (Belt Line Station), just north of the intersection of Valley View Lane and Belt Line Road, and continue generally west onto DFW Airport property. The Phase I alignment would continue west and then bear north to follow DFW Airport property boundaries and generally parallel North Airfield Drive until it crosses Freeport Parkway. The Phase I alignment would then continue west following on the north side of North Airfield Drive before crossing North Airfield Drive and bearing west and then south parallel to International Parkway toward the Terminal A planned platform area. Phase II would begin at the terminus of the Irving-2, utilizing the same tracks as the Phase I but would spur off the Phase I alignment just south of Freeport Parkway and aurally cross SH 114 to follow along the north side of SH 114 to the DART-owned Cotton Belt Right-of-way (ROW). The alignment would then aurally cross SH 121 and travel westward along the Cotton Belt ROW to the proposed DFW North Station. From the North Station, the alignment would travel south, crossing over SH 121 and International Parkway, toward the Terminal A planned platform area. Both phases are located entirely on DFW Airport property.

The need for this project has been documented in previous studies, including the Northwest Corridor MIS, published in 2000, and the Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW FEIS (July 2008), which resulted in a Record of Decision (ROD) by FTA in September 2008. The identified primary travel need for the Irving-3 line (DFW Extension) is to enhance regional transit connections and to serve DFW airport passengers and employees with a direct public transit connection to the airport.

## Alternatives

The DFW Extension Project is a Build Alternative consisting of a two independent projects. Phase I of Irving-3 would be built in the near term and ready for revenue service by 2013. Phase II of Irving-3 will also be put forth in this EA for consideration but would be built in the later term, the specific date of which is dependent on several factors related to actions being undertaken or pursued by the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T) and DART.

Phase I would provide direct LRT service to DFW Airport A by connecting to the existing LRT system within the DART service area. Phase I would connect to the Orange Line (currently under construction) to DFW Terminal A. Phase I would operate on frequent headway similar to the existing DART LRT system. Phase II of the LRT alternative would extend to intercept passengers on future commuter rail service along the Cotton Belt before turning into Terminal A. Trains would operate along this route to meet the lower frequency commuter rail train on the Cotton Belt. Once both phases are in operation, the concept is that use of the two lines would alternate. Selected Orange Line trains would use the Phase II alignment in order to provide service that matches the commuter rail line service levels. All other Orange line trains would use the Phase I alignment to approach DFW airport.

Irving 3 is an extension of the Orange Line and would serve Irving, then interline with the Green Line and terminate at Lawnview Station. In the peak hour, Orange line trains would also serve areas north of downtown roughly following US-75, interlining with the existing DART Red line, to terminate at the existing Parker Road Station.

FTA with DART has determined that the two phases have independent utility. Phase I is an approximate 5-mile extension of the Orange Line that directly connects the existing DART LRT system to the DFW Airport Central Terminal Area. By making this connection DART meets the region's immediate goals of rail service to DFW Airport. The future Phase II adds approximately 5 miles to the line to interface with future commuter rail service along the Cotton Belt before turning into the Central Terminal Area. Phase II provides a transfer from commuter rail to the airport while allowing for efficient cross-town commuter rail service. Phase II would not be advanced until commuter rail service on the Cotton Belt is implemented. FTA with DART has determined that implementing the project in two phases is appropriate.

The DFW Extension Project will be evaluated against a No-Build Alternative consisting of all other planned, programmed, and funded transportation projects for the planning year 2030.

## **Probable Effects**

The purpose of this EA process is to study, in a public setting, the effects of the proposed project and its alternatives on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FTA and DART will evaluate all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EA. Impact areas to be addressed include land use, economic development; displacements, and relocation of existing uses; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources; parklands and recreational areas; visual and aesthetic qualities; environmental justice; natural resource impacts, including air quality, wetlands, water resources, and wildlife; noise and vibration; hazardous materials; energy; safety and security; utilities; traffic and transportation impacts; and airport operations. Potential impacts will be addressed for the long-term operation of each alternative and the short-term construction period. Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse impacts will be identified, evaluated, and adopted, as appropriate. Special emphasis will be placed on compliance with NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Projects.

## **FTA Procedures**

In the interest of streamlining the NEPA process, DART and other agencies involved in the scoping process will consider the results of all previous planning studies that are relevant to the proposed project. Such studies include the DART Northwest Corridor MIS, the DFW International Airport Rail Planning and Implementation Study, and the DART Northwest Corridor to Irving/DFW EIS.

The regulations implementing NEPA, as well as provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

(SAFETEA-LU), call for public involvement in the NEPA process. Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU provides the following guidance: (1) Extend an invitation to other federal and non-federal agencies and Native American tribes that may have an interest in becoming a participating agency for the proposed project; (2) Provide an opportunity for involvement by participating agencies and the public to help define the purpose and need for a proposed project, as well as the range of alternatives for consideration in the environmental documentation; and (3) Establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in, and comment on, the environmental review process. An invitation to become a participating or cooperating agency, with scoping materials appended, will be extended to other federal and non-federal agencies and Native American tribes that may have an interest in the proposed project. Any federal or non-federal agency or Native American tribe interested in the proposed project that does not receive an invitation to become a participating agency should notify the project manager, as identified in the "ADDRESSES" section above.

A comprehensive public involvement plan will be developed for the project and posted on the project website, <http://www.dart.org/dfwextension>. The public involvement plan includes a range of activities and techniques to help engage the public in the decision-making process for the proposed project, such as the project web site; development and distribution of project newsletters; and outreach to local officials, community and civic groups, and the public at large. Specific activities and events for involvement will be detailed in the public involvement plan.

In accordance with FTA policy, all federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders affecting project development, including, but not limited to, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), the joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations (23 CFR part 771), the project-level conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act and FAA Executive Order 5050.4B, will be addressed to the maximum extent practicable during the NEPA process.

After its publication, the Draft EA will be available for public review and comment. One public hearing will be held during the Draft EA public comment period. On the basis of the Draft EA and comments received, the preferred alternative will be further refined as necessary, and the Final EA will be prepared.