



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Mike Land, City Manager

From: Traci E. Leach, Deputy City Manager

Date: May 22, 2018

Reference: DART Cotton Belt Line DEIS Discussion

2030: Goal 5 states “Easy access to Dallas-Fort Worth Region” with the following objectives; Objective 1 – Participate in regional rail service to Dallas-Fort Worth, Objective 2- Maintain and enhance accessibility to DFW Airport, and Objective 5 – Develop regional connections for Coppell residents and employees of Coppell businesses

Introduction:

The Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) was released on April 20, 2018. This date triggers the start of the 45-day public comment period, during which the public may provide input regarding the content of the DEIS.

The purpose of the DEIS is to identify the environmental impacts the Cotton Belt line will have on the various environmental categories (25 categories plus the airports) throughout the 26-mile corridor. The public comment period for the DEIS began on April 20, 2018 and ends on June 4, 2018. At that time, DART will compile all comments. Substantive comments will be catalogued and recorded into the appropriate subject areas. All comments will be reviewed, will receive responses, and will be documented in the Final EIS (FEIS)/Record of Decision (ROD). Preliminary engineering and environmental analysis will be completed, with additional analysis done as required upon receipt of DEIS comments. Once the FEIS/ROD is prepared by FTA, FAA, and DART, the project funding may be accessed and the design build contract can be approved by the DART Board.

The full DEIS document can be accessed at the Cozby Library and Community Commons or online by following this link:

<http://www.dart.org/ShareRoot/about/expansion/cottonbelt/cottonbeltdeis/CottonBeltDEISApril2018.pdf>

Key Takeaways:

- Vibration impacts: No residential properties reached mitigation thresholds.
- Visual impacts: No locations were outlined for visual mitigation.
- Sound impacts: Seven (7) locations were identified as quiet zones.
- Traffic impacts: Impacts at the MacArthur/East Belt Line Road intersection and South Belt Line Road require mitigation.
- No other impact met the threshold for required mitigation for *City* facilities. Pinkerton Elementary is identified as being a moderate impact location.

Discussion Points:

Staff is recommending that the following comments be made for the record.

1. **Support the inclusion of the seven locations identified as quiet zones.** In Coppell, quiet zones (QZ) were shown to completely eliminate the number of residential homes moderately or severely impacted by horn noise.
2. **Support the traffic mitigation at the MacArthur/East Belt Line Road intersection and at South Belt Line Road.** The mitigation proposed for the MacArthur/East Belt Line intersection includes signal improvements at the MacArthur/East belt Line intersection and a grade separated crossing at South Belt Line Road and Sanders Loop.
3. **Support the mitigation recommended for Pinkerton Elementary School.** The City's support here will be supplemental to any feedback that the school district has related to the enhanced safety features proposed for the school. CISD has no additional mitigation requests in addition to what is outlined in the DEIS, subject to DART's continued coordination to discuss issues related to the school.
4. **Support the Cotton Belt Trail.** A regional trail within the DART right-of-way is currently included in the DEIS, but would not be funded as part of the rail project. The City is currently working with NCTCOG on this regional trail.
5. **Advocate for a quiet zone at Denton Tap Drive.** This location was originally included in the list of proposed QZ, but was later eliminated with the rationale being that the Cypress Waters alignment draws the passenger rail and its associated noise south away from the residential neighborhoods in close proximity to Denton Tap. With QZ proposed from both intersections on either side of Denton Tap, leaving a gap at Denton Tap has the potential to render those QZ ineffective if the horns from the freight traffic must be sounded in advance of this crossing.
6. **Advocate for Modifications to Grade Crossing Bells.** While QZ eliminates the noise associated with the trains sounding their horns, they do not eliminate the noise associated with the crossing bells. The crossing bells can be adjusted to lower the volume to "near the minimum values." Staff is respectfully requesting that DART consider adjusting the volume of the crossing bell to the minimum value to comply with American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association (AREMA) standard and also consider adding acoustic shrouds to the back half of the bells to direct noise away from noise-sensitive areas and direct it where it is needed.
7. **Advocate for the Addition of Vehicle Wheel Skirts.**
8. **Advocate for betterments for additional landscape planting in areas adjacent to residential areas.** While the betterment process is between individual neighborhoods in Coppell and DART, the City supports the addition of betterment improvements to help improve the visual impact of the rail.

9. **Advocate for betterments for enhancements to the proposed elevated crossing at South Belt Line Road.** While the City supports the mitigation improvement for this location, the City would like the aesthetics of the bridge to be consistent with other bridge structures throughout Coppell. As a major traffic point within Coppell, this crossing will be one of the first major structures seen by motorists traveling north from IH 635 on South Belt Line Road.

Analysis:

Advocacy for any of the positions outlined above is not a guarantee that those items will be incorporated into the project. If some of these requests are not included, it may be possible to implement specific improvements at the City's cost. Staff will be following up at a future Council meeting to discuss these items as well as additional mitigation improvements such as sound barriers.

Legal: No legal review necessary.

Fiscal Impact: None at this time. However, any future financial commitment to this project will be for quiet zones, sound attenuation solutions, and possible property dedication for rail right-of-way where these items may be needed or required and are located within the City of Coppell or property owned by the City of Coppell.

Recommendation:

No formal action required of the Council at this time.