



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Mike Land, City Manager

From: Traci E. Leach, Deputy City Manager

Date: February 12, 2019

Reference: **DART Cotton Belt Trail Follow up**

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:

At the January 29, 2019 Fifth Tuesday workshop, staff presented information related to the possible improvements that are available for the City to consider that are outside of the cost of the rail construction. At that time, the Council directed staff to move forward with continued due diligence surrounding a number of improvements, including proposed trail segments that will be part of regional system that will run the entire stretch of the Cotton Belt line.

After the Fifth Tuesday briefing, staff conducted an update for the Parks Board and provided information about the proposed trail segments through Coppell. Staff obtained information regarding both segments of the trail that are currently unfunded. The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update to the Council regarding these segments.

Background:

The proposed trail is not included as part of the budget DART has identified for the rail project. North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) are coordinating the regional effort to design and construct the full length of the trail system along the rail corridor in cooperation with DART. The RTC has funded the design for the entire 26-mile trail and DART has included the trail in its Environmental Impact Study and will include the trail in its rail environmental clearance process for the entire stretch as well.

NCTCOG, in coordination with the stakeholder communities, identified several critical trail segments along the corridor. Critical segment was defined as a segment that, if not constructed at the same time as the rail line, could not feasibly be constructed due to site conditions. Coppell has one location that was identified as a critical segment, the grade elevated bridge structure that will cross over S. Belt Line Road (CBT 4 in the trail map). With the support of the RTC and Dallas County, the City is contributing Transportation Development Credits to fund this critical segment. Additionally, there is a segment that runs adjacent to the Cypress Waters rail station and Dallas County will be funding that segment (CBT 5 on the trail map).

The two unfunded segments include a stretch of trail beginning at S. Coppell Road and running west towards Grapevine (CBT 3 on the trail map) and a segment beginning at Mockingbird Lane and heading east towards Carrollton (CBT 6 on the trail map). The Council and Park Board have similar opinions as to the community value and course of action related to CBT 3. At this time, staff will be following up with DART, NCTCOG, and other key entities to continue working out details for this segment.

When discussing options related to CBT6, the Park Board provided input regarding an alternative alignment that would connect trail users from the east side of MacArthur to the west side of MacArthur, via the Campion trail (circled on the Parks Masterplan map). The proposed trail connector would begin at Fairway and head west on the south side of E. Belt Line and would head south near the property with the storage facility to connect to the Campion, which intersects with the Cotton Belt Trail at Mockingbird. The City currently owns an easement that connects to a sidewalk the apartment developer installed for this purpose.

There are funding alternatives for CBT 6 that could result in lowering the City's cash investment in this very expensive segment. The estimated cost at this time is \$6.2 million (NCTCOG is projecting potentially less if constructed with the rail line). Staff is pursuing grant funding for CBT 3 and may also consider doing so for CBT 6. It would imperative for the funding grant to cover a very substantial percentage of the cost, as this segment has very little community value from Fairway heading east.

Additionally, it may be possible to split CBT 6 and pursue grant funding for only the segment beginning at Fairway and extending east towards Carrollton. The estimated cost for this segment is \$4.5 million.

Analysis: The decision-making timeline for the unfunded segments is not ideal, as there are many factors still uncertain. The following factors are contributing to the uncertainty:

- **Funding:** Of primary concern is the funding scenarios. The City has grant programs available that can help offset partial construction cost, if awarded. However, the cost estimates are very preliminary and have the potential to change as design progresses. NCTCOG continues to work to identify additional funding via TXDOT, as this is a priority project.
- **Design Modifications of CBT 6 as proposed by DART:** Additionally, there are discussions that may result in the alignment of CBT 6 that would eliminate the elevated structure east of Fairway. Should this design alteration be made, it should positively impact the construction cost. To what degree is still unknown.

- **Design Uncertainty for Fairway Dr connector:** While the City does own an easement that would connect to the Campion trail, the crossing at Grapevine Creek has yet to be designed. The structure required to traverse the creek could be costly.

Legal: N/A.

Fiscal Impact: Undetermined.

Recommendation: This is a discussion briefing and no action is required.