

[Real Points](#)

Daily Reports on Commercial Real Estate

[ULI Panel: Transportation Investments Should Focus on Needs, Not Wants](#)

Category:

Author:

By [Jessica Melton](#)

Post date:

June 14th, 2012 7:28am



ULI's Infrastructure 2012: Spotlight on Leadership

A high-speed rail line that's on the drawing board could cut the commute from Dallas to Fort Worth to under 20 minutes. Gary Fickes, Tarrant County commissioner and secretary of the Texas High Speed Rail & Transportation Corp., said the rail lines would move at about 200 miles per hour. The goal is to have the system up and running by 2020.

Fickes was among the speakers at an "Infrastructure 2012—Spotlight on Leadership" event hosted by the Urban Land Institute yesterday at the Westin Hotel, where the presentations centered on high-speed rail and DART.

Tom Murphy, senior resident fellow of the Urban Land Institute kicked things off by sharing the results of report that assesses the state of transportation infrastructure in the United States and around the world.

A panel discussion followed, featuring Fickes, David Leininger, executive vice president and CFO of DART; and Russell Laughlin, senior vice president of Hillwood Properties, who spoke on behalf of the private sector.

Leininger started off by explaining that, despite some opinions to the contrary, DART ridership is up on its light rail system, the largest in North America. He also said DART is adding 14 miles of light rail to Las Colinas this year and is looking to get a new bus fleet that's more energy-efficient in the next few years.

One strategy DART has used is continual planning and building throughout tough economic times. “That’s when you see the best rates,” Leininger said. He estimates DART has saved roughly \$74 million by using this tactic.

In keeping with the leadership theme, Leininger said vision is critical. When people ask him how to get something done in five years, he said he responds by telling them they should have started 15 years ago. “You have to look long-term and make decisions that may not benefit you, but will benefit your kids or grandkids,” he said.

Laughlin said the private sector should focus more on transportation infrastructure, versus fancy bridges and additional parks. Taking care of the “needs” has to remain a priority he says, before work starts on more “wants.”

Fickes said the potential high-speed rail line between Dallas and Fort Worth would take roughly 18 minutes to travel. Longer lines could connect North Texas with Austin or Houston, he said.

The Dallas-Fort Worth system would be a privately funded project, with no federal dollars involved. Specific plans for how and when the rail lines ultimately will be built, Fickes said, will all come down to money.

•

Leave a Comment

* required fields

- Name (required)
- Mail (will not be published) (required)
- Website

• Message



[Welcome to RealPoints, D CEO's new commercial real estate blog.](#)