

Web Search by Yahoo!

Search

Blog Keywords

News Sports Business Entertainment Life Health Travel Opinion Autos Real Estate Jobs Shopping Classifieds



Elections Weather Traffic Investigations Obituaries Celebrations Photos Video Blogs eBooks Contact Us Subscribe

Home > Transportation Blog

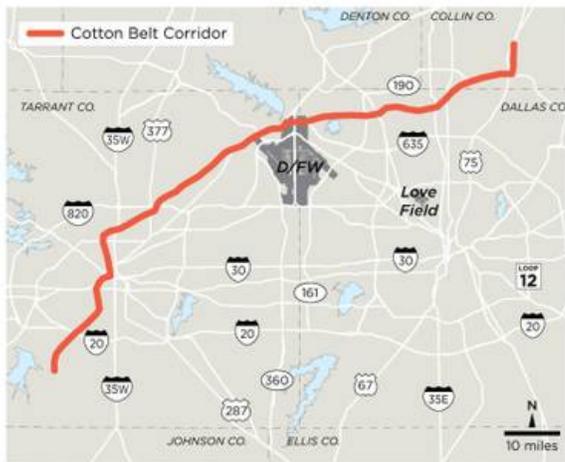
# Group says ambitious Cotton Belt commuter rail project remains on track, but maybe not for long



By Tom Benning / Reporter  
tbenning@dallasnews.com

10:50 am on March 7, 2013 | Permalink

0 1 **Share** 0 0



SOURCE: North Central Texas Council of Governments Steff Graphic

A group leading efforts to build the \$2 billion-plus Cotton Belt Corridor commuter rail project still expects to meet a key deadline — filing a bill by Friday's end to create a special tax district — even after Fort Worth's City Council bucked those plans this week by voting against a resolution to support the project.

But Ron Natinsky, a consultant to the private group, acknowledged Wednesday that getting Fort Worth's blessing is one of the keys to the success of the plan to develop the entire 62-mile corridor from Plano to Fort Worth decades ahead of schedule.

In other words, getting a state lawmaker to file such a bill without Fort Worth's blessing is one of the keys to the deal, particularly if the state lawmaker hails from the Fort Worth area.

"It's not a technical requirement," said Natinsky, a former Dallas City Council Member. "But it's a political requirement. 'If you want the district to go to southwest Fort Worth,' and Fort Worth is voting to say we don't want the district."

The March 8 filing deadline, save for local or emergency bills, has long been considered a key marker of whether the public-private partnership will come to fruition. Failure to file a bill would delay the Cotton Belt plan for at least two years — and potentially kill the effort for good.

The project has been shrouded in secrecy for months — ever since the private consortium, which includes construction giants Balfour Beatty and Odebrecht, expressed an interest to the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

While the group hasn't yet submitted a formal proposal, several possible revenue sources have been identified. And officials have pointed to the special tax district as a particularly important element because it would allow dollars to be captured along the corridor.

"You can't finance it city-by-city, county-by-county, miles of track-by-miles of track," Natinsky said. "You've gotta have one entity responsible, from both the

### MORE IN COMMUTER RAIL

#### Expect gargantuan jump in DART light-rail figures

Watch for a massive jump in DART's light-rail ridership figures in the days ahead. The transit system is switching from...

contracting and financing perspective.”

The Council of Governments, along with the consortium, have asked the 13 cities along the proposed corridor to pass resolutions supporting the plan. Most have done so, although Dallas hasn't scheduled a vote and Grapevine declined to vote on it.

Fort Worth then was the first city to register opposition, a move that caught project proponents off-guard.

The complicating factor is that the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, known as The T, is separately pursuing federal dollars to develop the line's 37 miles that sit in Tarrant County. (Traditional financing isn't expected to be available on the eastern portion for 20 years or more.)

Fort Worth leaders, who voted Tuesday, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that the public-private partnership would wrest too much control from cities and that it would hinder The T's efforts to build the western part, known as TEX Rail, by 2016.

“It would have muddied up the TEX Rail project,” Fort Worth City Councilman Jungus Jordan told the Star-Telegram.

Natinsky said the consortium has taken pains to ensure their proposal wouldn't interfere with The T's plan. He added that cities, under the private group's effort, would have the fail safe of being required to vote on any debt occurrence on rail that runs through their territories.

And while Natinsky said there are yet-to-be-identified lawmakers still lined up to file the enabling legislation, he said his group and others are now working to allay Fort Worth's concerns and get them back on board.

“Hopefully, we'll be able to rectify that situation,” he said.

Follow Tom Benning on Twitter at @tombenning.

From the web

- StyleBistro Penny of 'The Big Bang Theory' as You've Never Seen Her Before
First to Know Matt Lauer's Possible Firing from Today Show
AARP.org Valerie Harper's Rare Brain Cancer: What Caused It?
MamasLatinas 16-Year-Old With IQ Higher Than Einstein Is a Total 'Girly' Girl
Newser Mother Teresa 'Anything but a Saint,' Says Study

More From Dallasnews.com

- Sports Ricky Williams ends induction speech by thanking w ife for cleavage
New s Mother says son killed w hile breaking into East Oak Cliff home
Sports Morning sports radio ratings: How The Ticket's lead in Dallas breaks dow n
New s Most-w anted sex offender w ho molested Fort Worth girl surrenders at Mexico border
New s Jury quickly convicts Dallas man of sexually abusing girls, including 11-year-old relative he impregnated

What's this?

This entry was posted in commuter rail and tagged Cotton Belt Corridor, ron natinsky by Tom Benning / Reporter. Bookmark the permalink [http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/2013/03/group-says-ambitious-cotton-belt-commuter-rail-project-remains-on-track-but-for-how-long.html/] .

Comments

To post a comment, log into your chosen social network and then add your comment below. Your comments are subject to our Terms of Service and the privacy policy and terms of service of your social network. If you do not want to comment with a social network, please consider writing a letter to the editor.

Post a new comment
Login

[Large empty text box for comment]

Post

0 Comments

RSS | Subscribe

DALLASNEWS

- Home
Autos
Blogs
Real estate
Business
Jobs
eBooks
Shopping
Entertainment
Classifieds
Investigations
Business listings
Life
Legal notices
Local
Obituaries
Nation & World
Pets
Opinion
Sports
Traffic
Site map

ADVERTISING

- View ads
Place a Classified ad
Media kit
Special sections

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

- Home delivery
Pay bill
Vacation stop

CONTACT US

- Careers
New s tips
2013 DMN Intern Program
Feedback/questions

NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

- DMN story archive
Obituary archive
1885-1982 archive

RELATED SITES

- AlDiaTX.com
FDLuxe.com
GuideLive.com
neighborsgo.com
eEdition
Parade
Pegasusnew s.com
DentonRC.com
Local business listings
The Texas Wedding Guide
Design Guide Texas

[CELEBRATIONS](#)

[Submit a Celebration ad](#)

[View Celebration ads](#)

# The Dallas Morning News

©2013, The Dallas Morning News Inc. All Rights Reserved | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Updated Privacy Policy](#)