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# TEX Rail is moving full-speed ahead, but should it be stopped?

## HIGHLIGHTS

Most people are not aware of commuter rail line's cost

About \$468 million of total is not yet funded

Public vote should have been required



An artist's rendering of the new TEX Rail cars from Swiss maker Stadler. **Max Faulkner** - Star-Telegram

BY KONNI BURTON  
*Special to the Star-Telegram*

Tarrant County residents who pay close attention have heard of the "TEX Rail" project.

Still, my guess is the vast majority are not aware of the costs and realities of this 27-mile commuter train planned to run from downtown Fort Worth to Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

The enormous price tag of TEX Rail currently sits at \$998.78 million.

Local officials are aggressively pushing forward despite not having secured complete funding for the project.

At the end of 2015, total funding for TEX Rail included: \$150 million from the federal government, \$46 million from the state, \$20 million from Tarrant County, \$25 million from regional toll revenue and a projected, combined sales tax revenue of \$288.8 million from Grapevine and Fort Worth.

These sources total just under \$530 million, and there is no guarantee of securing the remaining \$468 million from the federal government.

Also unsettling is the fact that our community has not signaled a desire for mass transit.

Other county governments, such as Travis County, allowed their residents to vote on a commuter rail project before committing to spend millions of dollars.

Would it not have behooved our local governments to bring TEX Rail to a countywide vote to gauge the public's interest and willingness to use and support the project long term with tax dollars?

The Federal Transportation Administration offers grants to cities for projects that fall within its ultimate objective of socially re-engineering the urban landscape.

The two obvious problems with this are that our local officials are entering into a multiyear, billion-dollar project with the irrational and fiscally irresponsible federal government, and that we are artificially creating supply for a commodity that has little demand.

Further, the environmental impact study for TEX Rail, published in May 2014 states, "Overall the commuter rail alternative has negligible effects on traffic patterns and volumes on parallel roadways."

It further posits the average daily vehicle miles traveled in our region would decrease by only 0.07 percent. The study concludes there will be no significant improvements on air quality or congestion, whether building rail or not.

An unjustifiable taxpayer-funded albatross is being created here.

Mass transit systems are an essential component to a thriving urban area; however, rail has repeatedly shown to be a cost-intensive and failed option for growing cities.

Our bus system is a great example of a manageable and necessary system of mass transit. Many low-income and disabled individuals rely on our bus system for their everyday livelihood.

Sadly, studies have shown rail projects attract middle-to-high income riders, which in turn creates a transit system that neglects the needs of our most vulnerable.

Furthermore, case studies show bus service suffers when rail is introduced, because tax dollars are redirected to shore up funding shortfalls for maintenance and operations of rail. Ridership revenues simply do not cover the costs.

The allure of easy money from the federal government can sometimes create blind spots when determining what is best for our local community.

With TEX Rail, our local leaders have disregarded the grim realities of rail and have sidestepped the residents of Tarrant County to make a bad deal with the central planners and social engineers in Washington, D.C.

If you agree with me, demand a say. Tarrant County deserves better.

*State Sen. Konni Burton, R-Colleyville, represents Senate District 10 in Tarrant County.*

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 **Herman Torres**  
Interesting that Kooki didn't raise the same issues with the Trinity River Vision plan. Could it be that she doesn't want to tangle with Kay Granger? But more to the point, Kooki is unapologetic about her bias against mass transit. Only the "most vulnerable" - losers - should ride public transportation. Not the middle class, who care about the environment or find it more productive by not sitting in gridlock. Imagine her argument in the 1940s against a taxpayer-funded highway system because only the wealthy have cars.


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 **Liz Glinsky Hvidston** · Richland High School  
Too bad we can't get those nice, new trains to replace the tired, old, run down TRE trains for all of that commute between Fort Worth and Dallas. Just sayin...


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 **Gene Campbell**  
"We?" Feel free to pay for one yourself!


Like · Reply ·  1 · Feb 3, 2016 12:39pm

 **Kelly Canon** · Arlington, Texas  
Thank you, Konni Burton! You nailed it!


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 **Gene Campbell**  
Agreed. Please point out to Sherman Torres that his juvenile "greater evil" argument is NEVER a valid defense!

Like · Reply ·  1 · Feb 3, 2016 12:43pm

 **Matt Platts**  
It's a 2-hour debacle to try to get from far south Tarrant County to DFW airport via mass transit versus 40 minutes by car in rush hour traffic. What a joke. What's the harm to run a rail line to DFW? Maybe it doesn't need to cost \$1M, but we need to move into the future at some point, and busses don't get the job done.

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 **Gene Campbell**  
Then, how \$much are YOU willing to 'pony up' yourself?

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