

TEXAS PLANNING REVIEW



American Planning Association
Texas Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

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Feature Article

North Texas light rail expansion: a very efficient use of stimulus funds

By Lori Lee, Editor

Outside Granada Market in Las Colinas, customers trickle in and out. It's a slow-paced sunny afternoon, and the combination of Spanish architecture and the cigar smoke and music filtering from inside the market is enough to attract people from the surrounding neighborhood. A group of young women sit outside on the patio, and nearby residents stop in to grab a quick bite and say hello to market owner Sam Tartir. Having owned Granada Market 12 years, Sam knows a lot of his customers in the tight-knit community. Sam says the atmosphere of the community is the way the developers imagined it. "They wanted people to live outside, not just inside. . . Having the music outside fits with the vision". According to Tartir, the developer, Columbus Realty, mixed residential with retail because they wanted people to be able to walk more, and they wanted to improve their lives socially.

The Las Colinas community, when built, was cutting edge. Based on a concept similar to the old downtowns, where deep stores and narrow store-fronts offer a lot of opportunities within walking distance, the development's strengths are in higher than average densities and a strategic mix of uses designed to keep the ground floor active. Environmentally progressive and good for business, the concept stimulates an active environment and reduces the need to drive. Says Tartir, the concept works. "The people love it. . . They go downstairs and get a piece of pizza and whatever else they need, and they don't have to get in their cars and drive to the grocery store." Many of his customers have lived there for years, Sam said.

Still, the harsh economy has hit the area hard, and many businesses that once made the area vibrant are now closed, while remaining businesses struggle. A local business owner, Steve Love of Eagle Postal Center, frustrated with a corporate environment that seems to sidestep local independent business, said he may be closing soon. Similarly, Tartir says "Some days the community's like a ghost town. . . Because it's a corporate area, when the economy hits, the area slows down. It affects us directly."

DART's Orange Line expansion offers hope

In May of this year, DART received \$61.2 million for light-rail construction, helping DART pursue its plans for Las Colinas. The funds will apply primarily to design and construction of the first phase of the Orange Line extension to Las Colinas, affording a big chunk of the \$817 million total price tag.

The rail expansion offers hope to the community. When Granada Market customers were asked how they feel about the planned rail, most agreed it's a positive move in light of problems with the current system, which they complained makes using local transit cumbersome and time-consuming. When Steve Love, of Eagle Postal Center, was asked if he thought the Orange Line expansion would help his business, he sounded hopeful. Whether he can hold out that long is another matter.

According to City of Irving Planning Manager, Steve Reed, many spaces in Las Colinas lay vacant, waiting for the Orange Line to come through. In the late 90's, Reed said the City of Irving worked with DART to obtain approval for the Orange Line extension, committing to \$16 million worth of right-of-way, value engineering and other savings. Since approval, Irving planners have been busy planning for and promoting mixed-use, transit friendly development around the future stations.

Its new transit-oriented development zoning ("TOD") can be requested when a developer has dedicated rail right-of-way within a half mile of a station. The new zoning, by requiring higher densities around the stations, naturally promotes transit use, and is therefore in line with federal goals of promoting energy efficiency, and projects in prominent Las Colinas must meet community deed restrictions. Still, Reed explains the ordinance is flexible, allowing a single-use building if another use is present adjacent or across the street. In this case, it seems, what is good for energy efficiency, is also good for business since according to Reed, many developers prefer the TOD zoning, as it allows them to maximize uses and densities, and so the number of people patronizing their developments.

Says DART's spokesperson Morgan Lyons, Phase I of the Orange Line will be complete in 2011. It will update Irving/Las Colinas infrastructure and unite it with the surrounding area, connecting Bachman Lake, the Texas Stadium site, the University of Dallas, and the Convention Center at Las Colinas, now under development. In 2012, Phase II will connect through Belt Line, and in 2013, Phase III will reach right up to Terminal A of D/FW Airport.

Feature Article

Federal goals

Will the funding promote federal stimulus goals of stabilizing state and local economies, creating or preserving jobs, improving the country's infrastructure, and promoting energy efficiency and science? Las Colinas businesses are hopeful. While achieving federal goals of improving infrastructure and energy efficiency, the Orange Line project is also realizing economic recovery and job creation. Probably the most effective way to stimulate the economy is by creating new jobs, and this project has put hundreds of design and construction contractors to work locally and throughout the US. DART spokesperson Morgan Lyons confirms that jobs created are right in line with the 670 new jobs DART predicted in its Response to the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Request for Certification, Transparency and Accountability. The \$61.2 million investment has directly resulted in payroll increases of almost \$25 million.

But the people sketching out designs and laying down tracks are only the beginning. As the line is built, new town centers and communities will spring up at stations all along the route, resulting in new places, new jobs and new spending.

According to DART projections, nearly 10,500 new residents and 18,000 new employees are projected for the \$3.7 billion worth of progressive mixed-use development planned. Just down the street from Granada Market in Las Colinas, construction has begun on the new Water Street development. One block from the Lake Carolyn Station, Water Street will carefully integrate the new station into its design and will connect the surrounding neighborhood through use of the existing tram system (the Las Colinas' Area Personal Transit ("APT"), an ultra-modern, on-call system that works similar to an elevator.

A new town center for the University of Dallas and two new mixed-use developments for Las Colinas are also planned. These hip, new transit-oriented communities are associated with the environmentally friendly Smart Growth Movement, which in the opposite direction of urban sprawl, concentrates development, placing a large number of people within walking distance of rail. This makes it easy for the masses to use transit, easing traffic burdens and stress, while tying into federal stimulus goals of energy efficiency.

Pollution Reductions

Says Tom Diggs, Associate Director of the EPA Region 6 Air Program, Dallas is currently classified as a non-attainment zone, or an area that does not meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards for criteria pollutants designated in the Clean Air Act. Increasing light rail is part of the plan to help D/FW meet EPA pollution reduction regulations. Though, according to Diggs, Dallas has made substantial progress since the program began, the rail expansion will go a long way toward meeting the new, more protective standards recently established. According to Madhu Venugopal, Senior Transportation Planner of the North Central Texas Council of Governments ("NCTCOG"), by 2019, given a 40% increase in transit use, D/FW can expect a 5,000 pound/year reduction in nitrous oxide emissions and almost 4,000 pounds/year in volatile organic compounds associated with the Orange Line.

DART Proves Worthy of Investment

DART was on the ball and began seeking the transit capital assistance grant in the late winter of 2008, when discussion of the funds began and as a number of activities around the country tried to identify projects. The federal government wanted the funds to be used immediately to accelerate the effects on the economy, with the most common criteria being that the projects be shovel ready. DART's Orange Line was ready to go, and the Federal government sent the funds to DART almost immediately. Says Morgan Lyons of DART, "The federal funding has helped us by freeing up local money to continue to expand the system. We actually have today 42 miles of line under construction, more than any other place in North America. The Green Line, which will be complete in 2010, began opening in September of this year, and having the cash on hand gave us needed flexibility."

A good match for the stimulus investment, the Orange Line project will achieve federal goals of improving the country's infrastructure, while promoting energy efficiency and stimulating a green economy locally and nationally. The project is stimulating real estate investment along the line, including blighted areas, like Bachman Lake, stagnant areas, like the University of Dallas and Las Colinas, and areas open for redevelopment, like the former Texas Stadium site. The Orange Line has already stimulated \$8 billion in private investment along the rail corridors, proving the ability of transportation and infrastructure improvements, especially light rail, to create jobs and to improve economies.

Sources

Interview with DART Spokesperson, Morgan Lyons

Interview with Steve Reed, Planning Manager, City of Irving

Interview with Tom Diggs, Associate Director of the EPA Region 6 Air Program

Interview with Madhu Venugopal, Senior Transportation Planner of the North Central Texas Council of Governments

DART's Response to the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Request for Certification, Transparency and Accountability

City of Dallas Federal Economic Stimulus Package, Update and Recommended Action Plan

Chapter News/Calendar

Treasurer's Report

A major reorganization of the Chapter's financial structure has begun. The activity is the result of the IRS rules governing non-profit organizations. They apply to APA National, the Chapter and each of the Sections. The issues outlined below are the result of considerable effort with the CPA working with the Chapter and includes issues considered, or action taken, by the Chapter's Board of Directors at the Galveston Conference.

- Adopted a policy on the allocation of excess revenues.
- Adopted a policy on travel expense reimbursement.
- Considered a contract for services by the Executive Administrator.
- Approved revision of Chapter/Section funding procedures.
- Revised the existing financial and accounting procedures for the Chapter.
- Supported changing the Sections fiscal year to match the Chapters.
- Supported changing the variety of Section election dates to match the Chapters.
- Met with the CPA to assure appropriate actions are taken by the Board.

2009 APA Texas Officer Elections

APA Texas elected officers changed hands in October at the conclusion of the conference in Galveston. Veronica Rosales-Soto is now Texas Chapter President. President Elect is Renae Ollie, Secretary Wendy Shabay, and Treasurer is now Lindsey Guindi. Members interested in serving the Chapter in one of these leadership positions are encouraged to contact Veronica Rosales-Soto (RosalesV@elpasotexas.gov) for additional information.

APA Holds National Election

The Texas Chapter's Ann Bagley, AICP has been slated by the APA Nominating Committee to appear on the ballot for the 2010 APA/AICP Election. The Chapter's Executive Committee has voted to endorse Ann in her candidacy for Board Director, At-large. The names of the candidates for all six of the positions are listed below. Open www.planning.org and APA-AICP Elections. The election season runs through March 30, 2010 and is the last day for members to vote.

APA President-elect

Jeffrey Lambert, AICP
Mitchell Silver, AICP

Board Director, Region I

Angela Vincent
David Woods, AICP

Board Director, Region V

Thomas Dow, AICP
Kelli Sertich, AICP
Dan Pava, AICP

Board Director, Region VI

William Anderson, FAICP
Collette Morse, AICP

Board Director, At-large

Ann Bagley, AICP
Chad Nabity, AICP

Board Director, At-large Planning

Commissioner – focused

Debra March
Shedrick Coleman

Information on these candidates, along with their position statements can be found at www.planning.org/elections/

Chapter News/Calendar

APA Texas Chapter Awards

The annual APA Texas Chapter recognized the following recipients for great planning in Texas. Awards were presented at the annual conference in Galveston on October 9 for projects, plans, studies, individuals and organizations nominated by various Texas Chapter members.

Comprehensive Planning Award

City of Brownsville – Imagine Brownsville
City of Seguin – Comprehensive Plan

Project Planning Award

City of University Park – Snider Plaza Concept Plan
City of Southlake – Major Corridors Urban Design Plan
City of San Antonio – River North District Plan
City of Austin – 2009 Bicycle Plan Update

Current Planning Award

City of Hutto – Heart of Hutto Plan & Smart Code
City of Georgetown – Building a Legacy with Our Parks
Town of Little Elm – Commercial Design Standards Report

Planning Commissioners Award

Fred Palacios – Commissioner, City of Edinburg

Long Range Planning Award

City of Galveston – Long Term Recovery Plan
City of Boerne – Honorable Mention, Boerne by Design

Student Project Award

UT at Arlington – Forest Hill Parks & Recreation Master Plan
Texas A & M University – Texas Urban Triangle

Community of the Year

City of McAllen

Chapter President's Award

David Hoover
Cameron Walker

The Award System

Any member can nominate what they consider a great project, plan, study, individual or organization. Please consider making a nomination for next year's awards.

The criteria used by the Awards Committee is based on innovation, transferability, quality, implementation, and comprehensiveness. One representative from each of the nine sections, appointed by the Section Directors, attends a meeting, usually held August or September to vote on the submittals. This year's Awards Committee consisted of Craig Farmer, FAICP Northwest Section, Charles Lee, AICP North Central Texas Section, Richard Schell, AICP Midwest Section, Christina Ainsworth, AICP West Section, Xavier Cervantes, AICP Southmost Section, Brian Chandler San Antonio Section, Lindsey Guindi AICP, Central Section, Jimmie Lewis, AICP Southeast Section, Cameron Walker, AICP Chair. The Chapter Presidents Award recipient is selected by the Chapter President. The Chair does not vote.

Chapter News/Calendar

Chapter Conference Schedule

The 2010 Conference will be held San Antonio, Texas' man-made oasis. Future conferences are currently on the following rotation schedule:

2011 – Central Section (Austin area)

2012 – Midwest Section (Fort Worth area)

2013 – Southernmost Section (Rio Grande Valley/South Padre/Corpus Christi)

2014 – North Central Section (Dallas area)

2015 – West Section (El Paso)

Sustainable Zoning and Development Controls Workshop

Austin, Texas, January 21-22, 2010

Courtyard & Residence Inn by Marriott, Austin Downtown / Convention Center

Hosted by the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute

Local governments have a legitimate — *and leading* — role to play in creating sustainable communities. In this PTS Workshop, you'll learn how communities around the country have written or amended land-use plans, zoning codes, and subdivision regulations to achieve greater sustainability. Find out how you can apply many innovative models and strategies to your own community. Application in process for certification maintenance credits CM |14.

Please visit <http://law.du.edu/index.php/rmlui/planners-training-service> for further details.

Texas Trails & Active Transportation Conference 16th Annual Texas Trails Conference

February 3 - 6, 2010

AT&T Conference Center, Austin, Texas

Presenters will include:

- [Mark Fenton](#), expert on walking and host of the PBS television series "America's Walking."
- [Jeff Mapes](#), author of "Pedaling Revolution"
- [Kathryn Nichols](#), Community Planner for the National Park Service
- [John Pucher](#), a Rutgers professor and expert on what we can learn from European treatment of non-motorized transportation
- [Michael Ronkin](#), Bicycle Coordinator for the State of Oregon for almost 20 years
- [Robert Searns](#), a trail planner with 35 years of planning and developing award winning greenway, trail, and open space projects across North America
- [Carol Campa](#), Safe Routes to School Program Coordinator for the Texas Department of Transportation
- [Kartik Sribarra](#), Manager of Policy Outreach for the Rails to Trails Conservancy, and many more. [Click here](#) to see all the presenters and their sessions!

We look forward to seeing you there. Register today!

The University of Texas School of Law is hosting the 2010 Land Use Conference, March 25-26 at the AT&T Conference Center, Austin, TX 2010 Land Use Conference

March 25-26, 2009, Conference Location: AT & T Conference Center

City: Austin, TX

Credit Hours: Earn up to 13.50 Hours of Credit

Registration: \$460 before March 17

Register Online: <http://www.utcle.org/conferences/LD10>

Phone: (512) 475-6700

Fax: (512) 475-6876

E-mail: service@utcle.org

Chapter News/Calendar



APA heads down to New Orleans for the 2010 National Planning Conference, Saturday, April 10, through Tuesday, April 13.

Set your course

Develop your leadership and management skills in intensive workshops, informal discussions, and sessions included in the Planning Leadership and Management Track.

Nick Spitzer featured



Nick Spitzer is the renowned producer and host of *American Routes*, a public radio program produced in New Orleans that draws connections between legendary American music and its community origins. He is also a folklorist and professor of American Studies at Tulane University, specializing in American music and cultures of the Gulf South.

At the 2010 National Planning Conference in New Orleans, APA will host "[American Routes Live: a Dinner and Music Gala with Nick Spitzer](#)," to honor and celebrate the musical heritage of New Orleans and southern Louisiana. The event, featuring live music, dinner, and dancing, will be recorded for an *American Routes* radio program.

Earn CM Credits

AICP members, earn a maximum of 32 CM credits (including ethics and law requirements) by attending the 2010 National Planning Conference. Maximize your conference experience by attending a full-day of Saturday training workshops, sessions available in each time block, and take part in the post-conference online education.

What makes this the Conference of the Year?

For 2010 we've reorganized and shortened the conference to make it more convenient for you. You'll still find the wide variety of intensive, unparalleled educational opportunities that make the National Planning Conference the conference of the year.

News Media

Get complimentary registration for the 2010 conference in New Orleans.

2009 Sessions in Digital Capture

Digital Capture is a new way to experience sessions from the APA's 2009 National Planning Conference in Minneapolis and earn Certification Maintenance (CM) credits.

Texas APA Leadership

Texas APA Board of Directors 2008 – 2009



ELECTED OFFICERS:	Name	Phone	Fax	E-mail
President	Veronica Soto, AICP	915/541-4670	915/541-1316	sotov@aol.com
President Elect	Renae Ollie	972/442-8157	972/442-8115	renae.ollie@wylitexas.gov
Secretary	Wendy Shabay, AICP	817/735-7259	817/735-7491	wds@freese.com
Treasurer	Lindsey Guindi, AICP	979/209-5076	979/209-5035	lguindi@bryantx.gov
Past President	John Kaminski, AICP	361/485-3379	361/572-6697	jkaminski@victoriatx.org

APA Texas is a respected leader and partner, whose members make great communities happen by providing expertise and innovation to shape livable and sustainable Texas communities.



Texas Planning Review is published quarterly by the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association. Submissions should be typewritten and submitted via email to lorldlee@gmail.com, including the name, telephone number and short bio of the individual writing the piece. Material may be edited to conform to space and style needs. Please address floppy or CD submissions to Lori Lee at 9000 Poppy Drive, #9144, Dallas, Texas 75218.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributes to this publication.



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