Meeting Summary
Tower 55 Technical Advisory Group
October 16, 2009

Attendees

Christopher Anderson, NCTCOG
Lonnie Blaydes, Blaydes Consulting
Mike Brennan, Fort Worth South, Inc.
Numa Bulot, DART-TRE
Charles Chambers
Darwin Desen, Jacobs/NCTCOG
Michel Etebbins, Fort Worth South, Inc.
Eric Fladager, City of Fort Worth
Tim Geeslin, NARP
Steve George, FWWR
Curtis Hanan, TxDOT
Susan Harper, Fairmount NA
Curvie Hawkins, The T
David Jodray, City of Fort Worth
Wesley Kaisershot, FHWA
Paulette Vander Kamp, URS/The T
Becky Karasko, NCTCOG
Kim Kendrick, NCTCOG
Melissa Konur, DFWI
Brain Large, BNSF Railway
Joe Lileikis, HNTB Corp.
Curtis Loftis, TxDOT
Eric Lyman, MainLine Management
Rodney Malone, Jacobs
Mike Marler, Jacobs
Jeff Neal, NCTCOG
Tim Oster, City of Fort Worth
Roy Purikh, TxDOT
Mark Rauscher, City of Fort Worth
Clint Schelbitzki, UPRR
Dick Schiefelbein, The T
Tom Shelton, NCTCOG
Randy Skinner, Tarrant County
Darrell Thompson, Jacobs/NCTCOG
Carl Weckenmann, The T
Mark Werner, TxDOT
Sandy Wesch, NCTCOG
Mark White, City of Saginaw
Sonja Whitehead

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** At approximately 10:00 a.m. Jeff Neal of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) began the meeting by welcoming those in attendance, reviewing the agenda for the morning and asking persons in attendance to introduce themselves. There were approximately 40 attendees.

2. **Approval of the June 19, 2009, Meeting Minutes:** Jeff Neal requested the approval of the meeting minutes from the June 19, 2009, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting. Sandy Wesch from NCTCOG motioned for approval. The motion was seconded by Randy Skinner from Tarrant County and approved without opposition.

3. **Review of August 3, 2009 Public Meeting:** Jeff Neal with NCTCOG briefly recapped the two August 3rd Public Meetings. There were 108 people that attended the noon meeting and 58 people that attended the evening meeting. At both of these meetings a questionnaire was handed out asking for the opinions of the proposed alternatives for Tower 55. The attendees were informed that their opinions and comments would be compiled and presented to the Tower 55 TAG and elected officials for consideration and made part of the project record. There were 81 questionnaires collected, and the results for the two meetings were four people indicated a preference for the No Build Alternative, 72 preferred the North-South Trench, and five people preferred the East-West Trench. Mr. Neal summarized the public's questions and comments gathered from the set of meetings.

The public was concerned about passenger rail access though the Tower; air quality and noise improvements; the safety, flooding and maintenance of a trench; if rerouting train traffic outside of Fort Worth had been considered; if their concerns will be weighed into the decision, equally with that of the railroad's; and how this project will be funded. The comments received related to the North-South Trench indicated that this option had less impacts and less disruptions to the surrounding community and would have a lower cost due to the lack of need to purchase right-of-way to construct this project. The comments received related to the East-West Trench indicated that the respondents did not see how this option would benefit the community; it would create a divide by isolating Fort Worth South from downtown and the hospital district. There were several concerns about access during and after construction; and it would hurt the Southside improvements and development efforts. The TIGER grant at-grade improvements were also presented at the Public Meetings.

4. **Status of "At-Grade Improvement" Design & Funding Application:** Tom Shelton with NCTCOG and Brain Large with BNSF Railway reviewed the importance of the at-grade improvements, estimated at $94 million, for the immediate short-term. These improvements are assumed to be in place, and part of the baseline condition for the mid-term improvements proposed in the Tower 55 study. Mr. Large explained the project components of the Tower 55 improvements (see PowerPoint slide 11) and the funding shares - 65% to be funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants and 35% through BNSF and UPRR. The TIGER application was submitted to USDOT on September 15, 2009 and a decision on project selections is anticipated by January 2010. Mr. Shelton explained how these projects will create jobs; improve air quality, and crossing/wait times for vehicles on the roads and the rails. He also congratulated Mr. Large and Nate Asplund with BNSF, as well as Clint Schelbitzki and Grant Janke with UPRR, for their joint efforts in compiling the TIGER application.

   It was asked what the UPRR and the BNSF Railway will do to keep on schedule if awarded this grant. Mr. Large stated that if awarded this grant they could start construction within three to four months of receiving the funds; the goal is to have all city street permits in advance and construction complete by February 2012, assuming funding is received by January 2010.

   It was also asked what the railroads will do if the grant is not approved. Mr. Large stated that BNSF Railway still would desire to implement the proposed improvements but the improvements would be deferred until an alternative funding source was identified. Mr. Schelbitzki stated that UPRR also feels the proposed improvements are needed, but like BNSF the UPRR could not fund these projects in the near future.

5. **Review of the East-West Trench by TxDOT:** Mr. Shelton explained that the NCTCOG staff conducted an October 9, 2009 workshop at the TxDOT Fort Worth District Office to brief TxDOT on the two current trench alternatives. Curtis Hanan from TxDOT discussed the results and comments from the October 9th workshop. TxDOT's focus during this meeting was how the two different

alternatives would impact TxDOT facilities. TxDOT's benchmark for any construction for a railroad trench is that regional mobility must be kept in tact, at all times, relative to: full capacity of highway main-lanes, interchanges direct connections, and access to the interstate system.

In reviewing the current North-South Trench alternative, TxDOT was concerned about the lowering of several roads (Stephenson and Lancaster) and local access ramps and if the grades of the proposed roads will meet TxDOT standards. Lancaster will need extensive reinforced retaining walls, a pump system, and the current design at six percent doesn't meet TxDOT construction standards. There is also a concern about the vertical and horizontal clearance under the Spur 280 Bridge. This location is also known as the "Hole-in-the-Wall". It is proposed to widen the lowest level for additional trackage on the two levels of the rail lines under the Spur 280 Bridge, however there are constructability and operations unknowns associated with this construction. Another concern is how the permanent closing of Vickery Boulevard through access to IH 30 will impact the TXDOT system, in addition to the access impacts associated with rerouting traffic via Hattie Street. Rosedale Street was recently reconstructed and would need to be lowered. The maintenance of pump stations at Stevens and Lancaster will also need to be addressed. W. Lancaster access ramps will be closed during construction.

When IH 35W/IH 30 interchange was reconstructed, its design, i.e., the placement of bents and columns, railroad sight distance requirements, etc., accommodated a future North-South Trench; deviations from the anticipated North-South Trench location/design may compromise TxDOT's vertical and horizontal clearances within the interchange. The East-West Trench was not considered when IH 35W/IH 30 interchange was reconstructed.

Mr. Janke asked Darwin Desen (Jacobs) if the costs for the TxDOT items of concern were included in the trench cost estimates. Mr. Desen responded that the costs of the retaining walls and pump system were included but the long term maintenance of the pumps was not included and there are several other concerns that will need to be evaluated when a final LPA is established.

In reviewing the East-West Trench Alternative the first TxDOT comment was how would the trench be constructed under IH 35W. TxDOT's benchmark for operation is to maintain full capacity, as stated above. The suggestion of a cut and cover construction for this segment of the trench would completely disrupt a high volume location. TxDOT did come up with a potential construction phasing solution entailing narrowing lane widths and dropping the shoulders and/or median; this solution also required the loss of direct connection access which may be seen as a fatal flaw if TxDOT can not find a way for traffic volumes to be maintained. TxDOT suggested potentially tunneling under the interchange, requiring extensive retaining walls and pump system. Other comments that TxDOT had about the East-West Trench were if the trench was lowered to lessen the impact on cross-street roadways, would the new grade be acceptable to the railroad; the current configuration of the 199/Henderson Street over pass does not meet TxDOT design criteria; what are the impacts to closing east bound Henderson Street access ramp; and there are several large utilities (e.g., a TESCO oil-cooled electric power line) that will need to be relocated for this

alternative that TxDOT avoided during the reconstruction of the IH 30/IH 35W interchange. Mr. Hanan explained that the since Tennessee Drive is not a TxDOT facility the over pass and ramping were not reviewed by TxDOT.

TxDOT's summary analysis report on the two alternatives is anticipated by the end of the year. It was asked what the time line was for the TxDOT comments to be addressed. Mr. Shelton stated that the next agenda item the UPRR will address their ideas for the next timeline.

6. **Proposed Approach form Union Pacific Railroad on Further Alternative Evaluation:** Mr. Schelbitzki and Mr. Janke from the UPRR thanked the NCTCOG for all their assistance with the TIGER application. Mr. Schelbitzki went on to state that the UPRR's benchmark for operations is to run at full capacity, just like TxDOT's. This benchmark is used as a starting point for evaluating the alternatives. He explained that the UPRR recognizes that with a project of this magnitude, zero impact maybe unrealistic. A model run that includes regional, national, and international rail freight traffic will have to be completed to determine how the construction phasing schedule will impact the railroad's operations, and to assess acceptable levels of risk. The UPRR standard of acceptable impact during construction is zero impact.

   Mr. Janke stated that Mr. Hanan hit on several issues that UPRR also feels are issues of concern: maintaining operational levels, connectivity, grades, horizontal and vertical alignments, placement of bridge columns, design criteria, capacity, and dispatching are issues that the railroads feels need to be addressed before moving forward.

   To move forward, UPRR identified three levels of required analysis:
   1) Operations 2) Engineering and cost estimates and 3) Construction logistics and community impact evaluations.

   1) Operations - Mr. Janke stated that there are 34 phases of staging for the North-South Trench. This staging is needed to develop preliminary signal plans and costs. To maintain capacity, the cut over process, infrastructure loss locations and key phases must be identified. The UPRR dispatchers input will used to evaluate the phasing plan, ensure maximum sight-distance, create a timing schedule and optimize the design. UPRR and the BNSF have agreed to pay for the RTC modeling effort. UPRR will complete the preliminary signal design for the construction phasing for the north/south grade separation alternative based on maps created by the NCTCOG via Jacobs Engineering (the maps will be funded by the NCTCOG).

   2) Engineering and cost estimates – Signal design compatibility must be ensured. The North-South Trench should be designed with 20 foot track centers in the trench (current design is 15 foot track centers). This would allow maintenance on the third track to occur without closing the trench. Current design provides for 1.00%, 0.8% max grade desired. Other requests that UPRR stated is that Ney Yard could not be impacted by the trench; the grade from the north side of Ney Yard to Hole-in-the-Wall needs to be reevaluated. North/South Trench design – 3rd track in horizontal curve. For safety reasons, railroads do not install switch point in a curve. Bridge abutments for all quads of the Tower 55

intersection need to be verified that they do not impact the tracks – min 20' horizontal clearance desired. Street Impacts – requires additional study relative to impacts, mitigation and costs for each street.

Costs for the TIGER improvements increased by 50% in just two months, due to additional analysis identified infrastructure necessary to accommodate efficient railroad operations and public safety improvements. As the two alternative grade separation improvements are far more complicated, it is critical that railroad senior management be provided with an accurate picture of operation and construction issues associated with these alternatives. Costs must be more fully developed and comprehensive. Mitigation steps and options must likewise be developed.

3) Construction logistics and community impacts - Mr. Janke also mentioned that construction logistics, including material queuing, truck traffic, safety of the general public, and construction personnel and train crews must be ensured while maintaining all current and future operational levels through the construction zone. All of these need to be considered in planning the phasing of this project, which would include how construction equipment traffic accessing the right-of-way will be handled to not interrupt daily rail operations and where supplies would be stored for the duration of the construction.

Mark Rauscher with the City of Fort Worth asked how much information will be brought back to this group from the RTC model. Mr. Janke stated that a summary report will be brought back to this committee, but NCTCOG will have the opportunity to review the model data and results in a secured data room. Mr. Shelton added that this is a new agreement beyond the normal planning studies. As some of the information to be reviewed at UP's offices is proprietary, NCTCOG was very appreciative of UP's offer. In addition, as model results will be used to improve and enhance the alternatives' design, it would not be possible to share a project schedule with elected officials until design elements, resulting from the model, have "gelled."

Carl Weckenmann with The T, asked about the time frame to get through this modeling effort. Mr. Janke replied that the modeling effort should take nine to 12 months to complete. Given the need to advance this project, Tom Shelton would like the team to examine ways to compress this schedule.

Mr. Large concurred that BNSF was in agreement with UPRR's approach for moving forward.

Mr. Janke also mentioned the need to review again the 1.0% grade impact beyond the lead in Ney Yard. Mr. Hanan asked if one percent creates an unacceptable lead into the yard; then what is an acceptable grade to get into a rail yard? Mr. Janke replied that a 0.8% grade would be an acceptable grade to lead into a yard.

Tim Oster with the City of Fort Worth asked if the train volume is a known input into the RTC model. Mr. Shelton replied the current volume is lower then anticipated due to the economy. The unknown issue is when the volume will pick up, back to years prior volumes, which could assist in determining the capacity

timeline. Mr. Janke stated that current volumes at the Tower could be increased by approximately 40 percent beyond 2009 levels if the at-grade improvements proposed in the TIGER application are constructed.

Christopher Anderson with the NCTCOG asked if the railroads knew of a construction company that has experience in developing 'construction logistics' for a trench or similar major undertaking, while maintaining railroad operational levels. Mr. Schelbitzki stated that no one has ever tried to build a trench option in active right-of-way. Mr. Shelton suggested that it might be a good idea to bring in an independent contractor on this topic to encourage new ideas. The UPRR, BNSF, and NCTCOG will collaborate on identifying a contractor to assist the cost estimating effort, while maintaining the need expedite the schedule. TxDOT agreed this would be a benefit to this project and indicated that they have used a similar analysis for some of their other projects.

7. **Environmental Analysis Status and Alternatives for Completion:** Sandy Wesch with NCTCOG explained the purpose and status of the environmental document, to date. The need and purpose, existing conditions, field surveys, and cultural resource report have been completed for the North-South Trench. Further work and documentation is on-hold pending the selection of an LPA. Once a LPA has been selected, the document will have to be updated, based upon that LPA, as well as including improvements proposed in the TIGER application as existing conditions.

   Ms. Wesch emphasized that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides the decision making process through which an alternative is environmentally cleared by federal agencies to ensure that environmental impacts of the proposed project have been considered, evaluated and mitigated. FHWA has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) is appropriate level of documentation for this project. The Federal lead agency on this project is FHWA; acting as FHWA's co-lead agency on this project, NCTCOG has sent letters to other Federal agencies soliciting their interest in becoming a cooperating agency on the Tower 55 project. A cooperating agency is any Federal, state, local agency or tribal government other than a lead agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal. They may be responsible for developing information and preparing environmental analyses including portions of the environmental document concerning which the cooperating agency has special expertise. Early September 2009, letters were sent to USACE, STB, FRA, FTA, ACHP, and the EPA. All agencies are allowed to review the document even if they choose not to be a cooperating agency. All of the agencies agreed to become a cooperating agency, with one exception; the ACHP declined the offer.

   Historical structures were assessed and determined in the reconnaissance-level field survey conducted in March 2009. Ms. Wesch explained that all structures built in 1965 or earlier were eligible for listing on the Historic Registry were considered potentially historic and would require Section 4(f) evaluation. Historians recorded 79 historic-age resources.

Mr. Schelbitzki asked if both alternatives could go through the environmental process and get cleared. Ms. Wesch explained that only one alternative could move forward through this decision making process.

8. **TAG Committee Discussion on "Moving Forward":** Mr. Shelton asked all the partners what they felt the next step should be moving this project forward. Most TAG committee members spoke of their appreciation to the UPRR and BNSF for consideration of further modeling and evaluation of the North-South Trench; but emphasized a need to expedite this effort when possible in order to respond to continued public questions. In addition, all the TAG Committee members expressed a strong desire to remain actively involved and informed on the additional modeling and evaluation efforts, so that they could brief their respective agency leadership.

9. **Next Steps and Questions:** Action Items that were proposed were: NCTCOG will develop a schedule for how the project will move forward, upon completion of further discussions with UPRR and BNSF on the RTC modeling and evaluation effort. The schedule will be forwarded to all TAG committee members once completed and agreed upon by UPRR, BNSF, and NCTCOG. The next TAG committee meeting will be scheduled in the near future, once some of the initial modeling and evaluation results are complete to be shared with the TAG committee. It is currently anticipated that this will occur after the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned.