



NORTH TEXAS HISTORIC TRANSPORTATION

Spring 2008

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In this issue...

Features:

Overview of
“Modern Streetcars for Fort Worth”
A publication of the Transit
Sub-Committee of Central City
Redevelopment Committee

News:

The Cherokeean Herald
Spring Cleaning at the Railroad

Fort Worth Star-Telegram
Your Map to Historic Fort Worth

Museum of the American Railroad
Moving to Frisco

Upcoming Event:

Quarterly Meeting
Election of Officers
Saturday, May 3, 2008

National Train Day
Saturday, May 10, 2008

“Modern Streetcars of Fort Worth”

An Update on Transit Planning &
Proposed Implementation Strategy
*Prepared by the Transit Sub-Committee
Central City Redevelopment Committee*

Jamie Terrell sent in a detailed presentation on the need for, and function of streetcars in the continuing growth of Downtown Fort Worth and surrounding residential and commercial areas.

Demographics—

- Fort Worth is the 17th largest city in the nation
- With a population of 686,650, it is also one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation
- Fort Worth’s population is estimated to exceed 850,000 by 2030
- One in Five residents of Fort Worth will be sixty-five or older in 2025.

Some of the sub-committee’s questions are—

- “With all the projected growth and the associated traffic congestion, how will people get around without spending significantly more time in their cars?”
- “Are the roads within the central city – streets that were platted out in the early part of the last century – capable of handling the increased urban flow?”
- “[Are] there solutions available that go beyond building new roads?”

To this last question, their response is: “Fortunately there are.”

(Continued on Page 2)

“Modern Streetcars of Fort Worth”

An Update on Transit Planning & Proposed Implementation Strategy

(Continued from Page 1)

“The time is now to start building a better mass transit system for the fastest growing large city in the country. Transportation systems often take decades to turn plans into reality. And while Fort Worth has a working bus system and plans for commuter lines on existing freight rail corridors to connect cities within the Metroplex, more attention must be given to a modern, reliable, appealing transit system that moves residents, workers, and visitors around and *within* the city. Projects in other cities demonstrate that the right transit system, and a synergistic relationship between transit and new and existing development, will entice people to leave their cars at home.”

Among the committee’s “world-class” cities and their respective transit systems –

Boston, MA.

Subway, Regional Commuter Rail, Streetcar

Portland, OR.

Regional/Local Light Rail, Modern Streetcar, Vintage Streetcar

Seattle, WA.

Regional Commuter Rail, Vintage Streetcar, Monorail, Modern Streetcar

**“FORT WORTH IS COMPETING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH
WORLD-CLASS CITIES THROUGHOUT THE U.S. AND THE WORLD.”**

“High density, mixed-use, urban development projects are completed or underway within all the areas along the proposed light rail line. Trinity Bluff, Magnolia Green, So7, T&P Lofts, Museum Place, West 7th, Evans & Rosedale, Montgomery Plaza, the GranMarc at TCU – most of these projects were not even on the drawing board in 2002 [when the City and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority completed a \$1 million study to develop a modern streetcar system connecting the Cultural District, Downtown, Near Southside, and the southeast Polytechnic area.]

“Compare Fort Worth’s system to Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). DART’s cities contribute a full one percent in sales taxes, versus the one-half percent dedication in Fort Worth. This funding difference allows DART to plan for and construct a world-class system.

“Mass transit modes come in many forms. There are buses and demand response vehicles; there are heavy rail commuter systems like in New York and Boston; and there are systems that fall in the category of light rail.

“Portland’s system as well as those in other cities, have demonstrated that modern streetcar systems attract choice riders, the riders who have cars but choose to use mass transit instead of driving to work or other destinations. Fort Worth needs to find a system that gets people out of their cars and that helps shape sustainable development.”

Some of the benefits the committee cites for modern streetcars are –

- 15-20 percent more riders than bus routes
- Adjacent property owners are often willing to contribute to a system that will enhance their business and property values, and make their neighborhood more visible
- Stops are generally spaced closer together and operate comfortably in a mixed flow with vehicular traffic.
- They are catalysts for urban infill development.

(Continued on Page 3)

“Modern Streetcars of Fort Worth”
An Update on Transit Planning &
Proposed Implementation Strategy
(Continued from Page 2)

The committee reintroduced proposals from a 2002 study—

- “A line between Downtown Fort Worth and the Cultural District could focus on mixed-use, high-density areas, while also serving visitors to the museums, gardens, Will Rogers and the Stock Show. The line could use the primary corridors of West 7th Street and Montgomery Street. [...] The route could also allow the use of the Farrington Field parking lot as a park-n-ride facility that would encourage commuters to get out of their cars.
- “A line connecting Downtown to the Near Southside – the city’s two largest employment centers – and extending eastward to Texas Wesleyan University (and potentially southward to Berry and TCU) could link the urban core to the revitalized central city neighborhoods.
- “A line that would run between Downtown and the Historic Stockyards and eventually out to Meacham Airport could be the third line. Given the new housing going on under the Trinity Uptown Plan, there will be a demand for efficient movement of these new residents the short trip to jobs downtown. Tarrant County College is also establishing a new campus on the river, and the students and school will greatly benefit from a rail line that runs through campus.”

“If The T doesn’t have the needed funding, and Fort Worth is currently maxed out on sales taxes, how would the City find a way to pay for these projects?”

- NCTCOG (North Central Texas Council of Governments) Regional Programs
- CMAQ (Congestion Mitigations and Air Quality) Improvement Program
- TCSP (Transportation, Community, and Service Preservation) Program
- TIF Tax Incremental Finance – A Transit District
- Legacy Funding From Barnett Shale Royalty Proceeds
- State Sales Cap Potential Increase
- Private Sector Investment
- Local Government Corporation Bonds
- Municipal Parking Revenues

The Committee set several realistic objectives for the City—

1. “The City needs to appoint a committee of private citizens, business leaders, City staff and Council members to come up with a master plan that addresses mass transit options. The City should set a firm timeline for the committee’s report.
2. “Fort Worth City staff should explore funding options.
3. “Central city business leaders should be consulted and all should be sensitive to the importance of coordinating the wide variety of downtown initiatives.
4. “Meet with state, federal and county elected officials and emphasize the importance of better mass transit for the city.
5. “Meet with neighborhood organizations and get their input.
6. “Hold public meetings and workshops throughout the process. And use the media and other marketing techniques to emphasize the importance of taking action now and the positive effects it [w]ill have on the city now and 25 years down the line.”

*Thanks to Jamie Terrell for contributing the 20-page report.
To see the entire report, contact Jamie Terrell at jamie.terrell@aa.com.*

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The Cherokeean Herald **Spring Cleaning at the Railroad** **March 26, 2008**

"Texas State Railroad General Manager Paul Schranck outlined spring cleaning plans to the Texas State Railroad Authority (TSRA).

"Items include worn out rail drills, inoperable generators, an inoperable Dodge Intrepid, several vehicles, used rails and cross ties, a 1974 International bus and a manufactured home that is in poor condition. A substantial amount of scrap metal was also included.

"Steve Presley, TSRA president, proposed submitting the list of surplus items to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to get approval to dispose of the surplus items in one request, so that the TSRA will not have to keep involving TPWD in disposal procedures.

"All we're asking for is permission to dispose of these items," Mr. Presley said. "I want to get TPWD out of the mix."

Aside from the list of surplus items, Mr. Schranck advised the board that some of the coaches, rail cars and equipment in the Rusk rail yard will likely never be used by the Texas State Railroad.

"Some of the pieces are not historical and will never be used," he said. "Some are not candidates for being rebuilt."

"Mr. Schranck suggested selling some of the equipment in the rail yard. The board discussed going to the donors of the equipment first to see if they would like the equipment returned.

"The board voted 5-0 to submit the list of surplus items to TPWD to get permission to dispose of them. The board also voted to transfer the titles of all state railroad vehicles to American Heritage Railways of Texas, LLC."

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Heritage Trails

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on April 9, 2008 the installation of nineteen markers along Main Street in Downtown Fort Worth, spanning from the Water Gardens to Heritage Park. Participating in the program are the Fort Worth Chamber Foundation, the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Downtown Fort Worth Inc.

On the West side of Main at the corner of Third and Fourth Streets is a marker on Streetcars & the Interurban

"Main Street in December 1876. By 1889, horses and mule-drawn cars had been replaced by the first electric trolley line in the entire Southwest. Individual companies served the north, south, east, and west sections of the city, with each building its own tracks and electric power plants. By the 1920s, consolidation had reduced duplication of facilities. Streetcars were replaced by buses in 1940. The Northern Texas Traction Co., from its headquarters in the building on this corner, began interurban service between Fort Worth and Dallas in July 1902. Passengers were transported between the two cities for 32 years. Affordability of the automobile and improved highways weakened ridership, bringing an end to this transit service in December 1934. The Trinity Railway Express introduced daily commuter rail service connecting Fort Worth and Dallas in December 2001."

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Museum of the American Railroad Moving to Frisco

NTHT received an announcement from the Museum of the American Railroad announcing their impending move to Frisco. In part, the letter reads—

“The Museum of the American Railroad has entered into an agreement with the City of Frisco to relocate its permanent collection and operations to that city. The new museum will anchor other cultural heritage facilities and compliment a system of planned parks and recreational areas.

“Formerly known as the “Age of Steam”, the Museum of the American Railroad is a 45-year old Dallas institution currently located at Fair Park. It houses an extensive collection of historic locomotives, rail passenger cars, and related artifacts. The museum’s mission is to ...share with the general public the heritage, as well as the current and future development of American Railroad through artistic, cultural and educational programming.

“In terms of our current and future needs, we see Frisco as an excellent fit for us”, said Bob LaPrelle, the museum’s CEO. The City of Frisco has committed a 12.3 acre site to the museum along with certain improvements. This will allow the museum to construct permanent structures that will adequately exhibit and protect its collection.

“The City of Frisco has embraced its railroad heritage and offers opportunities for the museum to become a major north Texas destination with international appeal. The new center for railroad history and technology will be built around the museum’s 36-piece collection of historic locomotives and rail cars. The present operation at Fair Park is held by many as one of the most promising museums in the area. The City of Frisco recognized the museum’s potential and demonstrated a willingness to invest in its future.

“Plans for the new museum are well underway and call for a 200,000 square foot facility reminiscent of a large, turn-of-the-century train station. The museum will be a grand public space and serve as a multi-use center for community activity. [...] [T]he museum will serve surrounding school districts with its interactive educational tours and history-oriented in-class programs.”

For more information, contact Bob LaPrelle, President & CEO at (214) 428-0101.

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National Train Day – Saturday, May 10, 2008

From an e-mail sent by Peter LeCody—

“The City of Fort Worth will issue a Train Day Proclamation at their city council meeting on Tuesday evening, May 6. The proclamation recognizes BNSF Railway, Union Pacific, Fort Worth and Western Railroad, the Fort Worth "T", Trinity Railway Express and Amtrak.

(Continued on Page 6)

National Train Day

May 10, 2008

(Continued from Page 5)

"The City of Dallas will issue a similar Proclamation at their city council briefing session on Wednesday morning, May 7 and this one recognizes UP, BNSF, The TRE, DART [Light] Rail, DGNO and Amtrak.

"We would like a representative from each rail organization to be present at the [respective] city councils for the event.

National Train Day Events

"There will be a limited number of spaces available at Dallas Union Station and the Fort Worth ITC for displays and booths - about 5 per station. There is no charge for participating. We will make a table available if requested. There are a limited number of power plugs at each station so it will be first come first served.

"You are welcome to bring banners, brochures, handouts, trinkets. We want to make this a [successful] event that raises [public] awareness about trains.

"The Museum of the American Railroad at Fair Park is scheduled to have a static equipment display at Dallas Union Station on Track #10 open to view for the public. Their M-180 Doodlebug and a Pullman Sleeper will be on display.

"The Gary Lee Band will be playing at Dallas Union Station from noon to 2pm. We are still open for suggestions at the Fort Worth ITC.

Next Quarterly Meeting
Saturday, May 3rd, 2008

The next quarterly meeting of North Texas Historic Transportation, Inc. is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Saturday, May 3rd, 2008 on the 2nd floor of the Knights of Pythias Building at 3rd and Main Streets in Downtown Fort Worth.

For information and directions, contact Willie Kirby at 817-478-0773 or via e-mail to wkirby@northtexasastractransport.org.

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