

Alternatives Analysis Public Meetings Summary

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in coordination with the Oklahoma Department and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), held eight public meetings to review the alternatives and solicit comments for the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study (TOPRS) in January and February 2014. The purpose of the TOPRS is to study passenger rail service as a viable option for improving congestion in the I-35 corridor from Oklahoma City to South Texas.

Notice

Notification and promotion of the activities included distributing press releases, placing paid newspaper ads, publicizing the events using Facebook and Twitter, and sending emails to the 500 person study mailing list. The team also distributed posters and newsletters to MPOs and other local organizations for them to send to their mailing lists. The study received excellent media coverage in local newspapers and TV, including: Valley Morning Star, MySA, The Monitor, Dallas Morning News, Tulsa World, News9 (in Oklahoma), NBC (in Dallas-Fort Worth), Killeen Daily Herald, Progressive Railroading, San Marcos Mercury, Waco Tribune, KXXV News Channel 25 (in Waco), Waco Tribune, and the Hillsboro Reporter.

In-person Open Houses

The team held eight in-person public meetings along the IH-35 corridor between January 27 and February 6. A total of 259 people signed-in at the meetings and 43 submitted comment forms (Appendices A and B). All meetings included time for participants to review displays and talk with staff and a formal presentation with a question and answer period. All meetings included the same materials and information.

The open house included display boards providing information about the purpose and need of the study, graphics illustrating the alternatives, and information about the decision making process. Meeting attendees received study newsletters. Attendees received comment forms that could be returned at the meeting or mailed in. A PowerPoint presentation showing all of the display boards translated into Spanish including a Spanish narration of the slides was available to meeting attendees. TxDOT, ODOT, and consultant staff answered questions about the project. Meeting attendees were also informed that the entire presentation as well as all display boards in both English and Spanish could be found at the project's website at www.TXOKrail.org.

In-person Open House Attendance

Date/Time	City	Attendance
Monday, January 27, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Waco	36
Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Austin	19
Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 5:30-7:30 p.m.	McAllen	53
Thursday, January 30, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Laredo	24
Monday, February 3, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Oklahoma City	11
Tuesday, February 4, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	Ardmore	13
Wednesday, February 5, 2014, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.	Dallas and Fort Worth	61
Thursday, February 6, 2014, 6-8 p.m.	San Antonio	42

Online Open House

The team also created an “online open house” that mimicked the in-person meeting format allowing community members to virtually review materials and provide comments until February 28, 2014. All statistics were gathered using Google Analytics. Approximately 4,500 unique visitors (90% of which were new visitors) viewed the online open house between January 13 and February 28. Visitors were mostly driven to the site by earned media (newspaper or TV coverage). A high percentage of visitors came to the site from a Houston Chronicle article (about 35% of all visitors). TxDOT Facebook and Twitter accounts drove large numbers of visitors to the site (23% of all visitors).

Comments Collected

In total, more than 600 comments were received. The team summarized the comments collected at the open houses, online (online open house, Twitter, and Facebook), as well as through emails and letters. The sections below describe the most common comments collected.

Comments generally supported the study recommendations. In some cases, comments reflect specific concerns about property impacts, or tax payer investment in either studying or construction rail improvements. Generally, comments point to desired station locations, route choices and priorities for improvements.

Stations, Alignments, and Extensions

- **North** - In the north section, most comments supported the suggested alternatives and placed an emphasis on the importance of connecting Dallas and Fort Worth to San Antonio. A number of comments supported the need for stations in both Dallas and Fort Worth.
- **Central** - In the central section, many comments suggested concern over how Austin would be served in options without a downtown station. Comments also suggested the need to connect to San Antonio, New Braunfels and San Marcos. Some comments suggested that the team should consider routes both east and west of IH-35.
- **South/Mexico** - In the south section, comments questioned the viability of service in south Texas noting that population density may be too low to cover operating costs and highlighting that Amtrak dropped service to Laredo due to low ridership. Comments reflected a need for connections to McAllen, Corpus Christi and Harlingen. Many comments supported a connection to Monterrey, Mexico via Laredo; many of these comments highlighted a need to serve Laredo on this line.
- **Outside the IH-35 Corridor** - Some comments suggested that the corridor should be extended from Dallas to Houston or from Fort Worth West toward Amarillo. Several comments reflect the need to coordinate with other ongoing projects like the Lone Star Rail District improvements and Dallas to Houston rail study.

Service and Multi-Modal Connections

Comments noted that TxDOT should only study only a high speed connection between Dallas and Fort Worth south, but not to Oklahoma. Comments suggested using abandoned rail rights-of-way, using routes that are separate from freight routes or adding capacity to existing rail lines. Comments noted that frequency, speed and connections to local transit systems would be important to creating a successful system.

Environmental Issues

Comments noted that rail should be located away from pipelines and that geology should be considered in the central section. Many comments noted concerns about impacts to property owners.

Individual Meeting Summaries

The individual summaries from each in-person meeting are listed below.

Waco, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Monday, January 27, 2014

6 – 8 p.m.

Location:

Heart of Texas Council of Governments
1514 S. New Road, Waco, TX 76711

Project Representatives:

Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)
Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kristin Hull, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kirstin Skadberg, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)
Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Attendees:

Thirty-six attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Waco Tribune Herald on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 with dates listed for the Arlington, Waco and Austin, Texas public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the Public Meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

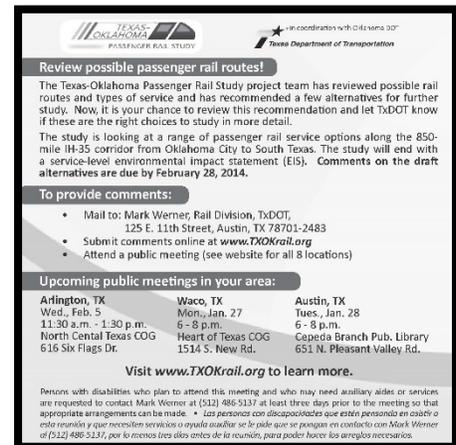
Media:

- “State seeks input on high-speed rail study.” *Waco Tribune-Herald* [Waco, Texas] 25 Jan 2014. http://www.wacotrib.com/news/roads/state-seeks-input-on-high-speed-rail-study/article_57634309-430b-55d6-bec9-a0408ce0bba3.html
- “High speed rail proposed to come through Central Texas.” *News Channel 25 KXXV* [Waco, Texas] 27 Jan 2014. <http://www.kxxv.com/story/24557395/txdot-to-hold-public-meeting-for-texas-oklahoma-passenger-rail-study>
- “High speed rail possibilities well-received at Waco meeting.” *Waco Tribune-Herald* [Waco, Texas] 28 Jan 2014. http://www.wacotrib.com/news/roads/high-speed-rail-possibilities-well-received-at-monday-meeting-in/article_e09b0ca0-460c-5f34-95ae-3e23997e4619.html
- “Viewpoint: High-speed rails are too good to be true in US.” *Baylor Lariat* [Waco, Texas] 5 Feb. 2014. <http://baylorlariat.com/2014/02/05/viewpoint-high-speed-rails-are-too-good-to-be-true-in-the-us/>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Exclusivity of higher and high speed tracks



- Possibility of more than one level of service
- Possibility of elevated right of ways
- Possibility of the use of existing abandoned corridors
- Location of greenfield alignments east/west of I-35
- Location of possible stations
- Connection of smaller cities along the central section line
- Consideration of farm land and other resources
- Cost estimates, ridership, budget
- Sources of funding for the study, future studies
- Overall study process and next milestones, including construction timeframe
- Previous discussions with freight industry
- Connection to Houston
- Possibility of no-build

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and nine comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Scanned copies of all comment forms received are available in Appendix B. Comments received at the meeting focused on the following themes:

- General approval of the suggested alternatives, with an emphasis on the importance of Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio connections
- Creation of separate stops in Dallas and Fort Worth
- Continue to study best routes both east and west of I-35
- Use existing abandoned rail right of ways

Austin, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

6 – 8 p.m.

Location:

Cepeda Branch, Austin Public Library
651 N. Pleasant Valley Rd., Austin, TX 78702

Project Representatives:

Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)
Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kristin Hull, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kirstin Skadberg, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)
Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Attendees:

Nineteen attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Waco Tribune Herald on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 with dates listed for the Arlington, Waco, and Austin public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the Public Meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

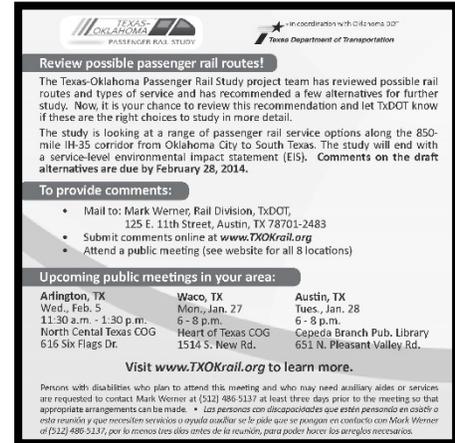
Media:

- "TxDOT to take closer look at high-speed rail." *San Marcos Mercury* [San Marcos, Texas] 28 Jan. 2014. <http://smmercury.com/2014/01/28/txdot-to-take-harder-look-at-high-speed-rail/>
- "Texas DOT seeks input on proposed Texas-Oklahoma passenger-rail routes." *Progressive Railroading*. 30 Jan 2014. http://www.progressiverailroading.com/passenger_rail/news/Texas-DOT-seeks-input-on-proposed-TexasOklahoma-passengerrail-routes--39270
- "TxDOT approves creation of high-speed rail commission." *Texas Public Radio*. 30 Jan. 2014 <http://tpr.org/post/txdot-approves-creation-high-speed-rail-commission>
- "TxDOT studying expanded rail service from Oklahoma." *Killeen Daily Herald* [Killeen, Texas] 2 Feb 2014. http://kdhnews.com/news/texas/txdot-studying-expanded-rail-service-from-oklahoma/article_590bab40-8bb2-11e3-8e2f-001a4bcf6878.html

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Sources of funding for the current and future studies
- Alternate plan if no rail is built



- Discussions with other rail districts
- Existing train service
- Elected official buy-in
- Subsidy options

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and one comment form was returned at the end of the meeting. Scanned copies of all comment forms received are available in Appendix B. Comments received at the meeting focused on the following themes:

- Ridership projections for the north section
- Concern over connection into Austin

McAllen, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Wednesday, January 29, 2014

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location:

Main McAllen Public Library
4001 N. 23rd St. McAllen, TX 78504

Project Representatives:

Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)
Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kristin Hull, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kirstin Skadberg, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)
Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Attendees:

Fifty-three attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Brownsville Herald on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 with dates listed for the San Antonio, McAllen, and Laredo public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

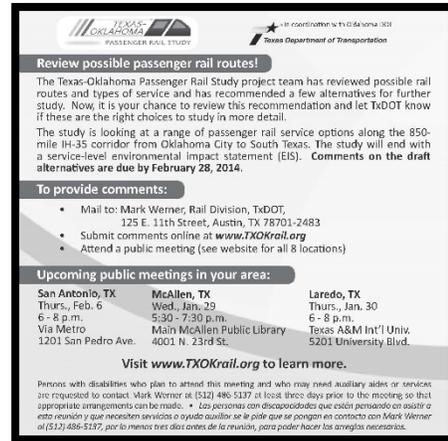
Media:

- "Passenger rail study on track." *Valley Morning Star* [Harlingen, Texas] 25 Jan. 2014.
- http://www.valleymorningstar.com/news/local_news/article_1919641e-863f-11e3-b662-001a4bcf6878.html
- "TxDOT seeks Valley's input on northward route." *The Brownsville Herald* [Brownsville, Texas] 25 Jan. 2014. http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/article_0afacf26-863f-11e3-8dc8-001a4bcf6878.html
- "TxDOT to lead Oklahoma-Texas rail system study." *Valley Morning Star* [Harlingen, Texas] 8 Feb. 2014. http://www.valleymorningstar.com/news/local_news/article_9cbe6b1a-9144-11e3-b412-001a4bcf6878.html
- "Rail-safety center opens at UTPA." *Valley Morning Star* [Harlingen, Texas] 10 Feb. 2014. http://www.valleymorningstar.com/news/local_news/article_6e7a185a-92d7-11e3-9b1b-0017a43b2370.html

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Funding for the rail construction
- Amount of subsidy needed



- Pricing on rail lines compared to bus service
- Asked for example of profitable rail line in US
- Possible use of existing abandoned right-of-way
- Preferred high speed to conventional speed
- Amount of growth to be considered in Texas
- Service connections from Monterrey into McAllen or Edinburg
- Based on population density, why consider McAllen
- Potential of increased ridership not only going north to San Antonio, but bring passenger south for tourism
- Timing for selecting the final infrastructure
- Completion date of this study phase and beginning date of next phase
- How to get rail approved after study
- Opinion on political push-back for rail
- Consider option to buy into rail system

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and four comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Scanned copies of all comment forms received are available in Appendix B. Comments received at the meeting focused on the following themes:

- General approval of suggested alternatives
- Great idea to address growth in the Valley
- Less likely to use conventional speed than high speed rail
- Use passenger rail routes separate from commercial freight routes

Laredo, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Thursday, January 30, 2014

6 - 8 p.m.

Location:

Texas A&M International University
5201 University Blvd. Laredo, TX 78041

Project Representatives:

Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)
Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kristin Hull, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Kirstin Skadberg, Consultant (CH2M Hill)
Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)
Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Attendees:

Twenty-four attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Laredo Morning Times on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 with dates listed for the San Antonio, McAllen, and Laredo public meetings. The Laredo meeting was also listed in the Brownsville Herald on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 with dates listed for the San Antonio, McAllen and Laredo, Texas public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

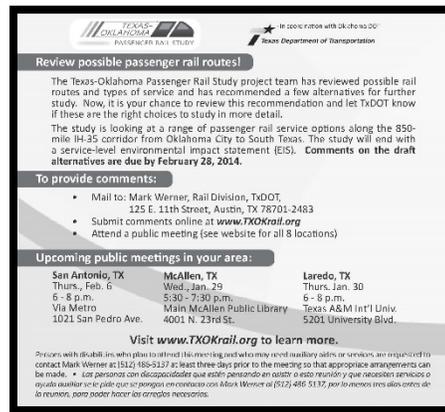
Media:

- "Next-generation border crossing: First-ever high speed train to connect U.S. and Mexico by 2018." *Fox News Latino* [Laredo, Texas] 16 Jan. 2014. <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/money/2014/01/16/next-generation-border-crossing-first-ever-high-speed-train-to-connect-us-and/>
- "US, Mexico officials discuss high-speed rail service." *Laredo Morning Times* [Laredo, Texas] 17 Jan. 2014. <http://www.lmtonline.com/articles/2014/01/17/front/news/doc52d992b7700d1591437620.txt>
- "Discussion turns to San Antonio-Mexico City rail service." *Latina Lista* [Laredo, Texas] 27 Jan. 2014. <http://latinalista.com/2014/01/discussion-turns-san-antonio-mexico-city-rail-service>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Study timing, when will it be narrowed to only viable options?
- Bus, car ridership numbers included in projections
- Increased tourism shown on open house boards in comments for South Texas



- Will train stop in Laredo, close to Laredo?
- Necessary use of Colombia Crossing to get into Monterrey
- Possibility of feasible options without connecting to Monterrey
- Other Mexico states that have evaluated right-of-way for passenger rail
- Current foreseen problems with addressing needed right-of-way
- Email notifications of next meetings

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and five comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Scanned copies of all comment forms received are available in Appendix B. Comments received at the meeting focused on the following themes:

- General approval of Laredo to Monterrey connection
- Make sure train stops in Laredo/Colombia
- Route needs to go through Laredo
- Make use of existing Mexican environmental clearance for bridge at Colombia Crossing

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Alternatives Public Meeting

Monday, February 3, 2014

6 - 8 p.m.

Location:

Metro Technology Center

1901 Springlake Dr. Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Project Representatives:

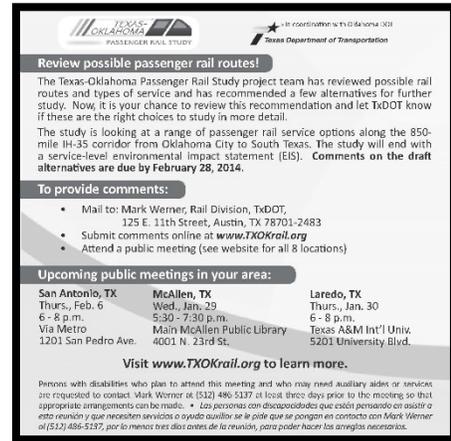
Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)

Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)



Attendees:

Eleven attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Ardmoreite on Monday, Jan. 27, 2014 with dates listed for the Oklahoma City and Ardmore, Oklahoma as well as Arlington, Texas public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

Media:

- "State Rep moves to prevent ODOT from selling rail line." *KRMG* [Tulsa, Oklahoma] 17 Jan. 2014. <http://www.krmg.com/news/news/local/state-rep-moves-prevent-odot-selling-rail-line/ncrqj/>
- "Meetings on passenger rail from Oklahoma to Texas set." *Tulsa World* [Tulsa, Oklahoma] 3Feb. 2014 http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/state/meetings-on-passenger-rail-from-oklahoma-to-texas-set/article_b5d528c2-8ce0-11e3-aebf-001a4bcf6878.html
- "Meetings on passenger rail from Oklahoma to Texas set." *News9.com* [Oklahoma City, Oklahoma] 3 Feb. 2014. <http://www.news9.com/story/24617391/meetings-on-passenger-rail-from-oklahoma-to-texas-set>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Actual feasibility of improvements
- Include documentation on investment needs and budget
- Study timeline and next steps
- Status of the company looking at Houston/Dallas extension
- Avoid Tower 55 in Fort Worth
- Timeline on improvements to Tower 55

- Criteria for higher speed alignments on current tracks
- Use of existing rail facilities

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees. No comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting.

Ardmore, Oklahoma Alternatives Public Meeting

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

6 - 8 p.m.

Location:

Ardmore Train Station

251 E. Main St. Ardmore, OK 73401

Project Representatives:

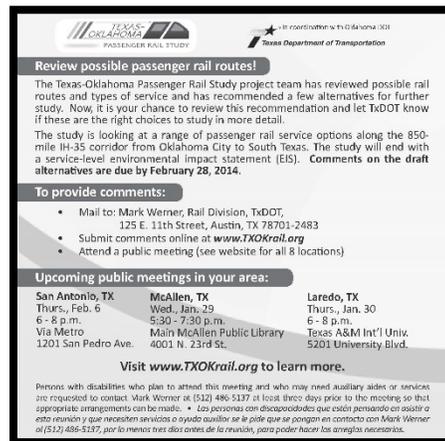
Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)

Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)



Attendees:

Thirteen attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Ardmoreite on Monday, Jan. 27, 2014 with dates listed for the Oklahoma City and Ardmore, Oklahoma as well as Arlington, Texas public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

Media:

- "Crain urges ODOT not to derail Eastern Flyer." *Ardmoreite* [Ardmore, Oklahoma] 20 Jan. 2014. <http://www.ardmoreite.com/article/20140120/NEWS/140129994/1001/NEWS>
- "Meetings on passenger rail from Oklahoma to Texas set." *News9.com* [Oklahoma City, Oklahoma] 3 Feb. 2014. <http://www.news9.com/story/24617391/meetings-on-passenger-rail-from-oklahoma-to-texas-set>
- "TxDOT to hold public meeting in Ardmore on passenger rail route." *News 12 KXII* [Ardmore, Oklahoma] 4 Feb. 2014. <http://www.kxii.com/home/headlines/TXDOT-to-hold-public-meeting-in-Ardmore-on-passenger-rail-route-243543561.html>
- "Rail expansion into Texas explored." *Ardmoreite* [Ardmore, Oklahoma] 5 Feb. 2014. <http://www.ardmoreite.com/article/20140205/News/140209814>
- "Rail study meeting makes stop in Ardmore." *KTEN.com* [Ardmore, Oklahoma] 5 Feb. 2014. <http://www.kten.com/story/24647569/rail-study-meeting-makes-stop-in-ardmore>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Options included for Dallas to Houston connection
- Maximum speed of trains on existing rail corridor

- What to expect after study is completed?

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and two comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Comments received focused on the following themes:

- Approval of suggested alternatives
- Work on double-tracking the existing line
- Improve existing infrastructure and frequency of trains
- Continue to study passenger rail from Fort Worth west towards Amarillo

Arlington, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location:

North Central Texas Council of Governments

616 Six Flags Dr. Arlington, TX 76011

Project Representatives:

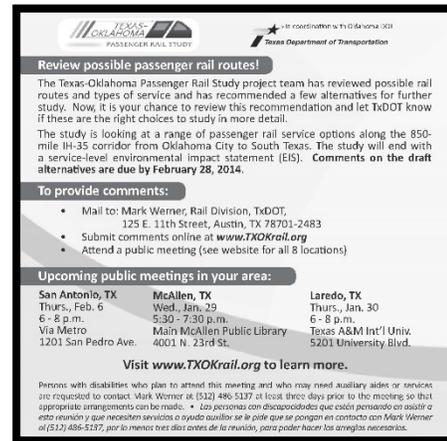
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Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)



Attendees:

Sixty-one attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Ardmoreite on Monday, Jan. 27, 2014 with dates listed for the Oklahoma City and Ardmore, Oklahoma as well as Arlington, Texas public meetings. The Arlington meeting was also listed in the Waco Tribune Herald ad that ran on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 with dates listed for the Arlington, Waco and Austin, Texas public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

Media:

- "U.S. transportation secretary gives Dallas-to-Houston high-speed rail yet another push." *Dallas Morning News* [Dallas, Texas] 8 Jan. 2014. <http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/2014/01/u-s-transportation-secretary-gives-dallas-to-houston-high-speed-rail-yet-another-push.html/>
- "Best thing to happen in Houston in 2013, HOU-DFW high-speed rail, HISD A+, METRO HOV adjustments, and more." *Houston Chron* [Houston, Texas] 13 Jan. 2014. <http://blog.chron.com/opportunityurbanist/2014/01/best-thing-to-happen-in-houston-in-2013-hou-dfw-high-speed-rail-hisd-a-metro-hov-adjustments-and-more/?cmpid=rrhoutex>
- "A high-speed unknown." *The Dallas Morning News* [Dallas, Texas] 18 Jan. 2014. http://res.dallasnews.com/interactives/2014_January/highspeedrail/
- "Bill Meadows to take helm of new Texas high-speed rail commission." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* [Fort Worth, Texas] 24 Jan. 2014. <http://www.star-telegram.com/2014/01/24/5512300/bill-meadows-to-take-helm-of-new.html?rh=1>
- "TxDOT to Discuss Passenger Train to Oklahoma." *NBCDFW.com* [Dallas, Texas] 3 Feb. 2014 <http://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/TxDOT-to-Discuss-Passenger-Train-to-Oklahoma-243337971.html>
- "TxDOT's Oklahoma-to-South Texas passenger rail study pulls into Arlington today." *Dallas Morning News* [Dallas, Texas] 5 Feb. 2014. <http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/2014/02/txdots-oklahoma-to-south-texas-passenger-rail-study-pulls-into-arlington-today.html/>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Cost to create new rail alignment
- Consideration of new rail technology
- Possibility of using current tracks with faster, modern trains
- Acquisition of land for right-of-way concerns
- Right-of-way for high speed trains paralleling highways between Dallas and San Antonio
- How decisions on alternatives were made
- Will next phase evaluate sections in more detail?
- How demand and ridership projections were determined per section
- Options included for Dallas to Houston connection
- More information on reduction of highway construction, congestion, time stuck in traffic between Dallas and San Antonio to show positive impact
- Stress importance of conveniences and train scheduling
- Distance/frequency of stops
- Explain Tower 55
- Calculations of pricing on train fares vs air and bus fares
- Accuracy of ridership projections vs. toll projections used for Toll 130 in Austin
- Possibility of private owner/operator to receive funding revenue from state/government for construction

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and six comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Comments received focused on the following themes:

- General approval of suggested alignments
- Continue to work with transit entities, including the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T)
- Include Monterrey extension
- Keep Arlington in the scope of the study
- Consider Cleburne as a passenger rail point
- Population density in South Texas too low to cover operating costs

San Antonio, Texas Alternatives Public Meeting

Thursday, February 6, 2014

6 – 8 p.m.

Location:

Via Metro

616 Six Flags Dr. Arlington, TX 76011

Project Representatives:

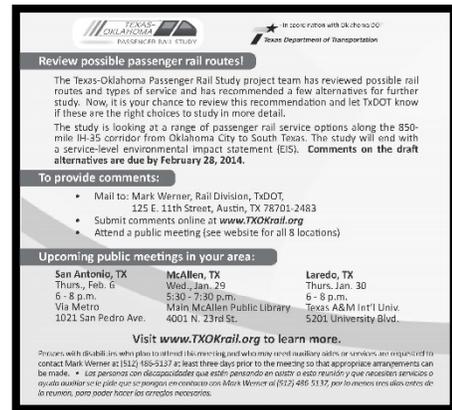
Mark Werner, Rail Division (TxDOT)

Mark Walbrun, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Brian Hausknecht, Consultant (CH2M Hill)

Aimee Vance, Consultant (K Strategies Group)

Jenny Paredes, Consultant (K Strategies Group)



Attendees:

Sixty-one attendees listed on the sign-in sheet, on record with TxDOT. Scanned sign-in sheets are available in Appendix A.

Advertising:

An advertisement (shown above) ran in the Laredo Morning Times on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 with dates listed for the San Antonio, McAllen, and Laredo public meetings. The San Antonio meeting was also listed in the Brownsville Herald on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 with dates listed for the San Antonio, McAllen, and Laredo public meetings. Posters and newsletters listing all 8 of the meeting locations, dates, and times were distributed to local MPOs, COGs, and other interested parties listed on the TOPRS mailing list.

Media:

- “Fast train to Monterrey on the horizon.” *San Antonio Express-News* [San Antonio, Texas] 16 Jan. 2014. <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Fast-train-to-Monterrey-on-the-horizon-5150132.php>
- “Will the SA/Monterrey high-speed rail line really happen?” *San Antonio Current* [San Antonio, Texas] 22 Jan. 2014. <http://sacurrent.com/news/will-the-sa-monterrey-high-speed-rail-line-really-happen-1.1620445>
- “High speed rail: an idea with no funding.” *San Antonio Express-News* [San Antonio, Texas] 7 Feb. 2014.
- <http://blog.mysanantonio.com/moveit/2014/02/high-speed-rail-an-idea-with-no-funding/>

Questions Asked:

At the conclusion of the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to ask questions pertaining to the project. Questions asked at the meeting addressed the following topics:

- Budget information for the study, difference in cost between California and Texas high speed project costs
- Example of private company building/operating service in America

- Access to methodology for how the numbers/projections were decided, including ridership projections specific per section; projected congestion reduction levels; environmental impact comparison between cars, planes, and trains; and comparison between bus, plane, and train fares
- Comparison to road construction needs/projections
- Consideration of a super-highway parallel to rail corridor
- Key areas in central section of the study
- Availability of study documents
- Next steps after study completion and construction, including the time requirement to build the system once approved
- Connecting this service with existing/future commuter services
- Necessity of connecting to airports
- Considerations for portion from Hillsboro to Fort Worth along 35W
- Possibility of San Antonio to Houston, Houston to Dallas connections
- Connection of San Antonio to Corpus Christi
- Possibility of freight cars to carry automobiles as cargo along the route
- Benefits of economic impact with the Laredo-Mexico extension

Comments Received:

Comment forms were handed out to all meeting attendees and 16 comment forms were returned at the end of the meeting. Comments received focused on the following themes:

- Look into private companies for funds
- Make the rail an investment opportunity
- Regulate the potential to create natural monopoly
- Need action, not just study after study
- Include sector cost comparison charts on website
- Include cost on fuel savings, travel time into data
- Decrease dependence on fuel energy
- Locate rails away from pipelines
- Add hurricane evacuation projections
- Consider geology, cave structures in Central section
- Work with landowners
- Include tie ins for local transportation
- Focus on Corpus Christi and Laredo connections
- Include more than just Laredo and San Antonio (e.g. McAllen, Corpus Christi, Harlingen)
- Skip Laredo – Amtrak dropped service due to low ridership
- Emphasized importance of San Antonio to South Texas
- Only study Dallas-Fort Worth high speed connection, not to Oklahoma
- Consider San Antonio, New Braunfels, Austin, San Marcos connections
- Add I-10 San Antonio to Houston conventional rail piggyback
- Favor a no-build option due to private property rights
- Include connections to cities and Lone Star Rail