

# City of Fort Worth Transit Masterplan Workshop Post-Event Report

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On the 14th of May, 2019, 44 members of the Real Estate Council of Greater Fort Worth and the Tarrant Transit Alliance met in the basement of the Reata Restaurant in downtown Fort Worth to discuss the City of Fort Worth's transit strategies as presented by the Transit Moves | Fort Worth State of the System Report.

## Background

In 2015, Trinity Metro (formerly known as the T) developed a Master Plan with the help of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates to determine the actions that the transit agency must take to establish a great transit system that truly meets the needs of Fort Worth and Tarrant County. In 2017, the Tarrant Transit Alliance and the Real Estate Council of Greater Fort Worth (along with several other civilians and organizations) petitioned the city for increased funding to continue to put the recommendations of this Masterplan into action. While this petition failed due to a lack of quorum, the city made some significant changes including re-structuring staff and conducting the supplementary *Transit Moves | Fort Worth* study on the best way for the city to move forward, which was also lead by Nelson\Nygaard.

While the Transit Moves | Fort Worth project is ongoing, the 14th of May workshop round table was organized for members of the Real Estate Council of Greater Fort Worth and the Tarrant Transit to discuss these strategies and how they might fit into the framework of the city. The goal of this workshop was to go over the recommendations, and then voice any priorities and concerns with the Transit Moves | Fort Worth project team.

## Attendees

The following people attending the Transit Masterplan Workshop:

### **Rachel Albright**

*Tarrant Transit Alliance*

### **Carlo Andreani**

*Pacheco Koch Consulting Engineers*

### **Tyler Arbogast**

*Fort Worth Housing Solutions*

### **Kenneth Barr**

*Barr Consulting*

### **Bob Baulsir**

*Trinity Metro*

### **Mike Brennan**

*Near Southside, Inc.*

### **Lonnie Burns**

*GFF*

### **Kristen Camareno**

*Tarrant County*

### **Travis Clegg**

*Peloton Land Solutions, Inc.*

### **Jeff Davis**

*Republic Title*

### **Michelle Davis-Mohammed**

*Tarrant County College District*

### **Rainey Dock Matthews**

*Mayors Committee On Persons with Disabilities*

### **Charles Edmonds**

*Charles Edmonds & Assoc Inc*

### **Jon Michael Franks**

*Trinity Metro*

### **Tom Galbreath**

*Dunaway & Associates, LP*

### **Steven Gonzalez**

*Workforce Solutions*

### **Ben Goss**

*Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL)*

### **Reginald Grant**

*United Way Tarrant County*

### **Gannon Gries**

*Bennett Benner Partners*

### **Jesse Herrera**

*Urban Theory*

### **Scott Hurbough**

*Transportation Services - Catholic Charities Ft. Worth*

### **Nanci Johnson-Plump**

*CBRE*

### **Ken Koo**

*Catholic Charities Fort Worth*

### **David Leininger**

*Sasaki Associates*

### **Ken Loose**

*VLK Architects*

### **Lauren McCarley**

*Halff Associates, Inc.*

### **Andre McEwing**

*Tarrant County College*

### **Kevin Medlin**

*City of Fort Worth - MCPD*

### **Monty Mohon**

*University of North Texas*

*Health Science Center*

### **Steve Montgomery**

*MontgomeryGR*

### **Lee Nicol**

*Lee Nicol Interests*

### **Brandon O'Donald**

*Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc.*

### **Bob Riley**

*Halff Associates, Inc.*

### **Julia Ryan**

*City of Fort Worth*

### **Craig Schkade**

*Hillwood*

### **Kelli Shields**

*Trinity Metro*

### **Dave Thornton**

*Linda Thornton*

*Trinity Metro*

### **Casey Tounget**

*Transwestern*

### **Karen Vermaire Fox**

*The Real Estate Council of*

*Greater Fort Worth*

### **Walter Williams**

*Tarrant County College*

*District*

### **Kylon Wilson**

*Stantec*

### **Michael Wyss**

*Mayors Committee On*

*Persons with Disabilities*

### **Ann Zadeh**

*City of Fort Worth*

## Conversation Topics

After a brief presentation about the Transit Moves | Fort Worth State of the System Report, the following question prompts were provided: Which Opportunities do you think fit best in our city? What opportunities should be emphasized first? What are the threats to the transit plan? What is missing from these opportunities? What is not being discussed? The following outlines items discussed during the round-table presentations:

### *Threat: Funding*

The #1 threat to an improved transit system is a lack of funding, and several groups talked about this. Trinity Metro is one of the lowest-funded transit authorities in Texas. The city's budget is tight, there is no relief from the state – how do we get more funding? This is the greatest unknown.

### *Opportunity: Education and Community Engagement*

Several groups discussed the needs for improved education and community engagement that could be addressed by this initiative. How are we engaging the community in the transit conversation, and how can this be improved? What is the best way to engage current riders to make sure they are a part of the transit planning process and their needs are heard and understood? Is there a riders advisory group that can provide insight and commentary on Trinity Metro's and the City of Fort Worth's plans? How can we increase the awareness of what in our transit system is currently funded, and what is needed in the future?

Our region is growing, and people are moving here from places where they are more likely to have used public transportation services. People who have used transit in the past are more likely to use transit now and are potential new riders. How are we educating people who are moving to the region about their transit options? The business community is another example of a group who would benefit from increased knowledge of the current transit system and the future of the system. The business community may even be able to drive the issue. There is an overall need for more conversations and educational platforms around transit – how to use it, its benefit to the community, and what is needed to make it better.

### *Threat & Opportunity: Culture*

Along the same lines as education and community engagement is the current culture around transit in Fort Worth. Right now, there exists a stigma against public transportation, and especially the bus. What research is being done into why people are not using transit, and how can we address those issues? Is it a lack of understanding and confidence in the current system? Is it safety concerns? Is it because the system does not run when and where they need it? What can be done to dispel myths about the safety and reliability of the public transportation system? These efforts might look different depending on the generation of the audience, as it appears that young people are more open to alternative transit options.

### *Opportunity: Groups to contract Transit Services*

Several groups discussed various possibilities for transit expansion through contracted services. These include Trinity Metro working with surrounding municipalities to provide additional services outside of their regular scope and contracting services for major employers who might engage in service buy-ups. Public-Private partnerships were discussed several times, and a couple of groups specifically mentioned the collaboration with Tarrant County College and how positive that partnership has been to the community. Another example of a potential service contract would be with entertainment facilities like the Dickies Arena – is there a way to set up specific bus routes for concerts and other events? Is there a way to build in transit passes into the ticket cost?

### *Opportunity: Collaboration between the City of Fort Worth and Trinity Metro*

The more the City of Fort Worth and Trinity Metro develop plans together, the more the public benefits. Several groups talked about the importance of the city prioritizing transportation improvements such as sidewalks, bus lanes, and encouraging a dense urban core. What opportunities are out there to ensure city planners know what Trinity Metro is doing and vice-versa? The City of Fort Worth and Trinity Metro can work together to help incentivize density and transit-oriented development through policies, funding incentives, and other models. One

suggestion was adding financial incentive for developers to help fund first/last mile solutions at their planned development sites.

### **Opportunity: Improved User Experience**

Improving user experience is incredibly important if we are going to increase ridership. What first mile/last mile solutions are out there? How can we minimize the wait time of the transit system? How can we make the experience feel safe and efficient?

Some specific examples discussed at the workshop include improvements to bus stops (lighting, seating, and shelter), an all-in-one app that is more user-friendly (ticket purchasing, trip planning, and next bus technology all in one place), longer transit hours and increased frequency. Most groups talked about the need for increased frequency in our system. Frequency can be a great sales pitch for the transit system. These conversations included discussions around increasing the number of express routes, decreasing the number of stops/reallocating stops, Bus Rapid Transit, making infrastructure improvements to (like bus lanes), and reducing wait time.

An essential aspect of our transit service and improvement possibilities that we need to remember is the needs of the members of our community with mobility differences. As our population ages, our city will need extra transit support. Opportunities to serve this population include increased frequency and extended hours of MITS services, first/last mile options that assume disability access, and on-demand MITS service.

### **Conclusion**

Trinity Metro has made great strides towards realizing the 2015 Masterplan. As the name change suggests, they are working on a regional approach and working on innovative programs such as on-demand service at Mercantile Center and the fully-electric DASH circulator (that was funded by a public-private partnership). TEXRail is arguably one of the most significant projects implemented by Trinity Metro since the Masterplan and has made an enormous impact on the region. However, there is still considerable room for improvement. The growth in our region demands that we continue to make smart and incremental investments in public transportation. We have opportunities to significantly improve the user experience, contract with other groups to increase ridership and services, enhance the collaborative relationship between Trinity Metro and the City of Fort Worth, and, engage the community in the process – but, essential to this venture is identifying solutions to our funding problems and engaging in curtailing the cultural stigma against transit. The Tarrant Transit Alliance and the Real Estate Council of Greater Fort Worth look forward to assisting in this worthy endeavor.