

February 3, 2011

**MEMO**

**TO:** LaShon Ross, Interim City Manager  
Frank F. Turner, Deputy City Manager

**FROM:** Phyllis M. Jarrell, Director of Planning

**SUBJECT:** Cotton Belt Rail Line Station Planning

Staff is seeking direction from City Council on additional planning activities related to the potential for two new rail stations in Plano on the Cotton Belt rail line, and requests time on the Council's February 14<sup>th</sup> Preliminary Open Meeting agenda. As you know, DART and the North Central Texas Council of Governments have been considering funding mechanisms to advance construction of the Cotton Belt, along with preliminary engineering studies to determine the ultimate route and station locations. These studies include alternative rail alignments and station location options in Richardson and Plano. Plano's preferred option is for a station located in the 12<sup>th</sup> Street/K Avenue area, where the Cotton Belt line crosses the light rail Red Line, with another potential station in the Shiloh Road/Plano Parkway area to serve the employment center in the Research Technology district. (See attached map.) Given that the Cotton Belt Line may ultimately extend to Wylie, locating the two stations on the existing rail line is the most logical and fiscally responsible option.

To date planning efforts have focused on a station at 12<sup>th</sup> Street. In September 2010, the city, along with the North Texas District Council of the Urban Land Institute and Space Between Design Studio, sponsored a one-half day workshop with property owners, City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission to explore the potential redevelopment opportunities afforded by a rail station in the area. Staff held follow-up meetings with area property owners and residents in December 2010 and will hold a rescheduled (original meeting cancelled because of winter weather) meeting in the Douglass neighborhood soon. At these meetings, attendees indicated substantial support for the area becoming an extension of Downtown Plano, including the following development concepts:

- Additional multi-family housing at urban densities
- New restaurants, retail shops, art galleries and studios
- More outdoor dining areas, plazas and patios
- Reduced parking requirements and shared parking
- Better pedestrian connections to downtown
- Maintaining and improving existing and new service uses
- Protecting existing single family neighborhoods in the area
- More infill housing in surrounding neighborhoods

There are several benefits to a new rail station in the Shiloh Road vicinity. The concentration of employees in the Research Technology district would increase ridership, and the location would also attract additional passengers from Murphy, Parker, Wylie and Garland. Proximity to the President George Bush Turnpike and its location on a major north-south thoroughfare would also facilitate access to the station. Assuming that Murphy and Wylie join DART at some point in the future, a station in this area would be reasonably spaced between the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Station and a future station in the City of Murphy.

To continue planning for both stations in the 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Shiloh Road areas, staff would recommend the following actions:

- Amend the Comprehensive Plan to designate station locations at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Shiloh Road -- Existing and future DART stations on the Red Line are presently indicated on the Future Land Use and Thoroughfare Plans. With DART now considering station locations for the Cotton Belt line, the city's preferred locations should be added to these plans.

Specific to the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Station area, staff would recommend the following actions:

- Develop a Conceptual Plan for the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Station Area – A conceptual plan for the station area will assist in delineating the station location, parking areas, pedestrian connections, streetscape improvements, land use and other attributes of the station area development/redevelopment.
- Determine General Goals for New Housing and Commercial Uses –As with the Downtown Plano Transit Village Plan, the city should set goals for the number of new housing units and new commercial space to be developed within the next 10 -15 years. Staff's initial recommendation is to promote the development of 800-1000 housing units and 100,000 square feet of commercial space.
- Rezone the area within the "zone of influence" of the station – After station locations are determined, proceed with rezoning the area most suitable for new housing and commercial development. The zoning should support more urban, pedestrian-oriented development.
- Develop a program of incentives – As with the revitalization of downtown Plano, public private partnerships will be important to promote new investment and reinvestment in the station area.

Staff seeks the City Council's direction on these key recommendations.

Please let me know if you need additional information or if you have any questions.

XC: Alan Upchurch, Director of Public Works and Engineering  
Gerald Cosgrove, Deputy Director of Public Works and Engineering  
Tina Firgens, Planning Manager