

MESQUITE TRANSIT INITIATIVE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Mesquite Transit Initiative?

The Mesquite Transit Initiative are the concepts and plans under development for providing a passenger rail connection from Mesquite to the rest of the regional light rail system within the next ten years.

2. Is the transit initiative an attempt to get Mesquite into DART?

No.

3. Will the transit initiative put DART buses on our streets?

No. At most two rapid transit vehicles (RTVs) will be employed as an interim connection between Mesquite and the regional rail system at DART's Lawnview Station along Scyene Road while we pursue passenger rail.

4. Will my taxes go up as a result of the transit initiative?

Only if the citizens and council support it. It is the intent of the City to find and use other sources of revenue, such as a partnership with private enterprise or federal grant money, to fund the transit initiative. A common misperception is that DART member cities have funded their entire light rail system. In truth, the Federal Transit Administration has funded the construction of the system through a federal grant program supported by the federal automotive fuel tax.

5. How can we connect to the DART system if Mesquite is not a member city?

Current DART Board Policy is the major hurdle preventing DART from contracting for services, such as passenger rail, with non-member cities. The DART Board is currently discussing the needed policy changes and evaluating the impacts of such a policy changes on its member cities. A decision by the DART Board is expected in the next few months.

6. How quickly can we get passenger rail to Mesquite?

Depending on the source of funding, it could take anywhere from 4 years, if funded privately, or up to 12 years, if federal funds are used. However, provided the DART Board changes its policy, Mesquite could connect to the DART Green Line at the Lawnview Station in Dallas using rapid transit vehicles before the end of 2011.

7. Where will the passenger rail line go?

All current plans indicate that the most likely route is in the median of Scyene Road and along side the Union Pacific Railroad line from the west city limit to Mesquite Metro Airport. This concept is similar to the Blue Line that runs in the median of Lancaster Road in South Dallas.

8. How much will the transit initiative cost overall?

Based upon the experience of the Denton County Transit Authority (DCTA) which is creating a passenger rail system similar to what we are planning, the overall cost to construct a passenger rail line with three stations from the west city limit to the east city limit is somewhere between \$110 and \$125 million. These costs are similar to what we would spend if we reconstructed Scyene Road as an 8-lane highway.

9. Can we afford the expense of beginning a passenger rail study in these tough economic times?

The real question is can we afford not to start the study. The multiyear “clock” on delivering passenger rail service to Mesquite doesn’t start until the alignment and environmental studies begin. These cannot begin without funding. Mesquite cannot compete for federal grant funding for construction until the studies and engineering are completed and approved by the Federal Transit Administration. Furthermore, private investors want proof of the City’s commitment in the form of tangible progress and funding. Funding and beginning the passenger rail study demonstrates such a commitment.

10. Are there really private investors interested in funding our passenger rail line?

Yes. To date the City of Mesquite has been approached by three separate investment groups who wanted to know how far along we were in the passenger rail delivery process. These private investors control significant resources and are searching for municipal infrastructure projects in which to invest. They understand that the real money is to be made, not from operation of the passenger rail line, but from the adjacent transit oriented development opportunities.

11. How will the transit initiative affect current MTED services?

Current MTED services will be unaffected. By law, if the City constructs a passenger rail line with stations within the city limits, it is required to provide complementary paratransit (MTED-like) services. Ultimately, the mobility of current MTED users would be enhanced since they would be able to access the entire regional transit system – DART, DCTA (Denton County Transit Authority), TRE (Trinity Railway Express), and The-T in Fort Worth.

12. Where can I find additional information and copies of the information displayed at the Transit Open House?

Go to the City of Mesquite website at www.cityofmesquite.com/transit .