

Talking Points for Collaboration between the Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District (NETEX) and Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMU-C)

About Rural Rail Transportation Districts and NETEX...

- A Rural Rail Transportation District (RRTD) is...
 - a governmental subdivision of the state;
 - created by the commissioners court by resolution;
 - operated by a board of directors appointed by the commissioners court;
 - a non-taxing authority;
 - a tax exempt authority;
 - a body holding the powers of eminent domain and condemnation;
 - a district insulating member counties from liability;
 - granted authority to generate revenue through economic development grants, loans, and leasing and operational agreements; and
 - granted the authority to issue revenue bonds.

- The Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District (NETEX)...
 - is an established governmental subdivision of the state of Texas representing six contiguous counties across northeast Texas, overlapping the service area of TAMU-C, including: Titus, Franklin, Hopkins, Delta, Hunt, & Collin Counties.
 - was formed in 1995 to save the former St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt) Railway's "C-Branch" from abandonment and preserve rail service for current and future customers along the corridor and ensure the potential for long-range economic growth in the region.
 - owns, or jointly owns with the state of Texas, 65.6 miles of operational railroad plus 23.2 miles of right of way with rails removed for a total corridor length of 88.8 miles.
 - contracts with Blacklands Railroad, Wayne Defebaugh, president, as operator of the railroad.



NETEX needs...

- Funds for rehabilitation of existing line from Franklin-Titus Co. line (MP 489.4) to Simtrott (MP 555.0 just west of Greenville) to bring the track up to Class II standards. (Section 1 - 65.6 mi.)
 - ~\$16.8M 2006 estimate (Carter-Burgess study)
 - ~\$19.7M 2009 estimate (Amount requested in TIGER Grant application)
- Funds for restoration of line on NETEX owned Right of Way (ROW) from Simtrott to Wylie (MP 578.2). (Section 2 – 23.2 mi.)
 - ~\$31M 2006 estimate (Carter-Burgess study)
 - ~\$36.4M 2009 estimate
- Total funding necessary: ~\$56.1M (current, 2009 estimate)
- The establishment of a working relationship with an institution of Higher Education. (Indicated by various grant requirements, U. S. Senator Cornyn's office, and understanding of Board of Directors.)



NETEX has...

- Board of Directors dedicated to the success of the rail district and promotion of the economic vitality of the region through expanding the availability of multimodal capable rail service.
- An active short line railroad on which railroad and transportation related research studies or training could be conducted.
- Established rail service enabling and promoting economic growth by attracting large and high volume industrial operations to the region.
- An award-winning operator (Blacklands RR) that has substantially grown the number of customers on the line and achieved a progressively increasing car handling count up to 3033 in 2008.
- Interchanges with two Class 1 railroads: Union Pacific & Kansas City Southern.
- Right of Way adjacent to proposed Collin County Intermodal Facility/Inland Port.
- Right of Way connecting to DART ROW enabling future rail passenger connections to/from the DFW Metroplex.
- Opportunities for development of tourism through railroad passenger excursions, motorcar runs, etc.
- Consultants with rail and related expertise.
- Connections to key political figures, individuals, organizations, and entities involved the areas of transportation and regional economic development.
 - Established, documented support from U. S. Senator John Cornyn
 - Established relationship with Andrew Blaylock, grants coordinator for Senator Cornyn.
 - TxDOT officials.
 - Railroad officials.
 - Elected County Officials
 - Area Councils of Government (ARK-TEX COG, NCTCOG)
 - Local Economic Development Corporations
 - Northeast Texas Regional Mobility Council (NETMob)
 - Texas High Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation (THSRTC) member



About Texas A&M University-Commerce (TAMU-C)...

- A regional university established in 1889 and became a member of the Texas A&M University System in 1996.
- Has a Fall 2009 enrollment of just under 10,000 students.
- Has a significant number of commuting students.
- Consists of a main campus in Commerce, with additional facilities in Mesquite and Corsicana and courses offered at locations throughout the region and online.
- Employees and students represent approximately ½ of the population of the City of Commerce.



TAMU-C needs...

- Opportunities to expand research activities across multiple disciplines and increase level of external funding to support this effort.
- Opportunities to involve students in relevant, real world research projects, practicum activities, and internship programs.
- Opportunities to re-establish its role as an active, contributing member of the community and region.
- Opportunities to grow its reputation as a leading research institution.
- Collaborators with which to pursue activities serving the greater good of the region, state, and nation.
- Opportunities to help secure a viable transportation infrastructure to support the future transportation needs of University students and employees and the general public within the institution's service area.
- Opportunities to help secure and ensure the future economic stability and growth of the region.
- Opportunities to strengthen ties with A&M System components, such as the Texas Transportation Institute.
- Opportunities to address its stated mission to “nurture partnerships for the intellectual, cultural, social, and economic vitality of Texas and beyond.”

TAMU-C has...

- Expertise in seeking and managing grant funding.
- Research leaders in a variety of disciplines.
- A connection to the resources of the Texas A&M University System including the Texas Transportation Institute.
- TAMU System is a Resource Agency for the Texas High Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation.
- TAMU-C is near the geographic center of the Rail District and located within ¼ mile of the active rail line in Commerce.
- An established linkage to the preservation of history associated with the NETEX Rail Line through the annual Cotton Belt Symposium, hosted by TAMU-Commerce.
- Connections to key political figures, individuals, organizations, and entities in a variety of areas including education funding.



Why NETEX & TAMU-Commerce?...

- Northeast Texas region commonly served by NETEX and the University.
- Common, vested interest in regional sustainability and global access.
 - Success of the University depends on the success of the region.
- Strengthening of I-30 as the corridor of choice for High-Speed Rail expansion from Metroplex.
 - Transportation route between Commerce and College Station (on Texas T-Bone) and other system institutions.
- Accessibility to system resources: Texas Transportation Institute, grant/funding experience, extensive research network, etc.
- Timing of primary needs of NETEX and the University coincide. (The timing is right.)

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