

Trinity River Corridor Project – Dallas

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Preamble

For any new comer to Dallas or casual visitor that heard of 'Trinity River' before setting foot on 'Big D', one would be full of anticipation as one expects to see an actual river. In order words, depending on the definition used, some will argue that it is a 'River' while some will state that it is a 'seasonal creek' far from being a river. No matter the side, the Trinity River Corridor Project is Dallas' hope to turn an acrid seasonal creek into the city's core asset in the form of chain of lakes, parks and open spaces, greenbelts, levee improvements and enhanced flood controls, transportation realignments, and other urban high density and smart growth projects. The Trinity River Corridor has always represented the greatest challenge and greater opportunity to redefine Dallas. For years, the Trinity River has been a barrier in the city by separating the northern sector, which depicts the real 'America Dream' and the southern sector, which is yet to experience the 'American Dream'; figuratively speaking. Because of the divide create by the river, it is expected that when completed it will act as a catalyst to spur and cement the city both in terms of new opportunities for greater socio-economic development and racial and diversity rebirth.

Project Overall Description + Cost

In 1995, the Trinity River Corridor Citizens Committee delivered a multilevel objective vision for the river, which would create new recreational opportunities, economic development, transportation improvements and flood control and reduction program along the corridor. However, it was not until August 1996, that Dallas Mayor Hon. Ron Kirk brought the representatives of City of Dallas, US Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, Texas Department of Transportation, North Texas Tollway Authority, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, County of Dallas and a host of other related agencies and commissions to initiate full inter-agency cooperation for efforts to coordinate funding and scheduling for the river corridor project. The meeting further harped on the need for citizens and communities involvement to ensure full support. In furtherance of this initiative, the Dallas voters were asked to approve a Bond Program to finance the project. The election occurred in May 1998 when the citizens of Dallas approved a \$246 million Capital Bond Program for improvement within the Trinity River Corridor to be implemented over a 10-year period. In addition, other agencies will provide approximately \$975 million in matching funds, giving a total of over \$1.2 billion for the project. It is the highest single public/private project of this magnitude in Texas if not the country.

Design and Construction Highlights

With a project this large, it is not unlikely to have several design proposals [Preferred Local Alternatives] and concepts for consideration. Apart from a few and minor construction, there has been no major construction that is related to the Trinity River Corridor Project. Nonetheless, an award of \$30 million from the Regional Transportation Council and Texas Transportation Commission, for the construction of the Woodall Rodgers Extension has been made. Additionally, there has been a private donation of \$2 million to offset some of the cost in the design of the 'signature' bridges that are proposed for the river. Furthermore, some spillages have occurred in the project timetable because of legal actions brought by interest groups. But in all, most of the rulings have been in favor of the project but did definitely resulted in lost of time. In a Dallas Morning News report of October 11, 2001, the presidential Office of Management and Budget was credited as saying that 'Building new levees and wetlands to protect the Cadillac Heights neighborhood and businesses in the southern Dallas sector, is not cost effective and should not proceed'. By this opinion, it means that the project design phase is hit with another snag that may lengthen the project time. This will further delay action and release of the \$10 million appropriation for floodway extension project for fiscal 2002 pending before House-Senate conference committee. For the environment, there is the Great Trinity Forest Master Plan Concept, approved by the council in March 1997. The concept plan proposes the development of Trinity Interpretive Center, equestrian facilities and nature trail. It also outlines the acquisition and preservation of bottomland hardwood forest within the river. Dallas is considered to have the largest urban forestry in US and that is located along the Trinity River Corridor Basin.

Implementation Timeline

On November 1998, the City Council authorized the development of a Master Implementation Plan for lake design and recreation amenities. The plan was designed to meet the goals proposed by Trinity River Corridor Citizens Committee and includes extensive public participation. The plan will serve as a 'footprint' that will guide the implementation of a vision that is 'Distinctively Dallas'. The study limit for the plan is from the Elm Fork and West Trinity to I-20. The MIP, was scheduled to be completed by June 1999.

Management or Sponsorship Group

In December 1996, the City Manager established the Trinity River Corridor Management Office for the purpose of preparing a development plan for the corridor with development and funding strategies to be approved by the City Council. The office is located at the Oak Cliff Municipal Annex on 320 E Jefferson Boulevard, Dallas, Texas 75203. For additional information visit: www.trinityrivercorridor.org.

Anticipated Economic Development

The sponsors and supporters of this project are positive that the completion of Trinity River Corridor Project, would ignite a development of Dallas that never before seen in the history of the city. It is expected that several new construction activities and development projects both public and private, would be spurred as a result. Notable among the expected developments, include chain of lakes, gateways, trail alignments, greenbelts, residential and commercial real estate developments and the opportunity for several signature bridges [5 proposed] to cross the river.

On April 1998, as part of the Trinity River Economic Development Initiatives, eight of the largest financial institutions in Dallas formed a partnership with the city in which they committed to lend over \$1 billion to businesses and homeowners in the southern sector of Dallas over the next 5 years. No data is available on how this initiative has worked, but it is the expectation of the sponsors and supporters that the project will be a boost to economic development. Apart from the physical benefits, intangible benefits expected from the project is to act as the cement to bring the north and south together as the races begin to pull for a better Dallas that is diverse and unified.

Finally, it is hard to put a finger on the number of permanent and temporary jobs that would be created as result of the project. But analysts envision that no less than 2,000 new permanent jobs will result from the project once it rolls off the drawing boards.