

# Transit plan offers smart ways to reconnect Fair Park to downtown Dallas

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## Document is promising, but planners could have reached out to South Dallas residents earlier.



By [Dallas Morning News Editorial](#)

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The Traveling Man stands as a DART train goes by at the Deep Ellum station in downtown Dallas, Texas, Saturday morning, September 23, 2023. (Anja Schlein/Dallas Morning News) (Anja Schlein)

Transportation can make or break a neighborhood. A railroad junction brought economic prosperity to Deep Ellum in the late 1800s. But in the 1940s, the railroad was torn out to make space for a new highway, and many residents were displaced. Today, Interstate 345

and Interstate 30 divide Deep Ellum and Fair Park from downtown Dallas.

Pedestrian caps to link parts of Oak Cliff over Interstate 35E, and the Cedars neighborhood to downtown Dallas over Interstate 30 recently won federal grants. Plans are also underway to reconstruct highways near Deep Ellum and Fair Park, but any deck parks over those projects are just ideas at this point. That's why a plan to improve transportation links between downtown Dallas and these neighborhoods is promising.

The project is called Fair Park Links and is being spearheaded by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, our region's transportation planners. The organization is studying confusing intersections like Exposition Avenue at Elm Street, where car traffic, Dallas Area Rapid Transit rail, and runners and cyclists coming off the Santa Fe Trail converge. There are plans to realign Grand and Haskell avenues to make driving safer. A section of Elm Street could become a two-way street.

Pedestrians familiar with the area know that walking down Commerce Street under the highways can often be faster than waiting for DART buses or the Green Line to take one to Deep Ellum. The plan proposes increasing the frequency of Bus Route 214 that currently runs every 30 minutes during peak hours. The plan also proposed dynamic electronic signage at transit stations to make DART more intuitive for new riders.

This high-level transportation planning is a good idea, but it should be done in step with residents. At a community meeting for this project in late January at the South Dallas Cultural Center, some residents said that they wished they had been consulted about the plan earlier.

Shanay Wise, a South Dallas resident, said that she was concerned that the NCTCOG planners were not aware of the [South Dallas/Fair Park area plan](#) being developed by city staff and neighbors. Wise also asked NCTCOG staff to work with [Bike Friendly South Dallas](#).

Staff with the regional planning group told residents that the project is focused narrowly on the transportation links between Fair Park and downtown Dallas and doesn't deal with broader land use improvements. This is true, but transportation projects can reshape neighborhoods adjacent to them, and planners should be sensitive to residents' concerns, particularly in historically overlooked areas like South Dallas.

The plan will be finalized in the summer, and residents can share their feedback online through Sunday. As our region balances the objectives of moving people efficiently and reconnecting neighborhoods, plans like Fair Park Links can be the right solution when accompanied by robust community input.



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