

## **35W Coalition hears update on North Tarrant Express**

**BY LESLIE WIMMER**

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The contracting company in charge of the maintenance, construction and financing of segments of the North Tarrant Express project is moving forward on designs for reconstructing the Interstate 35-W and Loop 820 interchange.

Robert Hinkle, the vice president of corporate affairs for NTE Mobility Partners, lead contractor for the project, spoke to area business, transportation and elected officials at a 35W Coalition meeting on Sept. 9.

Hinkle said NTE Mobility Partners is moving forward with plans to start construction on lane expansions along Loop 820, and Highways 121 and 183 in 2010. Hinkle also said NTE Mobility Partners is looking into applying for a competitive grant from federal stimulus funds for the construction of the I-35W and Loop 820 interchange, which could cost about \$300 million.

Financing for a portion of the North Tarrant Express project along highways 121 and 183 is currently held up, waiting on the Texas Department of Transportation's environmental clearance phase for the segment to clear.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Director of Public Private Partnerships Nate Asplund and Assistant Vice President of Corporate Real Estate Development Mark Ude spoke at the meeting as well.

Asplund said BNSF and Union Pacific Railway are continuing to work with the North Central Texas Council of Governments to fund and begin work on surface improvements at Tower 55, the congested rail yard at the corner of I-35W and I-30. A portion of funding for surface improvements is expected to come from federal stimulus funds, and another portion from private funds from BNSF and Union Pacific.

Surface improvements would include 9,000 new feet of track running north and south to allow more trains to move through the rail intersection, signal improvements, railroad crossing improvements, and rail bridge improvements to existing bridges which run over Rosedale Street and Lancaster Avenue, Asplund said.

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