

# High-speed rail project moves forward following RPA approval

BY ANNA LOTZ AND KARA MCINTYRE

A high-speed rail project looking to connect Houston to Dallas took two steps forward in September.

The Federal Railway Administration granted the Rule of Particular Applicability—or RPA—to Texas Central, the company overseeing the project, on Sept. 4.

RPAs are regulations that apply to a specific railroad or a specific type of operation to ensure a project's safety, according to the FRA.

A little over a week later, on Sept. 13, officials with Texas Central announced they signed a design-build agreement with civil engineering firms Salini Impregilo and Lane Construction Company to build the train.

The recent milestones put Texas Central on track to meet two crucial FRA requirements by 2020, officials said: the granting of the RPA and the completion of environmental permitting. From there, officials would look to finalize the financing of the project, and construction could follow closely

after, Texas Central CEO Carlos Aguilar said in a statement.

"We will meet or exceed all requirements the FRA mandates to ensure we have the safest high-speed rail system in the world," he said.

The agreements with Salini and Lane Construction set up the process by which the project will be designed and constructed, which entails an estimated \$14 billion of civil works. The two companies will take on the construction of the viaduct, which elevates the track across land, among other project elements. They will also work on the embankment sections along the Houston-to-Dallas route, the track system and all buildings and services that will house maintenance and other rail system equipment along the route.

"This agreement brings us one step closer to beginning construction of the civil infrastructure segments of the project," Aguilar said. "Salini-Lane's unmatched track record with rail infrastructure, and very specifically its

world-class high-speed rail expertise across the globe, will be central to the completion of America's first end-to-end high-speed rail system."

Texas Central's high-speed train is expected to require a \$20 billion investment by the time it is completed, according to the release. The high-speed train will connect Dallas and Houston, giving riders a 90-minute trip with a third stop in the Brazos Valley.

The high-speed rail project will be based on Central Japan Railway's Tokaido Shinkansen technology, which is the world's safest mass transportation system, according to the release. It has transported more than 10 billion passengers with no operational passenger fatalities or accidents since its deployment in 1964, the release said.

"With increasing congestion on our highways and airways, it is important that we look at alternative modes of transportation," said Robin Kemper, president of the American Society of Civil Engineers, in the release.

## PROPOSED ROUTE

Texas Central has acquired 30% of the land parcels needed to support land development, with most acquisitions occurring in Grimes and Leon counties.

..... Proposed route



## THE PROJECT WILL USE

<b>3 times</b> the concrete volume used in the Hoover Dam	<b>50,000</b> truckloads of materials
<b>1,100</b> miles of rails	

SOURCE: TEXAS CENTRAL/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER