

TEXRail's on-again, off-again opening is back on

BY GORDON DICKSON

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FORT WORTH

After three days of delays, TEXRail has been cleared to carry riders from downtown Fort Worth to DFW Airport and will open to the public Thursday morning.

Trinity Metro, the agency that built the 27-mile commuter rail line, on Monday afternoon received the federal approval it had been waiting for.

“Trinity Metro has received word from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) that the entire 27-mile TEXRail route has been approved for passenger service. We expect to begin full service from the T&P Station to DFW Airport’s Terminal B on Thursday, Jan. 10,” Trinity Metro officials said in a statement just before 4 p.m. Monday.

On Friday, Trinity Metro officials abruptly canceled plans to open the rail line to the public Saturday after a signal problem occurred while federal officials

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Community members and officials ride part of the TEXRail line during a celebratory first run on Dec. 31.

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were in town to give final approval for the rail line in Northeast Tarrant County. The cancellation came just hours before the modern, sleek trains were scheduled to begin hauling passengers, creating confusion among prospective riders who showed up expecting the stations to be open.

“On Friday afternoon, Jan. 4, Trinity Metro discovered a signal issue that interrupted train operations. We determined the issue was caused by a hardware installation problem by our signal contractor,” Trinity Metro officials said in the state-

ment. “We are testing each piece of hardware to make sure that all components are working properly before we begin passenger service.”

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price was fielding media questions about the TEXRail delay Monday afternoon when she got word that the commuter line had received final federal approval.

“That’s exciting news,” she said, adding that she intends to take the train to DFW Airport next time she needs to travel on city business.

The rail line will connect downtown Fort



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A section of TEXRail that runs under Spur 280, pictured, had to be certified by the the Federal Railroad Administration before trains could travel under it.

Worth to stations in North Richland Hills, Grapevine and DFW Airport.

Officials from those cities were caught off guard by the postpone-

ment of TEXRail service, but maintained that they had no reason to doubt that Trinity Metro would get the glitches fixed, and get the trains running

promptly.

“Trinity Metro has been open with us in communicating about TEXRail,” Oscar Trevino, North Richland Hills mayor, said in an interview Monday morning, before TEXRail received final approval. “I have to believe they aren’t telling us more now because they don’t know.”

In 2013, the type of rail cars used by TEXRail came under fire for being too light and modern for their own good. The cars, which are manufactured by Stadler Rail of Bussnang, Switzerland, sometimes had trouble making electrical connections with the railroad tracks — something known as “shunting” in the rail industry — which could lead to incidents in which

the trains disappear from dispatchers’ monitors or fail to trigger railroad crossing arms.

But officials from Stadler said the cars used for TEXRail are an improved version of their vehicle that includes more wheels and a better connection with the tracks.

“I haven’t heard anything else. I assume that if there were any major concerns, we would be aware of them,” said Grapevine Mayor William D. Tate, whose city raised its sales tax to take part in TEXRail and has a comprehensive transit-oriented development planned for the city’s historical downtown area.

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