

NSF TO FUND STUDY OF RAIL LINE'S IMPACT ON CITY AREA

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DALLAS, Texas, Dec. 5 -- The University of Texas at Dallas issued the following news release:

The National Science Foundation has awarded a UT Dallas team of researchers in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, \$1,000,178 to study neighborhood change in Fair Park in South Dallas.

The research team will study and catalog the neighborhood before and after the extension of the DART rail line into South Dallas.

"Our proposed research takes advantage of a unique opportunity to study a poor neighborhood that will likely experience change within the next five years," said Principal Investigator Jim Murdoch, head of the economics program.

The \$1.8 billion DART project is scheduled to open Sept. 14 of next year. The 28-mile rail line will run through Deep Ellum, Baylor University Medical Center and Fair Park. The researchers believe this publicly driven investment will noticeably change the Fair Park neighborhood. Three of their main objectives are to:

- * Measure the changes in this low-income, ethnic minority, urban neighborhood.
- * Measure the changes in the perceptions, preferences and behaviors of the residents in the neighborhood.
- * Examine how changes influence children's educational outcomes.

The research will require collaboration among economists, geographers, public health and education researchers, as well as public and nonprofit entities in the Dallas area. UT Dallas professors Catherine Eckel and Daniel Griffith, and Margaret Caughy from the UT School of Public Health are co-principle investigators. The Dallas Independent School District and the UT Dallas **Institute for Urban Policy Research** will also play important roles in the research.

"When you look at a place like Fair Park, we don't have any science that tells us what to do," said Murdoch. "Ultimately we'd like to recommend where development dollars might go. This study will enable us to do that."

Fair Park, located southeast of downtown Dallas, spans more than 2,000 acres and has approximately 26,000 residents. It has long been one of the poorest areas in Dallas.

The research team will use observations of neighborhood conditions, household surveys, experimental measures, reports from students, parents and teachers, and school district data. The **Institute for Urban Policy Research** has recruited and trained a team to begin collecting some of this data.

Despite enormous federal, state and local economic development resources intended to improve neighborhoods, there has been very little scientific research about the impact. By the end of this three year study, the researchers hope to find out how public investment changes the physical and social landscape of a neighborhood and the well-being of the children and adults connected to it.

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