

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from DART Board Member Randall Bryant on Sales Tax Reduction

It is unfortunate to witness Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) member city councils consider and approve adversarial resolutions against our transit agency. Although the timing and language of these resolutions are similar, the core issues impacting these cities desiring to defund DART are not. Some cities claim the necessity of additional sales tax dollars to economically compete with neighboring municipalities, some need it to rescue poorly invested retirement plans, while others just don't see the value of the DART system and view the ridership as "trash".

Regardless of the rationale, the signal is that accessibility to public transportation for the most vulnerable residents in their communities is low enough on the totem pole to explore a financial reduction. It must first be acknowledged for the cities that are looking at this monetarily, all DART member cities (Addison, Carrollton, Cockrell Hill, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Garland, Glenn Heights, Highland Park, Irving, Plano, Richardson, Rowlett, and University Park) have increased their general fund budgets in total an average 26% over the past five years. The notion that these cities would divert 25% of their sales tax money away from DART and instantly create these economic opportunities, parks, streets, and so much more for their residents when they've continuously had the annual opportunity to do so yet chose not to is highly questionable. It is also noteworthy to point out that while our member cities annual budgets have increased an average of 26% over the past five years, the total average population across the member cities has only increased 2% over that same period. If the assertion is there should be a linear relationship between DART's reduction in ridership justifying the cause for less revenue, should taxpayers ask for justification as to the increasing annual budgets reflecting your population growth, or lack thereof?

Nevertheless, with an expected FY 2024-2025 sales tax revenue of \$910.2M to DART from our member cities, I do agree that the councils, city managers and voters should always ensure there is a true value in the DART penny.

We've all heard the common phrase, "a penny saved, is a penny earned". At DART, your penny is earned, and it goes very far. According to the American Public Transportation Association (ATPA), every \$1 invested in public transportation generates approximately \$5 in economic returns. Of the five cities that have passed a resolution to reduce ¼ cent of their sales tax contribution to DART (Carrollton, Farmers Branch, Irving, Plano and Rowlett), no city can deny the hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact generated through numerous transient-oriented developments adjacent to and surrounding DART light-rail stations within each of their respective cities. No city can deny the temporary construction jobs and permanent employment opportunities created for their residents by these developments. No city can deny the

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increased ad valorem taxes collected, and sales taxes generated by these developments. And, no city can deny the enhanced vibrancy, expanded tourism and excess walkability spurred by these developments. The value of DART goes well beyond ridership!

Should the DART Board, collective member cities, or state legislature authorize a successful referendum to reduce our revenue, it will result in a reduction of service. It is unconscionable to assume otherwise. Many options from my personal perspective exist including consolidation of bus routes, increased schedule intervals for buses, light rail and commuter rail, as well as the reduction up to removal of the GoLink service. Excluding our paratransit operations, GoLink expends our agency's highest subsidy per passenger, it is highly questionable to me as to its equitable distribution of zones agency-wide, and it is unfathomable to me that I would subject our dedicated service riders who utilize bus and rail to stand in the pouring rain, sweltering heat, or frigid cold for hour-long wait times while the door-to-door service provided by GoLink continues.

In these times of uncertainty, it is important that you hear directly from your board members as to their intentions for our agency. That is why I want you to know that I strongly oppose the reduction of sales tax contributions to DART in any form, and more importantly I remain committed to working internally with our Board of Directors and CEO to develop a legislative agenda, board policies, and operational standards that will strengthen our agency and work externally with our member cities, legislature, stakeholders, riders, and voters to make DART a better system for all. I understand that member city councils will act on what they believe are the best interests for their residents just as I will for the riders of DART. It is my hope however, that an understanding will soon be revealed that this should not be a city versus DART debate, because what is good for DART is good for our member cities and what is harmful to DART is harmful to our member cities as well. A reduction in revenue is harmful to DART!

Sincerely,



Randall Bryant
DART Board Member