**Region’s Transit agencies respond to needs of community; ready to welcome you back**

Things are slowly starting to return to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the region’s public transit agencies remind North Texans that they are ready to get people where they need to go – when riders are ready.

While ridership was greatly affected by the pandemic, transit has continued to serve an essential function for those who need it to get to work, school and other spots throughout the region.

Since the beginning, transit vehicles have provided transportation to healthcare professionals, first responders, service industry professionals, as well as other essential workers. Transit has also helped seniors and people with disabilities who require help getting meals, medicine, necessities and life-sustaining services.

Trinity Metro, for example, provided thousands of paratransit trips to medical appointments and grocery stores in November and December 2020 alone, as well as trips for dialysis treatment.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) provided transportation for the Methodist Dallas Medical Center’s COVID-19 vaccination event in Dallas in February of this year.

The Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) used buses to distribute personal protective equipment such as 225,000 masks and hand sanitizer to its Denton social service agency partners to distribute to its clients, while DART, through eight unique programs and several partnerships, helped deliver nearly 200,000 meals and care packages. These eight programs included such initiatives as paratransit grocery delivery, senior care package delivery, school meal kit delivery and more. DART also supported the Dallas, Garland and Richardson independent school districts by using its buses and vans to deliver more than 75,000 meals to families who normally relied on their schools' food programs.

These are just a few examples of the work the agencies have done to help their communities through the pandemic. Trinity Metro, DART and DCTA have been working to continue providing a safe riding experience.

All three agencies have been following strict cleaning protocols since the pandemic began, and the federal government continues requiring masks on public transit vehicles. There are also dividers between drivers and riders to promote the health and safety of both customers and employees.

Trinity Metro, DART and DCTA signed on to the American Public Transit Association’s “Health and Safety Commitments Program,” signifying their pledge to instill confidence in customers and to protect their health and safety.

Public transportation is safe. Studies around the world show no known link between the coronavirus and public transit.

To reassure the community even further, transit providers are working every day to keep their riders and employees safe and informed. Riders are asked to share the responsibility by doing things everyone has become accustomed to since March 2020.

Wear a mask.

Wash or sanitize your hands.

Practice social distancing on board.

Do not ride when you are ill.

You can even have your fare ready to go or pay through the DART-maintained GoPass app, which riders of all three transit agencies can use.  Riders of DART buses, light rail and Dallas Streetcar vehicles are now also able to pay with a contactless credit card, debit card, or a payment-enabled mobile phone or wearable device.Other options are Trinity Metro’s tap card for local daily, weekly, and monthly tickets and DART’s GoPass tap card.

As a key part of the region’s transportation system, public transit is counted on to help move almost 8 million people. The transit agencies are working daily to ensure the vehicles not only run on time but are clean and ready to welcome riders back.

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