



Transit Agencies Respond to Needs of Community Amid COVID-19

With things starting to return to normal as the world continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, the region's public transit agencies are prepared to get people where they need to go – when they are ready.

While ridership has been 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.

[Dallas Area Rapid Transit](#), [Trinity Metro](#), and the [Denton County Transportation Authority](#) are working with the [North Central Texas Council of Governments](#) to develop educational initiatives to help improve North Texans' comfort level with transit.

"Our teams have worked tirelessly to create a clean and secure environment, with a focus on providing the highest level of safety for our customers and employees throughout this pandemic," DART President and CEO Nadine Lee said. "As the region continues to reopen, we want all of the residents of North Texas to know that DART is ready to serve them, and that we remain committed to keeping our customers and employees safe."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, transit vehicles have provided transportation to healthcare professionals, first responders, service industry professionals, and other essential workers. Transit has also helped seniors and people with disabilities who require assistance getting meals, medicine, necessities, and life-sustaining services. A few examples stand out.

Trinity Metro provided thousands of trips to medical appointments and grocery stores, as well as trips for dialysis treatment. During the pandemic, the agency also added two ZIPZONE on-demand rideshare programs and expanded ZIPZONE service areas to provide increased mobility options for the community. In addition, Trinity Metro has provided nearly 50,000 free rides to job seekers since September 2020. The agency also partnered with the Tarrant Area Food Bank to host a food drive that served 268 households and 1,151 individuals.

DART, through eight 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.

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 clients.

“We are thankful to live in a region that values cooperative problem-solving,” DCTA CEO Raymond Suarez said. “When the opportunity to help distribute PPE to the community presented itself, we were happy to assist. We were able to use our buses to provide an essential need at a critical time, but we could not have done it without our valued partners in the community. At DCTA, our top priority is safety, and I’m proud of our agency’s partnership with the United Way and Denton County to source and deliver critical PPE to help the many communities DCTA serves.”

All three transit agencies have also assisted in keeping people well, providing transportation to vaccine sites in their service areas. In addition to helping keep their communities healthy, Trinity Metro, DART, and DCTA have followed strict cleaning protocols since the pandemic began to keep riders and transit employees safe. All three providers 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.

The federal government is also requiring masks on public transit vehicles through Sept. 13. And there are dividers between drivers and riders to promote health and safety of both customers and employees.

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. Other options are Trinity Metro's tap card for local daily, weekly, and monthly tickets and DART's GoPass® Tap card.

"By adhering to strict protocols, we have been able to maintain safe, healthy operations to assist essential workers, first responders, seniors, and others who rely on public transportation to get where they need to go," said Bob Baulsir, President and CEO, Trinity Metro. "As the region continues to open and residents return to their offices, Trinity Metro and our North Texas transit partners have an important role to play to get us moving again."

About the North Central Texas Council of Governments:

NCTCOG is a voluntary association of local governments established in 1966 to assist local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. NCTCOG's purpose is to strengthen both the individual and collective power of local governments and to help them recognize regional opportunities, eliminate unnecessary duplication and make joint decisions.

NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas, which is centered on the two urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth. Currently, NCTCOG has 238 member governments including 16 counties, 169 cities, 22 school districts and 31 special districts. For more information on the NCTCOG Transportation Department, visit www.nctcog.org/trans.

About the Regional Transportation Council:

The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) of the North Central Texas Council of Governments has served as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for regional transportation planning in the Dallas-Fort Worth area since 1974. The MPO works in cooperation with the region's transportation providers to address the complex transportation needs of the rapidly growing metropolitan area. The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area includes Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, and Wise counties. The RTC's 44 members include local elected or appointed officials from the metropolitan area and representatives from each of the area's transportation providers. More information can be found at www.nctcog.org.

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