



Editorial: Promise along DART's Green Line

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This newspaper has not hesitated to express exasperation at the disappointing trend in overall ridership on DART's light-rail network.

Then there is the rest of the story.

The Green Line continues to slowly build momentum in only its second full year of service, and the line is generating renewed development activity in communities that have waited more than two decades for rail service, Carrollton and Farmers Branch.

In a roundup of transit-oriented construction, *Dallas Morning News* real estate editor Steve Brown reported last week that initial-phase apartment projects are moving ahead near rail stations in both cities and that developers are already discussing possible second phases.

Spurring real estate development is a big part of DART's long-term promise, and it's good to see member cities positioned to make the most of it.

In full operation since December 2010, the Green Line has been the only one of DART's three light-rail lines to consistently gain passengers in monthly ridership reports. The Red Line has been flat, and the Blue Line has been on a slide.

DART has not found the formula for attracting and keeping passengers on its older, established lines. But the Green Line, at least for now, seems to be prospering by serving major employment centers, including the Parkland-UT Southwestern hospital district.

The district itself had a building boom of apartments before the national economic nose dive, and more are planned. Now it's the suburbs' turn.

The multibillion-dollar cost of the light-rail system makes sense as a civic investment only if it succeeds in moving prodigious numbers of people, which has been a struggle, and also helps transform the cityscape through opportunities to build new, compact, sustainable communities.

On the horizon, successful transit-oriented development should provide DART with future rail passengers in a cycle that benefits both. It will take years to realize the promise, but we believe it's real and worth taking to the entire city.

Three months ago, city leaders announced a \$30 million apartment-retail-office complex near the DART Blue Line station that serves the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in southern Dallas. Through a special district, that project is tied to the fortunes of development around DART's Mockingbird and Lovers Lane stations. DART is in talks to lease out its Mockingbird parking lots for a proposed 200,000-square-foot mixed-use project.

Meanwhile, we hope to see the full benefits of the Green Line extending all the way to its terminus in southeast Dallas' Pleasant Grove neighborhood, around DART's Buckner station. About a half-mile away there is an Eastfield College campus that DART passengers reach by foot. Or should we say *manage* to reach by foot.

Long stretches of Buckner have no sidewalks, which practically defies DART rail passengers to walk where they're going. The city needs to do something there, and anywhere else the landscape is pedestrian-unfriendly around transit stations.

What good is a transit station if you can't use your feet to get there?

