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Brookings study finds Dallas jobs and workers among least connected in the country via public transit



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By Tristan Hallman
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Two-and-a-half weeks before the July 30 opening of the expanded Orange Line in Las Colinas, the Brookings Institution has released a new study that ranks North Texas among the worst regions in the country for connecting employers and employees by public transportation.

The research group's study ranked the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metropolitan area 81st out of 100 metropolitan areas in the country based on the percentage of jobs located near public transportation. The study found that roughly 58 percent of jobs in the area are located within three-quarters of a mile of public transportation.

That's mostly in line with the rest of the state. The ranking is slightly worse than Austin-Round Rock and marginally better than Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown.

Broken down, the numbers show that 78.2 percent of jobs in the three major cities are near public transportation. Only 43.6 percent of jobs in the suburbs have transit access.

Much of the low ranking can be attributed to Arlington, which lacks public transportation, and the sprawl of North Texas suburbs, said Adie Tomer, the study's author.

"The city of Dallas has very good transit — some of the best in the country, actually," Tomer said. "The problem is we know that most people don't live and work in Dallas. They either do one or the other."

But a significantly lower percentage of workers are well-connected to their workplaces by public transit. The study found that less than 15 percent of jobs in North Texas are accessible within 90 minutes of all residents by public transportation. In that category, the Dallas area ranked 86th in the country.

Tomer said that's a testament to the size of the metropolitan area alone. And the fact that the T in Fort Worth and DART are limited by their jurisdictions.

"If people want to move tens of miles away from the cities, the transit agencies can't do much to service them," Tomer said.

The expansion of the Orange Line to Las Colinas, a major business center, and the park-and-ride in northwest Plano are meant to help bridge that gap. Both will open July 30.

But access is just one piece of the problem for transit agencies. As Michael Lindenberger wrote about a month ago, DART's challenge is to actually get people and companies on board.



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Transportation writer Michael Lindenberger, reporter Theodore Kim and editorial writer Rodger Jones cover the subject from tollways to traffic, roads to rail. They invite tips and feedback from decision-makers and commuters alike.



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Zaldor Khrabree · ★Top Commenter

The question remains and is never really discussed. Why are so many people traveling to another place to sit in front of a computer to work? A great many jobs can be performed nearly anywhere on the face of the planet where you can get onto the Internet, yet so many companies cannot release their micromanagement state of mind. The question should not be why is it so hard to use public transit to get to work, but why do you need to "get to work" in the first place?

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Pat Patterson · ★Top Commenter · University of Missouri

Sorry, but most jobs require a person to physically be there - schools, police, fire, universities, hospitals, industries, etc. Als,o it is actually harder working at home because of distractions (children, pets, laundry, cleaning house, etc.) and having to stick to a schedule. Trying to use public transport isn't particularely easy and is time consuming. Who wants to stand out in the heat, rain and cold? Not to mention having to get up much earlier in many cases and getting home late. Then you have to wait until you get home to do everything else that you could have done in the day if you had a car.

Reply · Like · 2 hours ago



Tracey Edwards · ★Top Commenter

Pat Patterson As Zaldor said...a great many jobs (he never said most or all) CAN be performed at home, mine included. I have to leave to drive there in a little while because for some reason my employer thinks you are not working if your tail is not in the chair...even if they only email me or call when they want anything.

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Robert Hutchings · Dallas, Texas

Having lived in the Southeastern Pennsylvania area for 5 years, I experienced the best situation that mass-transit offers. I drove from my suburban apartment to a train station less than 1 mile away. I waited inside the climate-controlled train station for my train and then boarded my train which was also climate-controlled. The train took me into downtown Philadelphia where I worked, and then took me back home at 5:30 PM. A monthly "pass" was about \$100 back then (1990's) and gave access to all trains, subways, "el", trolleys and buses.

My point is that mass-transit CAN work and be very effective. But, the city and it's suburbs must cooperate and provide transit where people live AND work, not just one or the other.

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