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Uncle Sam to send \$1 million to Fort Worth to kick-start bike-share program

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By Michael Lindenberg

mlindenberg@dallasnews.com
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Bike-share programs, a fixture in some international cities like Paris, are gaining in popularity in America. San Antonio, Oklahoma City, and Denver -- shown here during the 2008 Democratic National Convention -- all have bike share programs. Soon, Fort Worth will too. (Bloomberg)

The Obama Administration has awarded The T in Fort Worth about \$1 million to build a bike-share program. I couldn't be more jealous.

Here's how the U.S. Department of Transportation described the grant, announced this morning by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on [his blog](#): "To further improve mobility and connectivity between popular destinations, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority will implement the Fort Worth Livability Bike Sharing Program. Bike stations will be placed in areas that have dense neighborhoods with high activity and access to a variety of transit connections. Bike stations will also be placed at the intermodal hub in Ft. Worth."

Joan Hunter, spokeswoman for The T, said she learned of the grant through a call from the city this morning and was still tracking down details. But she said the transit agency has been working on a plan to run a pilot program for the bike-share in hopes of "being a catalyst for the city of Fort Worth."

She said if the program works, officials are hoping the city will expand it and set up the Fort Worth bike share effort as a standalone entity. She said the agency was hoping to have the bike-share pilot project underway by the end of this year, but was still looking for the necessary funding. The federal grant will help a lot, she said.

The plan will be modeled in many ways on the San Antonio bike share program, which puts computerized bike racks at key places throughout downtown. Users can check out the bike with a credit card, or swipe a membership card if they are on a monthly or year plan. A user buys a specified period of time to use the bike, say an hour or three, and when time is up the bike must be parked back in one of the racks — either the one it was checked out from or any of the others.

The transit grants showed nearly \$800 million on agencies throughout the U.S. and Fort Worth's pile of dough was considerably smaller than many of the other grants, including several that topped \$10 million in Texas. But in terms of putting something new on the ground, the money may have most noticeable impact.

In Dallas, DART snagged \$12 million to cover costs of its new fleet of Compressed Natural Gas powered buses, which will begin arriving late this year and continue over the next three years as the agency replaces its entire fleet.

That order, for more than \$200 million, will bring about 450 new buses to DART's system, and will be a mix of traditional large buses with new, smaller vehicles for use on less-populated routes. It was billed as the largest order of CNG-fueled buses in the country.

I've asked DART whether the \$12 million grant had been baked into the budget already, or whether the new money means that DART can now spend \$12 million it had planned to use for the buses on something else. I'll let you know when I hear.



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