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New DART stop intends to boost rail connections

by [Renee Hansen](#), [Nick Todaro](#) July 16, 2014

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Dallas Area Rapid Transit's new station on its Orange Line at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport opens Aug. 18. The station, located in Terminal A, enables commuters and travelers alike to have access to any city along the DART rail route.

The newest addition to the Orange Line takes riders from the airport to Belt Line Station and represents the completion of the rail line that runs from Parker Road Station in Plano.

DART has been in operation for 30 years, and from the beginning the transit company had a goal to expand its route to DFW Airport, said Morgan Lyons, assistant vice president of communications and community engagement for DART.

"The airport has always been an important destination for us," he said. "It's been a natural progression to get to this point."

While cities near the airport are not directly a part of the DART rail system, commuters who live nearby can travel by car, park at the airport and have access to DART connections, said Cynthia Vega, manager of media relations for DFW Airport.

Business advantages

The airport is in the heart of the Metroplex, and with 60,000 jobs found within the travel hub, Lyons said DART is targeting workers who desire an alternative to driving.

The Terminal A station also forms a point of convenience for both employers and employees, he said. While employees have more convenient access to employment centers, the DART Orange Line also provides businesses located in and around the airport access to a larger labor pool, Lyons said.

DART's rail schedule accommodates early and late commuters, with trains starting before 4 a.m. and running until just after 1 a.m., he said.

The rail line's connection to Dallas would also allow for business travelers who have meetings in downtown Dallas to board the train, ride it into the city, conduct meetings and be back to the airport within the same day.

A trip to downtown Dallas would be approximately 50 minutes to an hour from the airport for commuters, which is time that could be spent working rather than driving, Vega said.

"It'll be a long commute, but it's all time you can be productive," Lyons said. "You can save wear and tear on your vehicle, and you don't have to fight traffic."

Easing traffic

Andy Bell, vice president of planning for the airport, said congestion is the main driver of the rail project, which, if utilized, he said will offer a more consistent and reliable mode of transportation. He said a current DART forecast

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projects 2,700 riders per day once the new airport station opens. The number is also expected to rise significantly as time goes on, Bell said.

"There is a master vision of rail connectivity in this region," he said. "This is the first big step."

Airport benefits

Vega said DART's new station will mark DFW Airport as the third-largest U.S. airport with direct passenger light rail service, just behind O'Hare International Airport and ranking ahead of John F. Kennedy International Airport, according to a study by the Airports Council International North America.

Vega said the airport constantly looks to raise the bar on all levels, and by having a rail connection, DFW Airport will be able to offer services like those of other international airports.

Because of the increase of international visitors to the airport, Bell said the new station will serve those individuals' expectations of boarding a rail line right out of the airport.

"It's all about providing our international customers with something they already expect," Vega said.

"We want to continue to grow as an intermodal hub," Bell said. "In that way we're becoming similar to our global comparisons."

Bell said the rail line will also benefit the airport via saving money on capital costs such as infrastructure and construction.

"At the end of the day, [the rail line] helps [the airport] not to have to build as many parking spaces," he said.

Future connections

Grapevine City Manager Bruno Rumbelow said rail connectivity will serve as the biggest asset to the city once the Fort Worth Transportation Authority links DFW Airport with TEX Rail.

Rumbelow said this commuter rail system will have stations at DFW Airport's Terminal B and on Grapevine's Main Street, among others, in 2018.

"From a business and tourism standpoint, the connection between the light rail going east and commuter rail going west is something that's been talked about quite a bit," he said.

As the opening day for the DART station approaches, Bell said multiple sources have been working to get the word out.

"We as an airport have partnered very closely with DART and The T to do what we can to encourage people to consider using rail," he said. "It's a very big community effort to do this."

"Any time you can improve access to the airport, you're going to be able to help the entire North Texas economy grow," Lyons said. "It's something that helps the North Texas region stand out from other regions."

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