

Countdown to the Final Four

Final Four organizers: Avoid Dallas traffic madness by taking DART

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An influx of basketball fans, concerts with big-name acts and ongoing highway construction could make navigating North Texas roads and rails tricky this week.

In fact, the NCAA Final Four games are likely to be the smoothest transportation experience for locals. After all, AT&T Stadium is well-versed in hosting big events.

It's the ancillary events in downtown Dallas — especially the March Madness Music Festival — that will require people to do some prior strategizing. And event organizers have some advice for getting to the concerts and the Bracket Town fan experience.

"We're asking people to ride DART first and foremost," said Lamar Green, part of the North Texas Local Organizing Committee.

Dallas Area Rapid Transit will run extra trains on its four lines through downtown this weekend. The TRE, which links Dallas and Fort Worth, will run Sunday.

DART, planners and police are expecting hundreds of people heading to the free concerts to take trains. The concerts are Friday through Sunday at Reunion Park, on the southwestern edge of downtown. Bracket Town is at Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center a few blocks away. That event runs Friday through April 7.

DART is using four of its downtown-area stations as access points to the events. The agency wants to prevent all train passengers from funneling into one single station and overloading it. Passengers are asked to use the Victory, West End, Union and Convention Center stations.

DART employees, volunteers and signs will direct passengers to the station they should use. Which of the four it will be depends on the line passengers ride and the direction from which they're coming.

DART will run bus shuttles from the Victory and West End stations to the events. Both the concerts and Bracket Town are within walking distance from the Union and Convention Center stations.

"The city will be very pedestrian friendly that week," said Tony Fay, who is also part of the Final Four committee.

People who wait until late in the day to head downtown may want to pay attention while they're on the trains or at any stations. Organizers plan to inform DART when they're nearing capacity at the free concerts. Once capacity is reached, organizers won't let anyone else in.

Organizers and DART plan to use social media to spread the word. DART will also use its messaging boards at stations and employees to tell people along the various train lines that the park is already full. They're hoping to stop people from continuing to descend on downtown when they're just going to be turned away at the concert gates.

Stay away from I-35E

Organizers also have advice for people intent on skipping the trains and driving into downtown.

"Avoid [Interstate 35E] where you can," Fay said.

Drivers are being warned that the best way to enter downtown will be from the north, along Woodall Rogers Freeway, or from the east, where Interstate 45 and U.S. Highway 75 converge. Even though the concerts will be at the former Reunion Arena site, the worst exit to use is Reunion Boulevard.

That street will have controlled access all weekend. It's only being kept open for people trying to get to Reunion Tower or the Hyatt Regency hotel. Streets around the hotel also will be closed intermittently throughout the week.

Folks who haven't been in downtown for a bit should prepare to navigate construction. Interstates 30 and 35E are undergoing a massive reconstruction project. There are likely to be exit closures and lane realignments some motorists aren't used to.

Parking for Bracket Town is available at the convention center. The Lamar Street ramp from the convention center to eastbound Interstate 30 and both directions of I-35E will be closed, so folks will want to plan a different route to get out of downtown. Parking for the concerts will be wherever motorists can find an available spot in downtown.

"Plan to park as close to Union Station as you can," Green said.

Getting to games

I-30 will provide the easiest east-west access to AT&T Stadium for the Final Four games, just as it does for Dallas Cowboys and Texas Rangers games. The Texas Department of Transportation is reconstructing the HOV lanes on I-30. They'll remain closed.

The area's transit agencies also are teaming up to provide transit to the stadium for the games. Folks can use any of the region's train networks to access the TRE line.

Passengers should get off at the CentrePort Station. Bus shuttles will take people from there to the stadium. A special Fan Express Transit Pass is required to use transit for the games.

Follow Brandon Formby on Twitter at

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Final Four: Downtown events by train

Dallas Area Rapid Transit is running extra trains this weekend to get people into and out of downtown for the Final Four concerts and Bracket Town. There are also bus shuttles that will take passengers from train stations to events. The downtown station you will use depends on the line you ride. Here's a look at how to get to this weekend's events by train:

Red and Blue Lines, from north and northeast

For concerts, leave the train at Union Station and walk to Reunion Park. For Bracket Town, get off at Convention Center Station and walk to the convention center.

Orange Line, from north

Get off at West End Station. A shuttle connects to Reunion Park and Bracket Town. You can also walk to either location.

Green Line, from southeast

Get off at West End Station. A shuttle connects to Reunion Park and Bracket Town. You can also walk. From 6 to 8 p.m. Saturday only, special Green Line trains will run directly to Union Station. You can walk to the concert or Bracket Town from there.

Green and Orange lines, from north and northwest

Get off at Victory Station. A shuttle connects to Reunion Park and Bracket Town.

Trinity Railway Express from west

For concerts, get off at Union Station and walk to Reunion Park. For Bracket Town, get off at Union Station and walk to the convention center. There will be TRE service on Sunday.

Red and blue lines, from southwest and south

Get off at Convention Center Station. For concerts, walk to Reunion Park. For Bracket Town, walk to the convention center.

Source: DART

Who to follow

For up-to-the-minute updates on getting to events, follow these entities on Twitter.

@finalfour

@MMMUSICFestival

@dartmedia

@dallaspd

Tailgating at AT&T Stadium

Tailgating is only allowed in specific parking spaces, which are along the perimeter of parking lots 4-7 and 10-15. Tailgating spaces are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Final Four Mass Transit

North Texas' transit authorities are providing rail and bus service to AT&T Stadium from throughout the region for the Final Four games. The only way to use transit for the games is to buy a Fan Express Transit Pass.

Cost: \$10 for a one-day pass for Saturday or Monday; \$30 for a four-day pass for Friday to Monday

Access: The pass provides access to the full systems of Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Denton County Transportation Authority, The T and TRE.

Game day: Take the TRE to the CentrePort Station. Bus shuttles will take you directly to the stadium.

Purchase: Download the DART GoPass app or visit dart.org/finalfour

March Madness Concert Series

Drivers should not expect to have access to Reunion Boulevard east of Interstate 35E. Parking for Bracket Town is available at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. Parking for the concerts will be at any available downtown parking lot. Organizers suggest coming into downtown from the north or east. Dallas police will be directing traffic through downtown. Here are some suggested exits from the highways that form downtown's boundaries.

1. From northbound Interstate 35E

Exit eastbound Commerce Street.

Exit to eastbound Woodall Rogers Freeway and take the Field and Griffin exit or Pearl exit.

2. From southbound Interstate 35E

Exit to westbound Interstate 30 and then take the Lamar exit or Cadiz and Griffin exit.

Exit to eastbound Woodall Rogers Freeway and take the Field and Griffin exit or Pearl exit.

Do not take the Reunion Boulevard exit.

3. From eastbound Interstate 30

Exit Beckley Avenue before downtown. Take Beckley to eastbound Commerce Street. Take Commerce into downtown.

Exit Lamar Street.

Exit Cadiz and Griffin streets.

Do not take the Reunion Boulevard exit.

4. From westbound Interstate 30

Exit Cesar Chavez Boulevard.

Exit Ervay Street.

5. From northbound Interstate 45

Exit Main Street West.

Exit to westbound Interstate 30 ramp and exit Ervay Street before merging onto I-30.

Exit westbound Woodall Rogers Freeway and take the St. Paul or Field street exits.


6. From southbound U.S. 75

Exit Ross Avenue


Exit Good Latimer/Downtown . From there, take Good Latimer or Live Oak into downtown.

Exit westbound Woodall Rogers Freeway and take the Pearl, St. Paul or Field street exits.

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J and J Grapevine


Of course, the argument could be raised yet again that the stadium would have been better served had it been accessible via rail transit - either DART or TRE. That could have relieved a good portion of the need for cars, trucks and buses - perhaps as high as 25% fewer as experienced in other metro areas with transit-accessible venues. In the long-term, there may be a light rail line connecting the Silver Biscuit at some point in the future. Stranger things have happened.

The article doesn't address the fact that there will also be a competing event this next weekend at Texas Motor Speedway - whose promoters proclaim it will draw more fans than the Final Four.

If you aren't going to the race, the games, or any of the events, the best advice is to leave the Metroplex until April 7th. That, or cozy up with your flat screen and avoid the madness entirely.

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James Southall

Interesting headline, since AT&T Stadium is famously THE ONLY NFL stadium in the country not served by public transportation??

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David L

And that is a good thing.

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No problem. I avoid Arlington completely, ever since Jerruh pressured the government to give him other people's land and snookered the taxpayers into giving him yet another stadium.

7 hours ago

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