

news

Morning News

sell naming rights for its rail lines and stations

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marks after corporate sponsors could soon expand beyond ballparks, stadiums and concert venues. The next Area Rapid Transit light-rail lines and transit centers.

g a policy that would offer the names of its four train lines and 61 train stations to corporations willing to dole out y officials estimate they could bring in up to \$24.5 million over 15 years if there are enough takers.

ings like the AT&T Blue Line or the State Farm Bush Turnpike Station on any DART maps just yet. The agency ing companies until this summer.

like about a year before any deal goes through.

aming rights as a way to secure more revenue. The agency's main source of funds is a 1-cent sales tax from each of its 13 member cities. Naming rights could be bringing in an estimated \$4.9 million a year in about 11 years or so. That's about what DART earns from selling advertising on buses and trains.

And while folks who regularly use DART trains to get to work or move about town would see the sponsored names the most, they're not the target audience.

"The non-rider audience is of the highest value," senior consumer programs manager Bob English told DART board members this month.

The agency is using a metric typical to the advertising industry to determine the value of naming parts of its system.

The value is determined by how many views per 1,000 people a renamed line, station or transit center would get. Those views would come from directional signs outside stations and centers or from putting signs on rail overpasses that motorists drive under throughout North Texas.

DART's not the only transit agency to test the corporate naming waters. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority renamed a bus route the "Health Line" through a naming partnership with two hospitals. English said San Diego's transit authority has an agreement in the works. He said Boston's agency recently tried to get sponsors but didn't acquire any.

DART's lines and stations would retain their current names. The sponsor's name would just be added.

The agency will try to sell the rights to a line before renaming the stations on it. English said the rail lines would garner a corporate partner the most visibility — and the agency the most revenue. DART estimates it could make \$1.1 million to \$1.4 million a year on naming rights for a rail line.

English said selling the stations' names first could prevent a sponsor's competitor from buying the rights to a line in which it would otherwise have interest.

"If you start selling stations first, you lose the value of the line," he said.

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