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DART chief tells Senate panel federal transportation funds vital

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By **BRANDON FORMBY**

Transportation Writer

bformby@dallasnews.com

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Dallas Area Rapid Transit President and CEO Gary Thomas testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee Thursday about federal transportation funding. Congress is working on a bill that would renew the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, which provided \$105 billion to transportation projects over two years. That funding expires this year if the law isn't extended.

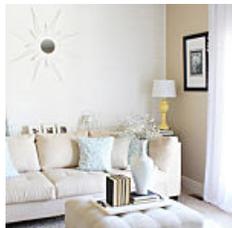
Thomas told the Housing, Transportation and Community Development subcommittee that DART managed to build the nation's longest light-rail network while three-fourths of its revenue sources remained stagnant.

He said that growth and high passenger loads are forcing the agency to replace the rail lines in downtown Dallas several years ahead of what was expected. That will come with a \$45 million to \$50 million price tag. While DART has already budgeted for that expense, Thomas told lawmakers that federal funding is vital if transportation agencies are to keep their systems in good repair and properly build for future demand.

"This strategy develops a program of interrelated projects which will be critical to respond to continued high regional growth trends, demands for system accessibility, expansion of new rail corridors outside our Service Area, and the development of a privately funded high speed rail system between Dallas and Houston, which is anticipated to open in 2021," Thomas said.

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