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Excitement around D/FW Airport's DART station begins to build



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DFW Airport DART Station Coming Soon

The Dallas Morning News takes a look at the new DFW International Airport DART station, opening in August.

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Next month's opening of a Dallas Area Rapid Transit light-rail station at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport can't come soon enough for Andrea Boughton.

The Irving resident, who lives along DART's Orange Line in Las Colinas, expressed excitement about the new DFW Airport Station on Wednesday as she helped her daughter check in on a flight headed for Chicago.

"I would have rather used it this morning than to drive," Boughton said at the airport's Gate A10, about 400 feet from where the station will open Aug. 18.

Boughton flies for work several times a year. She is among scores of frequent fliers, airport employees and international travelers who have waited decades for North Texas' prominent transit authority to tie its light-rail network into the region's biggest economic engine.

DART officials and a horde of media rode the 5-mile Orange Line expansion and toured the airport station Wednesday. The extension will run from Belt Line Station in Irving to the airport. It will create a direct connection from D/FW to downtown Dallas' West End Station.

"This really does connect a lot of people to major employment centers," said Gary Thomas, DART's president and executive director. "It connects a lot of people to the world."

The pending opening is considered a major step in Dallas' quest to brand itself as an international city. Atlanta and Chicago are the only American cities with busier airports that also have direct public transit connections between their urban cores and their airports.

"It's a major coup for the region," DART board member Rick Stopfer said Wednesday as he stood at the Orange Line's Belt Line Station platform.

DART officials estimate 1,200 people a day will use the station within a few years. Trains will run every 15 minutes during morning and evening peak hours and every 20 minutes all other times. DART is still working on the schedule.

Many passengers are expected to be airport employees. About 143,000 people either work at the airport or are based out of it.

"Workers want a very cost-effective, very convenient, very predictable way to get to work," said Jim Crites, the airport's vice president of operations.

Regional leaders also see the extension as an easy way to get visitors — especially from other countries — into downtown easily. The airport has flights to 55 international destinations and is expected to continue expanding both international and domestic flights.

The light-rail trip from the airport to West End Station will take about 50 minutes, officials said. From there, visitors can use the Red or Blue Lines to reach the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center and adjacent Omni Dallas Hotel.

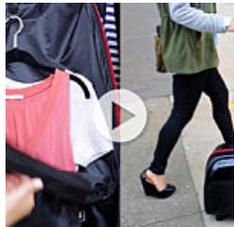
Passengers flying American Airlines out of Terminal A will have a short walk from the train to baggage check and the security checkpoint. Travelers not checking bags who leave out of other terminals can check in at A10, go through security and take the airport's Skylink to their destination. Travelers on other airlines who do have checked luggage can catch airport shuttles to other terminals outside the A10 entrance.

Boughton is already sold. "It's more convenient."

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