

*Dallas Morning News*

9/16/13

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## **Smartphone app for DART, DCTA and The T plots routes, gives schedules, even sells tickets**

Riding public transportation in North Texas just got easier. For smartphone owners, anyway.

The area's three major public transit agencies are unveiling an app Monday that lets bus and train riders pay for tickets, route trips and check departure times.

GoPass is a free iPhone and Android app that works for Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the Denton County Transportation Authority and Tarrant County's The T.

"I believe that our passengers really don't care what color train or bus they're on," said the Denton County agency's president, Jim Cline. "They just need to go from point A to point B."

DART spearheaded the joint effort. Agency spokesman Morgan Lyons said about half of that system's riders rely on phones to manage other parts of their lives — from social networking to banking.

"Smartphones seemed to fit with the lifestyle of the customer we have and the customers we want to be able to attract," Lyons said.

The main driver of the app was a desire to give people an alternative to paper tickets. Riders often complain about them because kiosks can be hard to use and tickets can be easily lost.

"It's just adding a level of convenience," Lyons said.

For DART, machine maintenance and processing of cash that customers deposit helps eat up 14 percent of a ticket's price.

The new app also routes trips between any two addresses and tells riders when the next bus or train is scheduled to leave a stop or station. It seamlessly uses data and schedules from all three agencies' systems.

"It can give them routes on what buses and trains to catch throughout the region," said Joan Hunter, a spokeswoman for The T.

With GoPass, riders can buy a ticket up to 60 days in advance and not activate it until they're ready to ride. Buying ahead of time isn't something paper-ticket kiosks offer.

Transit officials hope the change prompts people to use public transportation for special events such as concerts, festivals and ballgames, not just for work.

“Mobile is a lifestyle tool,” Lyons said.

By last week, more than 1,000 people had downloaded the app, not bad for a soft launch with little publicity.

In the future, the agencies want people to be able to buy event bundles that carry a discount for purchasing transit access alongside tickets to, say, the zoo or the State Fair.

“We’re not there,” Cline said, “but as you look into the possibility, this is coming down the line.”

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