

Big-city thinking: DART plans subway in downtown Dallas



BY GORDON DICKSON
gdickson@star-telegram.com

Dallas Area Rapid Transit plans to take its act underground.

The public-transportation service better known as DART, which boasts the largest light-rail system in the southwestern United States, is taking steps to expand its footprint in its host city's downtown.

But unlike the current Red Line, Blue Line, Green Line and Orange Line trains that run at surface level along downtown Dallas streets such as Pacific Avenue, the planned expansion involves building a subway line.

ADVERTISING

Area residents who want to learn more about the proposed subway and other planned improvements are invited to attend either of two public meetings (noon or 6:30 p.m.) on Jan. 19 at DART headquarters in Dallas.

“We need your input to refine this project,” DART officials said in a news release. “What is your vision of a subway in downtown Dallas?”

Making the grades

It's not Big D's first dalliance with underground trains. DART in 2000 opened Cityplace Station, a subway stop on the Red and Blue lines just north of downtown and south of Southern Methodist University.

Also, the tracks around Mockingbird Station near SMU and Central Expressway are underground, although that cavernous station itself is outdoors.

93

Miles of track operated by DART in the Dallas area

Other than that, most of the DART light-rail system is either at grade — competing with cars for space on the roads — or above ground on overhead rail lines.

In addition to all the Dallas-area trains, DART co-owns the Trinity Railway Express with the Fort Worth Transportation Authority. TRE operates Monday through Saturday between downtown Fort Worth and Dallas, with connections convenient to Northeast Tarrant County, Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, west and south Irving, and Victory Station at American Airlines Center, where the Dallas Mavericks and Stars play.

Controversial decision

Last fall, the DART board of directors voted to embark upon plans for a downtown subway as well as to expand Cotton Belt service in northern cities such as Plano and Addison, the latter of which has had no rail service despite 33 years of DART membership.

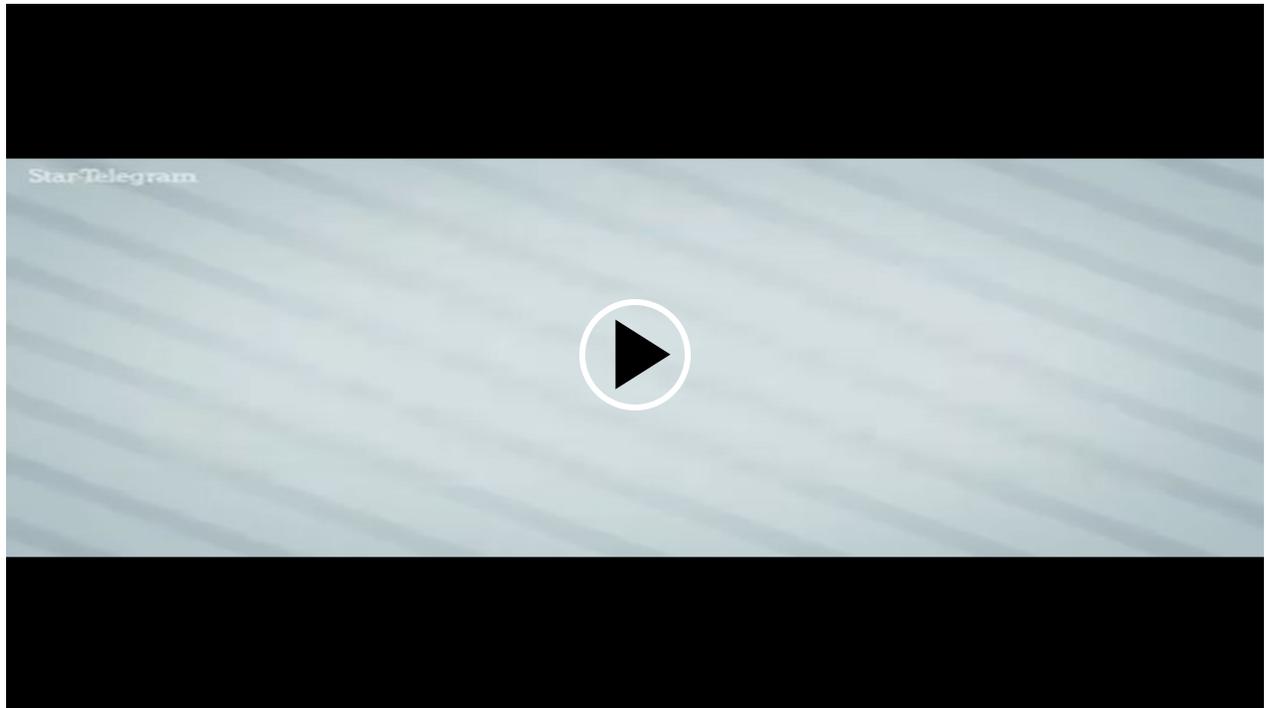
Many supporters of the subway plan argued that DART couldn't afford both projects, according to reports in *The Dallas Morning News*.

But leaders in Addison and other cities hailed the decision as a good move to ensure regional mobility. The Cotton Belt passenger-train service would be built mostly at street-level grade, along tracks that formerly carried freight trains on the historical Cotton Belt Rail Line.

“This has been a long time coming, but I'm very proud of the DART board doing what I think they are charged with and that's thinking and acting regionally,” Addison Mayor Todd Meier was quoted as saying.

The Cotton Belt line would lead riders to DFW Airport, and would become an extension of the planned TEX Rail line that is scheduled to connect Fort Worth to DFW Airport's Terminal B by late 2018. DART's Orange Line light-rail service also serves DFW Airport.

Gordon Dickson: 817-390-7796, @gdickson



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DART SUBWAY PROPOSAL

Residents who want to learn more about DART's expansion plans are encouraged to attend one of two public meetings.

- When: Noon and 6:30 p.m. Jan. 19
- Where: Board room, DART Headquarters, 1401 Pacific Ave., Dallas
- What else: The meeting is planned by DART and the Federal Transit Administration. The same information will be provided at both meetings.
- More: www.DART.org/D2



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