

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE September 15, 2023

Honorable Members of the City Council Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:  
TO Omar Narvaez (Chair), Zarin Gracey (Vice Chair), Tennell Atkins, Cara Mendelsohn,  
Kathy Stewart, Jaynie Schultz, Jaime Resendez

SUBJECT **Update of the City of Dallas' DART Student Ridership Pilot Program**

## Background

In June 2023, Dallas City Council approved the receipt of \$80M in Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Excess Sales Tax Revenues and of those funds, City staff identified the use of \$250K to support a pilot project to provide free DART services for K-12 students. As City staff has been working the independent school districts (ISDs), within the City of Dallas, and DART to develop the Student Ridership Pilot Program, the purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update of the program development, discuss next steps of the program, and seek feed back from the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

## Pilot Program Development

Given the brief background provided above, K-12 students, who live in the City of Dallas, across all ISDs within the City of Dallas, were the target population of this pilot program. However, based upon the \$250K funding level and the existing DART fare policy, staff has determined that the program could serve:

- **260** K-12 students for an entire year (based upon \$960 for a local annual pass),
- **1,302** middle school and high school students for one semester (based upon \$192 for individual, semester passes).

Through the lens of serving the highest number of students, staff recommends funding the option for 1,302 semester passes for middle school and high students.

### *Distribution of Passes/Tap Cards*

Assuming the City of Dallas funds 1,302 semester passes for middle school and high school students, the City team is evaluating middle and high schools with transit-dependent students to determine how many passes will be distributed to each school district. It is envisioned that the passes will be distributed to the school districts based upon the proportion of transit-dependent students by district.

Once the proportional distribution by school district is determined, the City will rely upon participating school districts to distribute passes to the students most in need of these services. Issued by the ISDs/schools to the students, tap cards will serve as the passes (as opposed to an electronic application that does not track usage). Each student using the tap card will be required to tap the card when entering a bus or train and DART can track the usage of each tap card as a performance metric.

### *Goals of the DART Ridership Pilot Program*

Understanding the use and distribution of tap cards for this pilot program, the following are goals of the program:

- Provide 1,302 middle school and high school students with City-funded DART ridership,
- Establish and monitor performance measures to determine program effectiveness,
- Develop future generations of public transit users to increase overall DART ridership,
- Begin the pilot program in January 2024, with duration through the end of the spring semester,
- Plan to distribute the tap cards/passes to the ISDs by December 2023, to activate and begin use by January 2024.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

Through the development of the pilot program goals, since June 2023, City staff has been engaged with stakeholders including DART and ISD representatives. The last stakeholder meeting, held on September 7, 2023, included invited representatives from:

- DART,
- Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD,
- Cedar Hill ISD,
- Coppell ISD,
- Dallas ISD,
- Garland ISD,
- Grand Prairie ISD,
- Highland Park ISD,
- Irving, ISD,
- Lancaster, ISD,
- Mesquite ISD,
- Plano ISD,
- Richardson ISD.

### **Next Steps**


As the pilot program continues to develop, over the next several months, the City team will:

- Identify the transit-dependent middle school and high school students, within the stakeholder ISDs, to determine the proportion of passes to be distributed to each ISD,
- Regroup with the stakeholder team in early October 2023 with any comments from the TRNI Committee; the City team should also be ready to share the proportion of passes each ISD should expect to receive,
- On November 1, 2023, brief City Council on the details of the pilot program,
- Work with the stakeholder ISDs in November and December to finalize and distribute the passes to the identified students,

DATE September 15, 2023  
SUBJECT **Update of the City of Dallas' DART Student Ridership Pilot Program**  
PAGE **3 of 3**

- Begin the pilot program in January 2024,
  - Once the pilot program begins, the Department of Transportation will provide monthly user updates through memorandum to the TRNI Committee.

In summary, the purpose of this memorandum was to provide background, details of the development, and next steps for the City of Dallas' DART Student Transit Pilot Program. Should there be any questions, please email me at: [robert.perez@dallas.gov](mailto:robert.perez@dallas.gov).



Robert M. Perez, Ph.D.  
Assistant City Manager

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Tammy Palomino, Interim City Attorney  
Mark Swann, City Auditor  
Billierae Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Deputy City Manager  
Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager

Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager  
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager  
Carl Simpson, Assistant City Manager  
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer  
Genesis D. Gavino, Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Directors and Assistant Directors