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Commute Solutions Month, August 1-31

DART riders lead the fight against ozone pollution

Combating air pollution is everyone's responsibility, especially during summer ozone season. DART customers are doing their part by sharing the ride, and other North Texans have the perfect opportunity to join their effort during Commute Solutions Month, August 1-31.

By taking the bus, DART Rail and the Trinity Railway Express (TRE), or carpooling in a high occupancy vehicle lane, commuters keep vehicles off the road, reducing the primary source of ozone-causing emissions. During Commute Solutions Month, sponsored by the **North Texas Clean Air Coalition** (NTCAC), area residents are encouraged to "Try Parking It" and take public transit or a carpool.

Motor vehicles are major contributors to ground-level ozone, which is formed when gases or pollutants are released into the air on hot, sunny days with little wind present. Already this year, North Texans have seen firsthand the growing severity of ozone pollution. On May 31, dangerous ozone levels caused the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to issue the highest ozone alert level possible - purple.

Last summer Dallas-Fort Worth air quality violated U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ozone standards 22 times. The EPA has ruled Collin, Denton, Dallas and Tarrant counties to be in nonattainment for ozone. The region must reduce ozone levels and reach attainment with current federal standards by 2007, or federal highway funds may be withheld.

Take Action, Take DART

Parking your personal vehicle and using public transportation helps reduce ozone pollution. Last year DART provided nearly 94 million passenger trips on buses, DART Rail, the TRE and HOV lanes, removing thousands of vehicles each day from area roads.

"All of us can contribute to improving air quality by keeping our cars and trucks parked as much as possible during ozone season," said Micah Causey, DART assistant vice president of Marketing and Advertising, who also serves as marketing chair of the NTCAC. "Using DART's efficient, environmentally friendly buses and trains can go a long way toward tackling this problem."

While vehicle emissions make up 55% of the chemicals that cause ozone in the Metroplex, DART vehicles are responsible for less than one-half of one percent of the area's air pollution. DART vehicles meet or exceed all current federal and state air quality standards. Through an aggressive fleet upgrade program, DART has replaced 83% of its buses over the last four years, reducing total fleet emissions by almost 60% while increasing fleet size by 12% during the same period. DART's fleet includes zero-emission electric light rail vehicles, ultra-low-emission buses and trolley-buses fueled by natural gas, and low-emission buses powered by clean diesel.

Sharing the Ride Helps too

Participating in a vanpool or carpool is another good way to do your part for air quality. Riding with others on DART's 31-mile network of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes reduces vehicle

emissions stemming from rush-hour traffic jams. According to the North Texas Council of Governments, DART HOV lanes reduce pollution - nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds - by 370 pounds per weekday.

Dallas-area residents lead the nation in HOV use. Last year commuters took more than 34 million passenger trips on DART's 31-mile HOV network. According to U.S. Census data, nearly 18% of Dallas-area residents travel together to and from work, the highest carpooling rate in the nation.

Commuters can link up with a carpool through **RideMatch**, DART's regionwide computerized system that matches people based on where they live and work and their work schedules. DART also offers a **vanpooling program** that provides low-cost service for groups of six to 15 people.

Employers can help people get out of their cars and on to public transportation by participating in DART's **Annual Business Pass** program. In addition to providing transportation for employees, an Annual Business Pass offers value-added benefits such as emergency- and executive-ride programs and product and service discounts.

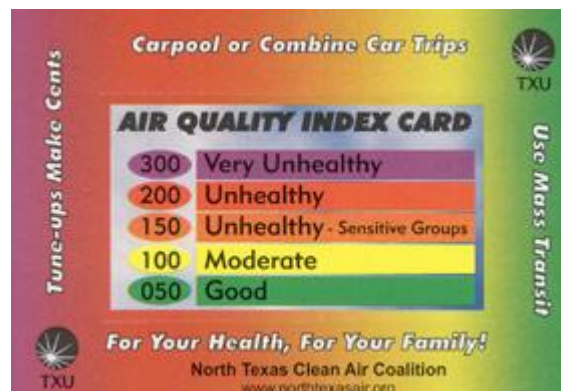
A Long-time Air Quality Team Member

DART has been an active participant in air quality forums since the 1993 formation of the NTCAC. The coalition members are DART, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T), the Greater Dallas Chamber, the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, the North Texas Commission and the North Texas Council of Governments.

The coalition's goal is to promote voluntary actions to clean up the air in North Texas. "We have an ozone air pollution problem. The mission of the coalition is to provide public education and encourage voluntary actions that result in a reduction in the emission to the air of ozone precursor chemicals," says Howard Gilberg, NTCAC chair. "If action is not taken, the situation is unlikely to improve."

Keeping Tabs on Air Quality

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality warns North Texans of potential air quality problems. Television and radio stations broadcast Air Pollution Watch announcements when the next day's air is predicted to be a public risk due to excessive pollution. An Air Pollution Warning is issued when actual air pollution measurements reach levels deemed to be unhealthy by the EPA.



Air quality announcements are based on the following color-coded system:

- Green: Good - recommended actions: no activity restrictions.
- Yellow: Moderate - recommended actions: unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.

- Orange: Unhealthy For Sensitive Groups - recommended actions: active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
- Red: Unhealthy - recommended actions: active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exposure. Everyone else, especially children, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
- Purple: Very Unhealthy - recommended actions: active children and adults and people with respiratory diseases, such as asthma, should avoid all prolonged outdoor exertion. Everyone else, especially children, should limit outdoor exertion.

An Ozone Action Checklist

Here are some of the things citizens can do for clean air in the region:

- Drive less
- Share a ride: carpool, vanpool
- Ride DART or the T
- Keep your vehicle well-maintained
- Report smoking vehicles
- Pay attention to **air pollution watch days** and practice ozone reducing behaviors.

Call 214-747-RIDE or visit DART.org for information on DART's **Annual Pass program, vanpooling** and **carpooling**. For additional information on DART services, visit DART.org or call DART Customer Service at 214-979-1111. For mass transit services in Fort Worth visit www.the-t.com or call the T at 817-336-RIDE. For cross-regional transit options visit www.bus-stop.org. For air quality information contact the North Texas Clean Air Coalition by e-mail at info@northtexasair.org or call metro 972-621-0400.