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Tarrant County Commuters Boarding TRE at Irving Station

FORT WORTH, Texas - A recent survey by Dallas Area Rapid Transit shows 25 percent of the activity at the South Irving Transit Center is from Tarrant County commuters, most of whom are riding the Trinity Railway Express into downtown Dallas.

The auto tag survey, conducted during weekday rush hours in December 1999, found more than 100 vehicles registered to Tarrant County drivers in cities including Arlington, Euless, Fort Worth, Hurst, North Richland Hills and Richland Hills. Activity also included cars registered from as far west as White Settlement, as farsouthwest as Alvarado and Cleburne and as far northwest as Saginaw and Springtown.

"These numbers are a clear indication that Tarrant County residents view the Trinity Railway Express as an alternative to traditional automobile commuting," said John Bartosiewicz, general manager of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T), which is partnering with DART in the commuter rail project. "The South Irving Station is located in the heart of Irving near its municipal complex. It is not easy to access for those unfamiliar with the city. Yet, these commuters, eager to avoid the gridlock on Airport Freeway and Interstate 30, and high parking fees in downtown Dallas, are finding their way to the station and taking the train.



"This September, those already enjoying the comfort and convenience of the Trinity Railway Express, will be able to board the train at stations much closer to their homes," he said.

The survey results represent increases from a previous auto tag survey, conducted by DART in June 1998, when Tarrant County riders made up 16.4 percent of the activity at the station. Researchers say ridership could actually be higher, since some vehicles may carry more than one person.

Mid-Cities activity at the station grew over the last 18 months, with Arlington experiencing the largest increase, followed by Euless, Grand Prairie and Bedford. Arlington drivers at the station represented 7.47 percent in December, versus 5.2 percent in June 1998. Euless registered 6.19 percent in the recent count, an increase from 4.8 percent last survey.

Grand Prairie activity increased in the 1999 count, although the percentages stayed the same. Bedford followed with 4.64 percent in December versus 4 percent in June 1998.

While Grapevine and Hurst registered the same activity in 1999 as in 1998, several new cities made the survey for the first time including Azle, Flower Mound, North Richland Hills, Richland Hills and Watauga. Fort Worth also registered activity for the first time with 2.58 percent.

Nine Tarrant County cities including Arlington, Grand Prairie, Hurst, Euless, Bedford, Grapevine, Colleyville, North Richland Hills and Haltom City are being asked to support the Trinity Railway Express through an annual operating subsidy. Richland Hills and Fort Worth participate through their half-cent sales tax to the T.

Colleyville and North Richland Hills have agreed to participate, while Arlington has voiced its support for the TRE but not yet approved the operating subsidy. The remaining cities have yet to vote.

The Trinity Railway Express is a joint project of the T and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), connecting Fort Worth and Dallas with commuter rail service along a 34-mile rail line. Currently the service operates from Union Station in downtown Dallas to South Irving, with a stop in the Medical/Market area.

In September, service will be extended to Tarrant County with stops at stations in CentrePort-D/FW Airport, Hurst-Bell and Richland Hills. Additional Dallas County service will be added in late 2000 with a station in West Irving. The TRE makes its first stop in downtown Fort Worth in July 2001 at the Intermodal Transportation Center at Ninth and Jones streets. Riders can access the TRE at the T&P Station beginning in October 2001.

