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DART bus route links workers to jobs

D/FW Airport employers, employees connect with DART bus route

Amanda Jeffrey says her new 45-minute bus ride to Globe Securities at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport northwest of Dallas "sure beats the hour and a half it took on the route I used to take." Jeffrey, 21, is one of many DART riders taking advantage of the extension of DART Route 202 which delivers passengers directly to the north entrance of the airport seven days a week.

Before the expanded route was launched in March, Jeffrey and many other airport-area employees relied on Route 409 which still serves the airport, but from the southern entrance of the facility and away from many local employers like United Parcel Service (UPS) and American Airlines.

DART's Route 202 improvement is part of a regional Welfare-to-Work initiative facilitated by the transit agency, the Dallas-Fort Worth Work Coalition, local employment agencies, area businesses and Lockheed Martin Information Management Systems (IMS). The extended route opened up more than 10,000 jobs in and around D/FW to workers otherwise unable to access jobs in the Irving-Las Colinas area. The bus stops at D/FW Airport's North Shuttle Parking Lot, the UPS terminal, and American Airlines Cargo.

"DART is a major player in this program. We can work as hard as we can to line up jobs, but unless we have transportation for employees, the program won't work. DART is as critical as child care to make working a reality for welfare recipients," says the head of the Dallas County Workforce Board Laurie Laurel.

"This type of transit service -- linking people to jobs -- is essential to our agency," DART President/Executive Director Roger Snoble said. "We were encouraged by the early positive reception the route improvement received by local employers and we are very happy with the early performance of this route. We think it will only grow stronger."

"This route has opened an important job market to a whole new group of potential employees," Lockheed Martin Employer Services Manager Glenn Weinger added. Lockheed Martin IMS works under contract to WorkSource for Dallas County (Dallas County Local Workforce Development Board) and has worked with the Dallas/Fort Worth Work Coalition and more than 20 D/FW Airport-area employers to connect job seekers with employment opportunities in that area. "The most common problem for these potential employees is the lack of reliable transportation to get them to and from a job."

The Coalition also keeps accessibility in mind when it hosts job fairs in Dallas and Irving. Rather than require the potential employees to travel to a remote job fair site, the companies joined with the Coalition to bring the job fairs to the prospective employees. For example, the locations of two recent job fairs held in south Dallas and the DART member city of Irving were determined by their proximity to DART bus lines.

D/FW Airport is taking extra steps to make the new route even more useful to current and prospective employees. The airport is proposing a plan to implement a circulator shuttle. The proposed circulator will pick up employees at DART bus stops in or at airport entrances, and transport commuters to various businesses within the airport.

D/FW Airport official Lisa Flores said airport area employers have hired people from the job fairs and even conducted a survey to gauge need for public transportation among current employees. "The problem is that the 1,500-plus employees we have are spread out around the airport," she said. The airport circulator would help connect the employees with DART bus routes and conveniently bring employees to the workplace.

One of the companies supporting the new route is Globe Aviation Services. Human Resources Manager Farah Vaughn explained that while Globe Aviation Services has a large number of jobs to fill, the company has had a hard time in the past finding employees who could get to the work site near the airport. The company, which provides a variety of customer service positions to the airline industry, participates in many area job fairs. Vaughn said their recruitment material has a new message since the introduction of Route 202: DART bus available from downtown to D/FW Airport.

Tom Mullen, who is in charge of employment services for the Metro Dallas District of United Parcel Service (UPS), said the company wants to work with DART on implementing different employee transportation programs at their D/FW Airport facility. UPS currently offers employees DART's monthly bus and rail pass at half price. As a bonus for the first month of employment, the company covers 100 percent of the cost of the pass. Mullen thinks more people will take advantage of the many job opportunities at UPS as they become more familiar with the transit benefit offered by the company. In addition, Mullen believes businesses can successfully market high quality jobs in the neighborhoods with the highest welfare and underemployment if residents in those areas feel there is adequate transportation available. "Marketing is first and foremost, and DART has been great on this project," Mullen said.

UPS and other employers such as the D/FW Hilton, International Total Services (ITS), Federal Express (FedEx), and the D/FW Airport are collaborating with DART to make residents in areas of high unemployment aware of the service and the available jobs which are only a bus ride away.

The job fair held at debut of DART bus route 202 extension to D/FW Airport yielded several employees for FedEx. The corporation has been involved with the Coalition since February 1998, actively seeking potential employees through the Welfare to Work program. "We encourage people to take any type of public transportation to our job sites," says Senior Personnel Representative Angela Hamilton.

