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New DART budget sets groundwork for expanded rail operations

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Board of Directors approved a \$1.07 billion budget for fiscal year 2013 that supports expanded Orange and Blue Lines as well as the continued construction towards a direct rail connection to DFW Airport in 2014.

Smaller than the FY 2012 budget of \$1.15 billion, the new budget starting October 1 supports the December 2012 opening of two light rail projects: the second phase of the Orange Line to Irving and the Blue Line extension from Garland to Rowlett. The lower overall budget includes a decrease in capital spending as the expansion of light rail slows; however, the operating budget is up as DART adds more service to more places.

"This budget allows us to continue meeting our commitments to our service area cities as we create an even more attractive system for new customers," DART Board Chair John Danish said.

There are three components to DART's annual budget: operating, capital and non-operating and net debt service.

Operating	\$449.6 million
Capital and Non-Operating	\$468.98 million
Net Debt Service	\$151.4 million

The FY 2013 budget is the latest in a multi-year effort to manage the impact of a decade of flat sales tax receipts. That effort saw the number of employees at the agency remain unchanged despite the addition of nearly 14 miles of new Orange and Blue light rail service along with an increased level of police presence throughout the system. The budget also supports the approved introduction of new fares beginning in December, the changeover to a new mobility management/paratransit service provider in October and the introduction of a new fleet of 123 smaller 17-seat buses. Additionally, it includes the introduction in December of a new fleet of 459 full-size compressed natural gas buses.

Improving local economic conditions and the success of DART's multi-year financial and budgetary initiatives will benefit the southern portion of the service area by making possible the acceleration of the South Oak Cliff Blue Line extension to the University of North Texas campus from 2019 to 2016.