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'Appalled': Hundreds decry proposed DART cuts, fare hikes at raucous hearing

The agency is considering slashing nearly \$60 million in services across its system.



By **Amber Gaudet**

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Byron Murphy holds a sign reading "No Caps No Cuts" as he waits to speak in opposition to a proposed \$60 million in service cuts during a DART board of directors meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, in Dallas.

SMILEY N. POOL / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Dallas Area Rapid Transit is proposing the largest cuts in [the agency's](#) 40-year history — and riders are pushing back.

Hundreds packed the halls of DART's downtown Dallas headquarters Tuesday evening, sharing their frustrations over nearly \$60 million in proposed cuts to the agency's buses, trains and on-demand services, along with fare changes that would leave riders paying more.

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The proposals would help DART balance its 2026 budget, which is expected to fall more than \$78 million short of available revenues. But Dallas-Fort Worth residents who rely on the system say they will limit their ability to get to work, school and obtain medical treatments.

“For many in southern Dallas and our working-class communities, DART isn’t just a convenience, it’s a lifeline,” resident Eric Wilson told the board.

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Changes would include the discontinuation of nine bus routes and elimination of one GoLink zone plus three zone-to-zone pilot programs; decreased frequency of buses, light rail, TRE and the upcoming Silver Line; nearly doubling paratransit fares and reducing service for riders with disabilities; and fare restructuring that would shift flat GoLink on-demand fees to distance-based fares.



City of Dallas representatives Maureen Milligan (left) and Roy Lopez listen as DISD trustee Byron Sanders speaks during a DART board of directors meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, in Dallas.

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Tuesday's hearing was the culmination of more than a year of tension over how the agency handles its finances.

Much of the projected budget shortfall is DART's own making — its board voted in March to voluntarily refund seven cities a collective \$42 million as part of a three-year general mobility program. That's on top of at least \$18 million the agency expects to spend on city service requests, and \$9 million for additional Silver Line operations.

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But those decisions were an attempt to fend off now-failed state legislation that would have permanently slashed DART's available revenues by 25%. That would have "killed" the agency, leaders said, with deep cuts rendering the system ineffective.

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The legislation ultimately failed to make it to the House floor for a vote, but it wasn't thanks to DART's attempts to appease member cities. Cities that supported the legislation — spearheaded by Plano and with strong support from other suburban members like Irving — pushed forward despite DART's concessions.

If approved, riders will feel the brunt of those cuts.

"This [general mobility program] was an attempt to compromise with those that just tried to kill you — and it didn't work," said Tyler Wright, vice president of pro-transit advocacy group Dallas Area Transit Alliance.

'No cuts, no caps'

On Tuesday, more than 200 residents, transit advocates, community leaders and elected officials crowded into DART's hallways, showing up in unprecedented numbers to what are usually sleepy board meetings with few attendees.

As the clock approached midnight, speakers continued trekking up to the microphone to voice their opposition.

Seated attendees pointed homemade signs at the gathered board members with proclamations like "No cuts, no caps" scrawled on neon poster boards. Nearly 700 people had already submitted

written comments during preliminary community meetings leading up to the hearing.

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A line of people wait their turn to speak during public comment regarding a proposed \$60 million in service cuts during a DART board of directors meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, in Dallas.

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Some present Tuesday treated the small wooden podium like a pulpit, citing Bible verses and calling for a “politics of empathy” in booming voices. Others spoke in terms of practicalities, pointing to the region’s growing population and use of the system by everyday commuters, or how less frequent service would mean fewer ticket sales.

“You have to make some tough decisions, but those decisions shouldn’t be balanced on the backs of people that can least afford it,” state Sen. Royce West told the board.

Several testified that public transit had delivered them to chemotherapy and dialysis appointments, becoming essential to even those who exclusively drove before illness took over. Many pointed to how the changes would disproportionately impact transit-dependent residents of the city’s southern sector and those with disabilities.

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None supported the cuts.

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“I’m appalled at the fact that DART is willing to take the most growable area of the city of Dallas and discontinue services,” Dallas City Council member Lorie Blair, who represents southeast Dallas, told the board.

Some board members nodded along with speakers describing the system as a lifeline for the region’s most vulnerable — one wearing a “Come and take it” T-shirt with a picture of a bus on it in solidarity with transit advocates. But others often sat stony-faced, staring at their laps.

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The divergent reactions reflected divisions among the body. Arguments from certain suburban members that poor service and financial mismanagement were grounds for clawing back funds their cities committed to the agency had become the catalyst for the proposed cuts.



Hans-Michael Ruthe, director of service planning, makes a presentation on a proposed \$60 million in service cuts during a DART board of directors meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, in Dallas.

SMILEY N. POOL / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

It also made them a target for the public's ire.

One woman in the fourth row called out for “New board members!” after nearly every speaker during the hearing's first two hours. DART board members are appointed by cities, not elected by the public.

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Yet the board remains tasked with coming together to reconcile widespread opposition to the cuts with a massive funding gap – and few realistic options to fill it outside of slashing service, the agency's biggest expenditure by far.

"The North Texas community responded to our call for input at last night's public hearing," DART said in a statement Wednesday morning. "...Over the next two months, staff and the board of directors will work through the budget to try and find ways to minimize any potential impacts to our riders."

The board will next discuss the changes during a budget workshop Aug. 1 and vote on the cuts Aug. 26. If approved, the service cuts would take effect Jan. 19, 2026, with fare hikes implemented sometime next year.

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By **Amber Gaudet**

Amber is a staff writer for The Dallas Morning News. She's produced award-winning business and investigative work, including a housing series that led to a federal inquiry and Texas state law change in 2023. Amber holds a master's degree from the University of North Texas' Mayborn School of Journalism.

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