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Long waits, missed trips defined transition to new DART paratransit vendor, clients say

Dallas riders say they waited hours on the phone and frequently had rides canceled.



By **Amber Gaudet**

Transportation and mobility reporter

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Derrick Williams, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) Paratransit driver, pushes Brenda Cummings into the DART minivan after her doctor's appointment in Garland on Thursday, Feb. 6, 2025. Cummings has had significant issues with the paratransit service causing her to miss doctor's appointments, canceling rides and leaving her stranded.

JUAN FIGUEROA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Dallas Area Rapid Transit provides paratransit services to more than 11,000 North Texans with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The door-to-door service — which costs DART [\\$600 million](#) for an eight-year contract — is essential for people who cannot access buses and trains, and often lack other means of transportation to doctors' appointments or to visit the grocery store.

Brenda Cummings on her experience with DART



Mobility management provider Transdev took over DART’s mobility contract from former partner MV Transportation on October 1, 2024. DART initially characterized the vendor switch as one that would ultimately “ensure high standards across all service modes,” with Transdev introducing a new fleet of vehicles and integrating services into a single technology platform.

But for clients, the transition seemed to create more issues than it purported to solve.

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The transition period was marked by more than 1,900 customer complaints between Sept. 1 and Nov. 7, according to a *Dallas Morning News* analysis — just under the 2,300 received in all of fiscal year 2023.

In complaints received between September and November, clients complained of canceled rides, missing medical appointments and an inability to reach DART staff. Some riders said they waited on hold for as long as five hours, or tried for an entire day to reach someone to make a reservation or check the status of a ride.

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Those times run counter to a DART mandate that 95% of calls be answered in 3 minutes — a maximum hold time that most transit agencies set per Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

DART said the uptick in complaints resulted from short-term issues caused by the transition from MV Transportation to Transdev. During the transition, data did not transfer correctly between the two parties, according to DART spokesperson Anna Kurian, which is why clients may have had issues.

And some complaints logged during the early days of Transdev's contract were related to service issues prior to October 1, Kurian said.

“DART and Transdev have been working diligently to correct the information as quickly as possible,” Transdev spokesperson Mitun Seguin said in an email.

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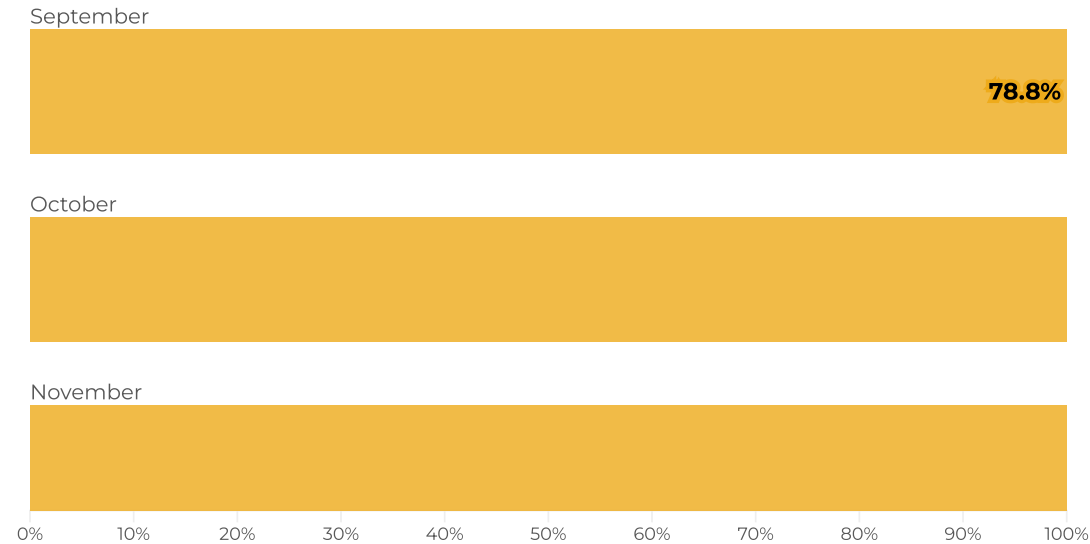
“Transdev [has] proactively called every single rider who had recurring trips to verify their needs and make corrections during the first couple of weeks of October 2024.”

On-time performance was at 67% when Transdev took over, but the company quickly raised it to 87% in October and 91% in November, general manager Rashida Kamara said during a community meeting in January.

Records provided to *The News*, however, show an average on-time ADA performance of 78.8% in September, the last month MV provided paratransit services. On-time performance for January through August 2024 under MV was above 85% each month.

DART paratransit on-time performance

Share of 2024 rides that were on time, by month



SOURCE: Dallas Area Rapid Transit • *NOTE: December figure represents rides through Dec. 26.
GRAPHIC: Mel Fronczek

The Dallas Morning News

The ADA requires that transit agencies provide timely pickups for paratransit, limit long wait times and generally create service conditions equitable to what able-bodied passengers using public transportation receive.

A 2015 [report from the National Council on Disability](#) listed a number of “prohibited capacity constraints” like excessively long pickup times and substantial numbers of canceled or missed trips — all problems that customers say they’ve repeatedly experienced using DART’s paratransit service.

“Any operational practices that significantly limit the availability of the service are also capacity constraints and are illegal,” the report reads. “One important example is when riders must wait on the telephone for an unduly long time to arrange rides.”

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The primary contact point for checking on the status of paratransit trips is “Where’s My Ride.” Records DART provided to *The News* showed the average combined call wait times for reservation and “Where’s My Ride” lines were over 9 minutes in October, improving to just over 4 minutes in November and 3 minutes 38 seconds in December.

However, several paratransit users reported waiting for hours.

“When they switched over [contractors]...it took me an hour, almost an hour-and-a-half to make a reservation,” client Karl Garrett said. “That is not acceptable.”

DART paratransit wait times

Data reflects wait times for both the "Where's My Ride" line and the ADA reservation line.

Average wait times in 2024, by month

SOURCE: Dallas Area Rapid Transit • *NOTE: December figure represents rides through 9:53 a.m. Dec. 27.
GRAPHIC: Mel Fronczek

The Dallas Morning News

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DART said there was an increase in turnover at the MV call center in the final months of its contract with DART as staff left for other jobs. The agency also had a shorter contractor transition period of 2.5 months compared to the typical 6-9 since the agency did not select its new contractor until June, though its goal was to do so in January.

“As a result, we faced logistical challenges to stand up proper staffing, ordering vehicles, getting management staff into place, etc.” DART’s Kurian said.

Things have since improved, according to the agency.

“DART definitely believes that things are in a better place than our previous experience,” DART spokesperson Jasmyn Carter said. “Many improvements have been made since the initial transition period. DART and Transdev continue to focus on the efforts to improve the customer experience.”

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There were 875 complaints about paratransit in the first two months of 2025 — 420 in January and 455 in February. But the complaints recount many of the same frustrations expressed by riders last fall.

“So far I can’t say that it’s any better,” client Brenda Cummings said. “They are understaffed, dispatchers don’t seem to know how to handle effective communication with the customers or the drivers and they don’t call you back when you ask for a supervisor.”

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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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