



# DART and the Value of Public Transit

Iowa Commercial Real Estate Association  
November 2024

**Amanda Wanke, CEO**



**BETHEL**  
UNIVERSITY



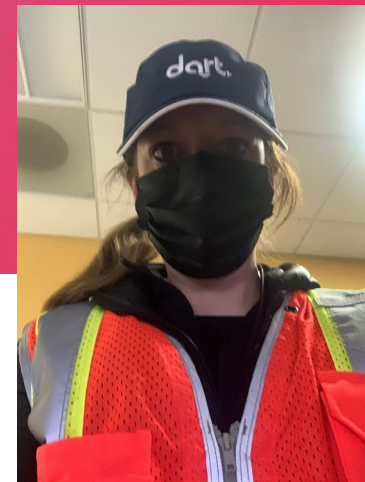
“

Your vocation in  
life is where your  
greatest joy  
meets the world's  
greatest need.

– FREDERICK BUECHNER



**Wanke to  
Return to  
DART as  
CEO**





**The roots of public transit in Des Moines run deep**





Post WWII

1973 – MTA

1985 – Walnut Street Transit Mall opens



## Walnut Street mall marks another step in downtown progress

By WILLIAM PETROSKI

Register Staff Writer

After a choir sings "America the Beautiful" and politicians give speeches, a 900-foot, bright green ribbon will be snipped Wednesday to open the \$3.9 million Walnut Street Transit Mall.

U.S. Senator Charles Grassley will then steer the first city bus onto the brown brick street, which is being financed largely by the generosity of the federal government.

With those formalities completed, city leaders can check off another major project on their list of redevelopment efforts in downtown Des Moines.

"We're certainly excited to see the transit mall completed," says Fred Hubbell, chairman of Younkers Inc. "As it gains acceptance among people in the community it will increase interest in downtown and that will help our business downtown."

"I'm thrilled," says K. Stephen Spade, general manager of the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority. "We're tickled to be part of it because we are so dependent on our downtown to have a successful transit system."

### Neither Cars Nor Trucks

As visitors and city residents soon will learn, the Walnut Street Transit Mall will be unique in Des Moines.

Initially, autos and trucks will be banned 24 hours a day on Walnut Street, from Fifth Avenue to Tenth Street, and violators will be ticketed

But Jepsen, who recently became chairman of the National Credit Union Administration Board, won't attend Wednesday's ceremonies. "Actually, he was not invited. I cannot tell you why," said Dee Weeda of Riche Associates public relations firm, which organized the dedication.

### Second Phase Pending

Phase II of the Walnut Street Transit Mall — from Second Avenue to Fifth Avenue — is slated for construction in 1986. But that project depends on whether an additional \$2.6 million in federal money is awarded, which remains uncertain.

Several other Iowa cities have special facilities for bus riders. Iowa City has one block that is a central downtown transfer point restricted to buses only. Davenport and Cedar Rapids have "ground transportation centers," which serve as hubs of downtown bus activity. In addition, Sioux City has a downtown bus transfer center where riders can go inside and stay warm while waiting for their bus.

For the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, the new mall is a cornerstone of efforts to recover some of its 27 percent drop in bus ridership since 1981. The MTA, which now serves 16,000 to 17,000 riders daily, has lost many passengers because of reductions in service, said Spade. The service changes were in response to cuts in federal transit subsidies that

# dart



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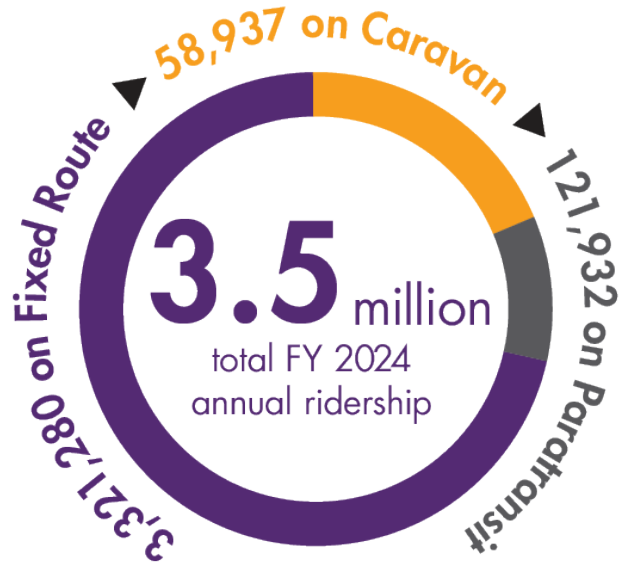


PARK  
& RIDE

dart **PARA**  
transit



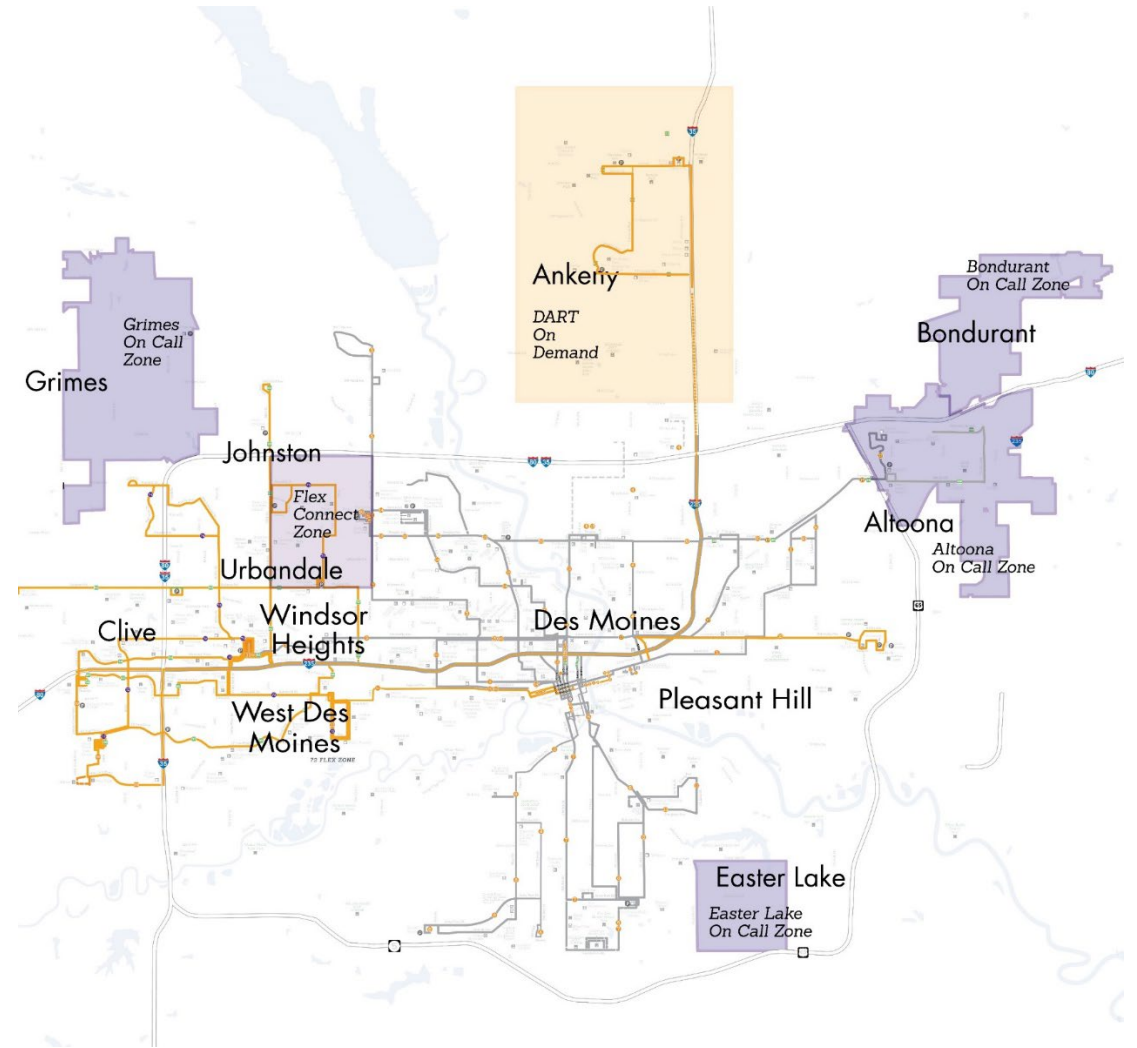
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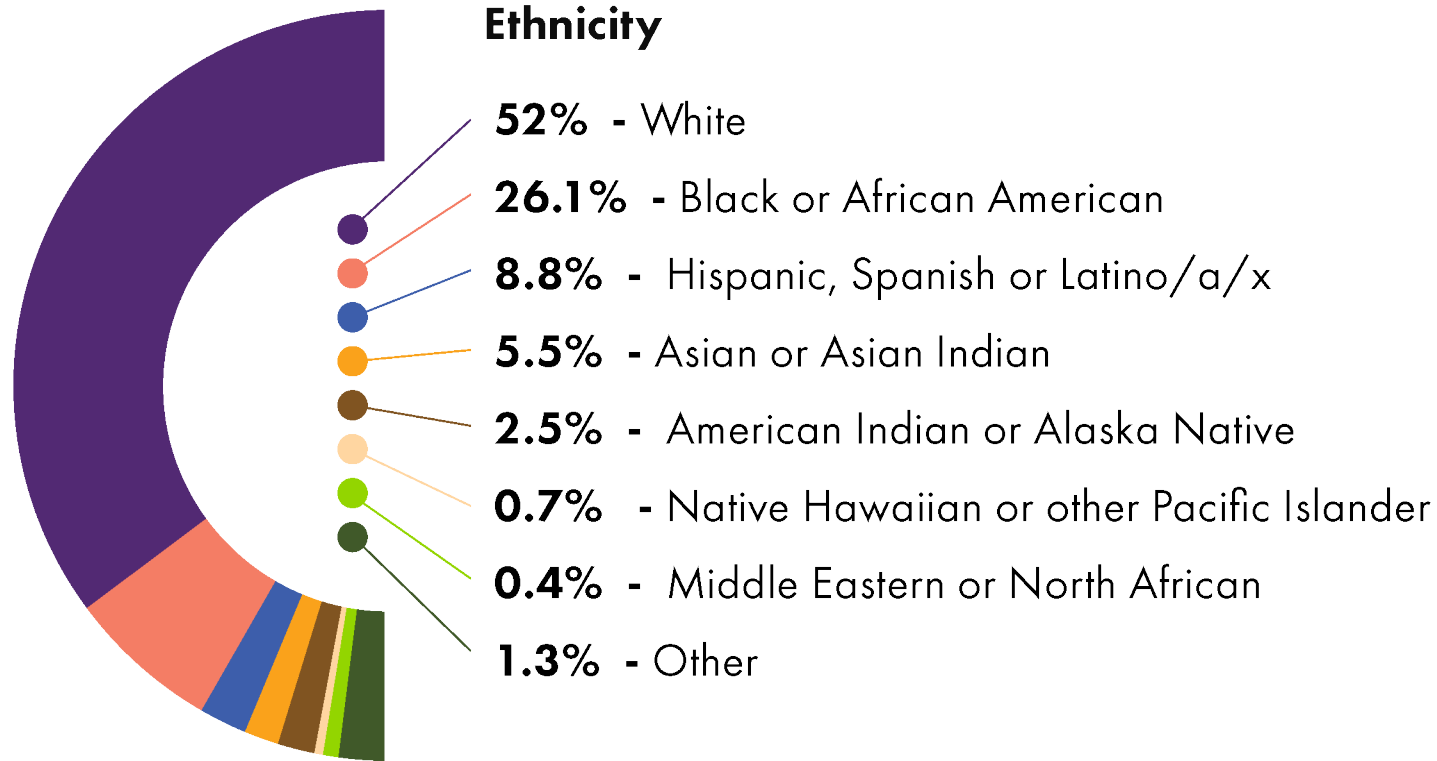
FY 2024

**1 2,000**

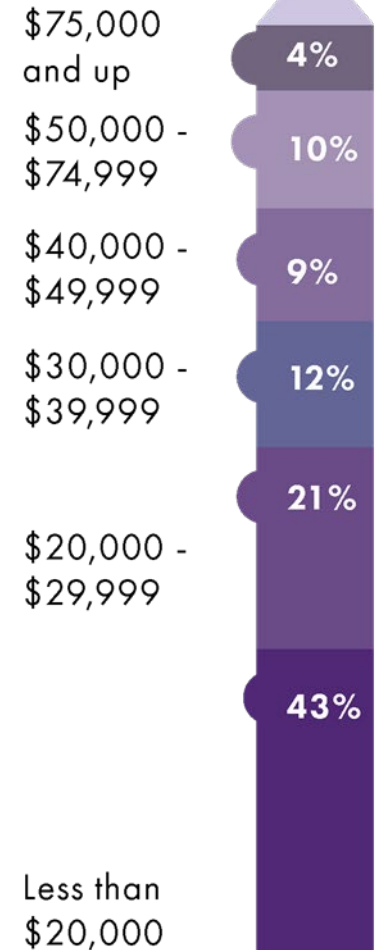
Average weekday ridership



# Who uses DART?



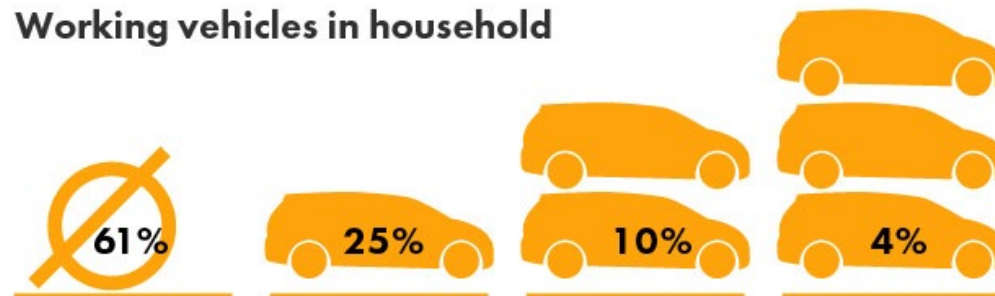
## Total household income



No valid driver's license

61%

Working vehicles in household



\*Excluding RideShare

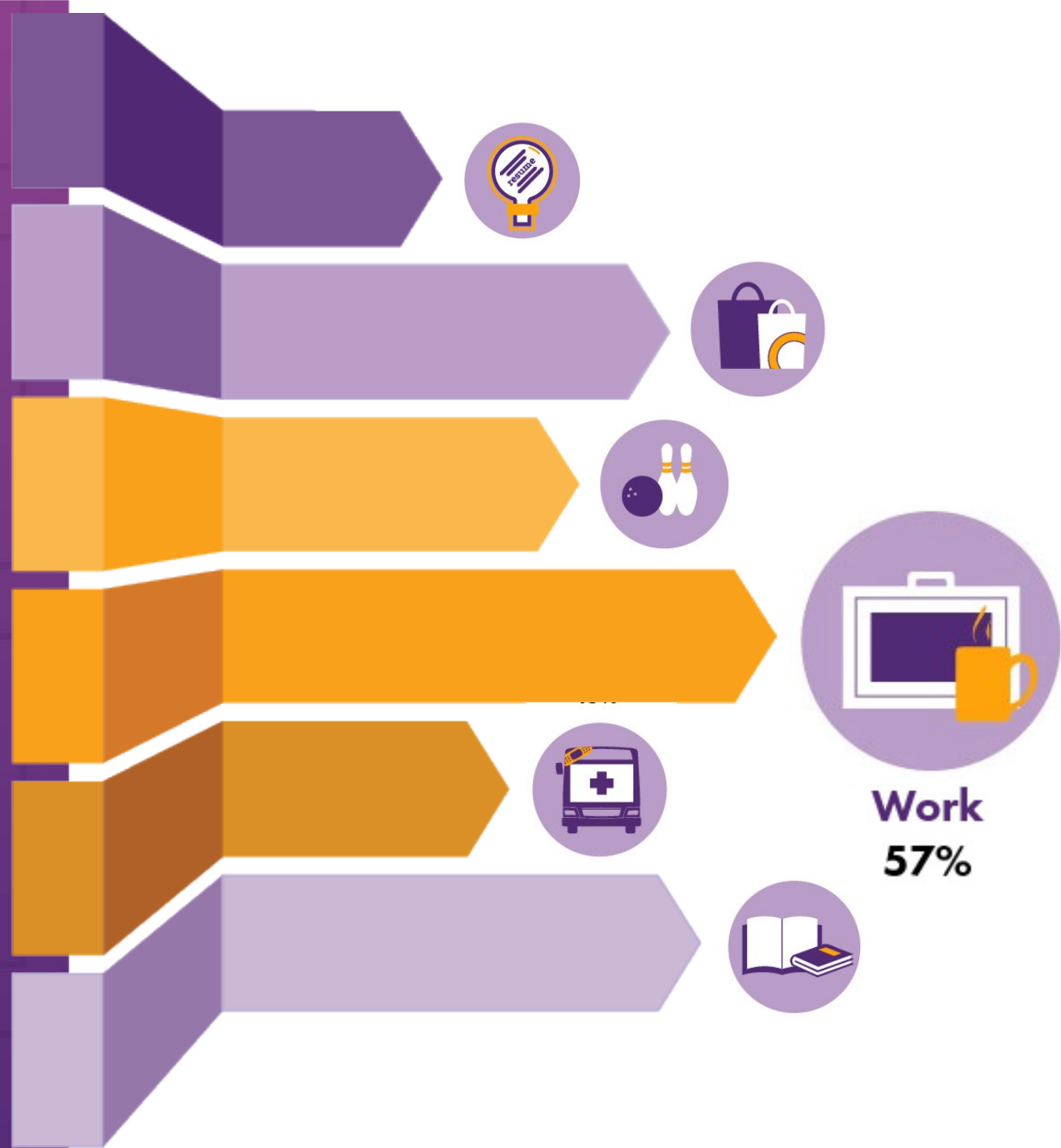




Why do people ride DART?

# #1 reason is to get to work

Transit provides affordable mobility options, connecting people to opportunities they may not otherwise have and unlocking access to employment, education, essential services, and participation in our region's quality of life.





**FIRST LOOK INSIDE BONDURANT AMAZON CENTER AHEAD OF HOLIDAY RUSH**

**NEW AT 5:00**

**KCCI NEWS 8**

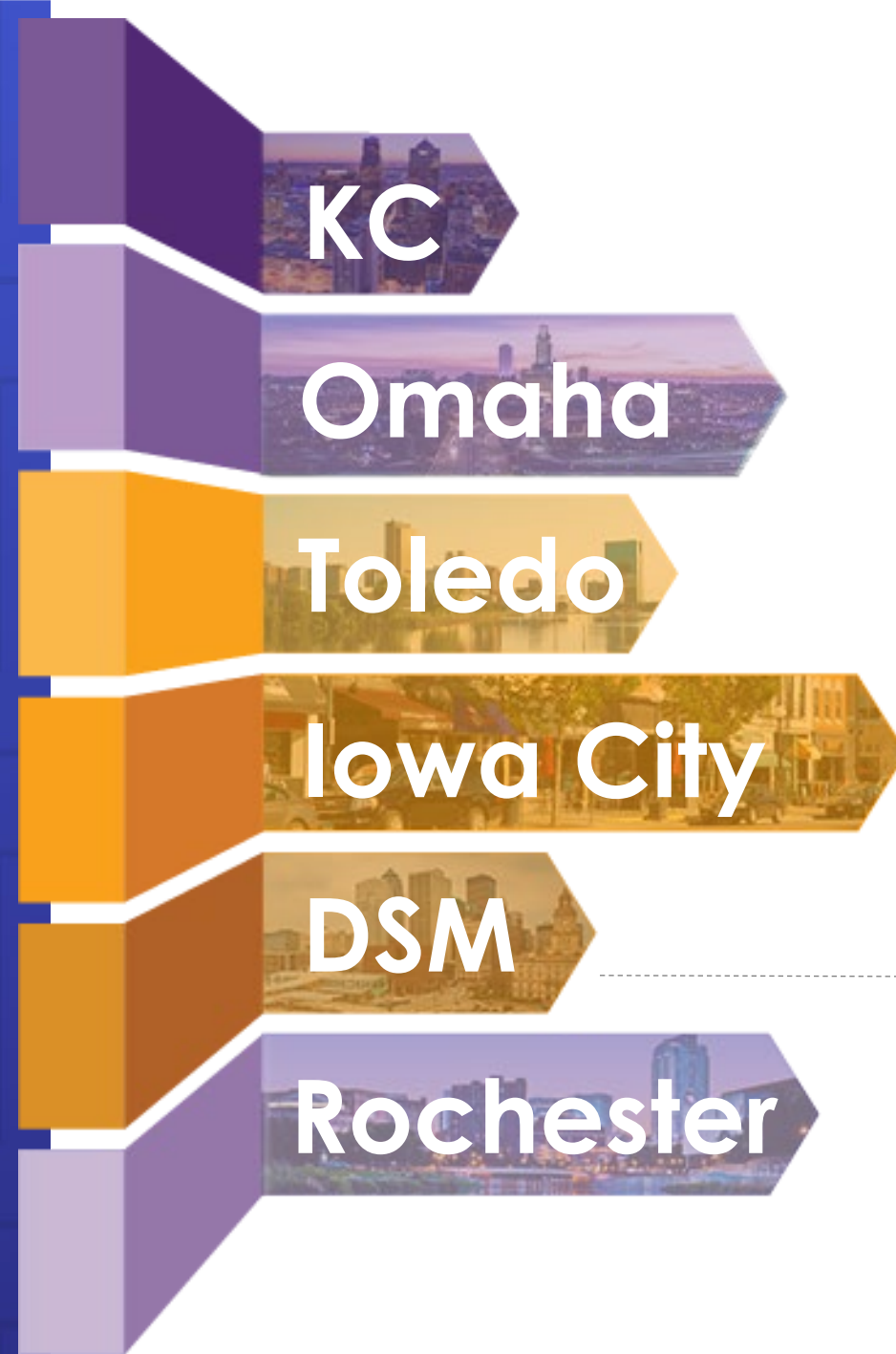
- ✓ Workforce recruitment and retention
  - ✓ Commercial development
  - ✓ Local business spending
  - ✓ Job creation
- 

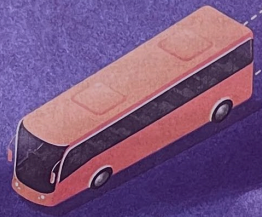
**Public transit is an economic driver.**  
9 out of 10 trips on DART are for people to earn or spend money.



# Is #DSMUSA keeping up?

Other communities are investing in transit to not only support essential needs but to remain competitive and help drive future growth.





EDITORIAL

# KEEP DART GOING WITH A HIGHER DES MOINES FRANCHISE FEE

The gap between revenue and expenses at the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority has a thousand authors. They've all seen the trouble coming for years, but decision makers have not agreed on a sustainable path forward. • The result is likely to be a significant service reduc-



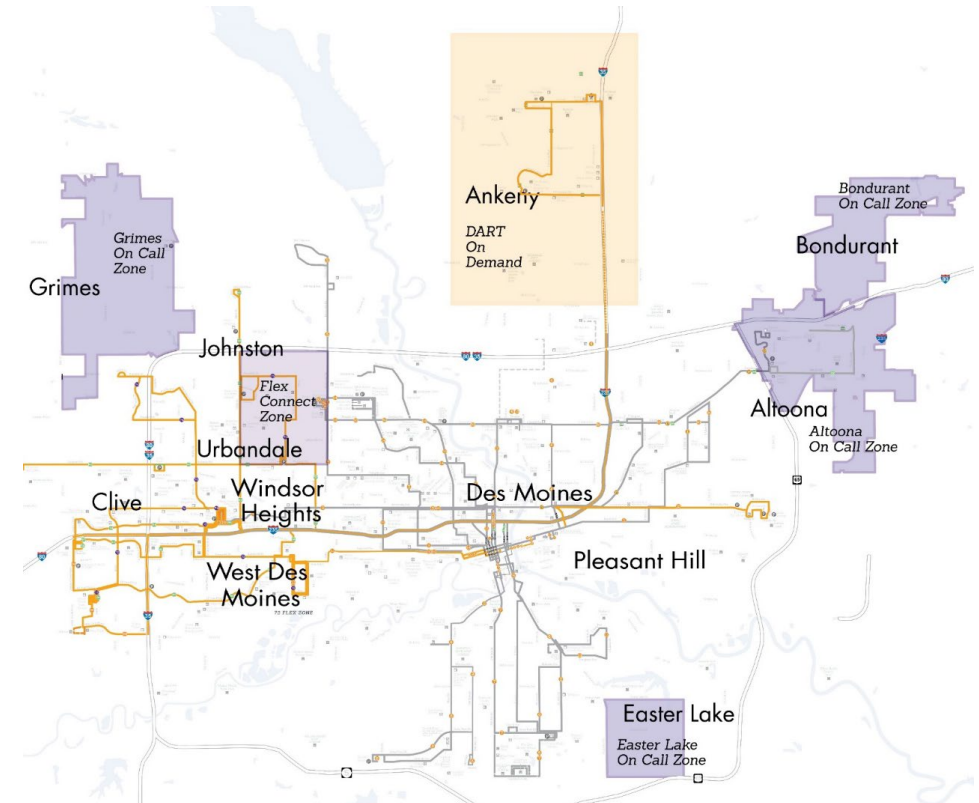
DART DISCUSSING FUNDING CHALLENGES THAT MAY LEAD TO REDUCED SERVICES

NEW AT 6:00



## Making headlines

While major cuts to service were avoided for the next two years thanks to funding from the Des Moines Area MPO, DART still faces an operating shortfall in FY2027.





# What we've heard

Transit is essential

Vision for the future

Funding discussion fatigue

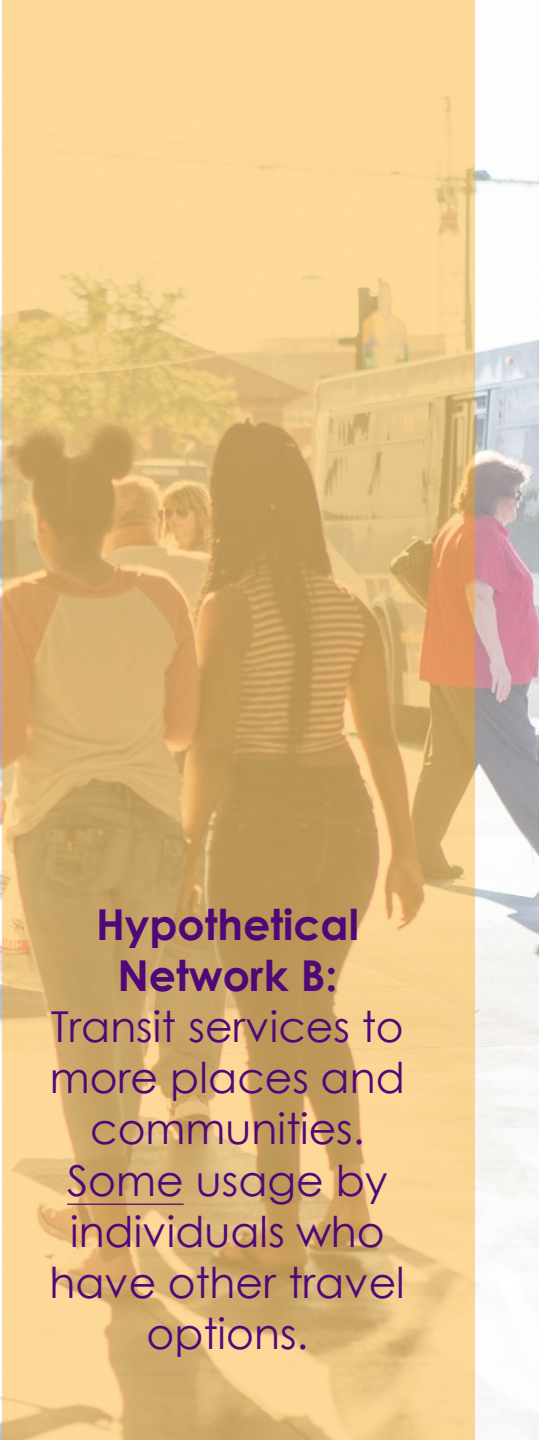
Sustainable formula

Business support



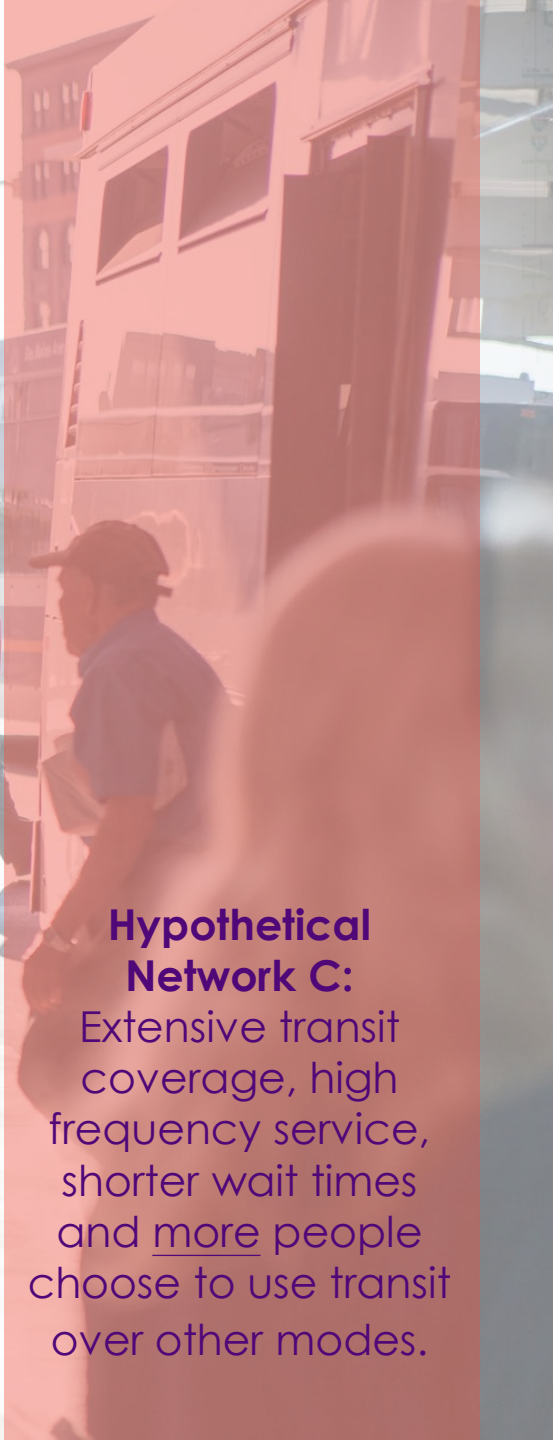
### Hypothetical Network A:

Limited transit service. Lower frequency, longer wait times. Only used by individuals who have no other option.



### Hypothetical Network B:

Transit services to more places and communities. Some usage by individuals who have other travel options.



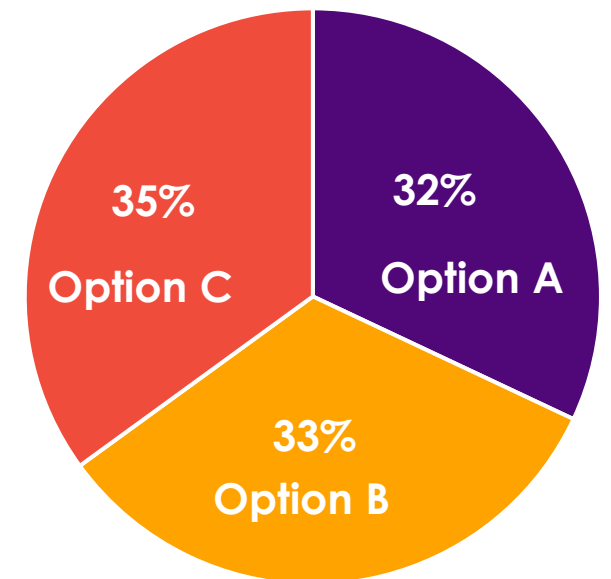
### Hypothetical Network C:

Extensive transit coverage, high frequency service, shorter wait times and more people choose to use transit over other modes.

Recent survey of elected officials

# Is there regional consensus?

	YES	NO
Changing transit <b>funding</b> formula?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Regional transit network <b>design</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Importance</b> of regional transit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





## **Creating connections. Building communities.**

Reimagine DART is a collaborative effort to transform public transit in Greater Des Moines, fostering stronger connections between our communities to create a future where everyone can easily access opportunities that drive our region's growth.

# **REIMAGINE** dart

What is it?

# Reimagine DART



**Regional Buy-in  
Around Shared Goals**



**Transit Network  
Redesign Scenarios**



**Public Input &  
Engagement**



Get Involved

# How you can support transit



## Stay Informed

Follow on social media. Sign up for email updates.



## Speak with decision makers

Share why public transit matters from your perspective.



## Participate

Attend public input meetings and other opportunities to provide input.



## Share resources

Provide information to your networks on our services and value for the region.





## Plan for transit access sooner rather than later

- Consider transit access in site planning and design of new development
- How will your employees and customers need to reach your business?
- What unintentional barriers are you creating for customers with limited mobility?



## Become an Unlimited Access partner

- *Free, unlimited use* of DART bus routes for employees, residents, or tenants
- Ridership reporting, promotion and how-to-ride training
- Flat-fee annual payments
- Easy mobile boarding



**Thank you**

[Ridedart.com](https://www.ridedart.com)

**dart**