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Transportation Is a Dallas Equity Issue

New Dallas mobility plan discussed Wednesday

By **Ken Kalthoff** • Published June 3, 2020 • Updated on June 3, 2020 at 5:34 pm



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As demonstrators march in Dallas for equity, one disparity issue that is often discussed in the city is transportation.



Research has documented the difficulty people have getting to jobs from affordable housing areas using Dallas public transportation.

The University of Texas at Arlington Institute for Urban Studies released such a report three years ago.

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**OCT 24, 2017****Transit Report Criticizes Reach of DART Service**

Riders don't need research to prove it may take several transfers to get where they need to go.

Amid protest marches and a coronavirus pandemic, Dallas City Council Members Wednesday discussed a new Dallas mobility plan.

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“We can’t do this plan without equity,” said Councilman Casey Thomas, a former Dallas NAACP leader.

Thomas said 17,000 Dallas families can’t afford a car.

Councilman Tennell Atkins said many of his constituents spend a large portion of their income just getting to work.

“That’s transportation poverty,” Atkins said.

City officials have been working for a year with a consultant and several transportation agencies on the plan that was presented Wednesday.

Instead of emphasizing streets and cars, the preferred option of the plan promotes greater reliance on public transportation and more facilities for bicycles.

It encourages city investment to promote affordable housing near transit and trails.

“It might not be buses, large buses that are going to be the solution, but looking at smaller vehicles, looking at rideshare,” said Dallas Transportation Director Michael Rogers.

Councilman Adam McGough, who leads the City Council Public Safety Committee, wants safety features added to the equation.

"Lights and cameras and other technology that could be incorporated as we are looking at the design and layout," McGough said.

But suddenly, the coronavirus pandemic has added social distancing to daily life and scared riders away from public transportation.

Council Member Cara Mendelsohn said it calls for a mobility planning attitude adjustment.

"DART is saying that they're expecting half or less of the ridership, over the next two years that they had originally considered, and I'm hearing businesses say that they are purposefully locating businesses away from public transportation for their health," she said.

City Council Members voiced concerns about the cost of maintaining new trails when the city budget is seriously ill from coronavirus. Hundreds of employees were furloughed as the mobility plan was prepared.

"What is the cost? How are we going to pay for it? And when will you have that analysis, where the money is going to come from," Atkins asked.

Planners said they will work on a financial plan over the summer.

At the same time, DART is also facing financial problems from the drop in sales taxes and ridership. But DART is continuing work on an overhaul of the bus network to improve service.

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