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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Tuesday, April 1, 2025

DART Seeks Public Input on Reimagine DART Network Redesign

In April, central Iowans are invited to weigh in on the future of public transit.

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is inviting central Iowans to share their perspectives on two concepts for redesigning the regional bus network. In April, community members are encouraged to explore these concepts and provide input through a short survey at reimagineDARTdsm.com. Feedback collected will guide the DART Commission as it decides priorities and budget for the regional network design.

"This is a unique opportunity for residents, riders and community leaders to help shape the future of public transit in Greater Des Moines," said City of Des Moines Mayor and DART Commission Chair Connie Boesen. "Every citizen's input is critical to informing how we design a transit network that best serves our growing and diverse communities within the reality of current budget constraints."

Established 20 years ago as a regional bus network, DART has continuously evolved to meet changing travel needs. Now, in response to post-pandemic travel changes and budget limitations, the Reimagine DART initiative seeks to boldly reassess services and chart a new path forward. This effort is designed to shape a shared vision for public transit's future – one that maximizes resources and ensures access to essential destinations across Greater Des Moines.

DART and planning staff from several member communities worked with consultants to develop two distinct concepts to help guide the future transit network. These concepts illustrate how you would design a transit network differently to achieve different goals with one goal being high ridership (getting lots of people to ride the bus) and the other goal being high coverage (reaching as many places as possible).

- **Ridership Concept:** Focuses on fewer, high-frequency routes that operate most of the day and week in areas with the most people and jobs.
- **Coverage Concept:** Expands the total number of routes, providing access to a broader geographic area, with less frequent service.

These concepts, along with a short survey, are available online at reimagineDARTdsm.com through the end of April. Additionally, DART will host eight public meetings across the region to gather feedback and engage residents.

"DART is committed to providing the best service possible with the resources we have," said DART CEO Amanda Wanke. "This comprehensive look at our entire network is critical to ensuring our service meets people's needs, maximizes the return on investment for central Iowa taxpayers and enhances economic growth in the communities we serve."

Nearly 60% of rides on DART help people get to and from work. These rides are essential to the region's economy – staffing businesses, hospitals, schools, grocery stores, restaurants and other services residents depend on and enjoy. This means everyone benefits from public transit – whether they know someone who uses DART or not. A significant number of DART riders have lower income, have a disability or do not have a valid driver's license or car in their household, which means DART is often their only option to travel.

All feedback collected will be shared with DART's governing board, the DART Commission, comprised of an elected leader from each of DART's member communities. The Commission, which sets DART's budget and policies that determine how DART staff deliver services, will provide direction in mid-May on how to prioritize ridership and coverage in the Draft Network that will be shared for public input in August.

Participation in public input is easy:

- Visit reimagineDARTdsm.com to view maps and complete a survey.
- Attend a public meeting happening throughout April.

Perspectives from Greater Des Moines Community Leaders:

Jo Christine Miles, director, Principal® Foundation, and Community Relations (which contributed toward Reimagine DART) and member of the Reimagine DART Advisory Cabinet: "Reimagine DART is about moving our entire community forward. Public transit leads to robust economic activity and positive outcomes on mental health and social connectivity, all of which contribute to a thriving interconnected community."

Brandon Paulsen, a DART rider and member of both the Transit Riders Advisory Committee and Reimagine DART Advisory Cabinet: "The few minutes you spend sharing your feedback will help shape a transit system that benefits everyone – riders like me, employers, service providers, and all of us who rely on the businesses and services that help make central Iowa a great place to live. As someone who has provided input to DART's Commissioners and staff over the years, I can assure you your feedback will be valued."

Molly Cutler, Co-Owner of Cutler Development and member of the Reimagine DART Advisory Cabinet: "As a commercial developer committed to projects that better our community, I witness firsthand how critical transit access has become for residents to access local businesses and for companies to succeed. Public transit is no longer just a

convenience – it's a fundamental part of a community's appeal, sustainability and ability to adapt to the needs of both employers and employees. Investing in transit means investing in the future of our region."

About DART

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is Iowa's largest, and only, regional transit agency, providing service in and around Polk County. DART operates a family of transportation services, providing 3.5 million annual rides that connect thousands of people every day to jobs, school, healthcare and other essential destinations. Twelve communities make up DART's service area, where the agency carries out its mission to enrich lives, connect communities and expand opportunities for central Iowans. For more information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit the website at ridedart.com, download the free MyDART app or call 515-283-8100.

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