



**DALLAS AREA
TRANSIT ALLIANCE
TEXAS RAIL
ADVOCATES
SOUTHWESTERN
RAIL CONFERENCE**

May 19, 2026 | Effective Rail Advocacy Strategies



Special Disclaimer

Dallas Area Transit Alliance (DATA) is unaffiliated with Dallas Area Rapid Transit.

Background Information

- The entity that formed DART was written into state law under Texas Transportation Code Chapter 452
- 1983 - Residents of cities in Dallas County hold elections to dedicate 1 cent of local sales tax to form a regional transit agency
- A city has the ability to call for elections every 6 years whether to stay or leave DART
- If a city leaves DART, they are on the hook to pay back their portion of DART debt
 - Which means the 1 cent sales tax is not immediately available to them.
- While disputed; cost increases, restriction on city revenues, disagreements regarding governance, service disparities, and other factors led to cities re-evaluating their willingness to eschew the 1 cent sales tax

The Origin of DATA

- Rose from existing unofficial DART-related online communities on Reddit and Discord
- Mid 2024 - DART member cities placed defunding resolutions on agenda which were noticed by eagle-eyed members
- These resolutions were used as ammunition for defunding bill at state legislature
- 3 cities passed exactly the same resolution within 2 weeks to defund DART by 25%

Cities that Voted for Funding Cut Resolution:

- Carrollton
- Farmers Branch
- Irving
- Plano
- University Park
- Rowlett*

*later reversed the resolution

The Origin of DATA

- First meeting in downtown Dallas held during the summer of 2024
- 2nd meeting - Dallas Area Transit Alliance was officially named, 50 attendants in person from across the DFW area
- End of summer - official structure, elected officers, and monthly meeting schedule was established
- We had extremely gifted volunteers help with logo design, websites, collaboration software, group chat setup etc that enabled us to start moving very quickly



Purpose

DATA is a grassroots, volunteer organization whose purpose is to advocate for riders of Dallas Area Rapid Transit (“DART”), and public transportation riders in the Dallas metropolitan area. The members of DATA believe that access to a safe, reliable, comprehensive, and affordable transit network is essential to the quality of life for every resident of the DART service area, and to that end we advocate for the preservation, expansion, and improvement of DART and raise awareness for issues that may negatively affect our fellow riders.

What have we done?

- Primary rider voice organization during suburban DART cities push to support HB3187 and SB1557, which aimed to cut DART funding by 25%
- Spoke at city councils, took media interviews, canvassed stations, held press conferences, lobbied directly at the state legislature
 - Visited around 50 legislative offices across the House and Senate
 - Organized 10+ people to testify at the hearing for HB3187
 - Further lobbying of Calendars committee members to ensure bill never reached the floor
- Used social media, well-researched articles, petition tools to engage with voters virtually
- Organized hundreds of phone calls and emails to legislators against HB3187
- HB3187/SB1557 did not make it to the floor for a vote

DATA at Lobby Day - April 2025



DATA with DART Board and TX House Transportation Committee Hearing - Late April/May 2025



What have we done since?

- When city councils called for elections to exit DART in 2026, we enacted constant pressure campaigns
- Partnered with organizations such as Addison Way Forward, Dallas Urbanists, DSA-NTX, Keep DART in Plano, Park Cities Area Democrats, ATU, etc
- Made around 9,000 voter contacts in Addison, Highland Park, University Park
- Constant flow of social media content, articles on the subject, interviews, and press releases to keep the issue at the forefront
- Ultimately, Addison and University Park stayed with DART while Highland Park voted to leave



Canvassing & Poll Greeting in Addison and Park Cities



What's next?

- We are committed to be the voice of the riders for the long term, currently in the works to organize as a non-profit
- With the immediate threats to DART gone, we will move forward with advocating for funding at the state level, and demanding better service from the agency
 - With the General Mobility Program agreement between DART and the cities, a new funding mechanism is needed to bridge the budget gap
- Build relationships with local elected officials and leaders - public transportation is often a blind spot
- Strengthen connections with underserved communities to make sure that public transportation works for everyone

Current Organization

- Connor Hulla, President
- Tyler Wright, Vice President
- Alexander Dunn, Secretary
- Patric Morgan, Parliamentarian

- Qui Le, Systems Administrator & Events Chair
- Chelsea Limboy, Community Outreach Chair
- David Yaqubian, External Affairs Chair
- Warren Peña, Finance Chair
- Keun Lee, Policy Research Chair

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