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**PRESS RELEASE:**

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**\$3.6 Million in One-Time MPO Award Helps DART Maintain Services for Two Years**

*Funding will provide the DART Commission 18 months to plan for future funding and service levels*

The Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Policy Committee awarded DART \$3.6 million from its Carbon Reduction Program last week. These one-time funds will go to DART's capital budget, allowing the organization to purchase buses, and provide flexibility to use more federal funds for operating expenses. At today's DART budget hearing, the DART Commission voted to use the equivalent amount of federal funds to fill a budget gap and to maintain services for two years, while the Commission engages member communities in planning for longer-term stability.

"We greatly appreciate the investment of these funds in DART, which allows us to maintain a critical service people depend on to get to work, school and medical appointments," said Russ Trimble, West Des Moines Mayor and DART Commission Chair. "Our efforts are just beginning as we embark on an intensive process that must arrive at a clear consensus on the services our regional public transit system provides and a commitment among all member communities to fund that system into the future."

The one-time MPO funds will cover two funding gaps. One gap is due to operating costs rising faster than property tax revenues. The other is due to the City of Des Moines' contribution to DART increasing under a new formula adopted by the DART Commission, which aligns how much each member community contributes with the level of services received.

DART will still make \$500,000 in administrative expense cuts in fiscal year 2025 to balance its budget; these will likely include eliminating onboard Wi-Fi, reducing customer service hours, and making a handful of other administrative and customer amenity changes that will be finalized and shared as part of a detailed budget staff will present to the Commission in June. In addition, DART expects to collect public input and consider eliminating the D-Line due to low ridership and some funding sources specific to that service not continuing.

The DART Commission will have until December 2025 to determine funding and service levels for the regional transit system to address both funding gaps ahead of DART's FY 2027 budget conversations. By that point, DART will have a \$4.7 million shortfall due to

the funding formula implementation, as well as an estimated \$2 million budget gap based on current service levels and property tax commitments.

“This funding speaks to how many people believe public transit is essential to our region. Of the nearly 2,000 people who participated in public input last fall, the vast majority indicated they wanted to see service levels maintained or even increased. This reflects that the level of transit services available in our region hasn't increased over the last 15 years,” said DART CEO Amanda Wanke. “We have difficult conversations ahead as we work to find consensus on how to fund regional transit services, and I remain committed to my goal of elevating how public transit is an investment that drives economic growth and quality of life in 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 3.2 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](http://ridedart.com), download the free MyDART app or call 515-283-8100.*

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