

TRANSPORTATION

# Traveling pains

Disconnect in Collin County transit agencies creates transit gap in Plano, neighboring cities

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Collin County has two major transit systems it counts on: DART and TAPS. But some commuters say using them together can be a difficult task if you live out of reach of dedicated shuttles.

Collin County's transit connections to Plano have been limited since the Collin County Area Regional Transit was disbanded in 2013, and many cities decided to partner with the Texoma Paratransit System, or TAPS.



Photos by BEN TORRES/special contributor

**Malcolm Slaughter, 21**, watches the road while riding on the Texoma Paratransit System express bus traveling from the Parker Road DART Station back to Allen. Slaughter normally rides the bus for work, but also rides to accompany his aunt who is an express bus driver.

"When TAPS began service in Collin County, replacing CCART, one of the initial issues was that CCART had been providing trips to and from Plano," TAPS spokesman Dan Acree said. "Those trips were not authorized by any contract and were not funded. TAPS determined from the beginning that it could not continue to provide on-demand service to Plano."

Today, a few fixed routes in McKinney and Allen provide service to DART's Parker Road Station, but the agency says on-demand riders in other areas can't use a TAPS bus to pick up or drop off in Plano. This has caused a gap between Plano — Collin County's only DART member — and its neighbors.

For example, getting from Murphy or Frisco to neighboring city Plano means a rider first would have to use TAPS's on-demand bus service and schedule a ride at least a day in advance to get to a dedicated shuttle bus route in Allen or McKinney.

From there, commuters can ride to DART's Parker Road Station in Plano and use one of DART's trains or buses to continue to a Plano destination or points farther south.

TAPS operates fixed bus lines, which provide bus service on a regular basis at regular stops in two cities throughout the week: Allen, with three routes, and McKinney, with seven routes. But TAPS's on-demand Get-a-Ride service, which includes all other areas of the county, doesn't run on weekends.

Concerns about traveling between Dallas and Collin counties are something DART hears all the time, said Marion Denny, senior manager for mobility management and planning for DART. She said DART's hands are tied, because it cannot operate out of its service area. Cities who join DART must contribute one

percent of sales tax for every dollar spent in the city.

The transit agency also allows nonmember cities to partner with them to run services on a contract basis. That arrangement has led to express bus service in Mesquite to the Green Line, and a bus from the Trinity Railway Express line to Arlington.

"There's virtually nothing DART can do unless a city decides to contract with or join DART," Denny said.

When CCART was disbanded, the North Central Texas Council of Governments provided a stop-gap program for residents, contracting with Yellow Cab Company of Dallas to shuttle riders to and from Plano. That program expired in November.

DART is working with the NCTCOG to create a website to help



**Shiri Gupton, 45**, of Prosper, exits the Texoma Paratransit System express bus as it arrives at the Parker Road DART Station in Plano. Gupton travels from Prosper to Allen to take the express bus to the Parker Road DART station to get to her office administration office in Dallas.



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residents find transportation options in their area, whether public, private or nonprofit, but Denny said they are still gathering resources.

"The scary part is we know in some areas, it just isn't going to be possible," Denny said.

Plano officials are aware of the is-



Plano Deputy City Manager Frank Tuner said. Although Plano does not financially participate in TAPS because the city already con-

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—Frank Tuner,  
Plano deputy city manager

tracts with DART, Turner said there's nothing that prevents TAPS buses from coming in to Plano from the city's standpoint.

"We wish there was a way to better coordinate between DART and TAPS," Turner said, adding that the city would prefer that more of their neighbors would join DART so that the area could have a seamless transit system.

Wylie City Manager Mindy Manson says working with TAPS has "definitely been something of an education," since the city has never had any form of public transit before.

But Manson doesn't see any alter-

native for the city — Wylie is prohibited from joining DART because it does not border a member city.

"I think everyone's been finding TAPS is doing an excellent job filling a niche," she said.

Until a solution is found, Denny says residents should talk to their city officials about transit concerns.

"Cities need to be aware of what their residents want and need," she said.

Plano neighborsgo editor Meredith Shamburger can be reached at 214-977-8292.

## MORE INFO

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit System provides commuter rail and bus service to Addison, Carrollton, Cockrell Hill, Dallas, Farmers Branch, Garland, Glenn Heights, Highland Park, Irving, Plano, Richardson, Rowlett and University Park. For more information, visit [dart.org](http://dart.org). The Texoma Paratransit System operates bus services in Clay, Collin, Cooke, Fannin, Grayson, Montague and Wise Counties. For more information, visit [tapsbus.com](http://tapsbus.com).