elch

**CONTACT:**Sarah Welch
Communications Manager

swelch@ridedart.com

515-805-6866

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**:
Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023

**DART seeks feedback on possible major service cuts in Des Moines***Without a funding increase, transit services will face significant cuts.*

DART is seeking input on a possible 40 percent reduction in bus services that could occur over five years. Public input opportunities are being offered as the Des Moines City Council considers whether to pass a franchise fee to fully fund DART services or make cuts to services.

From November 15 to December 15, 2023, DART will provide several ways for riders and community members to learn about the options the city is weighing, as well as provide feedback on an increase in the franchise fee for public transit and how service cuts could impact them.

“Public transit is an essential service intended to provide every central Iowan the opportunity to fully participate in our communities regardless of ability or income,” said DART Commission Chair and West Des Moines Mayor Russ Trimble. “Many of the individuals who use DART do not have other transportation options, which means a significant reduction in bus services will impact those who rely on public transit as part of their daily lives.”

“Choosing to invest in DART is important to a healthy, growing community,” said DART CEO Amanda Wanke. “Our population has increased 24% in the past decade, while services have stayed at existing levels due to funding constraints. As we look to the future, we need to ensure public transportation is an integral part of our region, connecting people to jobs, services, and opportunities in ways that benefit all of us.”

Potential cuts to services stem from a challenge the City of Des Moines faces in funding public transit. The city’s contribution to DART exceeds what it can collect in property taxes, the funding mechanism set by the Iowa Legislature. Its contribution to DART will continue to increase under a new funding formula that aligns what each community pays with the level of services received. Approximately 70 percent of the services DART provides are in the City of Des Moines.

The Iowa Legislature gave the City of Des Moines the option of increasing its franchise fee – a tax on gas and electric bills – up to 2.5 percent to help fund public transit. If the Des Moines City Council chooses to increase the franchise fee by the full 2.5 percent, the city could generate enough revenue to maintain bus services at the current level and reduce property taxes for the next few years. A homeowner in Des Moines with a $100 utility bill would experience a $2.50 per month increase in their franchise fee. In addition, non-profit and government organizations that do not pay property taxes would contribute to DART through franchise fees.

If the Des Moines City Council does not commit to funding DART above what the city can collect in property taxes, DART will have to cut services by up to 40 percent over five years. The first round of service cuts would begin in November 2024, affecting nearly all local bus routes in Des Moines. Service cuts would result in significantly longer travel times and less service throughout the day.

Individuals who live in the City of Des Moines and those who would be directly impacted by a potential increase in taxes or a cut to DART services are encouraged to attend one of six public meetings and complete a survey at a public meeting or online.

**Public Meeting Times and Locations:**

* **November 30,** 6-7 p.m., Northwest Community Center (Ward 1)
* **December 1,** Noon-1 p.m., virtual via Zoom
* **December 4,** 6-7 p.m., East Side Library (Ward 2)
* **December 6,** 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Open House at DART Central Station
* **December 7,** 6-7 p.m., DMPS Kurtz Opportunity Center (Ward 3)
* **December 12,** 6-7 p.m., Des Moines Area Religious Council (Ward 4)

Central Iowans can learn more about the issue, sign up to attend a public meeting, and take the survey at www.ridedart.com/service-cuts.

***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, download the free MyDART app or call 515-283-8100.*

# # #