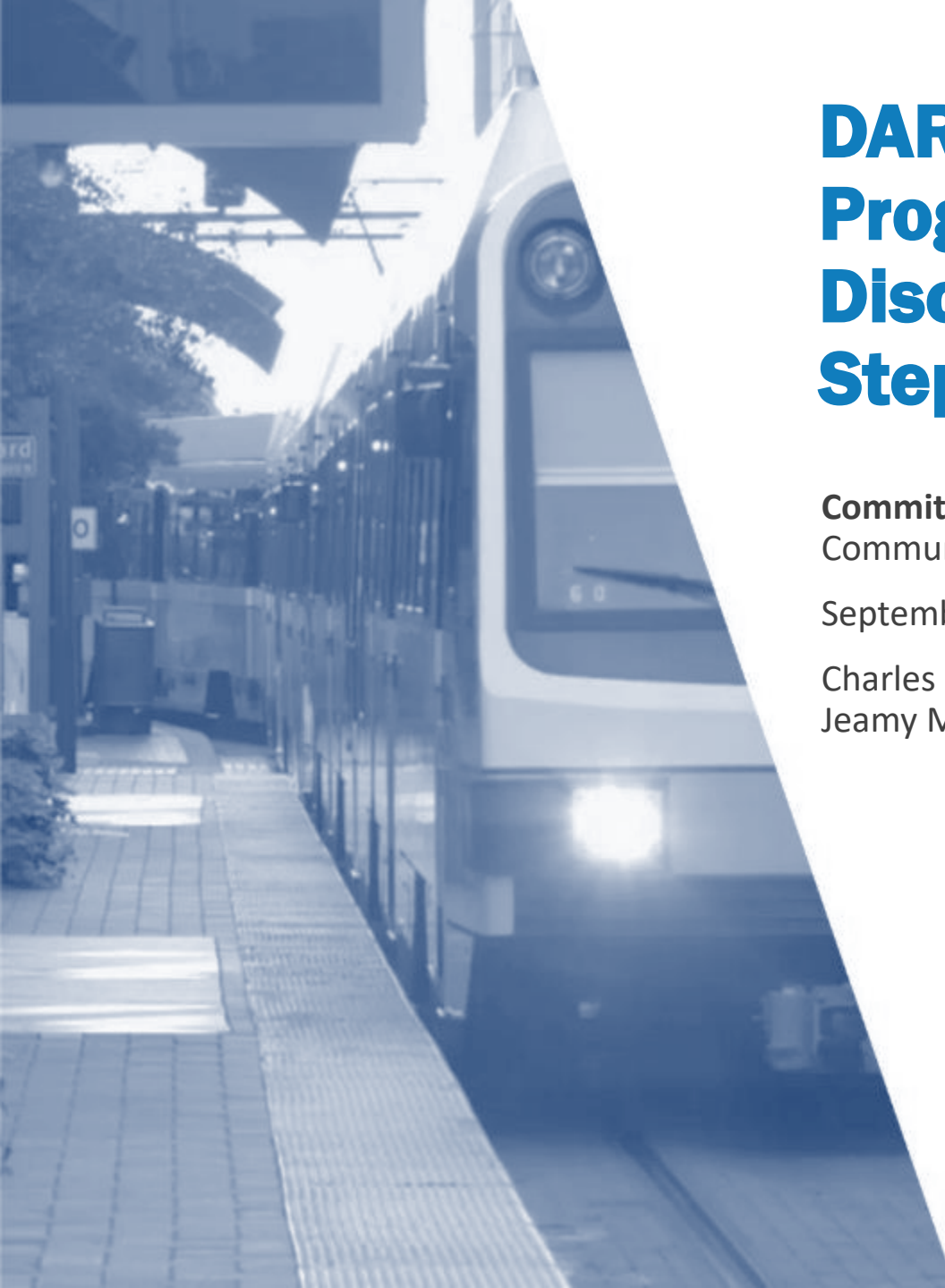




DART Cares MDRT Program Update and Discussion of Next Steps

Committee-of-the-Whole
Communications Subcommittee

September 30, 2025

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Program Background

History and Vision of DART Cares

The DART Cares Program includes several initiatives to help create a supportive environment that empowers individuals while enhancing the safety and well-being of the entire community.

The program seeks to:

- Collaborate with local organizations to support those in need
- Actively involve community members and businesses in solutions
- Use data to identify high-need areas and measure impact
- Educate the public about challenges faced by vulnerable populations
- Explore the creation of designated safe spaces within transit facilities

The Multi-Disciplinary Response Team (MDRT) is a pilot initiative to support this vision

MDRT Background

2020 – Pandemic led to city and customer concerns related to unhoused/mental health conditions on system.

2021-2022 – Discussions with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) on options, best practices.

November 2022 - Contract with MMHPI to create and launch beta test to support MDRT pilot.

October 2023 – Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with Parkland Health to provide licensed social workers for MDRT, including Dallas Fire-Rescue (DFR) paramedics.

November 2024 – Parkland ILA and pilot program extended without DFR, allowing MDRT to serve areas outside Dallas

- Agreement ends October 30, 2025

Ongoing – Meetings with DART cities and social service organizations to discuss MDRT and collaboration opportunities

MDRT Goal and Focus Areas

MDRT Goal - To transform DART from a de facto shelter into a proactive support system for vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges.

MDRT Focus Areas – Crisis intervention, mental health assessments, quality-of-life support for non-crisis situations

Strategic Plan Alignment



Quality Service



Strategic Relationships

MDRT Overview

The MDRT proactively patrols the system to identify and respond to needs.

DART operates the following MDRTs:

- Two (2) **Patrol** MDRTs include a DART Police officer and Parkland Health professional
- One (1) **Rail** MDRT includes a DART Police officer and Parkland Health professional
 - This team is strategically deployed on the rail system based on community need.
- One (1) **Rail** MDRT is a DART Police officer trained in mental health supported by the other teams as needed.

Teams patrol 7 am to 7 pm Monday - Friday



Point-in-Time Count

Point-in-Time Count

DART commissioned a Point-in-Time count for the DART Light Rail System:

- Conducted on February 27 and 28, 2025, to establish a baseline of individuals using the system as an overnight shelter.
- This count serves as an initial snapshot to understand the scale and nature of these challenges.

Methodology

- Conducted by social service professionals from four agencies
- Survey used Counting Us app for increased accuracy and geo-location capability
- Two shifts with teams assigned to each rail line to cover entire system and all stations



SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

43 professionals from four local social services agencies were recruited to conduct and document interviews and observations on the DART Rail System.

All surveyors have regular experience engaging people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, and substance use disorders.

Participating Agencies

Austin Street Center

North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA)

Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA)

The Human Impact

DART



COUNTING US APP

Surveyors utilized the Counting Us app from SimTech Solutions to conduct and document surveys and all attended a mandatory two-hour hands-on training on utilizing the app.

Using this app has multiple advantages over hand-counting:

1. **Improved accuracy** – can de-duplicate responses to prevent over-counting
2. **Best practice** – this is the same app used by the annual HUD Point In Time Count in Dallas
3. **Geo-location** – the app automatically locates each survey, telling us where they were conducted



COVERING THE RAIL SYSTEM

First Shift: 8pm–2am

One team of four surveyors were assigned to each line, starting at Akard Station. Surveyors counted their first train, exited and boarded the next train, counting that one, and so on. All teams traversed their entire rail line during their shift.

Second Shift: 2am–11am

Two teams of three surveyors were assigned to each line, focused on particular stations and departure times identified by DART Police as the trains most frequented by non-destination riders. After those trains were counted, teams continued to count until they traversed the entire line. All teams traversed their entire rail line during their shift.

Summary: twelve teams of 43 social services professionals traversed each line twice overnight

SURVEYS

Surveys were conducted with riders' explicit consent only, and included 20 standard questions plus 5 customized questions commissioned specifically by DART staff.

Questions were voluntary and included demographics, homelessness history, health conditions, veteran status, DART utilization, and homeless services utilization.

OBSERVATIONS

Persons who could not be safely surveyed due to incoherence, sleeping, perceived threat or danger, or lack of time were logged as observations. Surveyors were trained to identify non-destination riders and estimated each person's age, gender, and race and documented their clothing as well as distinguishing marks or characteristics.

485

Unique Surveys and Observations

Number of non-destination riders discovered on the DART Rail System

156

Surveys Completed

32% of total riders

329

Observations Documented

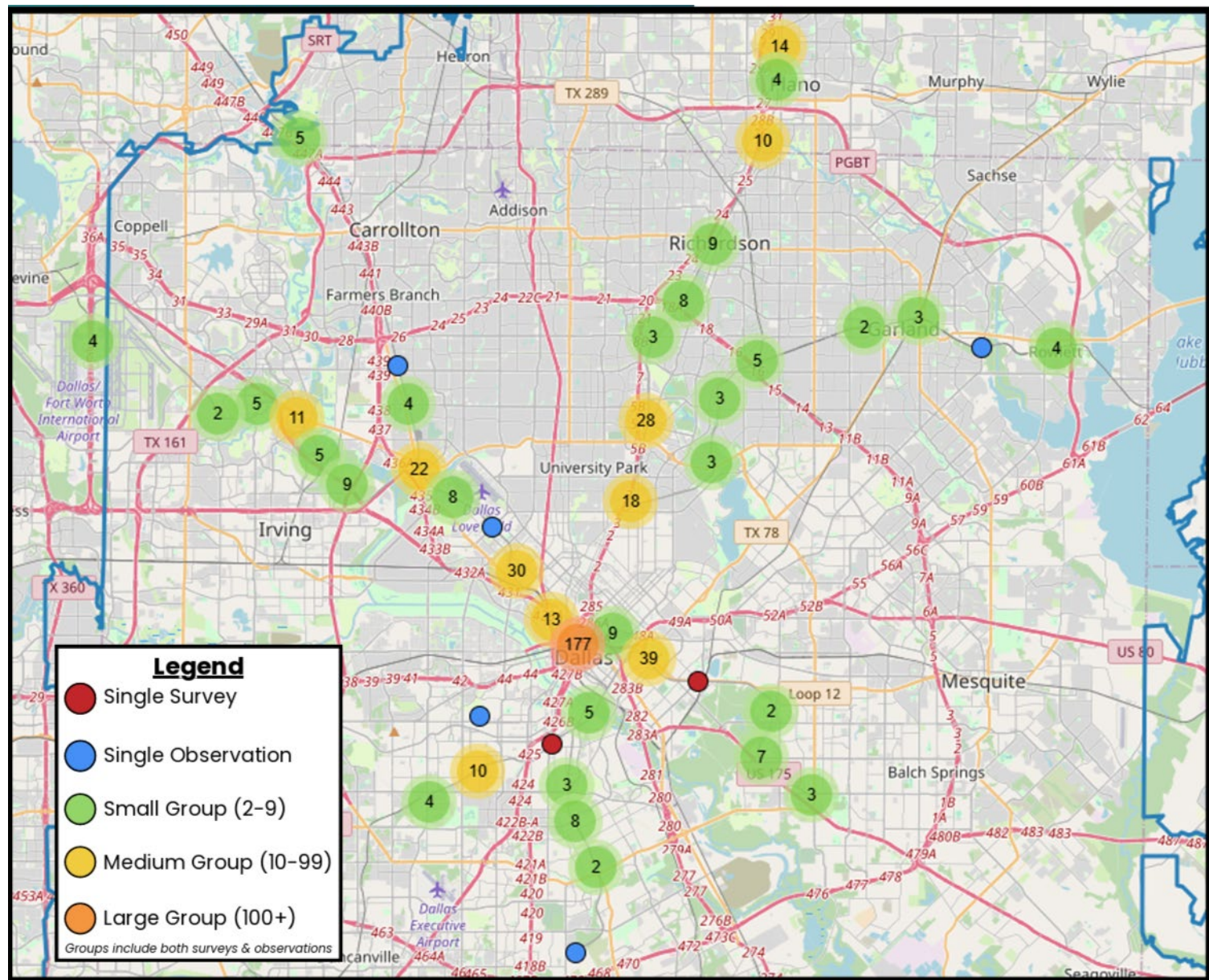
68% of total riders

Of the 156 surveys:

- 105 were completed on the train and 51 on the platform
- 60% indicated they sleep on DART
- Nearly 50% admitted to having a Mental Health disorder

Of the 329 observations:

- 44% declined
- 30% were sleeping
- 17% due to safety or incoherent person



Key Takeaways from Survey

Shelter Comparison

- Austin Street Center is one the largest low-barrier shelter providers in DFW, with 451 shelter beds provided on the daily basis
- DART had 8% more (485) than Austin Street Center and is an attractive low-barrier option especially when traditional shelters are full

Security Concerns

- Several surveyors noted low presence of police or fare enforcement at night
- Several reports of individuals at stations engaged in active drug use
- Reports of health and hygiene concerns due individuals rubbing private parts against surfaces or objects on trains

Lack of Services for the unhoused at night

- Several unhoused asked to be transported to shelter or services immediately but shelters typically close doors at 5 pm



Next Steps

Program Recommendation

- We now have a well-established baseline, which includes data on how many unhoused neighbors use Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) light rail for shelter.
- Transition the pilot into a permanent program based on these findings.
- Move forward with a Request for Proposals (RFP) to formally procure long-term services.
- Parkland has agreed to extend their ILA throughout the RFP process to ensure continuity.
- We will seek to establish a 3-year contract through this process.

THANK YOU!

