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Service begins Monday, July 30

DART Rail Orange Line opens new possibilities in Irving

Jill Martinez, owner and webmaster of IrvingOnline.com, and husband Robert, a lawyer and chairman of the Irving chamber's Transportation Management Association, are walking the talk when it comes to transportation matters. More than five years ago, the Martinezes downsized from a big house to an upscale loft just a short walk from DART's Las Colinas Urban Center Station, part of the first section of the Orange Line that opens on Monday, July 30.

"We wanted to make sure we got a good location and were willing to wait for light rail to come," Jill Martinez said. "It's been exciting to watch the Orange Line being built and we're proud to be urban pioneers."

Martinez walks or rides her scooter to work in the Urban Center. Meanwhile, her husband takes the Trinity Railway Express to his office in Fort Worth. New bus connections from the Urban Center Station to the TRE's Downtown Irving/Heritage Crossing Station will let him commute car-free, too.

Living along DART Rail now gives them access to the entire region. They look forward to spending a day at the zoo, dining at favorite restaurants, shopping in the West Village or going to the American Airlines Center for Dallas Mavericks games – all without driving.

New line creates more living and working options

The Orange Line brings new access to employment and educational opportunities, most notably in the master-planned community of Las Colinas. For the thousands of employees who commute in and out of Irving daily, the Orange Line offers fresh alternatives to driving. The highly anticipated arrival of DART Rail has spurred construction of luxury apartment communities throughout the Urban Center, with more than 7,000 units existing or planned, and several transit-oriented developments are in the works.

[web-archive version includes media]

A Discussion with DART Board Chair John Danish

The first 4.5-mile section of the 14-mile, \$1.3 billion project has stops at the University of Dallas, the Las Colinas Urban Center and the Irving Convention Center. The arrival of light rail culminates more than 12 years of land-use planning by DART, the city of Irving, the Las Colinas Association and the Dallas County Utilities Reclamation District.



Jill and Robert Martinez chose their loft based on its proximity to Lake Carolyn and the DART Orange Line.

On Dec. 3, DART opens the second phase to North Lake College and Belt Line Road. At Belt Line Station, buses will meet trains to take passengers to and from DFW International Airport. The DFW Station is scheduled to open in 2014, connecting downtown Dallas to one of the nation's busiest airports.

"With the opening of the Orange Line, thousands of people now can reach one of the region's densest employment centers via public transit," DART President/Executive Director Gary Thomas said. "That makes it easier for people to not only find jobs, but also pursue careers."

Irving is the only city in the service area - other than Dallas - to have both light and commuter rail service. The Trinity Railway Express has operated in South Irving since December 1996 along the right of way of the Rock Island Railway, where the city was founded in the early 1900s.

Federal funds seed economic recovery

DART's massive \$3.4 billion light rail expansion, which includes the Orange Line, has provided a much-needed stimulus during the economic downturn. The Irving build-out received \$61.2 million in ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) funds because of its employment impact and ability to attract additional development, companies, employees and residents to Irving.

True to expectations, the project produced more than 600 jobs at some 80 contractor companies in 14 states. Federal officials have closely monitored the project's progress and cited the Orange Line as one of the top "Recovery Act Projects Changing America."

Construction of the Orange Line adds to the largest electric light rail system in North America. The DART Rail System will reach nearly 90 miles at the completion of the current expansion in 2014, creating viable transit access to greater housing, employment, educational, medical and entertainment options throughout the Dallas area.

Station art reflects the community

DART's growing collection of public art adds three new displays with the opening of the Orange Line. The award-winning Station Art & Design Program creates site-specific works that both acknowledge the surroundings and assert themselves as a new contribution. As a result, DART stations become vibrant public spaces and not just transit stops.

A local advisory committee works with planners, architects and engineers at the earliest stages of station design, and later gives input to the station artist about themes and materials, to ensure the station reflects the history and culture of the community it serves. Art is then integrated into the design of column claddings, platform pavers, windscreens and landscaping. Information about the entire DART public art collection, along with photos of many of the pieces, is available online at www.DART.org/PublicArt.