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APTA Recognizes DART as Industry Leader in Improving Bus Safety

The American Public Transportation Association has recognized the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority as leading the industry in improving bus safety.

DART earned the national "Gold Award" in the safety category among mid-sized transit agencies as part of APTA's 2011 Bus Safety & Security Excellence Awards program. APTA presented the top honor to DART on Sunday evening at a conference in Memphis, Tennessee. Agencies' safety initiatives were evaluated on a wide array of criteria, including innovation, transferability, financial benefits, and effectiveness as measured by performance statistics. The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (Cincinnati) was also honored, receiving a Certificate of Merit.

"We have created a true safety culture at DART in the past few years with a renewed focus and intensity," DART General Manager Brad Miller said. "We have always valued safety, but we had to make some real, tangible changes after a string of pedestrian accidents a few years ago. We asked employees, riders and experts for ideas. We empowered all of our employees to become safety advocates. We measured the results, set goals, and made sure everyone on staff knew if we were meeting our objectives. And slowly but surely DART has become a national model for just how much can and should be done to make safety the top priority."

DART has made more than 50 safety improvements in recent years, including the hiring of a full-time Safety Manager; an intensified training program that focuses on the fundamentals of safe, defensive driving; tracking all incidents with a strict criteria that judges preventability, not just liability; and recognizing and awarding the safe driving records of DART operators.

DART's "accident frequency rate" has dramatically improved as a result, decreasing from 3.47 per 100,000 miles as of August 2007, to 1.02 per 100,000 miles so far in the current fiscal year. "Accident" is defined very strictly here, to include even the most minor incidents that could have been avoided.

"The award from APTA independently affirms DART's culture change and the measurable results that followed," Miller said. "That being said, we believe safety isn't an end result, but rather a never-ending process. DART will look for ways to improve safety for as long as it is in existence. It's the right thing to do and we owe it to the thousands of people who use public transit every day to hold our agency to the highest standards."

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority is the public transportation provider that serves Polk County. DART operates a family of transportation services that makes getting around the Greater Des Moines area easier and more convenient. For more information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit our website at www.ridedart.com or call 515.283.8100.