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Independent task force makes unanimous recommendation on more representative DART governance

Public's input wanted before DART Commission votes June 6

An independent task force has unanimously recommended a new and more representative governance structure for the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART), and the DART Commission is expected to vote on the recommendation June 6.

"We have heard again and again throughout the last year how important an efficient, effective and modern-day transit system is to our region. This governance structure, which has the communities at the heart of representation, is intended to be flexible and responsive to our growing and changing region," said West Des Moines Mayor Stave Gaer, who chaired the task force. "This plan provides equity in representation—both by community and by population."

For the last 10 years, representation on the DART Commission has been based on population with seven districts throughout the DART region and two at-large seats. The new recommendation includes:

- Each DART member government (currently 19 governments) will have one representative on the Commission. The mayors of the member communities will appoint the representative, who must be an elected official, and an alternate. In the case of county representation, the Board of Supervisors will choose the representative and alternate.
- A weighted vote be allowed, if called, on matters only related to budget and service levels. Weighted voting would be 1 vote per 25,000 population. Three-quarters of the quorum present would be required for a weighted vote to pass.
- If approved by the current Commission, the new 19-member Commission would likely be seated in October 2017.

The task force's recommendation and a full list of task force members is available at <https://www.ridedart.com/dart-governance-task-force>.

Members of the public are invited to give feedback on the recommendations by emailing governance@ridedart.com, contacting their DART Commission and/or City Council representative, or attending a public hearing that will take place before the vote on Tuesday, June 6, at noon at DART Central Station on Tuesday, June 6, immediately followed by a vote on the recommendation.

"This was a very positive and productive process," said the task force's facilitator, Scott Raecker, Executive Director of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University. "This group did a deep dive into difficult issues of regionalism and governance. The process included in-depth independent research and analysis—thanks in large part to the great work of Cassandra Halls, of 2 the Top."

The independent task force was facilitated by Raecker and Halls, with support from the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines. The research included findings based on interviews with DART member community mayors and city managers; an examination of the history of DART and its current governance structure; and a review of other regional structures and national transit structures.

"The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines is pleased to support the work of the DART Governance Task Force," said Kristi Knous, President of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines. "We are proud of our community and its leaders for coming around the table to develop collaborative approaches to strengthen our region."

"With our focus on civility and ethical leadership it seems appropriate that The Ray Center can serve as a place to facilitate productive dialogue on challenging conversations, and I am pleased that this task force was able to reach a unanimous consensus that can serve as a model for other regional governance discussions," says Former Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray.

The DART Commission chartered the formation of the independent task force after hearing from community representatives and individuals during the DART Forward 2035 long-term planning process.

"On behalf of the DART Commission, I want to thank the entire task force for their work and diligence to come to a recommendation," said current DART Chair Tom Gayman. "Conversations about regionalism and representation are not easy, and we're very grateful for the task force's dedication to serving our region well,"

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 the website at ridedart.com or call 515-283-8100. The MyDART Tools, Trip Planner and RideTime App are now available at ridedart.com.

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