

# Arlington transit plan an overdue necessity

Stories about what the "boy wonder," former Mayor Tom Vandergriff, and foresighted city planners did for Arlington's growth in the past two decades are nearly legendary. General Motors, Six Flags Over Texas, the Texas Rangers, UTA and a list of industry and amusement giants lured here have rocketed this bedroom community of the '50s to a thriving, ever-expanding metropolis.

At 200,000 citizens and rapidly moving up, Arlington is no longer just "one of the towns between Dallas and Fort Worth." But with the new industry, increasing population and national attention come unsightly and frustrating growing pains.

Arlington is choking on its own success.

Teeth-gnashing traffic tie-ups as bad as any on Dallas' infamous Central Expressway can be viewed on any of Arlington's major arteries, even during non-peak traffic hours. A basic law of physics has city motorists banging their steering wheels in frustration every morning and evening — no two objects can occupy one space at the same time. And there are simply too many cars for Arlington's streets.

For a city that claims to be aiming toward the future, Arlington has lagged far behind in tending to its transportation needs.

After years of patching potholes, adding street lights and widening roads (tantamount to putting a Band-Aid on the San Andreas Fault), city officials have finally discovered the cure. If Arlington is to become a prosperous city, it needs to think like one. Enter the Arlington Transit Authority.

In a September conference with an interim executive committee of the ATA (the transit plan's designers), the City Council tentatively slated a transit election for Aug. 10, 1985. Voters will decide then whether the program is worth the quarter-cent to half-cent sales tax increase needed to fund the the authority.

Any voter who has grumbled through the snail's-pace 5:15 p.m. mess on Cooper or Collins streets should have no trouble deciding on its value.

Included in the mass-transit plan is a minibus system designed for intra-city travel, an expanded Handitran program, rideshare and park-and-ride, a regular bus stop system and shuttle service to and from Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.

The proposed plan also includes:

- An eventual link-up with the Missouri-Pacific Railroad line to provide service between Arlington and Dallas.
- A north-south rail system connecting I-20 and I-30 with two intermediate stops to ease north-south congestion.
- Supplemental taxi service for the elderly and semi-handicapped.

The plan, supported unanimously by the City Council, is founded in the spirit that soon Arlington will connect with Fort Worth and Dallas in a unified Tarrant-Dallas counties mass transit system. Arlington City Councilman Leo Berman summed it up best. "I guess the rallying point was the fact that both Dallas and Fort Worth have transportation authorities," he said. "What the council was saying is we don't want to be left out."

Opponents of the plan question whether residents will tolerate another tax increase and speculate about jurisdiction of another city bureaucracy.

Careful study of successful transit plans in San Francisco, Oakland, Dallas and other bustling cities show how shrewd planning has conquered jurisdiction settlements.

And city residents? Step out of the car during one of Arlington's 20-minute traffic snarls and ask the driver in the car ahead if the plan is worth the effort.

Arlington is no longer a suburb. It is a full-force city exploding with energy. Arlington needs the transportation system a dynamic city deserves.