

Script of Presentation to Denton City Council
on April 5, 2022 by No Bus Cuts Denton

My name is Joshua Hatton. My address is [...], Denton. My thanks to the city workers who have facilitated my participation in tonight's meeting.

I am a member of the No Bus Cuts Denton campaign. We formed last year to fight back against former Denton mayor Chris Watts' scheme to cut the DCTA bus routes, lay off bus drivers, and take away low-income people's access to public transportation so that he could pay tens of millions of dollars of our public funds to the owners of the New York City-based Via corporation for its inferior GoZone service.

The Via GoZone vehicles began circulating in Denton in September, and we immediately began to witness their unsafe driving. After the CEO of the DCTA told council that Via reported that its GoZone vehicles had been involved in 10 collisions and received one citation, our campaign asked you not to simply take Via's word for it – and to conduct independent research to verify Via's information. Mayor Hudspeth ignored our request, but council member Armintor asked the city manager, Ms. Hensley, to follow our suggestion. Ms. Hensley refused, stating: "this request needs to go to DCTA and not the City of Denton staff." Because of this irresponsible stonewalling by Mayor Hudspeth and Ms. Hensley, we had to take matters into our own hands and conduct the research ourselves.

All of the evidence that I describe in this section is available on our website, www.NoBusCutsDenton.org.

We acquired video recordings of 45 Via GoZone vehicles and their license plates and then filed open records requests with the Denton, UNT, TWU, Highland Village, and Lewisville police departments – and the Denton County Sheriff's office – for reports of all of their Calls for Service involving these vehicles. We found that the safety record of Via's GoZone was much worse than the DCTA had reported to council. During about 10 weeks in Denton and Highland Village, and about 7 weeks in Lewisville, there were a total of 20 Calls for Service by police involving Via GoZone vehicles. There were nine by Lewisville, seven by Denton, two by Highland Village, and one each for UNT and Denton County Sheriff's office. Ten of these 20 calls were for collisions without injury. Five were traffic stops. There were two,

each, for disabled vehicles and a disturbance or suspicious activity. One call was for a collision with injury. Denton PD's seven Calls for Service involving Via GoZone vehicles occurred at a rate of about one every ten days and break down as follows: four collisions without injury, two traffic stops, and one collision with injury.

Two of these reports are particularly shocking. The first is a collision with injury in which a car carrying two female UNT students was rear-ended by a GoZone vehicle. The report reads: "CALLER SAYS SHE NEEDS AMB NOW, HIT HER HEAD, WANTS AN AMB." The second is a collision without injury – a hit-and-run in which a UNT and a TWU student in a car were struck by a GoZone van, which then fled the scene and was eventually found after a search by police. The report reads: "IS NEW VEH WITH DCTA THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRACK IT."

Clearly, the people of Denton cannot trust either the DCTA or its GoZone contractor, Via, to tell the truth about safety. You must overcome the stonewalling of Mayor Hudspeth and Ms. Hensley and direct city staff to investigate the safety of Via's GoZone immediately. We also urge you to pass a resolution directing your appointee to the DCTA board to advocate strongly for the DCTA doing the same for the whole system. Chris Watts has unleashed the harmful Via GoZone on our community; Denton City Council must perform its most basic function by taking steps to protect us from this threat.