

# Press Release

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## No Bus Cuts Denton to Present Demands to DCTA at Rally on June 9th

**Denton, TX, June 2, 2022** — The No Bus Cuts Denton campaign invites supporters of public transportation and responsible government to a rally at noon on Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, at the new Denton County Administrative Courthouse located at 1 Courthouse Drive, Denton, TX, 76208. We demand that the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) **keep its bus routes** and **bring the GoZone rideshare service in-house**. DCTA board members TJ Gilmore, Andy Eads, and Cesar Molina have signaled that they intend to cut the Connect bus routes, which would harm bus riders and drivers alike. Also, the DCTA must bring GoZone in-house, because its contractor Via's service is unsafe, unreliable, and unaccountable — simply put, Via's GoZone is unviable.

After years of sabotaging the DCTA's bus service through under-investment (and actual divestment), illogical route design, and mistreatment of drivers, former DCTA Board Chairman Chris Watts tried to replace all of the DCTA's bus routes with an inferior rideshare service called GoZone, claiming that bus ridership was too low. The No Bus Cuts Denton campaign mobilized the public to remove Watts from the DCTA board and to save five bus routes in Denton. However, funding for these routes runs out at the end of September 2022. Without a decision from the DCTA board to continue funding the buses, bus drivers will lose their jobs, and bus riders without the phone, minutes, or data necessary to book a GoZone ride will lose access to affordable transportation. The fact that more than eight thousand rides were taken in April 2022 on the five remaining Connect bus routes in Denton shows that cutting the buses would inflict harm on the many riders who are unable to use GoZone.

Chris Watts' inferior substitute for the buses, the GoZone rideshare service that the DCTA has contracted out to the New York City-based Via corporation, is an unviable money pit. The DCTA board recently added another \$1.5 million to the \$33.5 million of our public funds that it had already agreed to pay to the private Via corporation for a service that is unsafe, unreliable, and unaccountable. By pouring more of our public funds into its unviable contract with Via for GoZone, the DCTA board is throwing good money after bad.

The horrible safety record of Via's GoZone, which can be found on [NoBusCutsDenton.org](http://NoBusCutsDenton.org), includes a hit-and-run accident and a crash that resulted in an injury to a University of North Texas (UNT) student. The unreliability of Via's GoZone has been covered extensively by local

media, including the interim CEO of the DCTA being twice rejected for booking rides when he tried to use the service. But the effects of this unreliability on people with disabilities, such as UNT student and wheelchair user Darlene García, have been kept from the public. She was refused a GoZone ride after a late-night class and was only able to catch the last A-Train home by getting a ride to the station from a DCTA bus supervisor. The unaccountability of Via's GoZone is also now coming to light. A driver whose car was hit by a GoZone vehicle reported an ongoing battle with Via's insurance company to be paid for the damage; and Jasmine Willis, a former GoZone driver, was "disaffiliated" from Via for posting concerns about GoZone's driver training, community concerns, and lack of support for drivers' safety on social media. The logical alternative to the DCTA's unviable contract for GoZone with the Via corporation is to bring the service in-house with unionized drivers, as many other public transportation agencies — including the Central Ohio Transportation Authority, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (Nevada), and the Sacramento Regional Transit District — have done.

Please join No Bus Cuts Denton at noon on June 9<sup>th</sup> at the new Denton County Administrative Courthouse to demand that the DCTA **keep its bus routes** and **bring GoZone in-house**. The program will include the following confirmed speakers: UNT student Darlene García, former GoZone driver Jasmine Willis, former Denton City Council member Deb Armintor, public transportation advocate Kristine Bray (@dTXTransitPosts), and a representative of No Bus Cuts Denton.

### **About No Bus Cuts Denton:**

The No Bus Cuts Denton campaign is a committee of twenty-seven people from ten different labor unions. The No Bus Cuts Denton petition on Change.org lists nearly 1,000 supporters.

### **Additional Information:**

- Recent Media:
  - DeManuelle-Hall, Joe. "Texas Union Activists Fight 'Microtransit' Privatization" *Labor Notes*, March 8, 2022. <https://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2022/03/texas-union-activists-fight-microtransit-privatization>
  - Grass, Justin. "Insight Denton: Who's at the helm of No Bus Cuts Denton?" *Denton Record Chronicle*, November 21, 2021. [https://dentonrc.com/news/insight\\_denton/insight-denton-whos-at-the-helm-of-no-bus-cuts-denton/article\\_a2530ccb-27fc-5dcb-af36-1a29ffe3c3c9.html](https://dentonrc.com/news/insight_denton/insight-denton-whos-at-the-helm-of-no-bus-cuts-denton/article_a2530ccb-27fc-5dcb-af36-1a29ffe3c3c9.html)

- Reid, Marshall. "Tensions flared, brought infighting during Tuesday's Denton City Council meeting." *Denton Record Chronicle*, October 20, 2021. [https://dentonrc.com/news/denton/denton\\_city\\_council/tensions-flared-brought-infighting-during-tuesdays-denton-city-council-meeting/article\\_2c05679a-0eae-5f72-b2a2-ed83d6e46582.html](https://dentonrc.com/news/denton/denton_city_council/tensions-flared-brought-infighting-during-tuesdays-denton-city-council-meeting/article_2c05679a-0eae-5f72-b2a2-ed83d6e46582.html)
- Grass, Justin. "DCTA CEO: Options still open for bus routes a month into GoZone launch." *Denton Record Chronicle*, October 17, 2021. [https://dentonrc.com/news/dcta/dcta-ceo-options-still-open-for-bus-routes-a-month-into-gozone-launch/article\\_cc331326-2d7f-54c1-adf8-cf3d25b15a17.html](https://dentonrc.com/news/dcta/dcta-ceo-options-still-open-for-bus-routes-a-month-into-gozone-launch/article_cc331326-2d7f-54c1-adf8-cf3d25b15a17.html).
- Reid, Marshall. "Former mayor to retain chairmanship despite opposition." *Denton Record Chronicle*, October 12, 2021. [https://dentonrc.com/news/former-mayor-to-retain-chairmanship-despite-opposition/article\\_e8fe355d-011d-582f-bc22-6a986080a1de.html](https://dentonrc.com/news/former-mayor-to-retain-chairmanship-despite-opposition/article_e8fe355d-011d-582f-bc22-6a986080a1de.html).
- TransitCenter. "No Go Zone: Behind the Plan to Shrink the Bus System in Denton, Texas." *TransitCenter* (blog). July 21, 2021. <https://transitcenter.org/no-go-zone-behind-the-plan-to-shrink-the-bus-system-in-denton-texas>.
- Rivas, Lorena. "GoZone vs. Buses." Video, 2:10. September 14, 2021. <https://youtu.be/9SYCrJ3zQAo>.
- No Bus Cuts Denton Website: <https://www.NoBusCutsDenton.org>
- No Bus Cuts Denton Change.org Petition: [www.change.org/nobuscutsdenton](http://www.change.org/nobuscutsdenton)
  - 950 supporters as of June 2, 2022.
- No Bus Cuts Denton on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NoBusCutsDenton>
- No Bus Cuts Denton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NoBusCutsDenton>

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