

Press Release

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No Bus Cuts Denton Calls on City Councils and the DCTA Board of Directors to Adopt its Workers' Plan for Public Transportation

Denton, TX, November 2, 2021 — The Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) is in crisis. There is strong popular opposition to its plan to replace the Denton and Lewisville Connect bus routes with rides in Via corporation's GoZone minivans (our Change.org petition against the plan now has over 900 signatures). A mass resignation of DCTA executives was announced immediately after the approval of Via's GoZone contract in July. There was a sign of corruption when one of these executives — the one who negotiated the details of the Via contract — was hired by Via just a month after the contract was approved by the DCTA Board of Directors. The Chair of the DCTA Board of Directors, former Denton mayor Chris Watts, was removed from his position by Denton City Council after he promoted the interests of Via corporation over the will of the people of Denton. Via corporation reported ten collisions and a citation by police for Via GoZone vehicles in only six weeks of operation. The frequency of buses on the Connect routes has fallen drastically due to the DCTA's inability to hire and retain bus drivers for a service that it obviously aims to cut. In sum, the situation at the DCTA appears to be hopeless.

There is, however, a way out of this crisis: our Workers' Plan for Public Transportation. The No Bus Cuts Denton campaign's plan has three interconnected parts: **cancel the contract** with Via for GoZone, **keep the bus routes**, and **include the community** in a new, truly participatory process to decide the future of public transportation in Denton County. No Bus Cuts Denton urges the city councils of Denton, Highland Village, and Lewisville to pass resolutions in support of our plan, and we call on the DCTA Board of Directors to adopt our Workers' Plan for Public Transportation at its December 2 meeting. These are the details of our plan.

CANCEL THE CONTRACT

The DCTA's contract with Via for GoZone is discriminatory, hazardous for our environment and safety, damaging to our local economy, and potentially corrupt — but the contract fortunately includes a "convenience clause" that would allow the DCTA to pull out of the deal and pay Via for only the services used so far. The Via contract discriminates against people with very low incomes because Via's GoZone requires access to a working phone to book a ride. The many Via

minivans (and also SUVs) that now flood our roads pollute our air and had racked up ten collisions and one citation from police after only six weeks in operation (per Via — the actual numbers are probably higher). By substituting the New York City-based Via corporation's GoZone for our DCTA bus routes, the contract also harms our local economy. Via's owners in NYC would get richer off of \$33.5 million of our public funds, while our friends and neighbors who now drive the DCTA buses would be made poorer by layoffs — and therefore less able to support our local businesses and other organizations. Finally, the Via contract is marred by conflict of interest: Nicole Recker, the DCTA executive who negotiated its details, quit right after the contract was approved in July and started working for Via a month later. After the Via GoZone contract is canceled, former Via GoZone drivers could fill the many bus driver vacancies that the DCTA has allowed to build up through its neglect of the fixed-route bus system, which is the focus of the second part of our Workers' Plan.

KEEP THE BUS ROUTES

A commitment by the DCTA to keep its Connect bus routes will preserve accessible transportation for Denton County residents and prevent DCTA bus drivers from being laid off just before the holidays (as the DCTA threatened to do in a letter it sent to the drivers' union, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1338). DCTA bus drivers' livelihoods have been under threat of execution since the DCTA board began the contract process with Via in January. DCTA Connect bus services were scheduled to be cut just after the Via GoZone contract began in September, but the DCTA board responded to public opposition to the cuts by extending the Connect bus routes through December 6. Another stay-of-execution extension of bus service would be cruelly insufficient — the DCTA bus drivers should instead be taken off death row by a DCTA guarantee to maintain its Connect bus service for the foreseeable future. Doing so will also preserve an important building block for the future development of our public transit system, which is the focus of the third part of our Worker's Plan for Public Transportation.

INCLUDE THE COMMUNITY

The failure of the DCTA to include the community in the decision-making process is the primary cause of the crisis that the DCTA now faces. The DCTA admits on its website that only a small group of bureaucrats and officials made the decision: "DCTA and its board of directors, concluded that an on-demand service model would be the most advantageous service for both DCTA passengers and the agency overall." The Via GoZone contract has no organized public support because it was cooked up by the now-deposed DCTA board Chair Chris Watts, expensive consultants, and unscrupulous DCTA executives without genuine community involvement. No Bus Cuts Denton calls on the DCTA to initiate a community-based process that includes transit workers and riders to decide the form that our public transportation system should take. Together, we might choose to include buses, on-demand micro-transit, perhaps even electric trams — but above all, our new system must be safe, environmentally responsible, and have only drivers who are organized in a union behind the wheel.

No Bus Cuts Denton urges the city councils of Denton, Highland Village, and Lewisville to pass resolutions supporting our Workers' Plan for Public Transportation, and we call on the DCTA Board of Directors to adopt our plan at its December 2 meeting.

About No Bus Cuts Denton:

The No Bus Cuts Denton campaign comprises a committee of twenty people from ten different labor unions and opposes DCTA's plan to cut bus routes in Denton and Lewisville after December 6, 2021. The No Bus Cuts Denton petition on Change.org lists more than 900 supporters.

Additional Information:

- No Bus Cuts Denton Change.org Petition: www.change.org/nobuscutsdenton
 - 905 supporters as of October 30, 2021.
- No Bus Cuts Denton on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NoBusCutsDenton>
- No Bus Cuts Denton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NoBusCutsDenton>
- Recent Media:
 - 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
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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>.

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