



# Dallas Area Rapid Transit

Using the Web to Improve Customer Service



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Alan Gorman, Senior Manager  
Transit IT Systems



## BUSINESS PROBLEM

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) call center handles more than 9,000 agent-attended calls each day, 2,000 calls through its interactive voice response (IVR) system for fixed route schedule look-ups, and an additional 250 requests for trip planning by either fax or e-mail. DART research indicated that customers, including the general public, large employers, hotels and medical facility coordinators, wanted an online trip planning service to be available when the agent-attended call center is not open.

## GOALS

To provide the best customer service possible, DART wanted all the information given to customers to be consistent, whether it was through the agents, IVR or online. DART needed a stable system which required little or no data maintenance since adding another individual to maintain the system was not an option. Another goal was to allow anyone with an Internet connection on a desktop or a wireless, Web-enabled device, to access the trip planning information from anywhere at

anytime. DART also wanted to make the user interface clean and simple to use for its customers.

## SOLUTION

DART selected Trapeze INFO-Web for its online trip planning software. "The fact that Trapeze INFO-Web required absolutely no additional data maintenance was a huge factor in selecting the company as a vendor," said Alan Gorman, Senior Manager, Transit IT Systems.

Integration with the existing schedule data was another factor in the decision to select INFO-Web. Changes to the schedules are immediately reflected on the Internet site. There is no need for manual updating or uploading of data.

DART also liked the simplicity of the system: passengers enter a starting point, a destination and a preferred departure or arrival time, and itineraries are generated using scheduling and routing data from the Trapeze FX scheduling system. Results can be sorted by total trip time, number of transfers and walking distances. Drop-down menus also allow users to select landmarks such as shopping centers or hospitals as their origin and destination points.

## SNAPSHOT

<b>Type of operation:</b>	Fixed Route and Demand Services
<b>Trapeze products used:</b>	INFO-Web, FX, PASS, INFO, OPS
<b>Additional technology:</b>	MDT, AVL, IVR
<b>IT environment:</b>	Windows NT with Oracle database
<b>Agent attended calls/day:</b>	9,000–14,000
<b>Fixed route vehicles:</b>	801

The DART online trip planner can be accessed by most Internet devices running standard browsers such as Microsoft IE, Netscape and Opera. In 2003, XML technology will allow wireless access using common mobile phone browsers, WAP browsers, and Microsoft Mobile IE on Pocket PCs to access the website.

## RESULTS

Since implementing INFO-Web, DART has decreased its call center volumes by 300–400 calls per day, and increased its website traffic by 10–20%. Gorman says the service has been getting “rave reviews” from customers and staff, and DART is looking into deploying the technology on dedicated kiosks in high-traffic areas such as convention centers, social service locations and shopping malls.

## BOTTOM LINE

“The application is already serving as a fallback for our attended call center in the event that our primary trip planning server goes down,” said Gorman. “Through the INFO-Web interface, we are able to capture and retain the origin, destination and time of each trip requested. We will be using this data to augment our regional travel and ridership analysis capabilities within our GIS packages.”

This type of analysis helps DART’s Planning and Scheduling departments design routes and schedules to fit regional commuters’ needs.



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