

2011 Super Bowl will bring big transit changes to Dallas area

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FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. – [Super Bowl](#) events next year will require a dramatic but temporary overhaul of parts of the North Texas transportation system, including a temporary rail station in [Arlington](#) and changes to highway lanes.

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Speaking in great detail, the person leading the local transportation effort laid out many changes while visiting the North Texas Super Bowl Host Committee booth here Saturday.

Michael Morris, a host committee member and transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, talked about plans for rails, highways and buses.

There also will be transportation VIP treatment for groups ranging from league executives to the thousands of media members covering the Super Bowl.

"You have a lot of customers with high-end needs," Morris said. "So you have to layer your transportation system and provide the services for each of those groups, from the NFL owners to the NFL teams to obviously the teams. ... This is not a cookie-cutter initiative."

Morris said special consideration will be given to the obvious – team buses driving to the Super Bowl, as well as media buses traveling to press conferences and league officials going to organized events.

A large part of the transportation effort also will involve getting people out of their rental cars and into trains. Morris said transportation agencies plan to offer a one-week rail pass during the Super Bowl to cater to those from out of town.

Rail stops already exist near major Super Bowl venues, including the NFL Experience at the Dallas Convention Center and Taste of the NFL at the Fort Worth Convention Center.

Commuter rail service also will arrive temporarily in Arlington on Feb. 6, 2011. Transportation officials are negotiating with the [Union Pacific](#) Railroad to use their rail line, which passes about a mile from Cowboys Stadium.

If everything runs smoothly, transit agencies will send 10,000 people to the Super Bowl on commuter rail trains. A temporary station is planned for a site just north of Arlington City Hall, near Center Street.

Bill Lively, president and CEO of the North Texas Super Bowl Host Committee, said the region will have to be aggressive in marketing this temporary service.

"It won't be live the day before or the day after," he said about rail service to Arlington. "No one here is going to be familiar with it. No one from out of town is going to be familiar with it."

Morris said South Florida officials hoped that about 3,000 people would use rail to get to Sun Life Stadium for the [Pro Bowl](#) last week. He said the projections turned out to be nearly 10 times too high, but they were hoping for better numbers for the Super Bowl today.

The North Texas rail effort could cost at least \$250,000. The plan also calls for shuttle buses to use dedicated lanes on Center and [Mesquite](#) streets to take fans the rest of the way to and from the stadium.

The rail ticket probably would be sold in advance and would only be available at the last minute if capacity were still available. Lively said it would cost significantly less than parking at the stadium.

Morris said the proposed North Texas rail deal would allow the Union Pacific to transfer its freight trains to the Trinity Railway Express line just north of Arlington during Super Bowl Sunday. That's a major break from the usual North Texas transportation system. Arlington does not have rail service, and the TRE is closed Sundays for maintenance.

If this deal can't be finalized, Morris said fans could use the TRE line and its CentrePort/DFW Airport station, which is about six miles northeast of the stadium.

He said using the Union Pacific line would allow the host committee to transport more fans via rail, shorten the shuttle trip and reduce the number of buses required.

Although rail will be heavily emphasized, buses with a high-tech twist will remain one of the most important elements of the transportation plan.

On Super Bowl Sunday 2011, Morris said he expects to have about 400 to 500 buses transporting officials, guests and others to Cowboys Stadium. Each private coach will be monitored by GPS to determine whether it's following its recommended route.

"The security algorithms know when a bus deviates from its route," Morris said.

They'll also receive real-time information to help them avoid backups if necessary. More speculative but potentially as important, Morris said he'd like to work with GPS to factor in the Super Bowl traffic patterns.

"They might have the typical situation when they route you," he said about the navigation systems. "Super Bowl travel congestion is not typical.... The message right now would turn off your navigation system. By the time we have the Super Bowl, we might be able to integrate the information."

MORE SUPER BOWL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

Here are more transportation- related plans and information for the 2011 Super Bowl in North Texas.

- Major railroads, including Union Pacific and BNSF, are considering bringing some of their executives to the game in "heritage trains," which are trains with historic value.
- The North Texas host committee plans to emphasize the transportation heritage of the region. They have proposed several ideas, including flying in a Bell/Agusta BA609 Tiltrotor aircraft and working with [General Motors](#) on specialty vehicle paint schemes related to the Super Bowl.
- The NFL will continue using a Web site to provide fans with detailed directions from their homes or hotels to their designated stadium parking lot for the Super Bowl. That's similar to the [dallascowboysmaps.com](#) Web site the team created when the new stadium opened.
- State transportation officials plan to stock up on supplies for treating the roads in case of an ice storm and also redistribute some of it to areas near Arlington.

SOURCE: Michael Morris, North Texas Super Bowl Host Committee member and transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments