

ORDINANCE NO. 2156

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND PARK, TEXAS, ORDERING A SPECIAL ELECTION TO BE HELD IN AND THROUGHOUT THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND PARK, TEXAS, ON MAY 2, 2026, TO DISSOLVE THE DALLAS AREA RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM IN THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND PARK, TEXAS SUBJECT TO THE CONTINUED COLLECTION OF SALES TAXES FOR THE PERIOD REQUIRED BY LAW; PROVIDING FOR LOCATION OF POLLING PLACES TO BE DESIGNATED AT A LATER DATE; PROVIDING FOR EARLY VOTING; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**WHEREAS**, in 1983 the Town of Highland Park along with fourteen other municipalities formed the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (“DART”) system through legislative action that created an additional 1 cent sales tax to be allocated towards DART. In 1989, two of the fifteen cities voted to terminate their membership in DART. The Town of Highland Park has contributed substantial local sales tax revenues, totaling more than \$107 million, to support the regional transit system; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1989 the Texas Legislature amended the Development Corporation Act to authorize municipalities to levy an additional local sales and use tax under Section 4A for economic development purposes, and in 1991 further expanded this authority through Section 4B (later recodified as Type A and Type B sales taxes), thereby allowing cities outside of regional transit authorities such as DART to utilize the additional one percent sales tax capacity for other special purposes; and

**WHEREAS**, DART member cities, having already dedicated one percent of their local sales tax to support the regional transit system, were not afforded this additional taxing capacity and therefore operate at a competitive disadvantage relative to non-member cities in terms of fiscal flexibility and budgeting, an inequity reflected in DART’s inability to attract new member cities since its inception, underscoring the structural challenges of its current business model; and

**WHEREAS**, despite these longstanding contributions, the Town currently receives minimal direct transit service, with no light rail operations within its boundaries and a substantial reduction of DART bus service over the years culminating in a single route along Preston Road; and

**WHEREAS**, independent analyses indicate that in 2023, the Town contributed approximately \$6.3 million in sales tax revenue to DART, while only \$1.9 million was expended within Highland Park, primarily to operate a single bus route averaging sixty riders per day. For Fiscal Year 2025–2026, the Town’s contribution is projected to exceed \$8 million; and

**WHEREAS**, although the Town’s annual contribution may represent a small fraction of DART’s \$1.7 billion budget, it constitutes a significant fiscal outlay for a municipality of just 2.2 square miles, particularly as Highland Park continues to address the maintenance and modernization of a century-old public infrastructure system; and

**WHEREAS**, while DART promotes itself as a regional transit system, its operations are funded almost exclusively by thirteen member cities. A truly regional transportation framework requires a funding mechanism that makes it equitable and desirable for any municipality to join. DART's membership has never expanded even though millions of people have moved into the Metroplex; and

**WHEREAS**, the Texas Legislature, through enactment of Senate Bill 2 during the 86th Legislative Session in 2019, established a statutory limitation on the annual increase in property tax revenue for most local taxing units to 3.5 percent over the preceding year unless a higher rate is approved by voters; and

**WHEREAS**, this state-imposed revenue cap places municipalities that dedicate one percent of their local sales tax to regional transit agencies at a distinct fiscal disadvantage, as their capacity to generate and allocate discretionary revenues for essential municipal services including public safety, emergency response, and capital infrastructure improvements is allocated to mass transit or in the Town's case, one bust route.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND PARK, TEXAS;**

SECTION 1. The Town Council, by its own initiative, hereby calls a special election to be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at which special election the following proposition shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the Town of Highland Park:

Shall the Dallas Area Rapid Transit System be continued in the Town of Highland Park?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION 2. That, the Polling Places and county election precincts, whose qualified voters shall cast ballots at such locations in the above-mentioned election, shall be the regular polling places and regular precincts for elections conducted in the Town of Highland Park, and will be designated at a later date; and will be published in a Notice of Election, as required by law.

SECTION 3. That, a single election precinct is hereby created, which shall consist of the territory located within the corporate limits of the Town of Highland Park, Texas, including all or part of Dallas County precincts 2200, 2201, 2202, and 2203. The official polling centers for Early Voting and Election Day voting shall be determined by the Dallas County Elections Department and specified in the Election Services Contract. Qualified voters of the Town of Highland Park, Texas shall be permitted to vote in said election. In addition, the election materials as outlined in Section 272, Texas Election Code, shall be printed in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese for use at the polling centers during Early Voting and on Election Day.

SECTION 4. That, the polling centers for said election shall be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

SECTION 5. That, early voting by personal appearance for the above-designated election shall be conducted at the polling places, county vote centers, and the county election precincts, where qualified voters shall cast ballots at such locations for the 2026 Special Election. The Main Early Voting Location is 1460 Round Table Dr, Dallas, TX 75247. In the event Dallas County designates a different Main Early Voting Location for the May 2, 2026, election, that location is incorporated here by reference. A full list of voting locations and hours, as designated by the Dallas County Election Administrator, will be provided in a subsequent Election Notice. Early Voting-Vote by Mail applications should be mailed to the Joint Election Early Voting Clerk, Dallas County Elections, 1520 Round Table Drive, Dallas, Texas 75247, or by email to [evapplications@dallascounty.org](mailto:evapplications@dallascounty.org).

SECTION 9. That, the Mayor, Town Secretary, Town Administrator, and Town Attorney are authorized to execute the Election Services Contract with Dallas County, and any amendments thereto, on behalf of the Town. The Mayor, through the City Secretary, is hereby authorized and directed to publish and/or post, in the time and manner prescribed by law, all notices required to be so published and/or posted in connection with the conduct of this election.

SECTION 10. That, the governing body will give notice of the election pursuant to Texas Transportation Code Section 452.655 (c) to the executive committee of the authority, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the comptroller immediately on calling the election.

SECTION 11. That, this ordinance shall take effect immediately following its passage, approval and publication as provided by law, and it is accordingly ordained.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Town Council of the Town of Highland Park, Texas, on this 4th day of November 2025.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



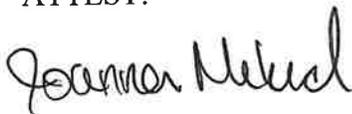
Susan Thomas  
Town Attorney

APPROVED:



Will C. Beecher  
Mayor

ATTEST:



Joanna Mekeal  
Town Secretary