



## Madison Area Bus Advocates

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### IMPROVING BUS SERVICE FOR FACULTY/STAFF AT THE UW-MADISON January 2012

This is a set of recommendations for how the UW-Madison could better facilitate bus use among its staff and faculty. It fuses interest in the UW's Sustainability Initiative with the desire to improve the bus system. We recognize the ambivalent relationship UW's Transportation Services (UWTS) has with Madison's Metro Transit. On the one hand, almost half of all Metro Transit trips (or triplets) involve UW staff, students and faculty, providing Metro with significant revenue and numbers of clients. On the other hand, as a state institution, UW's faculty and staff hail from all over, and the UW considers its own, not City, interests primary. A Regional Transport Authority that used a sales tax to support a regional transit system could make bus service more compatible with the UW's regional interests, but such is not likely in the near future. Even so, there are still significant actions that the UW-Madison could take to make bus use more attractive to UW faculty and staff. They include:

- 1. Keep Parking Policy In Line with Sustainability Goals.** Those goals include minimizing the need for Single Occupancy Vehicle motorized transportation to campus on the part of staff and faculty. The UW has been a national leader in promoting sustainable travel, using a Transportation Demand Management plan it calls 'Commuter Solutions.' Current State and UW transportation policy calls for all parking to be self-supporting. Laudably, the UW has gone one step further by underwriting the cost of unlimited bus passes from its parking revenue. However, the parking situation keeps changing, and current policy is under increasing financial pressure. The UW has been using land once designated for surface parking and a net source of parking revenue, for new buildings instead. It determined that the land was just too valuable to be left for surface parking. However, replacing surface lots with layered or structured parking is expensive – currently, the minimum cost of building one stall in a parking structure above ground may be more than \$12,000, more if the stall is under ground; the cost estimate for the proposed underground parking by the Capitol is \$31,000 per stall. The City of Madison charges roughly twice as much as does the UW for parking in a downtown above-ground structure because it has to recover the entire cost of having built the structure. The UW's Transportation Services (UWTS) has been able to charge less because it has absorbed some of the cost by applying revenue from surface parking to its structured parking. But as surface parking disappears, the ability to soften the charge for structured parking disappears too, as long as UWTS does not use non-parking revenue to continue to charge less. If demand stays the same, the charge for parking on campus will inevitably have to rise, enhancing the appeal of alternatives. One alternative that failed was an attempt to promote off-campus parking, running shuttles between the off-campus lot and campus buildings. While a variant of the experiment could be tried again, an alternative would be to make car parking less necessary while increasing the appeal of other modes such as the bus.
- 2. Provide bus information any time information on driving and parking is provided**
  - a. All web sites with location/driving/parking information should contain an equivalent amount of information on bus routes and bus schedules (both intercity and local). It is important to note that weekday and weekend local bus service is vastly different, and information about both should be provided when relevant.
  - b. Any time information on parking is sent out to employees, such information should be accompanied by information on the different transportation options, including data on the comparative cost of those options (monetary, time, health, safety, environmental etc. costs to both the individual and to the UW)
- 3. Route More Buses onto Old University Ave. Rather Than Campus Drive** In an attempt to minimize travel

times, Metro has increasingly routed buses onto Campus Drive away from Old University Avenue, or added new routes that also bypass Old University Ave. This has inadvertently created multiple inefficiencies that call into question the net benefit of saving time. Because the West campus area is less accessible than it should be to bus travel by UW faculty, staff and students whose destination is not as far east as Babcock Drive or as far west as University Bay Drive. The UW is well-positioned to ask for better bus service to its West Campus area even that is limited to asking for the reinstatement of a non-truncated #37 or an older #14. Newer routes from Middleton too could serve the campus area better.

4. **Be an Outlet for Metro Fares** Currently, it is not easy for UW affiliates to purchase Metro fares for others such as partners or children. The UWTS could perform a huge service by being an outlet for Metro fares, perhaps engaging the services of other entities such as the Student Unions as well. The outlets should include a range of different mediums, including passes for senior or disabled people, for groups, for visitors, for weekend use, and for youth.

5. **Make waiting for the bus more pleasant:**

- a. Have more bus shelters and benches at frequently-used stops so people do not need to be exposed to the wind, rain or snow while standing in wait for a bus (e.g. at the corner of Charter St. and Linden);
- b. Have temporary push-button heaters (and maybe lighting too) at all bus shelters -- the use of solar technology to generate the needed energy could be ideal;
- c. Have **accessible** route and schedule information at all bus shelters;
- d. Have a few bus shelters on campus that are totally closed in so people can wait in a pleasant, warm/cool, lighted environment in the winter/summer instead of a dark, cold/hot location – again, the use of solar technology to generate the needed energy could be ideal.

6. **Prioritize snow clearance of walk ways and bus stops** The UW academic year includes 4-6 months of wintry conditions that often include significant snow fall. Daylight can be only 9 out of 24 hours, and the temperature can climb to all of -15° in the afternoon. That should mean that extra care is taken to keep walkways and bus stops clear of snow and ice. Unfortunately, the reality is that this has not been so, even as parking lots get cleared. In fact, conditions were so bad in the winter of 2007-8 that the then Chair of the Campus Transportation Committee expressed his dismay to the Chancellor's Office. The office replied that "Our snow removal policy is to first clean the 50 miles of sidewalks, 12 miles of roads, and 90 parking lots on campus." Predictably, the reply did not mention bus stops. Clearing bus stops along with sidewalks should receive the highest priority.