

From: [South Madison](#)
To: [Transportation Policy Board](#)
Subject: Please post to Legistar for Item 5, Meeting 6/6/22
Date: Friday, June 3, 2022 12:53:23 PM
Attachments: [Community Groups" Collective Demand for Transit Equity_060322.pdf](#)

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Hello,

We request that this email accompanied by the attached document be uploaded to Legistar today for review by members of the TPPB for the meeting on 6/6/22.

We are currently collecting signatures of support for this document that we will present to TPPB prior to next week's meeting.

Thank you,
South Madison Unite!, NAACP, Southdale Tenants' Association

Community Groups Present Collective Demand for Transit Equity – June 3, 2022

To: TPPB

From: NAACP, South Madison Unite!, Southdale Tenants' Association

Re: Agenda Item #5, 71227

Date: June 3, 2022

Background

As a coalition of Madison area bus riders, community members, and local leaders, we are speaking out against the Draft Plan of the Madison Metro Redesign. The Draft Plan proposes a paradigm shift to a “ridership system” that would focus bus service on major thoroughfares where high numbers of potential riders live, work, and shop. On paper, this model appears to increase transit use and revenues. But many area residents are concerned that a ridership model will restrict transit access by already marginalized communities of people of color, people with low-income, and people with disabilities and seniors. Both the content of the plan and the design process have excluded large numbers of people, who depend most on public transit, from participation.

We urge the TPPB to pause the approval process of the Draft Plan. We oppose its passage by Madison Common Council and urge the city to recommit to investing in full-service transit.

We agree that our transit system needs a comprehensive redesign. The current Metro system isn't equitable. High-efficiency transit corridors that shorten wait times and make cross-town travel possible would be a huge benefit. We're told we have to sacrifice accessibility for these gains. But Metro's supporting data about who will sacrifice or benefit are ambiguous and biased. And with the testimony of hundreds of community members who currently rely on the bus and who oppose the redesign, we are left wondering: Who will the new system serve?

The premise of the Draft Plan, to build a more equitable transit system, is only as good as the public engagement on which that plan is based. Metro's dated and ineffective plan for public engagement has leaned heavily on arms-length methods of outreach that privileged communities that were already enfranchised and disadvantaged those that were not. The whole process has been unnecessarily complex and fast-paced. The Draft Plan is very difficult for transportation experts, let alone non-experts, to understand. Even many officials needed coaching by staff at meetings to understand the Draft Plan.

Shortcuts and gaps in public engagement have never been acknowledged or modified. Instead, the process has pushed forward, even as critical errors in inclusive public process are repeated at each meeting. **A majority of Madison-area residents aren't aware of the scope of the changes proposed.** In fact large numbers of people did not hear of the process at all. Meeting packets have been released after deadlines, sometimes just prior to a hearing. Videos of past hearings haven't been uploaded in a timely fashion. Public hearings have been scheduled in close succession. Translation and interpretation for non-English speakers has been patchy. Given the rapid pace of amendments, changes and new additions, there was an undue burden on the community to prepare and testify.

In areas without existing organizations, neighborhood associations or strong or sympathetic political representation, the public had no means to learn about or weigh in on service cuts. Low-wage workers, people of color, people with disabilities, people with children, and young people have not been proportionally included in conversations about this redesign. This has enabled a vicious cycle in which their needs have been discounted throughout the public process, and the glaring oversights of the proposed system as a whole have been ignored.

The route amendments comprise a piecemeal solution that misses the point. By focusing on drafting amendments in response to public outcry, Metro avoids accountability for the Redesign process itself or the shortcomings of the ridership model on which it is based. **As individuals and organizations, we stand with all transit riders in the area served by the Metro system.**

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Collective Demands for Transit Equity

WE SUPPORT the need for a Metro Redesign. The current system is due for change. Long wait times, long bus trips, lack of connectivity all currently disproportionately impact people who are of color or have low income and/or disabilities.

WE DEMAND that the TPPB and the Common Council postpone a vote for approval of the Draft Plan and that they recommend instead that Metro pause the Draft Plan process and commit to correcting its course. The process has been unnecessarily complex and fast-paced and what is needed at this point is a deep and comprehensive reassessment of the Draft Plan's premises, methodology, and conclusions.

WE DEMAND a ground-up equity study prior to the final Council vote on the Draft Plan. How are we to make a good decision about routes, service cuts, and trade-offs without a clear view of who benefits and who sacrifices? We have heard officials repeat claims that low-income individuals and people of color won't be unduly burdened by route changes, but how can we know without an analysis? The Draft Plan should undergo an equity analysis before being evaluated by TPPB and the Common Council. Individuals representing each geographic and special needs community should be consulted.

WE DEMAND creative modern best practices for public engagement. The City of Madison has based the premise of the Redesign on outdated outreach models. The approach so far has left it to citizens to overcome obstacles to participation, placing an undue and often insurmountable burden on those who are already disenfranchised. Metro needs to embrace a people-centered approach that seeks to overcome institutional and social barriers to participation. Transit redesign is a complex process, and every segment community deserves opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, education, accessible information, and influence. How can Metro move forward in good conscience when public comment to date is nearly unanimous that service cuts of this kind will be devastating?

WE DEMAND separate, additional funding for the new BRT system. The City of Madison has framed transit funding as a zero-sum game: there is a fixed pot of money, and in order to leap forward into BRT service, we have to sacrifice the existing network. Is a transit referendum a possibility? We urge the city to take a fresh look at transit funding and to preserve existing coverage networks that serve existing work and living arrangements and to overlay the BRT along service corridors.

WE OPPOSE any overall reductions in bus service. Background literature on the ridership model is shockingly out of touch and shows the implicit bias many planners and engineers hold. Longer walks are framed as a "chance for more physical activity" with 15+ minute walks to access the bus framed as viable choices. Bus service is not a choice for many low-income riders, seniors or people with disabilities for whom longer walks are simply not possible. Riders in every neighborhood, who have no alternative but to use the bus with children in tow, hands full of groceries, or to get to work on time, deserve physically accessible service, in any weather.

WE OPPOSE piecemeal concessions and the amendment process. The route amendment proposals are not a means to address systemic inequities or the flaws in the Draft Plan. The current process whereby amendments are in competition for selection pits neighbors against neighbors and sidesteps the city's accountability for the Redesign process itself and mistaken assumptions on which the ridership model is based. An equity analysis during the Draft Plan stage will identify routes and areas to be prioritized for service. It will allow us to propose route changes based on placing community needs first, making amendments a redundant step and assuring an equitable plan from the ground up.

WE OPPOSE the framework that ridership and coverage models are in competition. We say that good transit should provide both efficient routes with short wait times as well as coverage to outlying areas. Madison's highways, lakes, and urban layout mean that many low-income areas are isolated enclaves, and not

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appropriate targets for service cuts. Many areas slated for cuts are existing dense urban communities with established service. A more equitable plan might follow the advice of Jarrett Walker and adopt a hybrid model and combine ridership and coverage:

In fact, we encourage cities to develop consensus on a *Service Allocation Policy*, which takes the form of a percentage split of resources between the different goals. For example, an agency might decide to allocate 60 percent of its service towards the Ridership Goal and 40 percent towards the Coverage Goal. Source: <https://humantransit.org/2018/02/basics-the-ridership-coverage-tradeoff.html>

WE OPPOSE the aggregation of university low-income and generational low-income populations. If the premise of the Redesign is to address equity issues for low-income people, how can Metro assess the impacts if it aggregates data on two wildly different economic brackets? The MPO itself cautioned against this in a 2019 study:

MPO staff have excluded university students from household income charts and have cautioned Metro staff in using this data ... asking students to provide household income numbers is challenging for many reasons.

We don't accept the assertion that this Redesign will improve equity for targeted and marginalized communities. Rather it will adversely impact them. With the testimony of scores of community members in hand, it's time for the city to listen now and give credence to the lived experience of riders who depend on Metro as their primary means of transportation.