

From: [Sarah Perdue](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Proposed bus changes
Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 9:32:08 AM

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Dear Transportation Commission,

I have written multiple times to voice my opposition to the proposed bus changes. I need to keep trying, as even if the routes 10/27 are eliminated, **the short- and long-term effects have clearly not been thought out, and certainly not communicated** with people in my neighborhood (Emerson East) and our neighbors in Eken Park, the two areas most affected by these changes.

First, it is laughable that the cancellation of the Routes 10/27 are being "fixed" with increased 2 service. The 2 is not, and I cannot emphasize this enough, NOT an alternative. I just mapped it out for someone like me, who lives on Mifflin near Third St, lucky enough to be close-ish to Fordem: it's a 0.6 mile walk to Fordem/Johnson, the closest 2 stop for me. For someone in Eken Park who lives at the western boundary of that neighborhood, at North and Commercial, it's a 0.6 mile walk to the 2 stop at N. Sherman and Commercial. That means that for nearly everyone else, the Rte 2 stops are more than 0.6 miles away and in some cases well over a mile. Just because it looks close on a map doesn't make it an option -- if we all could fly over the railroad tracks and industrial areas, it would be close...but we can't.

You need to stop saying that it's okay the 10 and 27 are being eliminated because the 2 is getting increased frequency. It's not. Full stop.

Now, if you guarantee that the 2 will wait for the 5 and that everyone who wishes to transfer to the 2 at Fordem/Johnson will get a seat on the bus (and vice versa on the way out of downtown), perhaps that would alleviate some anger. Can you make that promise? Can the 2 be a guaranteed transfer with the 5, time- and seating-wise? Maybe think about that.

Also, to say that our neighborhoods are already well-served by transit is technically true, but let's look at the 4/5/6. None serve campus, at least not west of Park Street. The 5 -- the only route left that actually goes through Emerson and not on the boundary of it -- doesn't even come close to campus. The 4 takes an incredibly stupid meandering path, and both the 4/6 go all the way down State Street and get stuck for minutes and minutes at the Lake/State intersection, because without a traffic signal there and as a popular place for pedestrians, the buses have no choice but to wait.

The 4/5/6 are NOT options for the many of us who chose to live where we do because we work on campus.

Next, it is lost on no one that SASY and Marquette — two neighborhoods with higher median property values than Emerson and definitely Eken — got to complain about losing their commuter route, and they got the 38 back. They already have the 7. They need more? It's an insult to those of us in lower-property-value-neighborhoods-than-those-two to say that the 38 is a diversity and equity issue. If it were, you'd find a way to keep better campus/commuter service to Eken Park, which has vastly lower median property values relative to those on the

Isthmus serviced by the 7 and now 38. Maple Bluff is getting their lost 28 service back in the form of increased 2 buses. It is not going unnoticed that the neighborhoods with more wealth are getting what they want over the neighborhoods with less, simply because they're on the way to lower-income neighborhoods. If it really were an equity issue, you'd turn the 38 into an express route from the lower-income neighborhoods and skip over the wealthier ones, leaving the 7 to serve them. So please, we need to tell the full truth about what the return of the 38 and increased 2 really mean, not hide behind some only-half-true diversity and equity issue.

I will say that I am lucky, as someone who lives a block off E Wash (and thank goodness I no longer work at the hospital but instead on central campus, phew!), that the route 15 is an option for me. It likely will be for some others. That's fine. That doesn't help the many people the 15 is not a viable option for (someone on Hoard St, for example, will still have a half-mile walk to get it), for a number of reasons. Furthermore, am I guaranteed a seat on the bus? That is now the only direct-ish option for people in Eken/Emerson to campus and it only runs every 30 minutes.

Lastly, I'd really appreciate hearing that there is some semblance of a plan for the next few years, pre-BRT. Pre-pandemic, the bus system was already overcrowded, and I can't count the number of times the route 10 couldn't even start on time from Union Corners (I'll never forget the day the buses that were supposed to come to Third St at 8:08, 8:20, and 8:37 rolled down Johnson, three in a row, at 8:40, and I know because I was waiting for the first bus; that is the extreme but late buses were not the exception). The Gorham buses would get stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, or the 10s coming down Old Univ trying to get onto Johnson at Babcock would take 8-10 light cycles to get through, delaying them further. Buses couldn't handle ridership demands the closer they got to campus. Of course it's sensible that buses have been cut during the pandemic: not only is ridership down, but driving a bus is a high-risk job right now, and we don't need to unnecessarily put people in that situation. But UW has announced they are planning to return to "normal" in September. Right now, they are not even allowing departments to create backup plans for non-virtual courses. Ridership will be near — perhaps not at, but near — pre-pandemic levels. Yet bus service has been cut and there are no plans, at least that we've been told of, to deal with the upcoming ridership changes.

Tim at Metro Transit, who's been emailing several of us (we know, because we're getting copy-and-paste / form emails back), wrote to me of my long-term service and capacity concerns:

You are not alone in raising this magnitude of question as to longer term plans. I can state that as of right now the City has not identified or committed any additional resources to Metro Transit – for employees in the planning division to begin to contemplate how the existing levels of transit service currently being operated might be increased (in August of this year, or beyond).

So there are no plans. How is this possible? How is no one communicating with the people who are hoping to go back to work and hoping to take the bus this fall that there are plans to adjust once ridership goes back up? Again, we all understand why routes have been cut/reduced during the pandemic. It makes sense for now. It does not make sense for later this year, or next year.

Because let me explain where I'm at: with reduced routes, more cars on the road, and longer and longer commute times, I'm already weighing the cost of paying for parking on campus with how valuable my time is. Seriously, I did the math yesterday and figured out if I flex park

on the days I don't bike, I can still pay less than a full parking pass and never have to take the bus; some people will just pay for the year's parking pass on campus. Either way, that means more cars on the road, and the buses will get even slower/delayed; perhaps they'll be less crowded, but they will get bogged down even worse in rush hour traffic on an isthmus. Our public transit system that so many of us "have the means to drive and the salaries to afford parking but choose to bike / take public transit" near-downtowners have embraced over the years — and, many of whom chose their homes based on living on a direct route to campus / the hospital — will very quickly become a system only for the have-nots, those who cannot afford to *not* take the long, slow, reduced-service routes. How does that help with the very real inequalities in this city?

I think you owe it, to those of us for whom our years+ consistent commuter bus service to campus is being ripped away from us, to explain how these current changes are going to affect us when we go back to work, and what long-term plans you have to handle increased ridership in the fall / in the next year or two. I am yet to hear a reasonable explanation, other than "you'll just have to transfer, sorry your 20 min commute will double lol" or "BUT WE'RE INCREASING ROUTE 2 FREQUENCY AND BECAUSE WE PUT IT ON THE PDFs THAT IT'S THE ALTERNATIVE FOR EMERSON/EKEN, IT MUST BE TRUE!"

Until the transit committee provides reasonable explanations and plans for the future, I trust you can expect to hear Emerson and Eken residents' complaints for some time to come. You've set the precedent that when others complained, they got what they wanted, and it turned out to be at my neighborhood's expense. Now it's our turn to be heard. I'm perfectly ready to accept changes that make sense, but I will not be quiet about the proposed changes until reasonable and equitable alternatives and explanations exist.

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