

From: [Jonathan Mertzig](#)
To: [Mymetrobus](#)
Cc: [Tishler, Bill](#); [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Re: Tracking / Trip Planning Issues on Routes D + E
Date: Monday, July 10, 2023 7:34:16 PM

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[cc: D11 alder Bill Tishler; Transportation Commission re: July 12 agenda item 5]

Hello,

I'm following up on my previous message to Metro inquire as to whether there are any plans to address ongoing bus tracking and trip planning issues like those I reported last month. In my own observations and from what I'm hearing from other riders, this situation continues, and in my experience, has actually only gotten worse as I've encountered these problems more often.

The incidents of what I'd call "phantom delays" on Route D1 have continued to cause problems on my daily commute. In the morning I regularly see tracking delays of 15 minutes or more going Westbound at Whitney/Odana, which would potentially break my connection. In almost all cases, these turned out to not be real or significant delays, but in one case, it was real--making me and four other riders scramble to figure out an alternate connection to an overcrowded route 75 via E. Tonight on my return trip home, at Watts/Commerce the 6:16pm EB D1 was showing a delay as long as 22 minutes when actually, it was only in reality about 2 minutes late. It has become practically impossible to trust Metro's bus tracking.

The downstream effects of these tracking issues on trip planning apps continue to also cause havoc, as I've found both Google Maps and Transit app completely unreliable. For example, on a recent return trip from Breese Stevens Field, where D1 should've been an option, Google Maps skipped an entire available departure and Transit app was convinced there were no more departures for the entire evening; on another trip Transit app initially succeeded in finding an accurate trip plan 20 minutes out from departure but incorrectly registered the perfectly on-time trip as "cancelled" about 10 minutes from the bus arriving at Gorham/Paterson. Luckily I at least had the sense to put my trust in the paper schedule, which isn't always the wisest thing to do in light of the many real delays on the new network (and an unforgiving hourly frequency on evenings for D1).

Since bus stops now lack posted schedule info, paper schedule info is relatively sparsely available and inconvenient to carry, and Metro specifically encourages the use of electronic tracking and trip planning tools, it is **IMPERATIVE** that both Metro's own transit tracker and downstream apps like Google Maps and Transit App show accurate info. Metro is clearly aware of these issues--while "Ride Guides" were out I talked to several who were aware of these exact issues and workarounds

they were teaching riders, and I've talked to several drivers who seem to have theories as to why the tracking seems to be off... yet nothing seems to be fixed and Metro's communications don't seem to give the public any indication that these tools seem to be chronically broken.

Rather than pushing the endless self-congratulation about how great your new network is, please, just do better in providing basic information and tools about how to use it. Many of us riders are getting really tired of this.

-Jonathan Mertzig
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On 6/18/2023 8:29 PM, Jonathan Mertzig wrote:

> Hello,
>
> Just wanted to alert you all to some odd issues noticed in the first
> week of the network over here on the west side, dealing with bus
> tracking and trip planning on routes D and E.
>
> I typically use a combination of Metro's arrival times page
> (<http://webwatch.cityofmadison.com/TMWebWatch/LiveADAArrivalTimes>) and
> Google Maps for most of my needs but encountered a few problems this
> week...
>
> On the Metro Transit Tracker site, Route D1 would show some pretty
> significant delays that didn't seem to actually exist.
>
> For example, in the morning I tend to board a westbound D at the
> Whitney and Odana time point; I wait at my stop about 5 minutes ahead
> of the scheduled time; upon arriving at my stop, each day I'd
> initially see a growing delay of 8-12 minutes--though the delay would
> disappear suddenly and the bus actually would show up within a minute
> or two of its scheduled time. It seems the delay isn't real--like I
> can look at the tracker and literally see the bus coming while it
> still shows it as 8+ minutes behind, then refresh after I board and it
> shows as on-time. In the evenings I transfer from 55 to D1 using the
> stop at Watts & Commerce... there it would consistently show the next
> eastbound D1 as over 15-20 minutes late, then shortly before its
> scheduled time it updates that it is, correctly, actually on time.
>
> Luckily, the buses have actually been on time, but it's mildly
> alarming to see such significant delays pop-up as I'm not sure to
> trust whether or not a delay is real. I'm hoping that maybe this is
> just an odd glitch of trying to calibrate the tracking in the first
> days of the new service pattern.
>
> Perhaps more concerning is that Google Maps has been rather
> consistently failing to show trip options on routes D1 and E that
> should exist; I've tried planning several trips eastbound from
> Whitney and Odana where Google Maps consistently skipped over the
> existence of an hour or two of departure options on those lines.
>
> For example, on Friday evening I tried planning a trip from
> Whitney/Odana to Milwaukee/E Wash. a little past 5:30pm. D1 would be
> the most direct route from this stop, but Google Maps first showed

> trips as an option after 7pm--skipping the existence of trips at 6 and
> 6:30pm.
>
> I had a similar problem trying to plan a trip to Hilldale on Saturday
> afternoon--Route E should be an obvious option, but entering in trip
> details in the early afternoon, it only showed a trip on Route E as
> possible after 4pm, ignoring trips at 2:06 and 3:06.
>
> Exploring a variety of other hypothetical trips to/from Whitney/Odana
> I found a pretty consistent pattern of Google Maps dropping the next
> 1-2 hours worth of Route D and E departure options from the results it
> would present on Friday and Saturday (today with the Sunday schedule
> it seemed to work ok on a few attempts). Other routes in the area (A,
> J) didn't seem to exhibit this problem. Comparatively, Transit App
> did not have this problem at all. This seems to suggest there might
> be a glitch in the data in Google Maps for routes D and E.
>
> Anyway, I hope passing along this report maybe helps work out a few
> bugs in the system!
>
> Thanks,
> Jonathan Mertzig
>
> jmmertzig@uwalumni.com
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