
TRANSIT AND PARKING COMMISSION COVER SHEET

AGENDA ITEM: F.1.

MEETING DATE: April 12, 2007

ITEM: Ramp Shuttle Continuation Analysis

STAFF DISCUSSION OF ITEM:

On January 2, 2007, Madison Metro began operating Route 89 ramp shuttle with the Parking Utility financial sponsorship. The purpose was to redistribute parking demand from over-utilized ramps (Campus and GE) to underutilized ramps such as Overture and Capitol Square North. It was not designed to be a downtown get-a-round. We anticipated that price-sensitive parking customers with the opportunity to save up to \$64/month would shift their parking to the less expensive ramps, freeing up space at the more expensive ramps for parkers willing to pay more. In theory, it was a "win-win" with customers getting what they wanted and the Parking Utility breaking even on the operation. To break even, the Parking Utility needed to generate \$140K to cover the \$125K Metro operating cost and the \$15K in advertising cost. The financial success of the operation depended on latent demand to fill up the more popular ramps and on price-sensitive customers who would be willing to extend their commute time slightly to accommodate a short bus ride from a less expensive ramp. Bus riders could use either a bus pass or parking entry ticket to ride the shuttle for "free". Credits generated from bus passes would be used to reduce the cost to the Parking Utility. Bus ridership was to be another measure of the success of this program. The Madison Metro system-wide ridership average is over 30 riders per hour per route.

There were two target audiences for this service: 1) The commuter who worked near the Capitol Square and came to work between 6:30AM and 8:44AM and returned home between 3:37PM and 5:44PM, who could take the Capitol Ramp shuttle. 2) Students and UW-associated parkers who would normally park in Campus Ramps between 8:55AM and 3:25 PM, who could take the Campus Ramp shuttle to Overture and save \$.40/hour. "Shifters" would cost the Utility about \$565/riders per year, and "Newbies" would improve the financial results by approximately \$1825/year.

Numerous promotional methods were used to advertise the new service:

- News conference with the Mayor/DMI/BID/Ald. Webber, with television coverage by two local stations
- News stories in various publications including Wisconsin State Journal and Isthmus
- Downtown Madison newsletter
- BID newsletter
- BID website
- PU website
- Metro website
- Metro Map published with Route 89 information on the front
- E-mail to every downtown State and City employee with computer access
- ½-page brochures distributed by DMI/BID to downtown establishments
- 8000 ½-page brochures distributed by ramp personnel to parkers as they exited the ramps
- Full page brochures distributed by MPO staff with other TDM materials
- Weekly Isthmus ¼-page ads alternating between Capitol and Campus routes
- Isthmus Web Banner
- Weekly Badger Herald or Cardinal ads alternating between Capitol and Campus routes
- Sandwich-board type advertisements for viewing when entering all of the parking ramps

Most of the advertising showed a start date of JANUARY 2, 2007 and an end date of JUNE 15, 2007.

In the past two weeks, Parking Utility staff has attempted three on-board surveys to determine user behavior. The surveyor boarded the Capitol route twice, once in the morning and once in the afternoon; however no riders boarded and the survey could not be completed. The surveyor boarded Campus route once and a single rider was surveyed. She boarded on State Street near Lake using her UW bus pass and exited on State Street near Henry Street. Both drivers reported very little rider activity during the past three months. The best day (58 riders) was during a WIAA sporting event.

MATERIALS PRESENTED WITH ITEM:

- Route Maps

STAFF RECOMMENDATION/RATIONALE:

Early ridership data indicates very poor rider numbers. In January, 191 riders boarded the shuttle and in February, 200 riders used the service. The February figures indicated that 81% (162) of the riders rode the Campus route while 15% (9) rode the Capitol route. The 200 rides generate a .8 riders/service hour number compared to over 30/hour for the average Madison Metro route. About half of the riders used a parking pass to board, while the other half used a Metro pass. Thirty-one per cent of the riders used UW bus passes.

In January 2006 and January 2007, the peak occupancy levels at the parking ramps were as follows:

FACILITY	JANUARY 2006	JANUARY 2007*
Overture Cashiered	53%	52%
State Street Capitol Cashiered	61%	54%
Government East Cashiered	95%	89%
State Street Campus Cashiered	68%	54%
Capitol Square North Cashiered	68%	54%

In February 2006 and February 2007, the peak occupancy levels at the parking ramps were as follows:

FACILITY	FEBRUARY 2006	FEBRUARY 2007*
Overture Cashiered	59%	54%
State Street Capitol Cashiered	72%	64%
Government East Cashiered	95%	92%
State Street Campus Cashiered	84%	74%
Capitol Square North Cashiered	84%	59%

*Parking rate increase 7/1/06 (except Overture).

There is no indication from these occupancy figures that this service created many "Shifters" or "Newbies". At most, perhaps three "Newbies" were created, and we would need 78 to break even with a cost of \$140,000. If the three riders were actually "Shifters" and not "Newbies," then we lost additional revenue on top of the project costs.

Valuable resources we can save by discontinuing the service before the planned June 15 cut-off date would be:

- Fuel, pollution, bus maintenance, congestion, public perception of poor bus ridership
- A limited amount of advertising could be redesigned to advertise the end of the service

Before a bus route is discontinued prematurely, there needs to be a public hearing to allow for public comment. This public hearing could be held on the May 8th TPC meeting. Service could be discontinued on May 25th to allow for adequate notification, approximately three weeks before the planned (and advertised) June 15th discontinuance. The amount of resources to be saved between May 25th and June 15th would be very small.

Supporters of this service expected a fair trial – at least until June 15th. Terminating the service before this date would provide an opportunity for supporters to claim that we did not give the service and adequate trial.

Since the amount of resources to be saved would be small and the Parking Utility desires to provide a fair trial of the service, it is recommended that the service be continued until the advertised June 15th cut-off date.

PREPARED BY:

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DATE: 4/5/07