

My name is Allison Smith. I live downtown. I just want to say a few words.

I believe that Metro Transit's decision to install the sound alert system on all its buses was based on good intentions. Safety is an important issue, and I'm sure that when Metro decided to invest in this system, they thought it was a good solution. However, the fact remains - there is no way to measure the effectiveness of this system. There is no way to prove that it's having any positive impact on public safety, and no way to prove it has prevented any accidents.

We do know however, that many people are upset by the noise the system produces. For some, the noise is disrupting their sleep, and for others, their peace of mind. I've heard from still others who've said it's disruptive to their business. That's why I feel strongly that this is both a health and quality of life issue.

In terms of health, studies have found that extraneous noise can lead to a variety of negative health consequences. Sleep interruption leads to fatigue, poor decision making, poor work performance, stress, anxiety, aggressive behavior, and depression. Noise is a stressor that affects the endocrine and autonomic nervous systems, which can lead to heart disease, hypertension, and stroke. Furthermore, stress responses to noise have been observed in sleeping individuals as well as those who say they are unaffected by noise. Because chronic stress can lower one's immunity to all disease, noise pollution is considered a general threat to everyone's health and wellness.

Therefore, Metro needs to rethink this safety solution. There are other safety-based, alternative systems that should be researched and explored, such as motion detectors and cameras, as well as newer, high tech ultrasonic, radar, and laser pedestrian sensing equipment.

I would like to say in conclusion that I don't believe Metro needs this system as much as they think they do. As reported in Metro's 2012 annual report, better training and morale at Metro resulted in fewer accidents, even with increased ridership. Metro's accident record was, and still is, pretty good. The unfortunate accident in 2011 which resulted in the death of a Madison resident would not have been prevented by this alert system. The person involved was in the crosswalk and had the right of way. It was human error that took her life. In reaction to this tragedy, the decision to invest in this sound alert system - I believe - is also a human error - one that I hope you'll correct very soon. Thank you.