

Metro Transit Needs an Emergency Backup System
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Public Comment
Transit and Parking Commission
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Hello. My name is Susan De Vos and I am speaking on behalf of the Madison Area Bus Advocates. We would like the TPC to put the issue of Metro having an emergency backup plan on the agenda of a future meeting.

Madison winters are harsh, we can have excessive snowfalls, and conditions are not always amenable to a "business as usual" format. So when it cannot function at full steam, Metro shuts down totally. But people should be able to rely on Metro even when they cannot use an automobile. Even during the worst of the snows, the major arterials are kept clear. So Metro could have an emergency mode, a skeletal level of service, if you will. Devised beforehand, Metro and others who are now left stranded, could plan for it, akin to how there is currently a weekend level of service that is much more limited than weekday service.

There are a host of reasons why Metro should always function, even if in a very limited way. Most salient to one of our Board members is the need for hospital workers to get to work. He argued that medical workers need to arrive at work, no excuses. During the recent bus service closures scores of people could be seen walking on our arterial streets, clear of snow, but with no bus. Many were essential medical workers arriving for their shifts, with no other way to get there. Many had to walk several miles. Madison is also the state capital, the county seat, and a major economic center. It is the center of statewide emergency operations.

Here are a few issues to consider when devising a skeletal emergency system:

1. follow snow plow priority routes, i.e. major arterials.
2. Avoid hills and never stop on a slope;
3. Limit stops to once every half or 3/4 mile or so. Signs need to tell people which stops serve as winter emergency stops.
4. When the bus stops, drivers should avoid going all the way to the slushy curb so the bus can readily regain speed.
5. Reduce staffing but retain a core; it is possible to minimize their need to travel if there are emergency dormitory facilities on-site.

Assuming slick conditions:

1. Purchase buses that have transmission systems more amenable to starting in slick conditions.
2. Outfit buses on the most problematic routes with chains.
3. Explore using smaller buses to see if they perform better in snowy/icy conditions.