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The Madison experience in verse

Local contest seeks poems for city buses

Rosemary Zurlo-Cuva on Monday 01/05/2015 12:18 pm



Credit: Philip Ashby

In recent years we've seen an exciting expansion in our understanding of poetry and its forms, as well as how and where it is expressed. And here in Madison there is an opportunity for poets to share their work with a wide and eclectic audience.

Madison Metro and Madison's poet laureates have put out a call for short poems, haiku, prose poems or excerpts from longer poems for Bus Lines Poetry 2014/15. The theme is "Write Your Madison," and entries should reflect a broad range of our experiences and stories about living in this city.

Selected poems will appear on Metro buses, with featured selections chosen by categories: elementary students, middle school students, high school students and adults (18+). Video submissions are encouraged as well, and selected entries will appear in Metro's promotional materials on mymetrobus.com and on Metro's [YouTube channel](#).

The Bus Lines competition was created in 2009 by [Madison's former poet laureate, Fabu](#). Originally open only to high school students, the winning poems were printed on ad cards inside the buses. In 2013, Metro suggested opening the contest to adult riders and middle school students, and featuring poems in the Ride Guide and online as well as on

the outside of some of buses. This year the call for poems expanded to elementary school students; more buses will also be part of the project.

Bus Lines is part of a larger "Write Your Madison" umbrella project that began in 2012, when Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman began their term as poets laureate. The first project **resulted in *Echolocations***, a print anthology featuring more than 100 poets writing about Madison places. A dozen of those poems were placed on Trek B-cycle bikes as a subsidiary bike poetry project.

"We're always looking to facilitate a broader understanding of what poetry is and expand the ways it comes to our awareness," Vardaman says.

While the earlier stages of the project netted a wealth of more traditional words-on-paper poems, Vardaman and Busse wanted to expand the opportunities for Madison's vibrant spoken-word poetry communities to participate. They created a sort of digital surround on their online ***Echolocations* page** at **Cowfeather Press**, where there are videos of poets reading their work about Madison, an interactive Google map, and a Twitter feed using the hashtag **#writeyourmadison**. Using #writeyourmadison, people can post comments lines of poetry related to Madison experience, as well as photos and videos of poetry performance.

"We wanted to create a space where poets from these different communities could begin to communicate and recognize each other's work," Vardaman says. "We wanted a whole lot of expressions of what poetry is and how it gets produced and shared and, of course, who is making it."

Busse and Vardaman hope to create a collaborative poem through the Twitter feed, one that will reflect the full diversity of Madison experience and expression.

Written and video submissions to Bus Lines will be accepted no later than Jan. 31, 2015. Entries can include up to three poems in either format, by email at mymetrobus@cityofmadison.com or by snail mail to Metro Transit, Attn: Bus Lines Poetry, 1245 E. Washington Ave., Suite 201, Madison, WI 53703. For more information visit mymetrobus.com/poetry, or call 608-266-4466.

