

Bus Hearing for Proposed Route Changes for August 2014

Yvonne Schwinge – S. Franklin St.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Yvonne Schwinge, and I live on S. Franklin St. I rely on the bus for transportation since I do not drive. I ride the bus nearly daily and take between ten to fifteen different routes each week.

I use the bus for transportation to work on weekdays, but am also dependent on the bus system for transportation in the evenings and weekends. I was pleased to see the proposed linking of the route 78 and route 8 as this will provide a more direct service from Middleton to the UW Campus and downtown area. However, I am concerned that this route is being added by eliminating the connection between Middleton and the West Transfer Point. Although a transfer can be made in order to reach the WTP, the route will not be as direct. The proposed time schedules for the route indicate a wait of close to fifteen minutes for a transfer to the route 2 bus in order to reach the WTP.

I believe extreme caution needs to be exercised when a current route is proposed for elimination. For riders dependent on the bus, especially on weekends when there is already a lack of bus options, a large change like this can have a significant impact. In the past I have changed places of employment and my living location based on significant route changes. Even for routes not heavily used, the changes do matter to the riders who often depend on the route. I appreciate Metro's need to use the limited resources in a way that benefits the most people, but I feel this should be balanced when proposing significant changes to routes that are currently available.

I also support the increase of frequency of the route 50 during midday and evenings, and route 59 on weekends, although the changes to the route are of concern, but I think Metro should also consider the strong needs of additional service on other routes on the weekends. Several routes, for example the 2 and 6, continue to experience overcrowding that causes late arrivals and sometimes the inability to load waiting passengers. If it is not feasible to operate additional routes year round, Metro should definitely consider having extra buses available for special events such as sporting events, downtown festivals, and the beginning of the school year and holidays for increased shopping needs. An increase of service would encourage more use of public transportation for large events while still providing adequate service for the regular ridership. Several times this fall as I was smooshed like a sardine onto a route 2 or route 8 bus on a football Saturday, I heard comments from fellow riders, many first-time riders, that they would have made a different transportation choice had they known what riding the bus would be like. I am saddened when I hear comments such as these as I wonder if the rider's first impression will prevent them from riding again at other less crowded times or perhaps influence their willingness to use the bus system again. Madison has a wonderful bus system that becomes more comprehensive each year, but additional service on key routes on weekends would meet an important transportation need.

It would also be helpful to have all of the information regarding proposed bus route changes available when the notification first becomes public. I have checked the website several times in the past month and each time there seems to be new information. At first there was just a listing of the routes and a brief sentence or two about the proposed change. After a lack of specifics, I sent Metro an email to which I received a prompt reply with some more detailed information. Later time schedules and maps were added. If all of the information is not immediately available, it would be helpful for the website to have a date listing when it will be complete. This would give the public access to the information so more detailed discussion could occur.

Thank you for your time.