



BUS ROUTE REPORT CARD

Nashville Bus Riders Highlight Key Transit Priorities



Upper front cover: Bus stop in front of Fisk University on Jefferson street & D.B. Todd Blvd. This corner has one of the highest rates of pedestrian injuries and deaths in Davidson County.

Lower front cover: Group of Walk the Pike participants attempt to cross Clarksville Pike at a Route 22 bus stop near Buena Vista Pike in October, 2018. Although 20 people tried to cross, cars still whizzed by. The stop has no crosswalk or bus shelter.

Music City Riders United (MCRU) is an organization of public bus riders fighting for equitable transit to meet the needs of working-class Nashvillians. Since June 2016, MCRU has pressured WeGo (formerly MTA) to rebuild degrading prison-like bathrooms at the Music City Central bus station and expand hours of service and frequency of the Route 22 Bordeaux bus, after uncovering racial disparities in service between the Bordeaux line and other Top 10 routes. The organization was one of several groups that advocated for fare reductions and called attention to the free bus to the Gulch. WeGo reduced fares in 2017 and expanded the free circulator bus to extend from the Gulch to Tennessee State University. MCRU continues to address racial and economic inequities in Nashville both in transit and more widely as a project of Workers' Dignity, an umbrella organization of low-wage workers organizing for economic justice and the dignity of all.

Music City Riders United may be reached at:

615-763-3330 or 615-281-9251.

Email: info@mcridersunited.org

facebook.com/MusicCityRidersUnited

Graphic Design by: Shawn Reilly, shawn.e.reilly@vanderbilt.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	4
Bus Route Report Card Findings.....	6
Recommendations.....	14
Research Design.....	18
References.....	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Key Transit Priorities for the City

Nashville's WeGo public transit system is not adequately serving the city's workforce and ridership, and Metro Nashville Public Works and the Tennessee Department of Transportation are failing riders in providing pedestrian safety near bus stops. This is what 619 bus riders on 36 different routes reported through Bus Route Report Card surveys conducted between May and October of 2018.

Music City Riders United (MCRU) surveyed riders based on 10 standards of quality public transportation. MCRU then analyzed both the aggregate data for the 10 criteria and route-specific data for 9 routes in which 50 or more passengers completed the survey. The Bus Route Report Card revealed these critical findings:

Bus routes earned grades ranging from B to D+.

The two worst routes identified by riders service low-income neighborhoods.

- Antioch Express Route 38X earned a D+. The 38X earned Ds in various categories, including for lack of frequency on weekdays, insufficient hours of operation, lack of bus shelters and benches, and lack of crosswalks. It also earned an F for weekend service because the bus only runs on weekdays. On weekdays, it runs just five times per day, from 5:38am to 6:42pm. Antioch is one of major cities in Metro Nashville where residents are moving into after facing displacement from the urban core. The two Metro Council districts serviced by the 38X, Districts 28 and 29, face poverty rates of 21.6% and 13.8% respectively, and nearly half of residents are African American or Latino.
- Golden Valley Route 41 earned a C-. The 41 earned its lowest marks for bus frequency, sufficient benches and shelters, and hours of operation. Like the 38X, it earned an F for weekend service because the bus does not run on weekends and holidays. Buses run just five times, between 5:41am and 5:54pm. This route runs through Metro Council Districts 2 and 3, with poverty rates of 38.5% and 21.5% respectively. 79% of District 2 residents and 61% of District 3 residents are Black.

The highest scoring routes service several of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Nashville.

The highest scoring routes were the West End/White Bridge Route 3, earning a C+, and the West End/Bellevue Route 5, earning the only B. Both routes primarily service middle-class and wealthy neighborhoods whose residents are overwhelmingly white.

Riders identify systemwide problems with public transit service

Analysis of all 619 Bus Route Report Card across 36 routes were equally disappointing, demonstrating systemwide problems in Nashville's mass transit. All 10 areas of concern earned Cs. The worst problems identified by riders include

- Infrequent or no bus service on weekends.
- Hours of operation are too short. Buses do not run early enough in the morning or late enough at night.
- Insufficient benches and shelters along routes.
- Lack of crosswalks at or near bus stops.

Nashville's economy is booming, but the influx of money into the city has exacerbated rising racial and economic inequities in terms of housing, wages, and transit options. Our city's underserved public bus system creates multiple barriers for transit-dependent riders, who are largely low-income residents. Workers are blocked from access to employment. In a city profiting handsomely from tourism, conventions, and music, riders are unable to rely on public transit, which runs infrequently or not at all on weekends and nights.¹ This affects thousands of blue collar jobs across the city, as roughly one in four workers now work nights and a third of all workers work weekends.² As residents face displacement from urban core neighborhoods experiencing rapid gentrification, more are moving into transit deserts on the outskirts of Davidson County, areas with limited or no service. Without sufficient benches and shelters, people are left to brave the elements, fighting off rain, blazing summer sun, and winter winds. This disproportionately hurts pregnant women, the elderly and disabled passengers. Furthermore, through city and state government negligence regarding pedestrian safety infrastructure, public transit riders and others living in working-class neighborhoods must risk walking into dangerous traffic just to cross the street.

When the public transit system is not working and pedestrians are placed in danger, the necessities of everyday life are denied.



Route #22, Clarksville Hwy & 24th Ave. N.

Recommendations:

These issues demand urgent action from the Nashville Metro Council, WeGo, the Metro Nashville Public Works, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation. Based on the Bus Route Report Card findings, we recommend that Metro Council dedicate increased funding to expansion of bus service to 24 hours per day, increase bus frequency on weekends, and expand service hours and frequency in growing working-class neighborhoods outside the urban core. We call on WeGo to create a comprehensive plan to build shelters at all stops, with priority on historically neglected neighborhoods. Lastly, Public Works and TDOT should present a plan and schedule through the

end of 2020 to build protected crosswalks at every bus stop, prioritizing working-class and people of color areas.



These are important first steps in addressing the worsening economic and racial segregation in Nashville. Everyone in our city should be able to move easily between their jobs, their homes, their educational spaces, their places of worship, and spaces of leisure safely and with ease. Metro Council, WeGo, Public Works and TDOT have an opportunity to lead our city in addressing the wellbeing and prosperity of Nashville's public transit riders.

BUS ROUTE REPORT CARD FINDINGS

Between May and October 2018, Music City Riders United conducted 619 Bus Rider Report Card surveys with public transit riders. Riders graded their bus routes on ten standards, giving letter grades of A, B, C, D or F. The ten standards, as stated on the Bus Route Report Cards, were:

1. Bus stop is close to my home
2. Buses on this route generally show up on time
3. Buses run frequently on weekdays
4. Buses run frequently on weekends
5. Buses are clean
6. Buses are mechanically safe and well-maintained
7. It is safe to cross the street to get to and from bus stops on this route
8. There are enough bus shelters and benches on this route
9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful
10. Bus runs early enough in the morning and late enough at night for my schedule



Route #7, 21st Ave. S. & Edgehill

Bus Route Report Card

Bus Route ____

Please circle the grade that best fits your experience on this bus route (A is excellent and F is failing).

1. Bus stop is close to my home
A B C D F

2. Buses on this route generally show up on time
A B C D F

3. Buses run frequently on weekdays
A B C D F

4. Buses run frequently on weekends
A B C D F

5. Buses are clean
A B C D F

6. Buses are mechanically safe & well maintained
A B C D F

7. It is safe to cross the street to get to & from bus stops on this route
A B C D F

8. There are enough bus shelters & benches on this route
A B C D F

9. Bus drivers are friendly & helpful
A B C D F


10. Bus runs early enough in morning and late enough at night for my schedule
A B C D F

This report includes grades for the 9 routes in which 50 or more riders completed report cards. The West-End/Bellevue Route 5, which services several of the most affluent neighborhoods of Nashville, earned the highest grade of B. The Antioch Express Route 38X earned the lowest grade of D+. The Antioch Express services a wide swath of working-class neighborhoods, many of which have grown more dense as low-income residents are increasingly displaced from Nashville's urban core due to rising rents. WeGo bus riders' report cards underscore serious and concerning inequities in service between routes. Riders also report subpar service for public transit riders across Nashville, drawing attention to a broader equity dilemma impacting transit-dependent bus riders versus vehicle-owning commuters.


public transit riders across Nashville, drawing attention to a broader equity dilemma impacting transit-dependent bus riders versus vehicle-owning commuters.

BUS ROUTE REPORT CARDS


West End/White Bridge Route #3

REPORT CARD (50 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	B C+ B- B- C+ C+ C+ C+ C+ B-	

West End/Bellevue Route #5

REPORT CARD (50 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	B B A- B B- B- C+ B- B B-	

Charlotte Pike Route #10

REPORT CARD (54 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	B C+ C+ C C C C C C- C	

Herman Route #19

REPORT CARD (57 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	B- B- C+ C C C C C C C+	C+

Bordeaux Route #22

REPORT CARD (53 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	C+ C+ C+ C- C C+ C+ C C+ C	C+

Antioch Express Route 38X

REPORT CARD (54 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	D+ C- D F C C- D+ D+ C- D	D+

Golden Valley Route #41

REPORT CARD (55 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	C+ C+ C- F C C C D+ C D	C-

St. Cecilia/Cumberland Route #42

REPORT CARD (75 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	C C+ C C C B- C C C+ C	C

Music City Blue Circuit Route #60

REPORT CARD (52 cards)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus stop is close to home 2. Buses generally show up on time 3. Buses run frequently on weekdays 4. Buses run frequently on weekends 5. Buses are clean 6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced 7. Safe to cross the street 8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route 9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful 10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night 	C+ C C C C C C C C C	C

ANALYSIS AND ROUTE COMPARISON

According to the results of riders' Bus Route Report Card surveys, routes that serve lower income and communities of color score much lower than those that serve affluent neighborhoods. Additionally, the city's public transit system is woefully inadequate for transit-dependent riders in general. Of the nine routes surveyed, the 38X and 41 earned the lowest scores, receiving a D+ and C- respectively. Both routes run limited service to working-class neighborhoods.

The Antioch 38X provides service to residents living in Metro Council Districts 28 and 29. 21.6% of District 28 residents live in poverty and 48% of residents are people of color (30% Black, 25% Latino, 3% Asian). 13.8 % of District 29 residents live in poverty and 47% are people of color (see map and chart). As thousands of working-class Nashvillians are displaced from Nashville's urban core to outlying areas of Davidson County because of rapidly rising land values and rent, Antioch will likely experience additional population growth of transit-dependent riders. In spite of this changing reality, large portions of Antioch remain transit deserts — neighborhoods that have limited or no bus service.

The Golden Valley 41 serves residents in Metro Council Districts 2 and 3. 38.5% of District 2 residents live in poverty and 79% of the population is African American. 21.5% of District 3 residents live in poverty and 61% are African American. (see map and chart).

Significantly, both the Golden Valley and Antioch Express buses scored Ds across multiple transit equity issues, including hours of service and benches and shelters. Additionally, the Antioch Express scored Ds on bus stop distance from riders' homes and on crosswalks for pedestrian safety.

The West End/Bellevue Route 5 was the only route to score a B. When averaged with the West End/White Bridge Route 3, the overall grade for West End service stands at a B-. Both routes serve Nashvillians in Districts 22, 23, and 24. Demographically, 80%, 89%, and 88% of residents are white respectively in those three districts. The average poverty rate for Districts 22, 23, and 24 is under 8% (see demographic & poverty maps). The range of grades -- from the high of B to the low of D+ -- underscore inequity in route priorities of WeGo, as well as inequity in transit and pedestrian infrastructure funding by Metro Nashville Public Works and the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

Although Music City Riders United analyzed only the nine routes in which 50 or more riders were surveyed, striking trends emerge from the results. Should more data be collected, routes similar to the Golden Valley and Antioch Express lines would likely earn poor scores on bus frequency, inadequate service on weekends, and availability of sidewalks and shelters. Comparable routes to these also service working-class neighborhoods that lack public transit infrastructure.

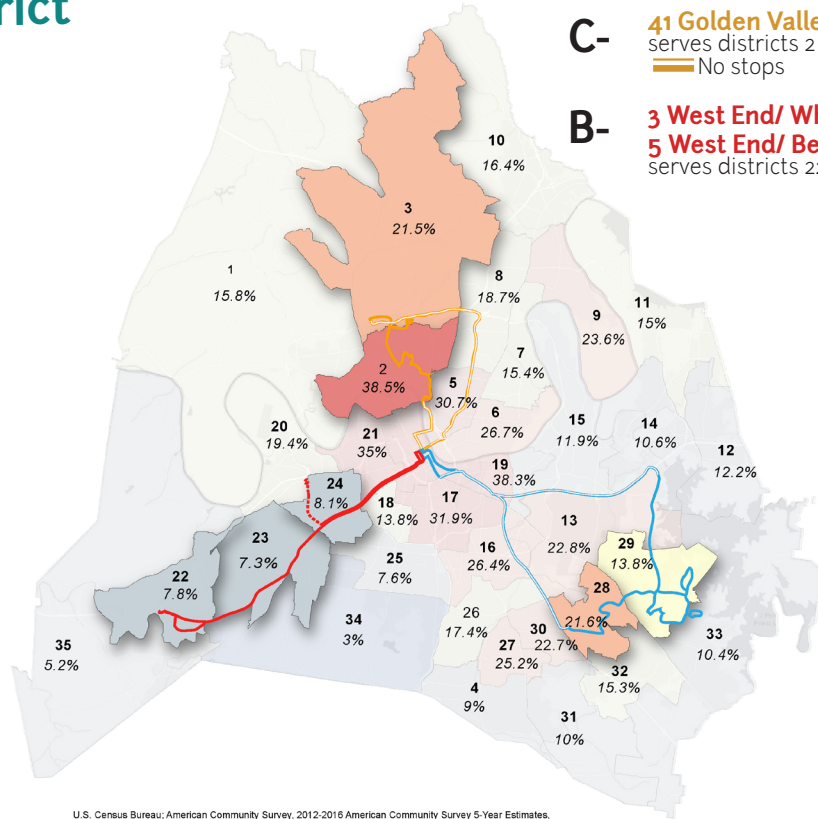
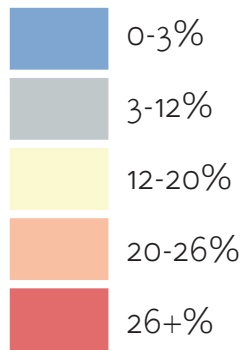


Kings Lane & Clarksville Hwy

Poverty Rate by Metro Council District

- D+** **38X Antioch Express**
serves districts 28 & 29
 No stops
- C-** **41 Golden Valley**
serves districts 2 & 3
 No stops
- B-** **3 West End/ White Bridge, 5 West End/ Bellevue**
serves districts 22, 23 & 24

District poverty rate
All Nashville = 18%



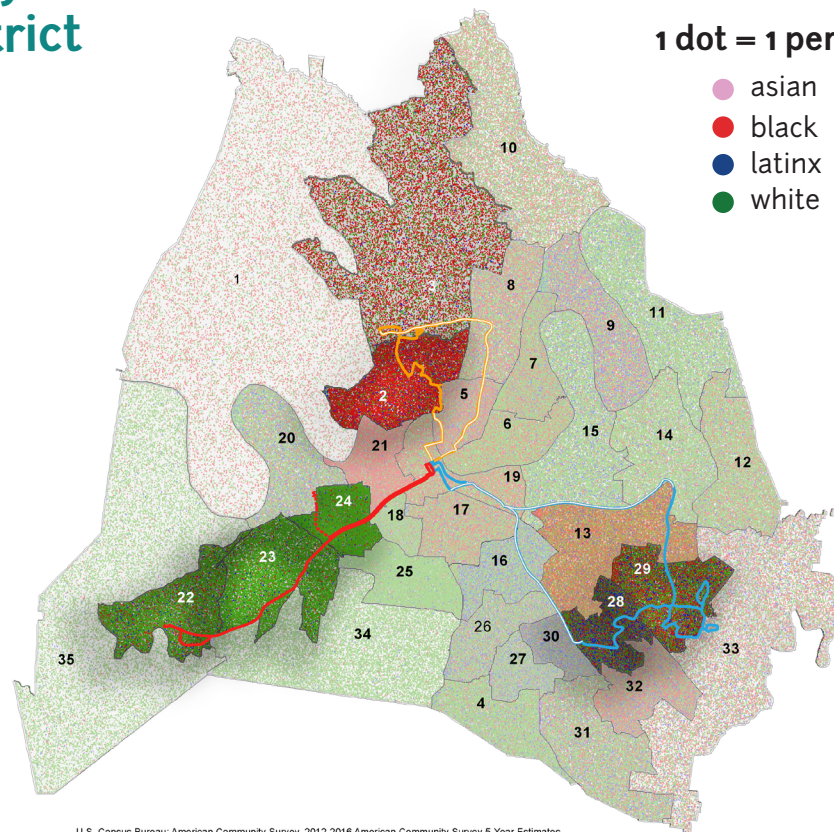
U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0102, generated using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder.census.gov>; (11 November 2018).

Race & Ethnicity by Metro Council District

1 dot = 1 person

- asian
- black
- latinx
- white

- D+** **38X Antioch Express**
serves districts 28 & 29
 No stops
- C-** **41 Golden Valley**
serves districts 2 & 3
 No stops
- B-** **3 West End/ White Bridge, 5 West End/ Bellevue**
serves districts 22, 23 & 24



U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0102, generated using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder.census.gov>; (11 November 2018).

ANALYSIS OF GRADES BASED ON TEN STANDARDS

619 total report cards from riders on 36 routes

1. Bus stop is close to home	C+
2. Buses generally show up on time	C+
3. Buses run frequently on weekdays	C+
4. Buses run frequently on weekends	C
5. Buses are clean	C
6. Buses are mechanically safe & well-maintenanced	C
7. Safe to cross the street	C
8. Enough bus shelters & benches on route	C
9. Bus drivers are friendly and helpful	C+
10. Bus runs early enough in morning & late enough at night	C

The cumulative grades based on the ten issues indicated in the Bus Route Report Card all hovered in the C/C+ range. Riders identified that all issues need significant improvement to meet their transit needs.

Public Safety

One of the most urgent needs is for greater physical safety for riders waiting for the bus and for those who need to cross the road to get to and from their stop. Walk Bike Nashville's Impossible Crossing report and the Nashville Pedestrian Death Registry each highlight the deadly consequences of state and local government inaction. Pedestrians in Nashville are being struck and killed every two to three weeks, while an average of one pedestrian is injured every single day.³ Streets in 12 South, Midtown/Vanderbilt, the Nations, and other wealthy and rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods have received major pedestrian safety infrastructure funding. Crosswalks with signals for drivers, protected bike lanes, and other traffic calming amenities are saving lives in those neighborhoods. Unfortunately, many working-class neighborhoods - especially majority black and Latino areas - have been woefully underfunded for pedestrian safety infrastructure, with frightening consequences. 14 of the top 20 most dangerous pedestrian crossing are in working-class neighborhoods.⁴ Report card grades underline the need for TDOT and Metro Nashville Public Works to take immediate steps to address problems of equity in bus rider and pedestrian safety.

# people hit by vehicles each month	30
# people killed by vehicles each month	2

14 of the top 20 most dangerous pedestrian crossings are in working-class neighborhoods.

ing-class neighborhoods - especially majority black and Latino areas - have been woefully underfunded for pedestrian safety infrastructure, with frightening consequences. 14 of the top 20 most dangerous pedestrian crossing are in working-class neighborhoods.⁴ Report

card grades underline the need for TDOT and Metro Nashville Public Works to take immediate steps to address problems of equity in bus rider and pedestrian safety.

Bus Operators and Riders

There are multiple factors affecting relationships between bus operators and riders, which explain the C+ grade. Since its inception in June 2016, Music City Riders United has built relationships with dozens of bus drivers both informally through conversations and through planned activities in which MCRU has partnered with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1235, the union representing operators, custodial staff, and mechanics at WeGo. These events have helped dispel common misconceptions about riders and operators. For example, riders frequently express frustration with buses that pass by their stop, and that frustration is (mis)placed onto drivers. MCRU has learned that management sometimes instructs drivers to skip stops and leave people behind to meet scheduling deadlines. This is just one example of a policy that needs to be re-evaluated or better communicated to riders. To address issues on a systemic level, MCRU will collaborate with the Amalgamated Transit Union to identify WeGo policies and procedures that inadvertently foster division. Those policies and procedures will then be brought to WeGo with requests to change policies or to clarify them to the public.



“We need crosswalks on Clarksville Highway, especially at the bus stops. Every time my kids and I have to cross the street, we’re risking our lives.”

-Ticoya, Route 22, Clarksville Hwy

“If I had a bus that ran more frequently, it would help me get more sleep for school because I have to get up two hours early just to get to my high school on time. There’s no bench at the stop I wait at to go to school, and the stop is literally on the shoulder of the road. If I had a bench at the stop, I wouldn’t just be standing out on the curb in the dark where I could get hit by cars.”



-Issaac, high school student, Route 41

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Transit Priorities for the City

More than 600 bus riders surveyed between June and October 2018 identified several areas for improvement of Nashville public transit and related services. Some are small fixes. Others, however, require a major commitment to the equity and dignity of public transit riders. This will require dedicated funding to reverse the years that the city and state government have neglected working-class, transit-dependent residents. Without a dedicated funding stream for public transit, Nashville cannot build a fully equitable system that addresses the urgent needs of transit-dependent riders. Resolving the transit crisis in our city will depend on the political will of elected officials, other public servants and the public at large. In the absence of a dedicated funding stream, several concrete steps can and should be taken immediately. We call on Metro Council, WeGo, the Nashville Department of Public Works, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation to draft public plans to address the following action items:

1. We call on the Metro Council to dedicate funding to expansion of bus service:

Expand bus service to 24 hours per day, beginning with 24-hour access to public transit for low-income night shift workers.

Nashville is a hospitality city. Tens of thousands of residents work second and third shift jobs, including on weekends. Nashville must provide these workers a safe and affordable means of getting to and from their jobs. A large majority of riders are working-class residents.⁵ MTA used to provide Night Owl service until the agency eliminated it in 2008⁶. Our current system locks out transit-dependent riders from thousands of jobs and disproportionately affects low-income communities of color. In addition, these communities rely on the public transit system to get to church, to school to pursue education, and to access other parts of the city for the leisure they deserve. Although fully functioning 24-hour service will require dedicated funding through a transit referendum, Metro Council should provide additional funding in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget to begin providing affordable 24-hour access to public transit for low-income night shift workers who contribute their sweat to Music City's growing tourism and convention industries.

Increase bus frequency in heavily populated, working-class neighborhoods on weekdays. Expand bus frequency with the goal of establishing equal frequencies seven days a week (or at least every 20 minutes on weekends).

The rapid rise of gentrification has displaced many lifelong residents from neighborhoods near the urban core into outlying areas including Antioch, Madison, and Hermitage. Many neighborhoods in outlying areas of the Davidson County are transit deserts with little or no service. As the report cards indicate, the limited service riders do receive is lacking in quality, dependency, and frequency. We call on Mayor Briley and Metro Council to increase operations funding to WeGo in the Fiscal 2020 budget to address riders' needs, and we urge the mayor and Metro Council to find the political will to take steps toward securing dedicated funding for equitable public transit that allows for systematic expansion that prioritizes the needs of transit-dependent riders.

In 2017, Music City Riders United identified disparities between the Bordeaux Route 22 and the other Top Ten busiest routes in the WeGo system. After a months-long advocacy campaign involving North Nashville-based at-large and District 1 Metro Council members, as well as other racial and economic justice supporters, WeGo (then “MTA”) amended their budget proposal to Metro Council. Riders won necessary funding to increase the frequency and hours of service on the 22 bus, and ridership climbed 14%. This should be viewed by city officials as a case study. The Antioch Express 38X averages 19.4 riders per trip, the tenth highest in the entire WeGo system, yet it has one of the worst frequencies⁷. Additional funding to meet passengers’ needs helped boost ridership. All metro and state agencies responsible for equitable transit should evaluate and eliminate racial and economic disparities in public transit and focus investment in neighborhoods historically neglected by Nashville metro government and services.



2. We call on WeGo to build bus benches and shelters at every stop, with a priority on neighborhoods historically neglected by city services.

WeGo has two major opportunities to address equity in bus bench and shelter placement. As the agency enters its Streamlining Process and as it develops new Transit Design Guidelines, WeGo should create and implement a public plan that gives special priority to building shelters and other state-of-the-art pedestrian safety features at the most frequently used stops in Nashville. This includes stops in working-class neighborhoods that city and state government have historically neglected.



Although WeGo has prioritized placing bus shelters at stops with 40 or more boardings per day, the agency’s leadership has stated that building shelters for many stops in working-class neighborhoods cost substantially more money. Often these are the same neighborhoods that were uprooted, divided, and economically devastated through racist state and local government actions when building Nashville’s interstate system. Unfortunately, in the decades since, local government has neglected building sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian amenities in these and other working-class neighborhoods.



It is no mystery that low-income neighborhoods have many of the most dangerous bus stops in terms of pedestrian safety. Streets like Jefferson Street, Kings Lane, West Hamilton, Clarksville Highway, Gallatin Pike, Dickerson Pike, Nolensville Pike, Murfreesboro Pike have too many stops without shelters, benches, standing pads, and, in some cases, sidewalks. Some stops are literally on the shoulder of the road, with bus stop signs in the ditch. Riders understand that their neighborhoods require more expensive infrastructure upgrades (because of legacies of racism and classism), but an historical lack of investment is no excuse for continuing to put riders at risk. Investment has already come too late, but is necessary to bridge the economic and racial gap in Nashville. WeGo must place equity at the forefront of its bench and shelter priorities, and Metro Nashville Public Works and TDOT need to fully cooperate in funding road and sidewalk upgrades needed to help WeGo meet its responsibilities.

WeGo must ensure that elderly and disabled people are not forced to wait sometimes 30 to 60 minutes without benches or shelters. Exposure to extreme weather can cause serious health risks. Nashville temperatures average as low as 28 degrees in January, and as high as 89 degrees in July. Combined with factors such as wind chill and humidity, this can make exposure a health hazard. Additionally, too many bus stops in front of schools are either lacking bus shelters or are too small to accommodate the children waiting to get home. There are other safety concerns as well. Lighting is often inadequate at night, the time when most pedestrian deaths and injuries occur.

Steps forward: Nolensville Pike

WeGo has taken some promising steps forward in beginning to address the legacy of racial and economic inequality in Metro Nashville transit. Since 2015, WeGo has installed over 100 new shelters. Currently about 10% of all stops have shelters. The agency plans to build 18 new shelters and upgrade 4 other shelters along Nolensville Pike Route 52 BRT Light, one of the busiest routes in the system. This is a major quality-of-life improvement for the thousands of riders who rely on the 52 BRT every day to get to and from work and school. WeGo has collaborated with Public Works and TDOT to include additional pedestrian safety amenities as well. Music City Riders United urges that any obstacle to immediate implementation of these construction projects be addressed and resolved right away.

3. We call on the Metropolitan Nashville Department of Public Works and the Tennessee Department of Transportation to build protected crosswalks at every major bus stop, prioritizing the most dangerous intersections first.

In 2014, Public Works released the “Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Pilot Project” report, which identified the 50 most dangerous pedestrian crash locations in Davidson County. Walk Bike Nashville’s “Impossible Crossings”⁸ report, released in October 2018, details how pedestrian safety has deteriorated since 2014. Impossible Crossing unveiled several frightening statistics. Since 2014, 1,636 pedestrians have been injured, and 78 have been killed after being struck by vehicles. Of the Top 50 most dangerous locations, 34 are on state roads controlled by Tennessee Department of Transportation and 16 are controlled by Metro Nashville Public Works.



Bus stop on Clarksville Pike near Buena Vista Pike.

Most strikingly, since 2014, TDOT and Metro Public Works have made major safety improvements in only four of the Top 50 most dangerous locations. Additionally, once the highly-congested downtown and midtown areas are separated from the Top 50, the large majority of dangerous locations are in low-income and working-class neighborhoods. Roads along 12 South (including 10th Ave South), Vanderbilt University, and other wealthy neighborhoods have received infusions of Public Works funding for pedestrian safety infrastructure, while streets in North Nashville, Southeast Nashville, East Nashville, and other working-class neighborhoods have largely been ignored. A notable exception was construction of the crosswalk with flashing lights and raised medians/refuge islands, installed last year on Nolensville Pike and Welshwood Drive after community pressure and multiple pedestrian deaths. That crosswalk has dramatically improved pedestrian safety, and only cost TDOT and Public Works \$25,000⁹ to build.



Protected crosswalk at Nolensville Pike and Welshwood Drive



Nolensville & Welshwood

will collaborate with local government agencies and regional planning agencies through established transportation planning processes to ensure that multimodal accommodations are addressed throughout the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of new construction.” Public Works and TDOT must address the serious racial and economic equity implications of this now.

Virtually none of the WeGo bus stops in working-class communities provide protected crosswalks that allow transit-dependent riders to safely cross the street. This is in spite of TDOT approving a Multi-Modal Access Policy¹⁰ in 2015, stating “TDOT



Route #38X, Bell Road

We call on Metro Nashville Public Works and TDOT to:

- Build protected crosswalks with activated flashing lights, sound signals for the visually impaired, and safety barriers at all major bus stops to ensure the safety of public transit riders and other pedestrians.
- Present a public plan and schedule for all protected crosswalks they will build in 2019 and in 2020.
- Prioritize neighborhoods that have historically faced discrimination and neglect.¹¹
- Present a plan for addressing racial and economic inequity in Metro Nashville road infrastructure projects instead of continuing to prioritize the safety concerns of affluent neighborhoods and tourist destinations.
- Closely collaborate with WeGo, the Metro Planning Department, and all other necessary government agencies to ensure smooth implementation of planned bus rider and pedestrian safety enhancements.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Members and staff of Music City Riders United surveyed WeGo public transit riders on buses and in front of the Music City Center downtown bus station. Data was collected through a Bus Rider Report Card, which asked riders to provide a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F on ten standards. During the first phase, bus riders met three times to formulate the ten standards on which they wanted routes to be graded. During the second phase, bus riders who are members and staff of MCRU carried out the surveys, guided by principles of Participatory Action Research, which emphasizes the agency and decision-making of the people who are directly affected by the issue being studied.

“Crosswalks would mean the world to me and everyone else who takes the 41 bus. It would save lives. There have been several deaths by hit-and-runs near my bus stop along Brick Church Pike and Trinity Lane.”

-Donald, Route 41

“At 5 ‘o’clock in the morning, when I get off work, buses don’t run. Sometimes I can’t get home. MTA or somebody should do something so hard-working people can get back home after work.”

-Deautae, Route 22

“ I work 3rd shift, and I’m always trying to figure out a way to go home without having to take an Uber.”

-Von

END NOTES

1. Ingraham, Christopher. “Nearly one third of the American workforce works on the weekend.” Washington Post, 8 September 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/09/08/nearly-one-third-of-the-american-labor-force-works-on-the-weekend/>
2. Hamermesh, Daniel, and Elena Stancanelli. “Long Workweeks and Strange Hours.” National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014, doi:10.3386/w20449.
3. Walk Bike Nashville, Impossible Crossings, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/walkbikenashville/pages/433/attachments/original/1540841704/WBN_impossible_crossings_final.pdf?1540841704
4. Ibid.
5. Nashville MTA/RTA, “QuickFacts on Middle Tennessee’s Transit Organizations,” <http://www.nashvillemta.org/PDF/PowerPointForWeb4.pdf>. Citation needed? (use nMotion plan as citation. Somewhere in there they give demographics of riders)
6. “New Fares and Service Changes Effective in July.” 25 June 2008, www.nashvillemta.org/PDF/JulyChanges_homepage.PDF.
7. “Quarterly Route Performance Indicator Report - July 2018 through September 2018.” Nashville MTA. Oct 2018.
8. “Impossible Crossings.” Walk/Bike Nashville, 2018, www.walkbikenashville.org/impossible_crossings.
9. Burch, Edward. “Temporary Crossing Installed on Deadly Stretch of Nolensville Road.” WSMV News Channel 4, 10 Dec. 2017.
10. Multimodal Access Report. Tennessee Department of Transportation, 2015, Multimodal Access Report Policy 530-01.
11. Karas, David. “New Visions for Public Affairs.” New Visions for Public Affairs, vol. 7, Apr. 2015, pp. 9–21.

REFERENCES

Burch, Edward. “Temporary Crossing Installed on Deadly Stretch of Nolensville Road.” WSMV News Channel 4, 10 Dec. 2017.

Hamermesh, Daniel, and Elena Stancanelli. “Long Workweeks and Strange Hours.” National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014, doi:10.3386/w20449.

“Impossible Crossings.” Walk/Bike Nashville, 2018, www.walkbikenashville.org/impossible_crossings.

Karas, David. “New Visions for Public Affairs.” New Visions for Public Affairs, vol. 7, Apr. 2015, pp. 9–21.

Multimodal Access Report. Tennessee Department of Transportation, 2015, Multimodal Access Report Policy 530-01.

Nashville MTA/RTA, “QuickFacts on Middle Tennessee’s Transit Organizations,” <http://www.nashvillemta.org/PDF/PowerPointForWeb4.pdf>.

Nashville Pedestrian Death Registry. “New Fares and Service Changes Effective in July.” 25 June 2008. www.nashvillemta.org/PDF/JulyChanges_homepage.PDF.

Walk Bike Nashville, “Impossible Crossings,” https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/walkbikenashville/pages/433/attachments/original/1540841704/WBN_impossible_crossings_final.pdf?1540841704

