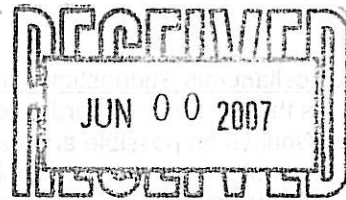


To: The Community Mobility Committee,  
The Metropolitan Planning Organization Committees,  
City Council Members,  
County Board of Supervisors, and  
Candidates:



I am a member of the Community Mobility Committee representing Albemarle County, but I am sending this report as a concerned resident. On the morning of May 29, 2007, Sally Thomas and I completed trips on a Route 7 bus from the bus station to Barracks Rd. where we transferred to a Route 5 bus to Walmart and returned, and then a roundtrip on a Route 2B bus. The transit center employees are friendly and helpful as were the bus drivers we encountered.

Thoughts and Observations on May 29 CTS trips

Equipment: The large buses used on Routes 5 and 7 are noisy, creaky and have 30 seats. They are wheelchair accessible, have easy access off and on, were clean and on time. Apparently, buses used formerly were quieter which is important especially if routes are through residential areas.

The smaller bus used on Route 2 has 16 seats and seat belts.

Suggestions:

1. When replacing buses, a great attempt should be made to find quieter buses, with more comfortable seats, with handles on the backs, which are helpful to passengers steadying themselves.
2. A space for strollers and/or carriages and the need for support for standing passengers should also be considered.
3. The use of smaller buses, which are much quieter and more comfortable, compared to our present large buses, should be carefully considered.

Bus stops: Many bus stops are presently difficult for a pedestrian to access safely, which seems to defeat the purpose of having a bus system.

Suggestions:

1. All bus stops need to be checked for best location and accessibility. (For example, on Route 2B, the County Office Building is almost inaccessible from the bus stop.)
2. A survey should be done to determine the need for additional sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks. (At first, it may be useful to place stanchions in the crosswalks as is done downtown on a rotational basis until drivers become use to stopping for pedestrians.) Note: The Pedestrian-Transit issue has been adopted as a core issue to be addressed in the FY08 MPO Work Program.
3. A periodic check should also be made of which stops are being used. Bus drivers can be asked.
4. It would be helpful to have bus shelters to provide overhead protection from rain at bus stops.
5. One bus stop had been moved and the passenger was not aware of it. Should a notice be posted on the bus? At the least, notices can now be posted in the bus terminal.

UTS/CTS Riders Guide: It provides much helpful and needed information.

Suggestions:

1. In addition there is a need for a wallet-sized timetable only, separate ones for UTS and CTS, that people can have easily available to carry with them in their purse or wallet.
2. There are a few changes that would make the Riders' Guide easier to use. The listings of the destinations on the left-hand side of the pages could be placed in a box to more clearly delineate them from the timetable, and the list of destinations could be expanded to let riders know what is nearby. Grocery store and library are examples.

Miscellaneous Suggestions or Queries:

1. Is there a policy regarding cell phone use on buses?
2. Would it be possible and easier to have seniors use their Medicare cards to obtain reduced fares instead of having to apply for a card? (This is done in Philadelphia where seniors ride, free.)
3. Can there be, or are there spot checks on ridership on various routes at various times to determine the popularity of the route? Bus drivers implied that they could help, if asked.
4. Should County employees and City employees be allowed to ride free with photo IDs? *The new provision of free rides for UVA employees has resulted in increased use of the buses, drivers told us, and we observed a number of users.*

Promotion: In addition to radio and television ads:

1. Can public service ads be placed in papers and items in condo association newsletters, the Senior Center and JABA publications, etc.? Postings for bulletin board teasers, in workplaces, hospitals, government offices? For example, Turtle Creek newsletter could tell residents where they can go by bus, such as Northside Library, Kroger's – destinations that are easily accessible by bus – with specific directions about where, when, how and cost. Would merchants join in this campaign? A discount with a bus token once a month? Library could give a bookmark.
2. Incorporate a session on alternative transportation in driver education classes, both teenagers' and senior citizens' classes? People need to be educated to ride the bus.
3. Make sure bike stores post notices about the bus bike racks (which seem to be fairly well utilized). Make sure senior centers of all sorts have bus information, including senior rate cards, available.

In summary, the bus ride was pleasant, clean, friendly and on time throughout. But getting to and from the bus seemed to be a challenge in many locations, and we thought ridership could be increased with some low-cost but customized campaigns to let people know how and why to use the bus.

I hope these comments prove to be helpful. As we all realize, a successful bus system is so important for the viability of Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

Respectfully,



Betty C. Black