

**Winston-Salem Urban League
Urges City Officials to
Expand Bus Service Beyond
WSTA Recommendations**

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The Winston-Salem Urban League (WSUL) recommends that City officials expand bus service. WSUL is uniquely situated as a non-profit organization serving both low and moderate income residents who rely on public transportation and businesses that employ them. WSUL engaged in a set of conversations with community leaders, employers and transit users to evaluate the changes to Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) services over the last three months and make recommendations for improvements.

Philosophy

WSUL supports a public transportation system that is safe, affordable, and efficient, and that provides opportunity for all Winston-Salem residents.

Background

In its 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, the City of Winston Salem sets forth a vision of “a municipal government deserving of public confidence that provides excellent and innovative services, and is an active and cooperative partner in creating a vital community.” Certainly, the Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA) sought to act in a manner consistent with that vision when it reformed bus service at the start of the 2017 calendar year. Regrettably, despite the countless hours of many hard working civil and dedicated servants, the WSTA board and contractors, the effort missed its goal.

To WSTA’s credit and to the credit of City leaders, there has been an inclusive effort to address missteps and make modifications. That effort has included addressing 473 public comments by route, ward, logistics, subject and cost. As a result, WSTA has:

- Made quick modifications when there were no costs or where there was high urgency due to public need;
- Made modification over 30, 60 and 90 days in response to public comments and internal observations; changes when costs were involved but budgeted resources allowed; and
- Now proposes additional modifications address outstanding public comments.

Winston-Salem Urban League Recommendations

The Winston-Salem Urban League supports the previous WSTA modifications, supports and urges adoption of the proposed WSTA modifications and urges additional modifications and actions.

In particular, the Winston-Salem Urban League recommends:

- **Service every 30 minutes during peak hours on popular routes;**
- **More expansive weekend service;**
- **More expansive night and evening service;**
- **Fewer holiday closures;**
- **Better system mapping; and**
- **Better marketing and rider communications.**

Service every 30 minutes during peak hours

Issue: A consistent concern among WSUL constituency and from employers is the lack of bus frequency. Many WSUL staff and constituency who required two buses were consistently able to arrive at destinations within an hour even if it required transferring from one bus to another. Since the January system revisions, because many buses generally pass every 50-60 minutes to minutes, if a resident requires two buses, his or her daily commute may take as many as one and a half to two hours each way, creating a three to four hour commute. In these circumstances, transportation turns eight hour work days into or 11 or 12 hour days.

Recommendation: Provide service in 30 minute intervals during peak ridership and during work commute times on high use routes and on routes that stop near colleges and universities, downtown and large employers.

More expansive weekend service

Issue: WSUL constituency and employers frequently raised the issue of weekend service. The issues were several. First, employer and employees sought employment-related transportation. Second, WSUL constituency sought access to grocery stores, general shopping and faith-based institutions. Both arguments make sense and ultimately support the City. Generally, employers and employees people contribute to the tax base. Further, transit to shopping insures tax income for the city.

Recommendation: Provide weekend service in hourly intervals on popular routes, routes that cross paths with employers who are open on weekends, and routes with popular grocery stores and popular shopping districts.

More expansive night and evening service

Issue: WSUL constituency often raised the issue of night and evening service, with multiple people sharing accounts of being stranded miles away from home without sufficient financial resources to pay for taxis or arrange other transportation. Fundamentally, most WSUL constituency use transit to get to and from work and have few other options. Some small employers gave employees rides. People shared stories of walking long distances at night in the January and February cold.

Recommendation: Provide evening service on popular routes and on routes that cross paths with employers who are open evenings.

Fewer holiday closures

Issue: This matter appeared front and center this Friday, April 14, 2017. WSUL received complaints from across the community. Employers and employees alike were unaware that the transit system was closed for business on Good Friday. For committed employees who had to report to work, it meant expensive taxi cabs or walking. One dedicated senior woman walked 2.5 miles to work. Generally, WSTA service is not provided on New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Recommendation: Provide service every two hours on New Year's Day, Christmas and Thanksgiving and every hour on all other holidays on popular routes and on routes that cross paths with clusters of businesses that open on holidays.

Better system mapping

Issue: WSUL constituency has complained that current mapping is difficult to read. The map graphic is hard to see both in print and online. It is nearly impossible to see street level information on current brochures or on the website. As a result, transit users have great difficulty determining which routes best meet their needs. Many modern users rely on smartphones. The WSTA system does not seem to be integrated into any of the modern mobile online transit mapping mechanisms. Early in the transition process and even now, many WSUL constituency reports rely on conversations with bus drivers as the best means to determine routes. We have been informed that WSTA is working to update its brochures and general mapping system.

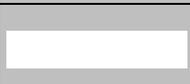
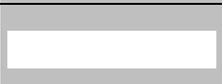
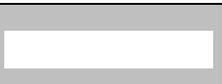
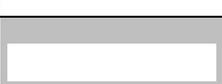
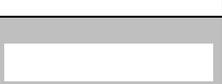
Recommendation: Update brochures and website with readable maps that allow residents to see street level locational information. Update the website with user friendly, mobile friendly, search friendly mapping tools allowing users to input a location and easily discern which route to use. Add WSTA transit information to popular online mobile transit systems like Google and Apple maps.

Better marketing and rider communications

Issue: WSUL constituency, WSUL management and employers have raised concerns and noted confusion in determining the status of matters related to WSTA. From route changes to scheduling and holiday closures, it has been challenging to gain consistent reliable information relative to WSTA.

Recommendation: Engage in a broad public service campaign relative to the 2017 WSTA transition process.

Proposed WSTA Service Modifications (Key below)

Route	Night	Saturday	Sunday	Service every 30 min during peak	Holiday Service
80	+	+	+		
81					
82					
83					
84					
85					
86	+	+	+		
87					

88					
89					
90	+	+	+		
91	+	+			
92	+	+			
93					
94	+		+		
95					
96					
97					
98					
99					
100	-	-			
101			+		
102					
103					
104	+	+	+		
105					
106	+	+	+		

107			+		
108	+	+	+		
109					
110					

WSTA Service Modification Key	
Winston-Salem Transit Authority proposed addition:	+
Winston-Salem Transit Authority proposed removal:	-
Winston-Salem Urban League proposed addition:	
Winston-Salem Transit Authority currently provided:	