

THE TUSCALOOSA METRO TRANSIT REPORT

This report has **two** parts:

The first part is a description of the five routes . The second part is a reflection and evaluation of our experience riding the Tuscaloosa Trolleys.

On Monday, July 6 , Ann Hewitt and I , Gabriella Merriman, started our Tuscaloosa Trolley marathon.

We arrived at the **Mund** main downtown terminal at 7:45. The terminal is located on 22nd and University. At our arrival there were already several people waiting at the various bus shelters. All the bus rides start on the hour and last usually between 45-55 minutes approximately.

They are **5 routes: McKenzie Court/ Stillman, Holt-Crescent Ridge, V.A/University Mall, Greensboro Avenue , Shelton State (This route was added last January)**

All the bus schedules and **detailed itineraries** are available on line: www.uatrolley.org

Brochures are also available on board of each trolley.

Times: 5:00a.m- 6:00 pm (M-F)/ (Note: the **4:00 p.m** run is the last route to transfer from one bus to another at the main terminal)

Note: all trolleys have a bike rack on the front!!

Bus fare:

Adults: \$ **1.00**/ Children 3 and under: **Free**/ **Students K-12**, Elderly (60 & over) and

Handicapped: \$ **.50** (Medicare card is accepted for half-fare).

Transfer: \$ **.20**

They are additional **Call-in Service** (Demand Response Vans) available to the elderly and handicapped anywhere within Tuscaloosa city limits on a call-in basis. This is a curb to curb service. Fare: \$. 2 (\$.4 dollars round trip).

For more info: 205- 556- 3876/ info@uatrolley.org

We started promptly at **8:00** with the **Mc Kenzie Court / Stillman Route. (42 minute R/T)**

This route covers an extensive area which includes various house subdivisions, a recycling center, Stillman College, C.A Fredd Technical Institute , Central West High School, Capitol Park and the Public Library.

The driver announced all the stops (*this is required in order to help the visually impaired*). The bus was clean and air-conditioned. As far as we could see they were bus stop signs all along the routes. Sometimes the driver stopped on request at different sites as a “courtesy call”.

Total numbers of passengers: 19

Holt -Crescent Ridge (50 minute R/T)

We boarded our second trolley which departed promptly at **9:00**. This route covers another extensive area passing through the campus area by the President's Mansion proceeding to Alberta City. The route covers several shopping areas in Alberta city, **Holt High School**, the **Capstone Medical Center** and the **DCH** area.

Total number of Passengers: 17

V.A./ Hargrove Rd/ University Mall (the Shopping/Utilities Trolley!) (52 minutes R/T)

At **10:00** we boarded the V.A/ University Mall trolley which went through Queen City stopping at the **Alabama Power** then down to 15 street to the **University Malls/Home Depot**. Covering another big area with several housing subdivisions (Kicker Road) and stopping at the V.A. the trolley returned to the University Mall. From there is stopped at various shopping locations such as **Mc Farland Plaza** and **Wood Square**. On the way back, the trolley went by the **DCH**, **Burke Hall //Bryan Museum and the Alabama Power/Alagasco** .

Total number of passengers: 20

Shelton State (This is the longest route : 56 minutes R/T)

While waiting for the next trolley departing at **11: 00** for the Greensboro Avenue Route, we were asked to change our route by the driver of the Shelton State trolley. The driver invited us to ride his bus because not many people are aware of this new route and he was hoping that we will help to spread the news. In fact, this route is still on trial. The route has few stops: **C.A Fredd, Taylorville Corner, Dollar General, Shelton State**) but the driver told us that if this route will become established, other stops will be added as needed.

Total number of passengers: 4

Greensboro Avenue (52 minute R/T) (Another shopping trolley!)

After a short break for lunch we boarded our last trolley at **1:00**. This is the route that brings you to **K-mart on Skyland, Wall-Mart/Office Depot/ Mc Farland Mall**. It also includes the **State Troopers Office, the Post Office, DHR** (The Human Resources- Food Stamps office), various subdivisions, **Piggy Wiggly**.

Total number of passengers: 19

OUR VIEW (See below)

We were quite pleased with the routes and the extensive service area provided by the trolleys. All drivers were very friendly and all buses were clean and air-conditioned. We liked the idea that the drivers may stop at non designated areas on request. The announcements of the stops were very helpful (*although only one driver actually did it*). **An Interesting fact: the trolleys have a bike rack in the front.**

1. BUS STOPS:

Although, we did not have to wait at any of the bus stops, we noticed that only a few had a bench and only one provided adequate shelter (the stop by the V.A Hospital). Lacking were also notices of arrival/departure usually posted on bus stops.

2. TIME NEEDED:

These are the statements printed on each brochure:

Take advantage of the Tuscaloosa Transit Authority's convenient bus schedules and routes.

It is an easy, inexpensive alternative to driving.

Weather you' re traveling to work, to school, or to shopping areas downtown or across town, your Transit Authority will get you where you want to!!!

Contrary to what is stated on the front cover of the brochures: It takes time and patience to ride the current bus system!!! It maybe that some routes intersect and therefore, it is not necessary to return to the terminal to complete one's trip. Without a map or brochure that displays all of the 5 routes it is quite difficult to find out.

The amount of time needed to reach a destination is not the real problem; the problem is the return. As a practical example: if I wanted to go to the University Mall from my house in Glendale Gardens, the closest stop is on 15 street (about -7-10 minutes walking) ; the bus stops at 10 minutes past the hour and reaches the mall at 13 minutes past the hour (total time 3 minutes, plus walking!!)

Return from the University Mall: the trolley departs at 33 past the hour, returns at Mund Terminal leaving again at the beginning of the hour stopping on 15 street at 13 minutes past the hour. Return Total time : **40 minutes + walking back home= 50 minutes!!!** (no comment!)

3. BUS TERMINAL

We were not pleased with the general appearance of the Mund terminal. The shelters had no bus route posted on them. There was no one, besides the drivers or riders, to ask questions or clarifications.

No restroom facilities/water fountain were on the premises, only a portable toilet.

Good News: A new Terminal is in the process of being completed in a new location downtown. The official opening is September 15.

What we found out.

After riding all the 5 trolley routes, we went to the Tuscaloosa Transit Authority Offices located on 2450 Hargrove and talked to Mrs. Susan Doyle – (accountant). Mrs. Doyle has been working with this office for about 4 years; she was very knowledgeable and quite happy to talk to us and to answer to our questions. She also seems to be quite understanding of the problems of the current transit system and eager to make it more user friendly.

This is what she told us:

- 1. A way to make the routes faster would be to create a bus lane (Extra funds are necessary).**
- 2. The new bus terminal will house a ticket office, the Tuscaloosa Transit Authority Offices, and an indoor waiting area with restrooms.**
- 3. The Tuscaloosa Transit Office is in the process of hiring a consultant to study the current Tuscaloosa Transit system and to provide the city with suggestions for its improvement.**
- 4. Regarding the lack of shelter at bus stops, Mrs. Doyle said that just recently one bench was removed from its location, other stops were vandalized.**
- 5. Currently, is not possible to acquire a weekly pass or month pass (or a day pass).**
- 6. For additional routes and the expansion/improvement of the current routes we will have to wait to see what the consultant's study will show.**

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