

More Buses, More Often

We know that more frequent service is in high demand among our current customers and prospective future riders, but how do we make that happen? The simple answer is to put more buses on each route. The more often buses come, the more often people ride. It means less time waiting for a bus and less time worrying that a bus won't arrive. When we get more routes running frequently throughout the day, we call that a frequent transit network.

So how does a frequent transit network benefit you as a customer?

- Frequent routes run every 15 minutes or better on weekdays. That means, you don't need to check a schedule; you can just show up and go.
- Currently, many transfers rely on timed connections that can only be made at certain times and at certain places, like WeGo Central. But when more routes become frequent, it becomes easier to transfer between them because you know you'll never have to wait long for the next bus.
- Frequent routes are also designed to be faster, with balanced stop spacing and more direct routing. When stops are balanced, we can increase the speed of the bus because there is less time spent pulling over and more time moving. Also, eliminating time-consuming turns off the main road allows routes to operate along a direct path, which increases service speed.

This approach greatly expands the number of places someone can get to using transit any time of day.

Seems simple, right? But making that service a reality here in Nashville isn't quite so easy. There are several possible approaches to achieving more frequency in our service, but not all of them will work for everyone.

The easy, relatively cost-neutral approach is to take buses from routes with fewer riders and put them on routes with more riders. In fall 2019, we did this when we enacted service eliminations, reductions, and changes to help offset the \$8.9 million budget deficit we faced. We took this approach where it made sense to help improve service and balance out what we knew might make things more challenging for customers. It created more frequency on our highest ridership routes and resulted in an overall increase in ridership in the first three months on those routes, which carry 70 percent of our total ridership. See table.

	2018	2019	Change
Charlotte	108413	106206	-2.0%
Murfreesboro	170007	189563	11.5%
Gallatin	189252	197980	4.6%
West End	115081	120972	5.1%
Nolensville	127529	139574	9.4%
Bordeaux	92385	94119	1.9%
Dickerson	93687	94503	0.9%
Hillsboro	73007	82091	12.4%
Total	969360	1025006	5.7%
% of Total Ridership	60.9%	69.2%	

Since we've already made those changes where we could, it's more difficult to do that without creating a significant negative impact. So, what's left?

Well, making this kind of service a reality all boils down to more funding. More funding allows us to buy more buses to operate service more frequently and pay for the costs of maintaining that bus and all the technology onboard. At this point, we cannot create a frequent transit network without

asking for more give and take on the part of customers, whether it is money or convenience, unless a significant investment is made in transit by city and state partners.

With an additional \$4.1 million in annual operating funding, we can improve and expand our frequent transit network. That means 44,000 more residents and 45,000 more jobs will have access to frequent service.

Here's what that could look like:

For the investment mentioned above, we could improve rush hour frequency on our two busiest frequent corridors – Gallatin and Murfreesboro – and expand the frequent transit network to include routes 23 Dickerson Road, 7 Hillsboro, and part of 4 Shelby.

For another \$3.6 million, we could also improve frequency on routes 6 Lebanon Pike, 8 8th Avenue South, 9 MetroCenter, 14 Whites Creek, 18 Airport, 34 Opry Mills, 38 Antioch, 42 St. Cecilia/Cumberland, and 76 Madison. These routes represent 14 percent of our existing customers, but this investment would create critical connection points across the city to feed into the high-frequency routes.

Information on the rest of the Better Bus Plan is available on our website and you can [click here](#) to learn more about the Mayor's Transportation Plan.