

# CBJ Capital Transit Employees

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## Letter of response to proposed new Transit structure

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**August 14, 2014**

On July 30 and 31, a presentation was made to all Capital Transit Employees regarding the proposed new Transit routing structure. From these meetings, it was a group consensus that we compile a list of our concerns with both the process and the proposed new structure being presented to the Assembly.

Transit Employees understand and appreciate all the time and effort put forward over the last year and a half by the Project Management Team and Consultants in developing the 2013 Transit Development Plan (TDP) which was adopted by the CBJ Assembly on April 7, 2014. While the adopted TDP was not a perfect solution to the desperate need to revitalize the Capital Transit (CT) system, it contained many key elements and changes that address the main concerns of the CBJ, the Public, and CT Employees.

However, that TDP was not implemented, and we are in a new (seemingly rushed) phase to develop yet another proposed Transit routing structure that may be implemented as early as October 2014. While the Public and CT Employees had a limited opportunity to participate in the 2013 TDP process, the current phase of planning has not been as inclusive.

As a result of our initial review of the proposed new Transit routing structure; and because of the accelerated process and timing, CT Employees felt compelled to formulate this letter of our concerns. What follows are: a list of the perceived positive and negative impacts of the proposed routing structure, a more detailed written analysis of these concerns, and a signature page from CT Employees.

With collectively over 100 years of service to Capital Transit and the CBJ, Transit Employees are ready and willing to work towards a restructured system that addresses concerns of public and employee safety, quality and comprehensive service, simplicity and efficiency of structure.

Therefore, we ultimately propose that the CBJ discontinue the current process and expense of developing a highly flawed Transit routing structure. Instead, working in collaboration with CT Employees and the Public, we are confident that we could produce a plan that incorporates the Riverside Drive corridor, addresses needs for extended hours and weekend express service, retains efficient transfers, and alleviates the unreasonable time constraint on most routes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## Transit Staff

### Positive

- No Franklin service
- No St. Ann's service
- Weekend Express  
-airport access, reduced crowding on Valley bus
- Riverside  
-if limited service
- Express to DTC
- Expanded service  
-job opportunities, public service

### Negative

- Overcrowding on Valley bus when Express transfers are missed or wait is too long
- Merging to Atlin stop
- Still driving into Lemon Creek
- 1 a.m. shift ending
- Weekend Express redundant if services closed (UAS, DMV, Job Service)

### Negative

- Schedule and routes confusing
- Timetables confusing
- No alleviation of current time constraint
- Longer Operator shifts
- Short or inadequate turnaround/recovery times
- Monitoring of indirect transfers is difficult
- Lost revenue from transfer fraud
- Increased maintenance costs and staff time
- Interlined Douglas/Express  
-high potential for late buses, mixed driving
- Riverside Service  
-left turn to Mint Way, speed bumps, school zones, residential, snow berms, Steven Richards traffic congestion

## Public

### Positive

- Weekend Express
- Express to DTC
- Riverside Service
- Longer service hours

### Negative

- No midday ½ hr. Express
- No Franklin service
- No St. Ann's service
- Reduced Back Loop Service
- No direct transfers  
-very long wait times in the weather
- Confusing schedules, routes, and timetables
- Riverside Service  
-school zones, early, late, ½ hr. operations, residential impact

- **Schedules, routes, and timetables are confusing**

Reading the schedule is confusing. It is meant to be read linearly, like reading lines in a book. But unlike reading lines in a book when one reads to the end of the paragraph one would go to the next line. However, this is not the case when reading the current schedule, especially with the interlined buses.

There is a time where a person needs to wait 36 minutes before continuing onto the Auke Bay Express from Douglas on Monday through Friday. When the bus arrives at 9:09 am, the passenger needs to wait 36 minutes to continue to Auke Bay. Or, they can wait 11 minutes at the DTC for a Valley bus.

This new bus schedule is very complicated to navigate. A well designed schedule requires simplicity; problems will result as people will never retain the complicated schedule, causing further delays with uncertainty on loading and unloading. After five years of transfers at the Nugget Mall it is still a confusing business for a large number of our local passengers.

We understand the difficulty of making all the pieces of the schedule puzzle fit and these are only a few quick observations in the short time we've had access to the proposed schedule.

- **No alleviation of the current time constraint to accomplish routes**

The overall feeling from the group was frankly one of disappointment and disbelief that the schedule was not an improvement, as they had expected after years of studies. For many years now, Operators in particular have looked forward to the day when the bus routes and schedules would be transformed into a simpler and more manageable operation. We have strived to maintain a timetable which has created tremendous pressure on the Operators. Not only has their physical and mental health suffered trying to provide reliable service all year round due to inclement weather, road construction, and increased ridership, but existing schedules are nearly impossible to maintain. Many of the routes, since the original schedules were created, have increased traffic lights and congestion as well as increased ridership. What results is more time needed to navigate to each bus stop and more time to load and unload passengers. This is the reason for our high rate of late busses and missed transfers.

It was the CT Employees' hope that the new proposal would have addressed these concerns and taken into consideration the shortfalls when the new timetable was created. The present schedule has such tight time restraints that it is extremely, if not impossible, some days to maintain. It would have been valuable to have included time in the schedules to allow for Operator's personal care breaks as well as perhaps even a few extra minutes at heavy traffic stops to allow Operators to get back on schedule. It is very common that

Operators are not having any break out of their seat for three or four hours as they struggle to make up lost minutes to get back on schedule. Adding as little as a 3-5 minute cushion in all routes would drastically improve System safety, reliability, and efficiency.

- **Longer Operator shifts**
- **1 a.m. shift endings**

At this time, the potential shifts are an unknown factor.

- **Short or inadequate turnaround/recovery times**

A very challenging change has been the elimination of the 8 minute layover between turnaround at UAS. (Currently Scheduled Arr: 25 or 55 after Dep: 3 or 33 after). The New time is Arr: 21 after Dep: 21 after. The New Schedule here allows 36 minutes from the Transit Center to UAS, but only 32 minutes to get back. Most Operators of the current UAS Express [Running Time: 1hour 3 minutes] would like to point out they never did get the 8 minutes scheduled layover and are under constant pressure to maintain the schedule. It is a struggle to get back on schedule with the current schedule that supposedly had an 8 minute layover built in, but does not exist in practicality.

What remains unclear, until we see the Operator shift schedules, is the time built in the schedule for Operator relief. Currently, Operators of the Valley and Douglas routes arrive at the DTC at :22 or :52 and depart at :38 and :08 (prepping buses at :35 and :05). This is a scheduled 13 minute relief period, but in actuality can be as little as 3-5 minutes after a late run or adverse weather. The New schedules allow for a 7 minute turnaround time at the DTC. This is of great concern for adequate Operator safety and health.

- **Monitoring of indirect transfers will be difficult**
- **Lost revenue from transfer fraud**

Since there are long waits for transfers at the DTC or Nugget Mall, anyone can walk on the bus and say they are a “transfer” when they just arrived to the Center and had not been on a bus. Already, under the current system of direct transfers, unless the buses arrive at the exact same time and can visually track passenger transfers, there is no feasible way to monitor the situation effectively.

- **Increased maintenance costs and staff time**

Longer hours will be needed for maintenance staff and increased maintenance costs due to many more hours of operation for the buses.

The financial implications to the city budget are an unknown. It seems probable that an increase in funding for Capital Transit will be required, as personnel and equipment run longer hours. The expense

of all the shift differential in starting buses before 6:00 am and the cost of paying Operators time and a half for working overtime.

- **Interlined Douglas/Express**

This interlining proposal creates a route with mixed driving styles: i.e. 55 MPH Egan Drive down to 30 MPH Douglas Highway. Currently, Operators appreciate the opportunity to bid for a shift of a certain driving style or service.

If a mechanical, passenger trouble or other delay occurs on the interlined bus then it affects not only the Express run but also the next Douglas run. The whole idea of interlining buses is to use buses that are heading in the same direction and use the same terminus.

Also, until we see how the Operator shifts will be arranged, we are concerned that this interlined route will create more long (10 hour+) shifts. This may affect both Operators who need full-time work and those who only desire part-time work.

This change in schedule was said to incorporate the Express with Douglas run to accommodate a break for the Express Operator. Relief time for this route at the Transit Center allow 7 minutes at beginning and at the end. The current UAS Express has 8 minutes allocated in the schedule but due to a tight schedule, Operators never get an 8 minute layover, if any at the UAS stop. It is very likely we will not see this 7 minutes relief time. The Operators do need to use the break room facilities or to stretch their legs; there is also the consideration for loading/unloading the bus which could take more than 2 minutes either end. Another concern for relief at the UAS stop is when the University is closed and we cannot access the restroom.

- **Riverside Service**

We can certainly understand the desire to add service to Riverside Drive. However, this one item is the cause of a whole system change that has the potential to degrade the overall high quality service Capital Transit provides.

One goal of public transit is to remain on major road systems so as not to impact neighborhoods unless there is low income housing and no other alternative access. This doesn't seem to be the case on Riverside Drive. To provide transportation access for the swimming pool, library, and high school is understood. However, is it necessary to impact entire neighborhoods from 6:00 am to 1:00 a.m., especially when these facilities are not operating consistent hours throughout the year nor late at night? Meanwhile, the nearest current stops at the Mendenhall Mall or Steven Richards Avenue provide the industry goal of being within ¼ mile of key infrastructure and ridership.

Some of the concerns with Riverside Drive Service:

1. No dedicated turning lane on the Back Loop to Mint Way which is an apex of a blind corner where vehicles have been known to travel at 50 mph in the ice and snowy road conditions.
2. Having to make a left turn off the Back Loop onto Mint Way is a very awkward turning maneuver, with a short straight downhill and sharp right turn.
3. Having to traverse four speed bumps at 15mph.
4. Having to make a 90 degree corner at a slow speed at Mendenhall River School Entrance.
5. Riverside Drive having to drive through three speed zones: 15, 25, 35 mph.
6. Riverside Drive stopping and starting at 2 school zones five times a day.
7. A challenging four way stop sign at Steven Richards which still creates heavy traffic issues during commute times.
8. Intense traffic flow in rush hour/s on Riverside Drive,
9. Unaware of passenger demand on Riverside Drive north of Steven Richards, which affects the start and stop times for the schedule. To drive this portion of road with no passenger activity is not a fair representation of the times necessary on the schedule.
10. The snow berm down the middle of Riverside drive in the winter is also a major traffic hazard, especially if people park along the road.
11. Unknown impact of interaction with large sporting events at Melvin Park where cars park on the shoulder and sidewalk.
12. Pedestrian and school children safety as there is NO sidewalk on the side of the road buses are to travel.

- **Overcrowding on buses when transfers are missed or wait is too long.**
- **No Midday ½ hour Express Service**

From 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. the Express route is proposed to be reduced to hourly service. This will cause both the Valley and the Town buses to be overcrowded because most people will not want to stand at Nugget Mall for to 25 minutes waiting for a transfer when they can get where they are going by staying on the slower local bus.

- **Merging to the Atlin stop (St. Paul's)**

This is very difficult during peak traffic times for the northbound Valley bus.

- **Still driving into Lemon Creek**

For many years, Capital Transit staff have been recommending that bus service through the Lemon Creek neighborhood be either limited to Central/Lund or out on Glacier Highway due to many safety and timing concerns. During the recent road reconstruction when we routed in that fashion, we were able to consistently save 2-3 minutes on travel time, thus greatly increasing reliability in transfer times and reducing Operator stress.

Pulling service out of Lemon Creek has also been incorporated and recommended in the last two Transit Development Plans.

From the Lemon Creek turnaround, the current schedule allows 13 minutes to the Nugget Mall. The current proposal cuts the time to the Nugget Mall to 11 minutes. Still it is difficult to get out of Davis Avenue at times to make left turns, since it is an uncontrolled intersection.

- **Reduced Back Loop Service**

For many years we have seen consistent passenger boarding on the Back Loop Route. (Montana Creek, Wren Drive, Goat Hill (Johnson Youth Center) and Windfall bus stops.) We realize that this is not a high ridership area compared to other routes. The new structure only has morning and evening commutes to Back Loop with a stretch from 7a.m. to 4p.m. with no service, and no service after 4:30p.m. Even bus service once an hour or two would be highly beneficial to the public.

- **No direct transfers**

As previously noted, there is the potential of very long transfer wait times. This is especially inconvenient for passengers in inclement weather. As difficult as maintaining direct transfers are, they are a unique asset to our Transit system.

- **Weekend Express redundant if services are closed (UAS, DMV, Job Service)**

We question the rationale for this service without additional weekend service to the Back Loop stops.