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MATS' PHASE VII SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

*SYSTEMWIDE SERVICE HOUR DECREASE, ROUTE RECONFIGURATION
& TRANSFER OF TROLLEY/SHUTTLE SERVICES*

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

November 10, 2010 – January 26, 2011 (FY 2011)

*Prepared February 2, 2011
By MATS' Management Team*

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2010, Montgomery Area Transit System (MATS) announced its plans for service enhancements to the existing fixed route system to cure scheduling issues in its overall system. The routes affected by the proposed changes include: 2-Eastdale Mall; 5-Montgomery Mall; 7-Maxwell AFB; 8-Gunter AFB; 12-Smiley Court/Gibbs Village; 15-Allendale; and 16-Twin Oaks [Appendices A1 to A7: Current maps of Routes 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, 15, and 16]. Additional service changes involve transfer of the downtown trolley circulators and state shuttle services back to the control of the City of Montgomery, effective January 2011 [Appendices B1 to B2: Current maps of downtown circulators; Appendix C: Street Narrative for Downtown State Shuttle].

All of the aforementioned changes fall under the transit system's *Phase VII Service Enhancements Program for Fiscal Year 2011* (hereinafter referred to as *Phase VII*), and will be funded through the existing fiscal year (FY) 2011 transit operating budget. As such, Phase VII not only reflects MATS' effort to maintain operations without the necessity of a substantial fare increase, but to adjust the system in conformance with Montgomery's ever-changing residential and commercial shifts in locale. The summary below further describes MATS' public involvement in the formulation of the Phase VII service enhancements; the feedback garnered from November 16, 2010 public hearing; and the modified plan of action for Phase VII.

I. MATS' ONGOING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A. Strategic collaborations and ongoing public feedback.

Over the past five years, MATS has engaged in a myriad of strategic collaborations with local and national human service and community action organizations to (1) increase citizen awareness about transit operations (2) provide transit travel training to local agency personnel and their transit-dependent and (3) solicit and receive continuous feedback on the needs of the transit riding public. Recent improvements made to the system not only serve the needs of individual riders, but also serve the agency level needs of local social service agencies, large scale employers, and educational institutions that purchase bulk passes from MATS to supplement their service offering [Appendix D: 2010-2011 purchasers and/or receivers of bulk bus passes]. MATS' response to the administrative needs of bulk pass purchasers in FY 2010 included the purchase and installation of new electronic fare boxes and card swipe bus passes; purchase and installation of security cameras on all revenue vehicles and transfer center locations; and the initiation of exterior bus and bench advertisement to accelerate the placement of much needed benches and shelters throughout the city.

B. Factors outside of MATS direct control.

MATS must also consider factors outside of the transit system's direct control—specifically (1) large scale development relocations or closures (2) roadway detours caused by new commercial construction (3) street reconfigurations and inaccessible (narrow) roadways (4) and mass movements of residents and businesses from areas that were formerly densely populated. However, despite these constant

conditions, MATS' strives to provide on-time, safe, and reliable service, and willingly revamps the system as roadway accessibility, vehicle resources, and/or funding permits.

II. RATIONALE FOR PHASE VII AND PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS

A. Rationale for Phase VII modifications.

The modifications proposed by *Phase VII* are predicted to address system-wide scheduling that can be traced back to roadway conditions on Routes 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, and 16. The cited problems generally start during the early peak traffic hours and progressively worsen with each inbound/outbound cycle. Since the affected transit buses have fixed connection times with the remaining eight transit buses, the whole system may be negatively impacted at one point or another throughout the course of each day. Additionally, Routes 2, 7, 8, 15, and 16 have shown a consistent decline in ridership on substantial segments of each line, between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm. This issue has not improved after long-standing attempts to promote ridership to the retail or other resources located on these lines.

B. Solicitation for public comments on proposed modifications.

The general public was invited to voice their concerns with officials from the City of Montgomery's Transportation Planning Office and MATS' management team during two public hearings held on November 17, 2010. Prior to the hearing MATS issued a brief summary of the changes to occur under *Phase VII* in the legal section of the *Montgomery Advertiser* newspaper and through informational flyers posted on the transit vehicles. Targeted mailings were sent to

various social and community service organizations and an official copy of the public notice was posted on MATS' company website at www.montgomerytransit.com [Appendix E1 to E3: Copy of the Public Notice posted in the November 10, 2010 edition of the *Montgomery Advertiser* newspaper; meeting agenda, and comment form]. Both segments of the public hearing were held at MATS' Intermodal Center, which serves as a central location for all endpoints throughout the transit system. The main conference room and auditorium are located on the first floor, and both are wheelchair accessible. There was free parking in the adjacent lot, but transit riders also had immediately access the main entrance of the building.

III. SPECIFIC MODIFICATIONS PROPOSED IN PHASE VII AND PUBLIC INPUT

The changes proposed in Phase VII serve as a timely opportunity to improve the efficiency of the City's public transit system. The transit management team determined identified three viable options based on the agency's current resources: (1) increase service from 60 minutes to 90 minutes roundtrip on selected routes (2) eliminate midday service for those lines with scarce midday ridership and/or (3) reconfigure the identified routes to help achieve on time service throughout the system.

- **Route 2-Eastdale Mall:** Passengers unable to make their transfer connections at the Downtown Intermodal Center. These issues stem from heavy traffic patterns on Atlanta Highway and ongoing roadway and building construction on Madison Avenue.

Proposed Modification: Operate alternating trips to Burbank/Wares Ferry area and Veteran's Hospital on Perry Hill Road, whereby the :35 after bus would service Burbank/Wares Ferry area (not VA Hospital) and the :05 bus would serve the VA Hospital (not Burbank/Wares Ferry area). This would allow more time for each bus to get to and from its endpoint at Wal-Mart on Atlanta Highway, while increasing trips to VA Hospital (going from 5 trips to 8 trips per day).

Summary of Public Comments: There were some misunderstandings by the public, in that it was assumed that transit service to the VA Hospital was being cut. The fact that service to the facility was going to increase was further clarified by transit management, and there virtually no concerns were raised concerning the decrease in service to the Burbank/Wares Ferry area. However, a suggestion was made by the public that transit management survey the veterans and employees of the VA Hospital once the adjustments to the transit schedule were made to confirm that the needs of riders to the hospital were adequately served.

Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action: *Modification of services to Burbank/Wares Ferry areas and VA Hospital will be made as described above.*

- **Route 5-Montgomery Mall:** Service issues concern the enclosure of ASU Campus and the periodic closure of gates on University Boulevard; parked cars on Hutchinson Street complicate transit driver's ability to

travel on these narrow street, especially when oncoming traffic is present; dense traffic at intersections of Carter Hill Road and Narrow Lane, Carter Hill and McGehee Roads; and buses delayed throughout the day by extended traffic signal wait times at Montgomery Mall main entrance and left turn lane leading into Executive Park at Eastern Boulevard.

Proposed Modification: Redirect bus straight down Hall Street from Glen Palmer to Carter Hill Road; extend the roundtrip service time from 60 minutes to 90 minutes throughout the day.

Summary of Public Comments: Public opposed to deletion of Hutchinson Street and University Boulevard from the current route, and there were concerns that elderly persons could potentially have difficulty traveling to Hall Street from Hutchinson Street. Transit officials acknowledge this concern; however, the entryway onto ASU Campus (via University Boulevard) is not a City-right of way and passage through the campus is at the will of university. Thus far, university officials have allowed passage of the transit vehicles through the interior of the campus, but ongoing construction activity makes navigation of a 30' to 35' vehicle through this area extremely difficult. ASU also retains the right to close its exterior gates at will, which coincides with their efforts to create a safer environment for their student population. The removal of the afore-mentioned streets is a necessary step in view of ASU's reconfiguration of

the campus, as well as MATS' overall transportation planning process.

Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action for Route 5:
Modification of service hours and redirection of route will be made as described above.

- **Route 7-Maxwell AFB and Route 8-Gunter AFB: Sharp decline in ridership during off-peak hours.**

Proposed Modification: During off-peak hours (between 10:05 am and 2:35 pm both routes would be served by a single vehicle making a single roundtrip to each area. This would increase the roundtrip service time from 45-minutes to 90-minutes during non-peak hours. Once the revised schedule is published, patrons traveling to these areas can make the necessary adjustments to their personal schedules.

Summary of Public Comments: No major problems were expressed with these changes.

Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action for Routes 7 and 8:
Modification of service hours will be made as described above.

- **Route 12-Smiley Court/Gibbs Village:** Chronic service delays with a high volume of customer complaints regarding missed transfers at the Downtown

Intermodal Center; substantial decrease in pick/up drop off from demolished housing units on Gibbs Drive; sustained damage to transit vehicles from speed humps [Appendix F: Photos of hump damaged vehicles].

Proposed Modification: Redirect transit vehicle down Bruce Street to S. Smiley Street for Smiley Court development; then down Air Base Boulevard for the first part of Gibbs Village; and continue down Terminal Road to Mobile Road exit.

Summary of Public Comments: Residents of Smiley Court concerned that elimination of service through the interior of the neighborhood would present a hardship for elderly and/or disabled transit patrons.

Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action for Route 12:
Transit officials acknowledged these concerns when presented at the public hearing and further met with concerned citizens at a separate meeting held at the Downtown Intermodal Center on December 15, 2010. Discussions among representatives from Smiley Court, Gibbs Village, the Montgomery Housing Authority, and transit officials are ongoing with regard to demolition and reconstruction of the speed humps. However, it was agreed that the immediate need to get the transit buses on a timely schedule would be cured by an increase in the roundtrip cycle from 60-minutes to 90-minutes for each of the two buses on this route.

- **Route 15-Allendale: Ridership decline during non-peak hours.**

Proposed Modification: Eliminate the midday service between the hours of 9:35 am and 1:35 pm.

Summary of Public Comments: Very little opposition received concerning the elimination of midday service on Route 15, and the diminutive ridership level no longer supports running the service throughout between 9:35 am and 1:35 pm.

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| <p><i>Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action for Route 15:</i> <i>Modification of service hours will be made as described above.</i></p> |
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- **Route 16-Twin Oaks:** Chronic delay in service issues due to heavy traffic on Perry Hill Road and Eastern Boulevard; sharp decline in ridership beyond Woodmere area during midday service; and very limited ridership on the roundtrip leg of the route from Carmichael Road to Vaughn Road by way of Eastern Bypass roads.

Proposed Modification: Extend the roundtrip cycle from 60-minutes to 90-minutes and eliminate service between Carmichael Road and Vaughn Road.

Summary of Public Comments: Some concern about the elimination of service by transit patrons and one business owner. However, the purposeful use for adding that particular stretch of roadway to the route

has not been realized since its inception in April 2006. Due to the general inaccessibility of the retail businesses by pedestrians, most transit patrons opt to shop at more accessible locations throughout the transit system.

Outcome and MATS Plan of Action for Route 16:
Extend the roundtrip cycle from 60-minutes to 90-minutes; otherwise, continue existing service points between Carmichael and Vaughn Roads.

- **Downtown Trolley Circulators and State Shuttle Service:** Federal constraints on use of specialized services supported by federal funding; more autonomy needed for the creative and strategic build-up of Montgomery's tourism activities.

Modification: Transfer of trolley and state shuttle services to the City of Montgomery when operationally possible.

Summary of Public Comments: No major comments regarding this change.

Outcome and MATS' Plan of Action: *Both services will be transferred from MATS to the City of Montgomery as described above.*

CONCLUSION

All written comments received during the public comment period (November 10 to November 24, 2010) have been made part of the official recorded hearing process for this event. Other comments were received after the comment closure date, and discussions regarding speed bumps on Route 12-Smiley Court/Gibbs Village will extend beyond the date of this summary document. The remaining service Phase VII service modifications will require adjustments to the published timetables and route maps. Once the adjustments have been made, MATS will notify the public of the exact date these changes will take effect throughout the system. The published schedules will be available at various locations throughout the City of Montgomery, and each one will be loaded in .pdf format on MATS agency website at www.montgomerytransit.com.

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APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A1: ROUTE 2—EASTDALE MALL
- APPENDIX A2: ROUTE 5—MONTGOMERY MALL
- APPENDIX A3: ROUTE 7—MAXWELL AFB
- APPENDIX A4: ROUTE 8—GUNTER AFB
- APPENDIX A5: ROUTE 12—SMILEY CT/GIBBS VILLAGE
- APPENDIX A6: ROUTE 15—ALLENDALE
- APPENDIX A7: ROUTE 16—TWIN OAKS
- APPENDIX B1: LIGHTNING ROUTE
- APPENDIX B2: ENTERTAINMENT EXPRESS
- APPENDIX C: STATE SHUTTLE STREET NARRATIVE
- APPENDIX D: 2010-2011 BULK PASS PURCHASERS
- APPENDIX E: PUBLISHED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
- APPENDIX F: PHOTOS OF HUMP DAMAGE TO TRANSIT VEHICLES