

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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PVTA Advisory Board
c/o Sandra E. Sheehan
PVTA Administrator
2808 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01107

To the members of the PVTA Advisory Board:

On behalf of the Chancellor, I am writing to submit University of Massachusetts Amherst comments on the proposed service reductions. The University has been involved in a mutually beneficial relationship with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) for the past forty years. Since 1976 this partnership has provided a cost-effective, sustainable transportation alternative for students, faculty and staff of the University, members of the Five College Consortium and the surrounding communities, helping reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion throughout the region. Further, public transportation is critical in creating over \$2 billion of economic activity generated by the University by bringing our faculty, staff and students to our campuses, downtowns, and shopping malls.

For the past two years, PVTA bus routes operated by the University carried over three and a half million passengers annually, nearly thirty percent of the twelve million passenger total for the entire PVTA system. This was a significant accomplishment given that the UMass PVTA bus fleet is less than nineteen percent of the total fleet of PVTA buses. The routes operating out of the UMass garage ensure the public safety of our students, greatly reduce the greenhouse gases in the region and mitigate traffic congestion in Amherst and the surrounding communities. Therefore, a robust transit system is absolutely critical to the success of the University and the Five College Consortium.

For these reasons the University must insist that cuts to Routes 34, 35, 39, M40 and 46 be avoided.

- Campus shuttle Routes 34 and 35 service newly built student housing at Olympia Place and provide safe, convenient shuttle service from the outlying parking lots of the University for everyone required to park in those lots. Eliminating evening service on Route 34 creates a safety hazard for students who would then need to wait longer and ride for longer trips on Route 35 for a safe ride home from the parking lots and buildings on campus after dark, or walk as an alternative.
- Route 39 provides essential opportunities for students, faculty and staff from Mount Holyoke College, Hampshire College and Smith College to conveniently travel

- between those institutions to take classes and partake in social activities that would otherwise be difficult to reach. Eliminating this bus route would significantly isolate many students and create hardship to those who have already signed up for classes this fall semester with the expectation that adequate transportation would be available.
- It is crucial to maintain the M40 bus service to and from UMass and Northampton. The express service along the M40 route is absolutely essential for those who live in Northampton and work or go to school at UMass. Many faculty, graduate students and staff choose to live in Northampton specifically because the M40 bus service is an alternative for them. Eliminating this service would require them to use the B43 bus, which at times is already running at overload capacity. Adding ridership to the B43 may result in stranding those who simply will not fit on an already overloaded bus route. It will also extend the travel time for many who appreciate the express nature of the M40.
 - Service on Route 46 to/from UMass and South Deerfield must continue. While the Route 46 bus from South Deerfield to UMass may include areas of the Franklin County Regional Transit Authorities' jurisdiction, this is an essential service for a contingent of dedicated riders who work and study at the University. This bus route also services the Whately Park & Ride lot, allowing students, faculty and staff from the hill towns to the west of the region an opportunity to access the University easily. There is a group of dedicated UMass riders on this route, some with disabilities that rely on this service.
 - All of these routes provide essential connectivity for a large number of students, faculty and staff to the University and the surrounding Five College Consortium and must be maintained in order to ensure our workforce and our students can continue to access the University, housing and the many merchants that surround the University in order to provide economic vitality for the community in the most efficient and sustainable manner.

I understand that the PVTA Advisory Board is actively learning about impacts to community members from the proposed service reductions and that the Advisory Board is very interested in hearing directly from riders. UMass applauds this outreach effort and is hopeful that it provides for effective decision making and the least amount of service disruption.

The University and PVTA have enjoyed a productive partnership over many decades to reduce vehicle traffic and related emissions in our communities and we will continue to work with the PVTA to advocate on behalf of our ridership. Our transportation staff will ensure that all of the PVTA routes operated by the University remain efficient and effective. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew P. Mangels
Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance