

From: [Julie Timm](#)
To: [Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council](#)
Cc: [Rose Pace Carrie](#); [Bieber, Craig K. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: RE: New Bus Stops on Route 77 - Grove Avenue
Date: Thursday, October 22, 2020 11:05:38 AM
Attachments: [Route 77 FDA Public Meeting 10_14.pdf](#)

Dear CM Gray,

Thank you for opening the public meeting held on October 14 to discuss the Route 77 and bus stop placement on Grove Avenue. I stayed on the meeting the entire length to watch the GRTC staff presentation, read and hear the comments from the attendees, and listen to the responses from GRTC Staff to support or clarify if necessary. I have also read all the comments that have been submitted to GRTC regarding the Route 77 public service. Anyone interested in reading all the comments received by GRTC may view them on our website (<http://ridegrtc.com/news-initiatives/news-updates/notice-of-community-meeting-route-77-grove-ave>). Although there are a number of Fan residents who have been very vocal and persistent in their opposition to public transit on Grove Avenue, received comments also include Fan residents and transit riders who have stated that they received our letters and are in favor of this route. It also includes numerous statements from other City of Richmond transit riders who support this route. Also included at the end of the page are comments received during our two prior public meetings on the Route 77 held in March 2020 and in July 2020.

The presentation developed by GRTC for the meeting (attached to this email) addresses the specific questions that came to GRTC prior to the virtual meeting. After the presentation, my team responded to the questions received during the Q&A portion of the meeting – including the comments you noted in your email. GRTC continues to receive comments from the public for and against Route 77 on Grove Avenue, and we will continue to report on the performance of this service.

I have provided more information below to expand on our previous responses to the items listed in your email.

- The significant reduction in number of parking spaces in a neighborhood where parking is at an absolute premium;

City of Richmond staff and GRTC understand that the space within publicly-owned and maintained transportation rights-of-way is at an absolute premium. The shared use of limited public infrastructure for the benefit of all Richmond City residents will continue to be an ongoing source of public concern when tradeoffs must be made. On-street parking is a significant challenge on Grove and throughout the City as it creates significant conflicts for priority shared uses.

As you can read in the comments on our website, residents are concerned that they have less space to park in front of their homes as a result of providing a small amount of access to transit riders. Per City code, parking is already prohibited within 30 feet of any stop sign and also within 20 feet of any crosswalk (marked or unmarked), so the addition of these bus

stops overlaps existing no-parking space at both Lombardy and Meadow. While some residents may have to walk an additional block or more to park and arrive at the front door of their home, transit riders will have a reduction of a mile long walk to a walk of a block or less to connect to service.

Residents are also concerned that double parking of parcel delivery vehicles that provide front door service causes a safety hazard – a situation only created by allowing on street parking on public streets and allowing delivery trucks to block active streets by double parking. This safety issue is not caused by transit, was an issue prior to buses using Grove Ave, and will continue to be a safety issue until the city addresses the issue of on street parking and door-to-door package deliveries on congested streets.

- Eyewitness evidence that the number of riders using Route 77 along Grove Avenue is miniscule;

GRTC will be monitoring ridership closely over the coming months. Starting at our November Board meeting, we will begin quarterly reporting on Key Performance Indicators for all routes. Any transit route that is not performing per its design and intended purpose will be subject to modification.

The re-introduction of this route was not advertised as aggressively as the introduction of the Pulse on Broad or the Route 111 in Chesterfield to John Tyler Community College, both of which immediately reached ridership projections on implementation. Therefore, we do expect start-up ridership to be slow. Even with this expectation of a slow start-up on the Route 77, this change was part of a combination of connected service changes to create a more streamlined connection between key destinations through an area with poor transit coverage. The early ridership results are already showing significant savings to GRTC operational costs and an overall increase in ridership when reviewed in combination with the connected route changes.

Further, as this Route was re-introduced during the COVID pandemic, GRTC expects a delay in the Route reaching full performance goals. GRTC has received written comments from Fan residents who are currently teleworking but plan to use the 77 when they are required to return to their workplaces. Our data shows that the essential needs of transit riders continue to be high throughout Richmond. We are asking riders to only make essential trips on transit to provide as much social distancing as possible on our vehicles.

- The dangers to public safety in a neighborhood with many children and where there is two-way traffic;

GRTC is in full agreement that all vehicular use on publicly owned and maintained roads continues to be a significant safety issue throughout Richmond. City streets are typically and primarily designed for cars, buses, fire and emergency vehicles, and delivery trucks. The public is left with the impression that the safety of pedestrians and children is given secondary consideration in traditional road design. When these roads are further

constrained with significant on-street parking, the dangers to pedestrians, cyclists, and other shared uses becomes even more significant. Private automobile use and distracted driving is a significant cause of crashes on public roads. GRTC bus operators are professional drivers with a very high safety record, but we are also impacted by private car owners unsafely driving on public streets. GRTC supports the City's initiatives to advance Vision Zero tactics to improve the safety of shared use roads, to slow speeding cars, and to reduce distracted driving.

With these considerations, GRTC has reviewed the street design for Grove Ave for compatibility of public transit service. Grove Avenue has many cross streets to maintain safety for pedestrians, children, and transit riders. It also has a posted speed limit of 25mph. These design conditions improve the safety environment for mixed uses including public transit service.

- The utilization of GRTC's largest sized buses when smaller sized buses appear to be adequate;

GRTC changed policies many years ago to use standard sized buses on fixed bus routes and to use vans for paratransit services. A streamlined fleet for vehicles size decreases overall maintenance expenses. However, vehicle size has not been shown to have a corresponding change in operational expenses. The cost to operate a bus or a van is primarily driven by staffing costs and not costs associated with vehicle size.

While the difference in the operational costs of the different sized vehicles is minor, I do believe that under normal conditions ADA-accessible vans should be used on local connector routes where peak passenger loads are typically less than ten people. Average vehicle loads over the course of a day vary including periods where buses run empty, but bus size assignments must consider peak passenger load, not average or off peak loads. Upon initial review, staff informs me that GRTC runs very few routes with peak loads at or under 10 people under non-COVID conditions. We will continue to monitor service, ridership, and vehicle size needs.

Another consideration for vehicle size that GRTC must account for is providing service under the current COVID state of emergency. While transit is shown to be safe and have a minor impact on the spread of COVID, it is critical that we consider social distancing whenever we can on our buses. Having adequate space on larger buses to allow for social distancing is a benefit to all Richmonders during this pandemic.

- The apparent availability of an alternative Route 77 using Main and Cary Streets as an east-west corridor.

Alternate corridors were fully considered and evaluated by GRTC staff. Direct (straight-line) routes are more cost-effective to operate. Specifically, GRTC reduced operating costs by \$330,696 annually with this service update and was able to reinvest those funds in other areas of the City including extending Route 50 to Broad and 2nd from Hermitage, to provide access to essential stores such as the grocery. Staff also mapped the additional walking

distance pre-service change at close to a mile for some riders to transfer between buses to reach employment, education, or housing. This service change greatly reduced that distance. Using an alternate route would increase system inefficiencies, increase service costs, and increase inequities in uses of our publicly owned and maintained roads.

I personally agree that government agencies are highly challenged to provide comprehensive public notification and engagement. We are constantly evolving to use new techniques to engage the public in an open dialogue on new initiatives and projects. GRTC is committed to continuing to improve our methods, and we continue to encourage all residents to voice their questions and thoughts on our operations.

In an effort to keep residents informed, GRTC will continue to collect and post comments regarding this route on our website and we will post quarterly metrics after they are presented in our Board meetings.

Respectfully,

Julie E. Timm
Chief Executive Officer
301 East Belt Boulevard
Richmond, VA 23224



From: Gray, Kimberly B. - City Council <Kimberly.Gray@richmondgov.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2020 1:12 PM
To: Julie Timm <julie.timm@ridegrtc.com>
Cc: Bieber, Craig K. - City Council Office <Craig.Bieber@richmondgov.com>
Subject: New Bus Stops on Route 77 - Grove Avenue

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Julie:

I am writing to share with you the feedback I have received and continue to receive from my constituents in the 2nd District about the new GRTC bus stops on Grove Avenue in the Fan. While last night's virtual Town Hall meeting did provide one opportunity for citizens to convey their concerns about the new stops on Route Number 77, many participants clearly expressed profound disappointment with the process used by GRTC to notify them of the new stops as well as frustration that their questions were ignored or not answered satisfactorily. No one believed that their voices were being heard or their opinions respected last night.

Among the concerns raised that remain to be addressed are:

- The significant reduction in number of parking spaces in a neighborhood where parking is at an absolute premium;
- Eyewitness evidence that the number of riders using Route 77 along Grove Avenue is miniscule;
- The dangers to public safety in a neighborhood with many children and where there is two-way traffic;
- The utilization of GRTC's largest sized buses when smaller sized buses appear to be adequate;
- The apparent availability of an alternative Route 77 using Main and Cary Streets as an east-west corridor.

The dearth of public engagement and community notification up until last night's meeting has been distressing. I have yet to find anyone who resides on Grove Avenue who received either a letter or a flyer notifying them of the new stops prior to the posting of signs announcing the additions to Route 77. The lack of prior notification accentuates the need for a more meaningful and robust dialogue moving forward.

When can an update from GRTC addressing citizens' unanswered questions and unresolved concerns be expected?

Sincerely,
Kim