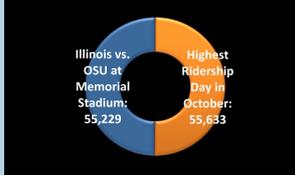


# STOPtalk



Issue 004 | October-November 2011

September Ridership Through the Years



## MTD Ridership on the Rise

Public transportation is very "in" this year. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), "Nearly 5.2 billion trips were taken on public transportation modes during the first six months of 2011, up 1.7 percent – or 85.7 million trips." Nationally, public transportation agencies serving populations between 100,000 and 499,999 have seen ridership increases of 4 percent so far [this year](#).

At MTD, we've been seeing even larger growth. The population of our District is approximately 130,000 and the University of Illinois has over 42,000 undergraduate and graduate students. August 2011 saw a 10.2 percent ridership increase compared to August 2010. September 2011 grew by 7.5 percent. The News-Gazette covered our ridership bump in [this article](#).

Carrying over 50,000 passengers on a weekday is something we usually don't see until the cold fall temperatures set in. But according to MTD Planner, Jay Rank, September 2011 recorded 14 days of over 50,000 rides. "We're not used to seeing numbers this high this early in the year."

Rank is also seeing large numbers on the weekend. "We've been carrying well over 20,000 passengers on Saturdays; we've got a few days in the 24-26,000 range." This time of year, Sundays have historically returned around 10,000 rides or fewer. But the counters have reported several Sundays of ridership in the 14-16,000 range. Learn more about our automatic passenger counters in this post from our blog, [The Inside Lane](#).

Our Operations and Maintenance Departments have concerns about providing service in the winter months. If ridership is already this high, what will it be like when the weather gets worse? There are capacity concerns as well as bus maintenance and servicing concerns. According to another APTA report, "During the 2007 and 2008 gas price spike, 85 percent of transit agencies reported experiencing [capacity constraints](#) on parts of their systems."

Thankfully, help is on the way. MTD's long-range bus fleet plan includes 13 new, 40-foot hybrid diesel-electric buses that are scheduled to arrive at the end of 2011. Although these arrivals are slated to retire buses that are 15 years old, we are considering holding on to several of these older buses as emergency backup. The new buses will provide much needed fleet security and flexibility.

So please continue to show your bus love! Thanks to everyone for riding and incorporating alternative transportation modes into your lifestyle.

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### Service Reductions in November

MTD reduces bus service for extended periods several times during the year. When the University of Illinois is in session, the 42,000 plus students require high frequency service and lots of vehicles, particularly big ones of the 60-foot articulated persuasion.

When the students go on break and the academic year ends, campus transforms. So, we do too. The first service reduction of our 2011-2012 service year is coming up in November when the University takes its [fall break](#). Class is dismissed from Monday, November 21 through Friday the 25th. But MTD will begin phasing in service reductions on Friday, November 18 through Sunday the 19th. There will also be no service, all day, on Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 24.

Even though the calendar dates of University breaks may change, MTD reduces the same services each time. To remember the periods of service reduction, think of the seasons. The University has a fall, winter, spring, and summer break. During these vacations, all Hoppers continue to run except the GREENhopper. The [27/270 Air Bus](#) also stops operating. It is important to note that during the summer sessions, the Air Bus does operate. The [12/120 Teal](#) and [13/130 Silver](#) reduce their frequency to every 20 minutes and begin operating their "Limited" route counterparts. The [22/220 Illini](#) reduces to 30 minute frequency and also operates a "Limited" route. Late night service, which operates past midnight, ceases. This affects the 50 Green, 100 Yellow, 120 Teal, 130 Silver, and 220 Illini. [SafeRides](#) also does not operate.

If you plan on riding MTD during the fall break, please stay connected with us! We will post detailed information about the phasing in and out of service reductions on our [website](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) pages.



### We Need Your Feedback!

MTD is in the business of continuous improvement. Recently, we held three Town Hall Meetings in conjunction with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and the Illinois Student Senate. The meetings were held October 10, 11, and 13. You can read about the feedback we received in [this post](#) on our blog, The Inside Lane.

But, we want more! The University of Illinois students represent a large portion of our ridership and many routes and services that we provide are inspired by their needs. This includes high frequency routes on and near campus, 60-foot articulated buses, late night service, and SafeRides. [WhiteSmith Marketing](#) is hosting five, on-campus focus group sessions to gather feedback from UI students. Interested? Please contact [lisa@whitesmithmarketing.com](mailto:lisa@whitesmithmarketing.com). The focus groups will be held throughout the day on Thursday, November 10 and Monday, November 14.

Can't participate in the focus groups? Not a University of Illinois student? We still want to hear from you! Follow and chat with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), or fill out a

feedback from on our website. All comments are read and shared with the appropriate departments. MTD is in the business of customer service.

[Give feedback on our website.](#)

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