



A significant increase of ridership of the UNC Asheville shuttles leave students frustrated as the transportation schedule proves to be unreliable.

Additional shuttle route added to accommodate ridership

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Students say the UNC Asheville shuttles have become increasingly unreliable with ridership increasing by 241 percent since 2014. The influx of riders leads to new, larger shuttles and an additional campus route, according to university officials.

“It sucks as a nonresident having to park way at the bottom and then being the ones late to class even though we have to account for an hour of travel time plus parking,” said Alexis Brandt, a junior managing student. “It’s ridiculous.”

Currently, UNC Asheville’s shuttles run on two routes: blue and red. Both run through campus either to the Health and Counseling Center and Hawthorne Northside apartments, the red route, or the Verge Apartments, the blue route.

Eric Boyce, assistant vice chancellor for public safety, said a purple shuttle will debut later this month, connecting the P1 and P2 parking lots as well as the Reuter Center to campus.

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that we created when we switched resident students’ parking P1 and P2 over to P21 and P29 on W.T. Weaver, but the new route will go from the parking lot up to the Reuter Center back down to campus and then over to P1,” Boyce said.

The shuttle route used to run every 20 to 30 minutes, but the new route runs every 12 minutes.

Morris Letsinger said he has been driving the shuttle for three years and noticed the new route is quicker and more efficient.

“I think this is the best setup that the university has had,” Letsinger said. “The ones before were done different, but to have a regular 12

minute shuttle is quite amazing, really.”

Many students said even with the improved route, the shuttle runs too slow and infrequently.

“The shuttle doesn’t run fast enough. They’re too far in between. And most of the time they’re full so you have to wait and you’re late to class,” Brandt said. “The times aren’t right. I think they should line up with the time set or efficient with the times at the start of class.”

According to statistics compiled by the UNCA Transportation and Parking services, the amount of students taking the shuttle has increased over the years. From the spring semester of 2014 to fall semester of 2017, the weekly total of shuttle riders increased from 870 to 2,972, respectively.

“We have noticed a pretty significant increase in ridership since I came in 2010,” Boyce said. “We do know we are operating at capacity quite often from around nine in the morning to about one in the afternoon.”

Boyce said new shuttles that carry more passengers — 13 passengers, to be exact — have been ordered by the university and are expected

to arrive in three to four weeks. He said the university hired more shuttle drivers so two shuttles can run if enough seats are not provided by the new shuttles.

“We’re trying to build our shuttles — we’re mindful — but our shuttles are small and our ridership has grown,” Boyce said.

Another concern students express is the untimeliness of the shuttles. According to UNCA’s Transportation and Parking services, the national average for on-time arrival for public transport is 70 percent.

John Ridout, transportation coordinator of public safety at UNCA, said the university aims for a higher percentage.

“We use a tighter standard because our routes are 12 minute intervals so we’re kind of hitting a better mark of one minute early to three minutes late. We’re at 80 to 85 percent on time arrival,” Ridout said. “Usually our issue is with the red route between the bulldog and Governors. If you look on the schedule there’s three minutes there so usually what happens is that’s a kind of dissonant make up time if we’re running a couple minutes late”