

# Fare-Free Busing Is Solution to Campus Parking Woes

Parking sucks. There isn't much else to say about it. While many of us may worry about who to blame for this mess (it's Tee Pruitt and the Carolina Athletic Association, by the way), it seems as though we are doomed for eternity to have a poor situation when it comes to trying to park a car on campus.

We resort to every other mode of transportation imaginable, from good old walking to biking to those little motorized scooter things. Now, the motorized scooter things are cool, but I'd like to make a suggestion to many of you who may now scramble every morning to figure out how to get to campus: Take the bus — for free.

Tomorrow we will vote on a proposal that would begin the process of mak-



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POINT OF VIEW**

ing the Chapel Hill Transit System fare-free. For a small fee increase of \$8.49 each semester, every one of us would be able to get on the bus without paying a fare or buying a bus pass. You might be thinking, "Brad, this is great! How can I get one of those motorized scooter things?"

To help everyone focus on the importance of the proposal, which is not to give everyone a motorized scooter thing, here are some helpful things to remember about the fare free proposal on Tuesday's ballot:

- It's a great deal for students. Instead of paying more than \$200 a year for a bus pass this cuts the annual cost to \$17. Even if you don't ride the bus now, because 70 percent of our students live off campus, chances are very good that you will at some point. If you pay the fee for four years and ride the bus for one year, you still save more than \$100.

- For those of you who plan on living on campus all four years, think of it as 11 round trips to the grocery store or the mall — it's still a good deal.

- It will ease crowding on the U-bus. For all you South Campus residents, voting for this proposal will pave the way for you to just hop on the S, P or the Reverse U buses to get directly to the Student Union or jump on the U or the N buses to go up to Franklin Street. The frequency of buses and the number of options available to you will increase with a fare-free system.

- It will not damage the level of service. The transit system has the excess capacity to handle an increase in riders. The maintenance of the system must continue to be a priority for the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro as well as the University. This proposal is a great signal of that commitment.

- It's convenient. Having access to all bus routes will improve students'

ability to get around town without having to worry about passes or loose change. It will also increase the number of options students have for getting around campus.

- It's good for the environment. We know this one, right?

- It's good for future growth of the campus.

With plans to get even larger, we have to pay attention to the alternatives to simply parking on campus. This is a smart way to enhance a very good transit system and to encourage more use of the buses.

- It is a proposal.

Bear in mind that this is the first step in the process. By voting for fare-free transit, you are authorizing an official offer to be made to the University,

Chapel Hill and Carrboro to make the system fare-free. As students, we would only be paying a part of the cost, and the three other parties involved would have to agree as well. If we can't reach an agreement, there will be no fee increase.

A fare-free transit system is a big step. It is a step that makes sense. Public transit exists for many reasons, but the goal has always been to have a high level of ridership. This will help students and achieve that goal. And hey, with all the money you'll save, you could go buy a motor scooter thingy.

Student Body President Brad Matthews is a senior political science major. Reach him with questions and comments at [bwad@email.unc.edu](mailto:bwad@email.unc.edu).

# Fare-Free Transit Ignores Real Busing Issues and Problems

The real question before you on the ballot tomorrow is: Do you want expanded bus service or free bus service? Those who promote free bus service will lead you to think that both are possible. This is very misleading.

While we at Think Transit are excited that the UNC community is addressing transit problems and searching for long-term solutions, we feel that the answer to our current and foreseeable transit problems is not fare-free busing. Instead, Think Transit, a student-run organization that promotes the use of mass transportation in the local community, encourages the campus to lobby for increased services from Chapel Hill Transit including greater frequency of buses, expanded routes and extended hours.

Fare-free busing will prevent Chapel

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AND  
AMANDA BOENISH  
POINT OF VIEW**

Hill Transit from improving service in any of these areas. Let's look at the economics.

According to the proposed referendum, the \$8.49 per semester student fee increase raises \$500,000 of the \$1 million total that the University will contribute toward the total cost of fare-free busing. Chapel Hill Transit Authority has agreed to pay the remaining 60 percent of the cost for fare-free service. This agreement initially seems like a deal. But as Rachel Willis, UNC adjunct associate profes-

sor economics and Triangle Transit Authority trustee, notes, "the 75 cents (fare) isn't stopping anyone. It is not the price but really the frequency of service and how late service is provided."

As Willis explains, fare-free busing would eliminate a revenue source, thus leading to budget cuts that would result in less service. Instead, the University should encourage ridership by directing this money to expanding and improving service and to providing subsidized bus passes to current riders. Not only would more ridership help create a more convenient bus system for everyone, but it would attract greater federal support. Federal money is distributed based on efficiency; transportation systems with the greatest number of riders will benefit the most. When greater frequency, longer hours

and weekend service are the factors that would increase ridership, fare-free busing is a move in the wrong direction.

Does the 75 cents fare discourage your ridership on the bus? Or is it the inconvenience of a bus system that does not suit your schedule?

Think Transit feels that the true problem facing the UNC community is scheduling that does not meet student needs.

Rachel Green, a senior from Greensboro, explained, "As a student who takes the bus daily, I would rather have buses that come more often and later in the day than ones that were free and didn't come as often or as late in the day."

Others like her complain about the inconvenience of the bus. For example, many lament that the N-bus that serves

the Bolinwood apartment complex runs at 45-minute intervals between 7:15 a.m. and 6:55 p.m. What do other students want? No one really knows, because there has not been a comprehensive poll.

Research seems to be lacking for this proposal. There has yet to be a study completed on fare-free busing for the University done by the UNC administration, student government or an outside source. Think Transit believes before spending \$1 million, we should have analyzed the effects of possible solutions before choosing one.

Moreover, University committees that address transit issues (the Transportation and Parking Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees) have yet to endorse fare-free transit.

Finally, a last question: Why should students support this proposal to the

tune of \$500,000 a year? Good question. Fare-free busing does not have the support of University transportation committees, sufficient research has not been completed, and the plan does not best meet the current transit needs of our community.

Tomorrow, we strongly urge you to vote "no" on the referendum for fare-free busing. But we remind you this vote is not a no for mass transit. Instead, it can be a sign of support for increased frequency of buses, more routes and longer hours as long as we voice this preference.

Brad Rathgeber is a senior from Kensington, Conn., and president of Think Transit. Amanda Boenish is a junior from Jacksonville, Fla., and treasurer of Think Transit. Comments are welcome at [thinktransit@unc.edu](mailto:thinktransit@unc.edu).

# DTH Readers Endorse Their Favorite Student Candidates

## Annie Peirce Would Serve UNC's Asian Community as SBP

TO THE EDITOR:

The Asian American Center for Development endorses Annie Peirce for student body president because of her interest in making the Asian population a more prominent presence on campus and her willingness to generally unify minority groups at UNC.

She is the only candidate who has pledged to add a chairman position in her Cabinet exclusively meant to serve as the link between the Asian community and student government and will have a representative to specifically deal with minority affairs. Annie understands the wealth of diversity within UNC's Asian population, and she genuinely wants to exploit the viewpoints accompanying this diversity by giving Asians a meaningful voice in student government.

Shailen Sehgal  
Co-President  
Asian American Center for  
Development

## Reid Chaney Will Keep Olympic Sport Interest Among Fever Members

TO THE EDITOR:

If you are an athlete, if you know an athlete, or if you enjoy UNC athletics, then this is about you. Carolina Fever is

the Carolina Athletic Association's fan club, and on Tuesday, you have the chance to support Carolina Fever by voting for CAA President.

Fever is the section of people clad in blue shirts and body paint you've seen and heard at soccer matches, field hockey games, swimming and diving meets, football walk-throughs, volleyball games, wrestling matches, women's basketball games, and gymnastic tournaments.

With the band, Fever leads the crowd in spirit, participates in halftime events, goes crazy with body paint and chants original cheers. Without their attendance at the women's basketball game against Duke University, the number of Duke fans would have easily outnumbered Carolina's home fans. Carolina Fever made it a home game.

If you have never been to an olympic sports game, then maybe you know Fever from men's basketball games. Throughout the year, members earn points for men's basketball tickets by attending more than 20 olympic sports games. At the beginning of the year, coaches from various sports called Carolina Fever the backbone of cheering at Olympic sports games — now that is at risk.

CAA candidate Michael Songer wants to eliminate Carolina Fever's reward system, thus downsizing the number of willing fans at sporting events. CAA candidate Reid Chaney knows the importance of organized fans and intends to keep Fever intact. If you think you are voting for shorter basketball lines or online distributions, you are

wrong; the Carolina Ticket Office dictates how tickets are given out.

Please vote for Carolina Fever on Tuesday because without Fever, we will become a "basketball school." Our athletes and friends deserve better than that.

Emma Griffis  
Sophomore  
History and Sociology  
Sarah Parker  
Junior  
Nursing and French

## Sport Clubs Endorse Peirce For Platform That Is 'Far-Reaching'

TO THE EDITOR:

The Sports Clubs Program formally endorsed candidate Annie Peirce for Student Body President at a meeting Feb. 5.

The Sports Club Program is one of the largest groups on campus, consisting of 55 individual clubs with over 2,000 members campuswide.

The decision to endorse Peirce came after a Jan. 25 forum open to all SBP candidates and sports club members. Of the eight candidates, Dustyn Baker, Justin Young, Eric Johnson, Charlie Trakas and Peirce attended.

After listening to each candidate's platform, students asked questions and voiced support for certain candidates.

Based on feedback from the individual sport clubs, the Sport Club Executive Council has chosen to

endorse Peirce. Peirce's platform was the most far-reaching and has the potential to impact all student organizations, including Sport Clubs.

Peirce's platform includes "increasing funding for all University sport clubs." She was the only candidate to specifically address sport club issues, and the council feels that she is the most qualified and best-prepared candidate in the field.

The Sport Clubs Program wholeheartedly supports Peirce and pledges at least 100 votes to her.

Meredith Hermance  
Vice President  
Sport Club Council

## Justin Young Would Bring Different Ideas to Executive Branch, SBP

TO THE EDITOR:

I am proud to endorse and support Justin Young for student body president because he is the only student body president candidate who has pledged to reject the thousands of dollars and the perks of the office and return the money to us through his creative new program the Student Empowerment Endowment. In rejecting the salary of the office, Young also shows that he is a different kind of candidate.

After many years of a Suite C composed of résumé-padding, ambitious pencil-pushers, Justin Young is a real leader who defies old stereotypes, breaks down old barriers, and has the

truly diverse experiences necessary to succeed.

Young has shown the traditional and nontraditional experience that we need in student government. He has successfully managed and expanded successful programs like Freshman Camp and Project UNC while dancing in a baby pool in the Pit to raise money for hurricane relief and starring on STV's comedy show "Off the Cuff."

He has already proven his ability to be an accessible but humble candidate, remaining visible around campus and having a fantastic Web site. Thousands of students have visited it at <http://www.unc.edu/~jyoung> to check out his video spoofs and read about his plans to work for a better future at UNC.

I will be one of the first to vote for Justin Young on Tuesday, and I encourage every other student to do the same — to support the candidate who understands the UNC experience and wants to put his diversity to work for us.

Will McKinney  
Sophomore  
Political Science

## Julius Peppers Would Make Popular and Intimidating President

TO THE EDITOR:

Let's face it: Only one man on this campus has what it takes to be student body president.

It's not the ability to schmooze with

administrators or form a new committee that matters; it's having forearms of steel and killer tattoos.

That's right: On Tuesday, I'm voting for Julius Peppers.

Now, I'm not just saying this because he threatened me.

But if he did, I would say anything he wanted, because Julius Peppers is a big, big man. And he could hurt me. Badly.

All of the "official" candidates tell us the student body president race isn't a popularity contest.

But don't you think it should be? It would be a lot more fun if we had a president who is well-known and respected by all.

And who better than the dunkmaster general himself, Julius Peppers?

Nobody cares about the so-called "issues."

We just want a student body president we can be proud of — and fear. For all of you politicians, you can still handle the insignificant day-to-day stuff like forming committees and holding student forums.

In the meantime, our student body president will be out sacking quarterbacks and shattering backboards. Now isn't that the kind of leadership we need?

Julius Peppers rewarded our loyalty when he decided to come back for another year — shouldn't we thank him on Tuesday? Vote Julius Peppers for student body president!

Brad Morrison  
Senior  
Political Science

# Visit to Iraq Provides More Complete View of Sanctions

Find yourself in the desert, and you'll quickly discover that things aren't always what they appear. You might notice an unlikely sight in the distance — a pool of water rising from out of the sand. But closer inspection reveals that your watering hole was only a mirage.

Many Americans have formed an impression about the sanctions on Iraq that is likewise just an illusion. They have come to believe the nation is a threat to its neighbors and that economic pressure from the United States has been instrumental in deterring this menace. But a closer look reveals these perceptions are only so much hot air emerging from factually arid grounds.

I returned from a six-day trip to Iraq about a week and a half ago. I traveled there with a delegation of about two dozen other Americans, delivering medicines, school supplies, and other aid into the country. We also brought back firsthand observations of the conditions that sanctions created.

Nearly a decade ago, the UN Security Council imposed this economic embargo following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War. The justification — Iraq was brewing a secret program to devel-

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POINT OF VIEW**

op weapons of mass destruction.

When I visited the country, the only apparent destruction was the widespread poverty left in the wake of the blockade.

The people most affected by the economic crisis are those who can least afford it — the poor, the sick, the young.

Supposedly the target of sanctions, the ruling elite suffer little from the embargo. Even as the nation, as a whole, crumbles under a poor economy, cranes and construction scaffolds are going up in wealthier neighborhoods to put the finishing touches on sprawling private homes.

But according to Scott Ritter, former head of the UN weapons inspection team, the widening gap between rich and poor hasn't encouraged resistance from below.

"Practically speaking," he reasoned, "there is virtually no chance that opposition groups could overthrow Saddam."

Ritter has also dropped a few bombs about the reality of the weapons program allegedly alive and well in Iraq.

"Today," he said flatly, "Iraq no longer possesses arms of mass destruction."

Of course, people familiar with Middle Eastern politics will remember seemingly damning reports of weapons inspectors being denied access to some of the sites they wanted to investigate.

In 1998, Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Iraq's minister of foreign affairs, explained the real reasons his government limited access to these locations.

The Western media has not publicized these explanations. Nor have they given much air to the effects of sanctions on the general population of Iraq.

I didn't fully understand the embargo's impact until I actually visited the nation.

During my stay in Iraq, I traveled to Basra, a city in southern Iraq, and one of the areas hit hardest by sanctions.

Fashionable homes in Basra are in disrepair, with chipping paint and eroding masonry. People who once lived comfortable lives are now reduced to selling their personal

belongings to make ends meet.

Schools are littered with garbage — trash collection being only one of the services scrapped when hard times began.

Sewage and drainage systems are also going to rot. Rainwater has begun to pool in the slums, stagnating without proper runoff. Children absently play in these disease-ridden ponds, contracting illnesses that clinics and hospitals can't always treat.

I toured hospitals in both Baghdad and Basra and saw the impact sanctions have had on a health care system that was once the envy of the whole Middle East. Doctors at Basra's Birthing and Maternity Hospital have made do without IV bags or blood for transfusions, and sterilization exists only in surgery because of a dearth of proper equipment. Power outages intermittently black out the hospital.

The poor health of Iraq's infrastructure does not, however, imply that the government has been remiss in its duties. The state has provided a great deal of support to its institutions. It has rebuilt nearly all of the structures destroyed in Gulf War bombings. It supersaturated the economy with cur-

rency that, once inflated, brought down the price of labor and allowed it to rebuild.

Iraq also has one of the best food distribution systems in the world. Khalil Amir, the representative of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in Baghdad, commended this rationing program, known as "the food basket," when I met him in person.

"The rationing system in Iraq is a perfect system," he insisted. "Everyone is getting his ration on time and in a systematic, computerized way." Even so, problems persist, owing partly to the constipated machinations of the UN bureaucracy charged with operating the "Oil for Food" program.

Millions of dollars in contracts are currently on hold at UN headquarters in New York. Orders for ambulances are being withheld in the unlikely event the Iraqi government uses the vacuum tubes standard on the vehicles to drop viruses from warplanes.

The unavailability of these items have also brought related services to a standstill because, as Kahlil noted, the production and delivery of even one item depends on the integrity of the

entire infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the cultural and political isolation resulting from the embargo has made a bad situation worse. This problem is especially severe, according to a Franciscan nun working with Iraqi refugees in Jordan, because it starves the nation of hope. "I wouldn't say it's worse than the people with no medicine," she said, "but its on par, because it is the future of the country."

Iraq's isolation from the rest of the world has also stemmed the flow of information into the nation. Its people are exposed to only the "truth" the regime wants them to know; television stations run a mind-numbing programming schedule that features all Saddam, all the time.

As long as sanctions deprive Iraq of outside contact, Hussein will continue to exert a stranglehold on the country. And its people will continue to suffer, while the world sees a mirage of defiance and danger where only misery exists.

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