Off-Campus Students Adjust to Transit Woes

Fare-free busing joins other transit methods as parking on campus becomes an even bigger commodity.

By Maggie Kao
Assistant City Editor

Despite the scarcity of on-campus parking spaces, students living off campus are making the best of a bad situation.

Cheryl Stout, assistant director of parking services, said that out of the 3,553 parking permits issued, 1,852 are available to student commuters.

"Parking is open to students who live off campus," she said.

Those students who live within a two-mile radius of the Bell Tower are ineligible for on-campus parking.

"Those that live outside of the two-mile radius can apply for permits distributed by lottery."

Because of the hassle of wait lists and lines for parking permits, many students living off campus are finding other ways to get to class on time.

Susanne Worsley, a junior psychology and Spanish major from Durham, said she is taking advantage of the new fare-free transit system.

"Right now, I'm riding the bus, and that's working pretty well," she said. "The fare-free did help because the money adds up going back and forth, so I think that has made me ride more."

Last semester, Worsley biked to school from Old Pittsboro Road, a 20-minute commute.

She added that she did not apply for an on-campus parking space this semester.

"It's a fair amount of money when it's not too difficult to get over to school.

"I'm not sure if it's worth it."

But Jessica White, a junior psychology and exercise and sports science major from Catawba County, said that despite the cost, she thinks her S-11 parking permit is worth it in the long run.

"I think it's a little high considering how far away it is and the distance that I still have to walk to get to class," she said. "But I think it's worth it to be able to know what time I'll be getting to class each day instead of not knowing when the bus will show up."

"I run to school twice a week and end up at class. If I could drive, I would, but I don't have a parking space."

Natalie Phillips
Junior

Natalie Phillips, a junior political science and English major from Waynesville, gets to class on foot.

"I've lived off campus for one year," she said. "And since it's a 10-minute walk from where I live off Hillsborough Street, I walk."

Phillips also said she jogs to her classes on certain days of the week.

"I only have one class on Tuesday and Thursdays, so I run to school twice a week and end up at class," she said. "If I could drive, I would, but I don't have a parking space."

But Phillips added that she would rather drive to school if at all possible.

In efforts to ease transportation woes, Stout said, University officials are working on providing more transportation and parking alternatives for off-campus students.

"We're working on a fairly new program right now that both markets and brings different alternatives for transportation, like carpooling, more park-and-ride lots and busing into one package," she said.

Stout added that the program is headed by Debbie Freed, transportation demand management coordinator, a recently added position.

She also cited the new fare-free transit system, a joint effort between Carrboro, Chapel Hill and UNC, as a contribution to the encouragement of alternative modes of transportation.

Caleb Pineo, a junior religious studies major from Meadville, Pa., said he does not mind doing without wheels.

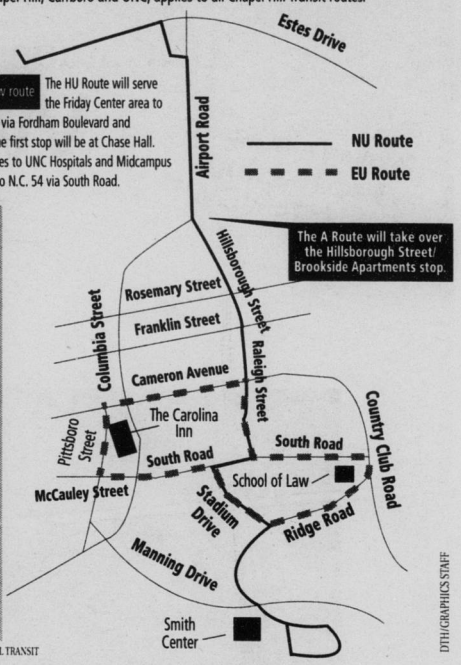
"More often than not, I bike to school," he said. "It takes about 10 or 12 minutes from Glen Lennox, and I don't mind it. The exercise keeps me in shape."

Pineo, who has been living off campus since June, also takes advantage of the fare-free busing.

"I didn't take the bus much last semester, but now that it's free, I take it when it's raining."

A Free Ride

Transportation planners have added new routes to increase service and campus access as a part of the new local fare-free busing service. The fare-free busing, which is a cooperative project financed by Chapel Hill, Carrboro and UNC, applies to all Chapel Hill Transit routes.



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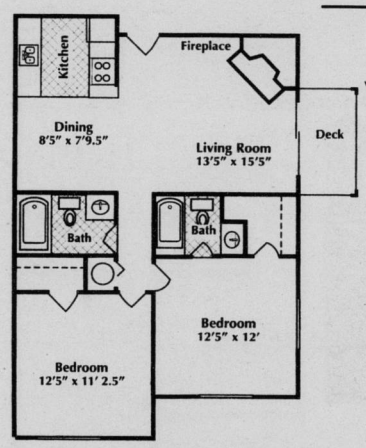

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