

# UNC employees struggle with crowded bus

## Chapel Hill Transit takes new routes

BY KATY DOLL  
SENIOR WRITER

When the bright orange bus pulled up to UNC Hospitals, employees broke from the queue to find a seat.

They barely managed to fit on the bus, the 25-person vehicle's first stop.

This bus is part of "Hill to Hill," the route that connects Chapel Hill and Hillsborough, and is looking to expand to deal with overcrowding concerns.

The route serves many UNC employees who live in the more affordable Hillsborough.

"It's very crowded," said Shiloh Pinnix, an employee at UNC Hospitals in the emergency department. "We're all on top of each other."

She said there are often more than 11 people standing for the whole 10-mile ride, and those lucky enough to have a seat often hold the bags of the standing riders.

If someone seated toward the

back of the bus needs to leave before the final stop, the other riders often have to exit and then re-enter the bus to make room, Pinnix said.

Orange County Public Transportation, which partners with Triangle Transit, has buses that seat about 25 people, said Erik Landfried, transit service planner for Triangle Transit.

Beginning soon, Chapel Hill Transit, which operates most campus buses, will take over the route during peak hours.

"We're addressing overcrowding by adding more capacity," Landfried said. "And changing routing in peak times to make service faster."

No date has been set for the changes to go into effect yet, nor have the proposed changes been finalized.

This will allow more room during the peak hours, from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and again from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Pinnix said the larger buses are a good solution to the overcrowding.

"It would truly accommodate our needs," Pinnix said.

The plan will not add any extra times, however, which is another complaint of many riders.

Pinnix said she is done with work at 3:30 p.m. but the buses come at either 3:12 or 4:30, meaning a long wait.

Triangle Transit is considering making the peak-time trips express routes, which are faster because they don't have as many stops.

"It would be, maybe, a slight increase in price as we go to that express fare," Landfried said. Express routes cost \$2.50 instead of the regular \$2 fare.

Landfried said this increase of rate will help cover the cost of the larger vehicles, but revenue only ever covers a small portion of expenses.

And moving people to use public transit can be cost effective in the long run, Orange County Commissioner Alice Gordon said.

The county hopes that money collected from rider's fares will consistently account for at least 25 percent of the cost of running the buses.

"That's our goal, but we haven't reached it yet," Gordon said, noting that most funding comes from subsidies.

The new Orange County branch of Durham Technical Community College will also be served in the proposed route.

The bus will end at a public Park and Ride lot located across the street from the college with 125 spaces.

"It's even more imperative to address overcrowding if we are going to serve a new location," Landfried said.

The route began a few years ago before Durham Tech was established in Hillsborough, so it does not connect to the college yet.

Ridership in July increased 50 percent from July 2007, Landfried said.

"Ridership has been up to record levels. The time is right to move forward now with trying to increase public transit as a primary mode of transport," Gordon said.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).



Riders on the "Hill to Hill" bus from Chapel Hill to Hillsborough want more routes and larger busses to deal with increasing ridership.

## CAMPAIGN

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They are working with the N.C. Republican Party, which has established and funded Victory offices that promote the entire ticket, said Brent Woodcox, communications director for the state's Republican party.

A regional office located in Tallahassee, Fla., manages the entire Southeast campaign effort, said Jennifer Fudala, a spokeswoman for the Tallahassee office.

Both campaigns have established youth outreach groups on campuses across the state.

UNC Students for Barack Obama was launched in May 2007, said Vivek Chilukuri, UNC Young Democrats co-president and former chairman of the campus group.

Both organizations report to the local Obama campaign office located on West Rosemary Street, which periodically sends campaign staff to work with the campus groups.

The McCain campaign recently launched the Students for McCain-Palin Leadership team in the state to direct campus operations.

Sophomore Jason Sutton is the UNC chairman of the organization,

*"Democrats do better in this state when they really work at it."*

### FERREL GUILLORY,

UNC DIRECTOR OF THE PROGRAM ON PUBLIC LIFE AND JOURNALISM PROFESSOR

which has representatives at 19 N.C. universities and three statewide chairmen. All of them report to the Southeast regional office, which organizes a weekly conference call between a campaign staff member and the student chairmen.

Woodcox said an advantage for McCain in North Carolina is the access to state and national party resources. Republican National Committee fundraising far outpaces that of the Democrats, he said.

The Republican party's emphasis on using volunteers in its campaign offices is an advantage — volunteers show true dedication in their willingness to give up their time without compensation, Woodcox said.

"The Obama campaign relies heavily on paid staff," he said. "There's an advantage to using volunteer effort."

Cox said there are thousands of unpaid volunteers for every paid staff member on the Obama campaign.

Campaign organizers are responsible for volunteer-run Campaign for Change crews, which operate at the precinct level throughout the state.

"The McCain campaign is not a grassroots-oriented campaign. That's a difference in strategy."

Cox said the Obama campaign receives some support from the N.C. Democratic party and many of the Obama campaign offices share space with local Democratic party offices.

The high level of activity in the state for both campaigns is a signal that the heated race is unlikely to abate before Nov. 4.

"The state has voted Republican in every (presidential) election since Jimmy Carter," Guillory said. "What's distinctive this year is that the Obama campaign isn't writing this state off."

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

## BUDGET

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again in 2009.

UNC-CH administrators said emphasis was a factor in deciding to ask the state for more safety money.

"We put it on because it is a system priority," said Provost Bernadette Gray-Little, who made the final decisions about what to include in the request.

More than \$200,000 a year will pay for two new positions related to safety, including an emergency management director to coordinate the campus' emergency response.

"Right now that's a spread-out responsibility," said Carolyn Eifland, associate vice chancellor for campus services.

In addition, the money will pay for a case worker in the Office of the Dean of Students, who will work with students to prevent emotional and academic breakdowns.

Though safety remains a prominent issue, UNC-system President

Ersine Bowles for the first time has asked campus leaders to tailor their budget requests to UNC Tomorrow — a system-wide effort to push the universities to address North Carolina's needs.

Most of UNC-CH's budget priorities flow directly from the University's response to UNC Tomorrow.

At the top of the list is almost \$2 million for money to help improve graduation and retention rates by hiring 10 new faculty to teach small classes, and by bringing in new staff for academic advising and other student support.

"That was a natural for No. 1," Gray-Little said. "That is such a fundamental goal for us."

The second priority asks for \$1.2 million a year to expand programs improving access to higher education, including one that helps students transfer from N.C. Community Colleges. The third priority asks for another \$1.2 million a year to address the state's K-12 teacher shortage by expanding a

*"It will be a more austere budget ... and it will be more than the General Assembly will be able to fund."*

ROB NELSON, FINANCE VICE PRESIDENT

program giving science and math majors a teaching license with their undergraduate diplomas.

Other campuses probably have similar requests, which could all be rolled together in a consolidated list presented to the Board of Governors in November, Nelson said.

From now until then, system officials will work with campus leaders to fine-tune that proposal, he said. "We don't guarantee anything at this point in the process."

Contact the Projects Editors at [dthprojects@gmail.com](mailto:dthprojects@gmail.com).

## FARM TOUR

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plot of land to work with.

Jason and Haruka Oatis, owners of Edible Earthscape, were the first farmers involved in the project when they moved to the United States after spending six years farming in Japan.

"Farming is farming no matter where you go," Jason Oatis said. "We've adjusted and quite like it here."

They spent a full season cultivating rows of carefully planted Japanese herbs and a variety of vegetables and flowers.

Edible Earthscape also produces biofuel.

Caleb Daniels, a production manager for the farm, explained that approximately 700 gallons of this organic alternative to fossil fuels is

*"Farming is farming no matter where you go. We've adjusted and quite like it here."*

### JASON OATIS, EDIBLE EARTHSCAPE

produced through their facility.

"I hope that they get an understanding of what goes into sustainable farming and what it takes to produce these vegetables," he said.

"I hope they leave with a feeling that they really are impressed and they want to support small agriculture."

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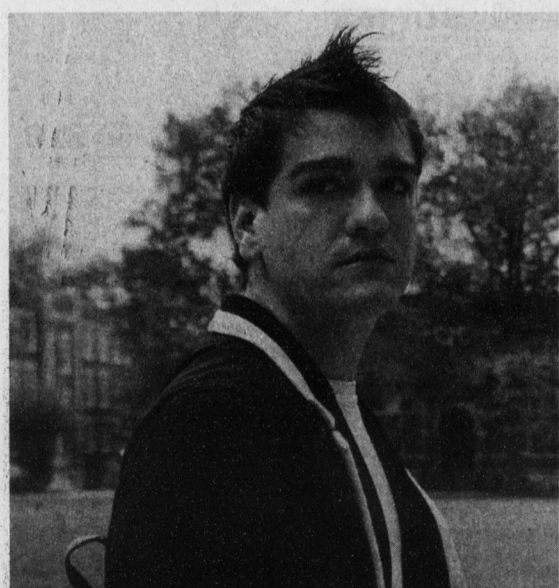
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