

GSG41-R06

A Resolution Calling on the University's Division of Administration and DOTS to Address Shuttle Demand and Overcrowding

Summary: The resolution calls upon the University's Division of Administration to increase financial support for the Department of Transportation Services (DOTS), and calls upon DOTS to address Fall 2021 shuttle demand and overcrowding, issues which threaten passengers' rights to health, safety and accessibility.

WHEREAS, many Fall 2021 classes and campus activities have returned to an in-person format for graduate students and the wider UMD community,

WHEREAS, given this return to in-person responsibilities, members of the UMD community including graduate students need transportation to and from their residences, and the university campus; and

WHEREAS, DOTS reported in 2019, there were 3,287,431 Shuttle-UM riders¹, indicating that when university functions are held in-person, numerous members of the UMD community utilize campus shuttles; and

WHEREAS, a number of undergraduate and graduate students, particularly international students and students moving from out-of-state, either have difficulty obtaining a car or, under the financial constraints of being a student, are unable to afford a car, meaning many students depend solely on public and University transportation to attend in-person functions; and

WHEREAS, during the first week of Fall 2021 classes, students witnessed a shortage of bus availability and overcrowding on the Shuttle-UM buses; and

WHEREAS, this overcrowding has resulted in reports of students either being left behind at their bus stops², or passengers standing shoulder-to-shoulder within the buses, neither of which are optimal for student safety, accessibility and well-being; and

WHEREAS, even as the University requires bus riders to wear masks in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines³, those same guidelines⁴ recommend outside of the home, putting at least six feet of distance between each individual and others, a precaution made impossible if buses are packed with standing room only; and

¹ DOTS Annual Report for 2019 (https://transportation.umd.edu/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report_2019.pdf)

² The Diamondback (<https://dbknews.com/2021/08/31/shuttle-um-umd-commuters-gaithersburg-bus/>)

³ University of Maryland Fall 2021 Health and Safety guidelines (<https://maryland.edu/4Maryland/health-plan>)

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>)

WHEREAS, while DOTS states on its website it is a self-support agency under the Division of Administration, f overcrowding and limited shuttle availability (particularly the potential increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and threats to safety and accessibility) can be especially harmful to students and threaten their health and well-being, and need to be prioritized by the university,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Student Government calls upon the Division of Administration and Finance to investigate how DOTS can be better financially supported within the university budget, in order to consistently maintain the health, well-being, and rights of students; and investigating ways to do so without increasing the student fees of already financially-strained students, perhaps by assessing the current funding model, or increasing parking fees for the highest-paid university employees, or shifting some of the fees that presently go into athletics into the shuttle service; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Student Government calls upon DOTS to address this commuter demand by either increasing the number of Shuttle-UM buses for already-scheduled routes, or by adjusting the schedules and increasing the frequency of departures and arrivals for high-demand routes (or if needed under the current financial constraints, use passenger usage data already collected by bus drivers to temporarily shift route schedules to provide increased capacity at high-demand times); and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Student Government calls upon DOTS to provide the necessary resources for employees of Shuttle-UM to be able to both maintain the rights to accessibility and safety for passengers, as well as ensure COVID-19 transmission risks are minimized on Shuttle-UM buses considering CDC guidelines.

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Date and Time of Submission:

Date of Presentation:

Action(s) Taken: