

News

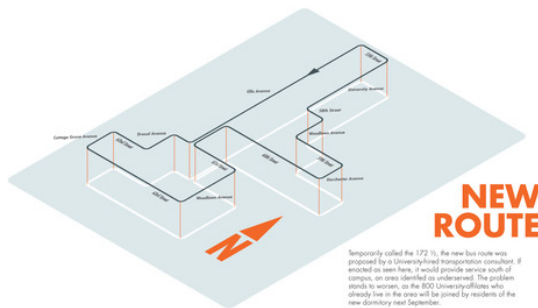
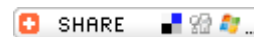
CHICAGO MAROON

Admin to consider new CTA route, shuttle service

New transportation system UchicaGO could use GPS in buses to text arrival times to students

By [Asher Klein](#)

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New route schematic. / [Tom Tian](#)

Proposals for a new bus route and revamped [shuttle](#) coverage were unveiled by a contractor employed by the University at a meeting Wednesday night.

The proposals, which include a new [CTA](#) route along with a modified 1#71 route, reworked shuttle service with expanded coverage south of campus and a quicker-response Safe-Ride, were presented by Mitch Skyer, president of Solstice [Transportation](#) Group, and Brian Shaw, director of transportation at the University.

Entitled UchicaGO, the plan seeks to unify all University-operated buses into one comprehensive system with brochures, maps, its own website, and possibly a text-message alert system to provide students easy access to transportation information.

Wednesday's presentation, held in Harper Memorial Library, was the first chance for students, faculty, and staff to see how the University may support its southward expansion with transportation infrastructure.

Central to those plans is a proposed CTA bus that would travel down South Ellis Avenue from East 55th Street and circle immediately south of campus, going as far west as South Cottage Grove Avenue and as far south as East 63rd Street.

The University also plans to expand its South shuttle route as it expects the number of residents in the area to double with the construction of the new dormitory. However, data presented at the meeting

showed a considerable number of University-affiliates—around 800—already living in the area.

“What’s most interesting to me is the density [of University-affiliated residents south of campus] which is totally underserved right now,” Shaw said.

He also pointed to the northwest portion of Hyde Park—between East 51st and 55th Streets, and bounded by South Cottage Grove and South Ellis Avenues—as being poorly serviced by the bus system.

The reworked shuttle routes will strive to be within three blocks of residences. Skyer also mentioned that they would try to increase shuttle service to every six or 12 minutes during peak times, and every 10 or 15 minutes all other times.

Skyer said that, should the University invest in it, GPS technology could be combined with text messages to provide students with real-time bus locations and wait-times. He described a system in which a student texts his or her location to a number and receives a reply with the wait-time.

“That technology would be very valuable and it also adds a lot to safety,” he said.

Skyer and Shaw also mentioned a change to the #171 route, which would take the bus away from Lake Shore Drive and onto Lake Park Avenue, where there are a number of businesses.

Shaw said the aim of this move is to “book-end the commercial area on 53rd street” with bus service. The #172 currently runs to a shopping center on East 53rd Street and South Woodlawn Avenue.

Another proposal was for SafeRide to operate what are being temporarily called “Troll Patrols.”

“At certain times of night, we’ll take buses and park them where they need to be, like cabs outside of nightclubs,” Shaw said. “We know where you all like to be and where you all like to go at night.” The Troll Patrol would mean quicker SafeRide response times to those places.

Shaw said this system puts the University “in a better position to assist people.” The current system doesn’t deploy vans until dispatchers receive a call.

Skyer stressed that, while the study is concluded and the proposition is “in the final stretch,” the final bus routes may not be identical to those presented.

“No plan survives first contact” with administrations, Skyer said. There will be another town hall

meeting in May when the UchicaGO system is revised.

The plan, which will go into effect in the fall, is the first revision to the University's transportation system in two years.

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