

APPENDIX D

LOS RIOS TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

Report on ADA Access issues at Cosumnes River College

*Making Public Transit Use More Feasible and Appealing
for Cosumnes River College Students with Disabilities*

by

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PURPOSE

Eight years of working with students with disabilities in the Los Rios Community College District have shown me that these students likely ride public transit at a higher rate than the general student population. In addition, riding transit presents a different constellation of problems for students with disabilities than for those without them. For example, those cognitively challenged by various disabilities often have difficulty understanding schedules and remembering where to get information. Those with physical disabilities may be more concerned than others for their physical safety. These ideas pointed up a need for a specialized inquiry into students' perceptions about public transit and how it, and communication about it, could be improved.

At least 400 students at Cosumnes River College (CRC) receive services from the campus Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) office. However, many students with disabilities are not served by this office. Many students do not want to identify themselves as having a disability. They do not realize that their confidential information would be protected if they did so. Others do not want to reveal a disability to anyone, even though they realize that confidentiality laws protect them, because they do not want to think of themselves as having a disability. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many more students with disabilities attend CRC besides those whom the campus Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) office serves. The same situation exists for the other colleges in the Los Rios Community College District.

Among Cosumnes River College students with disabilities, my project seeks to discover what issues and difficulties are preventing some students from using public transit. Typically, transit riders who become able to arrange other transportation often abandon transit riding. Some of the respondents in this project stated that they do not use public transit because they have cars. Having a car was enough to cause them to reject transit use despite the recent extreme rise in gasoline costs. There appears to be a mindset that using public transit does not make sense if one has the option of driving. While designing the project, I anticipated that such a response was possible. The project therefore has also sought to discover what problems riders with disabilities encounter on public transit, as well as levels of rider satisfaction. In addition, the study has sought to find out about students' feelings and beliefs about public transit since some students may have misperceptions contributing to their reluctance to use public transit. Another purpose of the project is to ascertain what changes students with disabilities who use public transit would like to see in the transit system

During the entire span of 2000 through 2007, I have worked for the Los Rios Community College District and used public transit to get to and from work at American River College, Cosumnes River College and Folsom Lake College, as well as the Folsom Lake College satellite campuses of Rancho Cordova Center and El Dorado Center. For part of this time, 2000 through 2004, I was a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento and used public transit to get to the campus for classes and employment. Lindell Price of WALKSacramento suggested that I include in the project information and recommendations gleaned from my eight years of personally using public transit as a university student and a Los Rios Community College District employee. To that end, I have included anecdotal information on my own observation and experience with transit riding to and from American River College, Folsom Lake College and Cosumnes River College. This information appears in each issue section. Most of my transit riding experience has been positive, and I almost always feel safe on public transit. However, for purposes of this paper, which largely examines ways public transit can be improved to increase ridership, I have selected examples of experiences that illustrate the same types of problems for which I am here recommending possible solutions.

SUBJECTS

Subjects were 39 Cosumnes River College (CRC) students with disabilities. Twenty-five of these were from three sections of Adapted Physical Education 300, called simply “Adapted Physical Education; and three sections of Adapted Physical Education 336, “Motor Development for the Physically Challenged. Thirteen were from the CRC campus’s two sections of Human Career Development 89, “Study Skills Lab.” One responding student was registered with DSPTS but was not in either of these courses.

METHOD

On the CRC campus, I distributed the questionnaire in three sections of Adapted Physical Education 300, “Adapted Physical Education” and three sections of Adapted Physical Education 336, “Motor Development for the Physically Challenged.” I treated these two courses as one because their sessions take place in the same room at the same times. I also distributed the questionnaire in two sections of Human Career Development 89. In all of these classes, students capable of writing filled out the questionnaires themselves. For those who could not write, I read the questions to each respondent aloud and wrote down his or her answers on the questionnaire. Some students are in both HCD 89 and adapted physical education. I instructed anyone who had already completed the questionnaire in another class not to complete another copy of it.

Also, in the CRC Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPTS) office, a display was set up consisting of 1) a document stand holding blank copies of the questionnaire; and 2) instructions requesting that respondents give completed questionnaires to the DSPTS clerk. The plan was for the clerk to keep completed questionnaires in an envelope me to pick up. However, only one student filled out a questionnaire in the DSPTS office.

QUESTIONNAIRE WITH RESULTS

Note: In some cases, respondents did not answer every question. Some questions ask each respondent to give all answers that apply. As a result, for some questions, combined responses do not equal 39, the total number of responders.

Do you use public transportation to travel to or from the campus?

39 responses

Yes: 12

No: 27

If not, why not? Please check all that apply.

Takes too long: 14 Too confusing: 4 Passengers behave badly: 4
Drivers are rude: 2 Don't feel safe: 5
Bus stop is too far from my home: 7 Have to transfer too many times: 3
Buses don't run often enough: 6 It doesn't come to my area: 6 including 2 from Galt
and 1 from West Sacramento

Don't know where to get information on schedules, routes, stops, etc.: 5

Discrimination because of disability: 1

Comment:

"Driver would not let me eat and drink on bus when I had a diabetic emergency. He made me get off the bus": 1

Other (Please describe):

Have a car: 2

Still able to drive: 1

I live within walking distance of campus: 1

Most buses have no wheelchair ramp or ramp not working: 1

Nearest bus stop is college: 1

In future I plan to: 1

Must pick up kids by 4:30: 1

Comment:

"I take medication that makes it dangerous for me to drive, but I drive to school anyway because transit doesn't come to where I live": 1

"Buses leave before they are supposed to": 1

"Line #54 drivers ignore people waiting at stops and don't stop for them": 1

If you qualify to use Paratransit but do not use it, why not?

Must call 24 hours in advance: 1 Lack of information: 1

Their bus is late: 1 Takes too long: 1

Live nearby and get rides: 1 Costs too much: 1

Don't know how convenient or comfortable it is: 1

I drive a car: 1

If you take public transit, please continue with the questionnaire. If not, please stop.

What public transportation bus companies do you use? Do you use light rail?

RT bus: 4

RT bus 55: 2

E-tran: 3

E-van: 1

Bus 55: 2

RT bus 81: 1

Yes: 5

No: 2

How much does it cost for you to ride each time?

Nothing after \$5 for pass: 6
\$1: 1

Don't know: 1
A bus card: 1

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with this transportation? Please state how happy or unhappy you are with each bus company (or light rail).

Very happy: 2
Happy: 1
Satisfied: 3
Somewhat Satisfied: 1
Happy about some aspects, unhappy about others: 1
Somewhat dissatisfied: 1

What does public transit do well?

Safe drivers: 1
Gets me to school on time: 1
Gets me to and from home: 1
I can get to most of the places that I regularly shop: 1
(Each response came from a different person.)

Door to door: 1
Gets me to CRC: 1

Where on campus is information available about bus and light rail transportation?

Don't know: 5
DSPS: 1
East steps: 1

How would you go about getting bus, light rail or Paratransit information online? What web address would you use, or if you don't know, how would you get the address?

Don't know: 2
DSPS: 1
Call or go to RT office: 1
School web page: 1
Comment:
"Don't know because I can't use the phone; I am too disabled. My wife would call if necessary": 1

Do you feel safe from harassment and physical attack while using public transportation to travel to and from the campus?

Yes: 6
No: 6
Sometimes (not an option to check—written in): 2

Comments accompanying responses of ‘No’:

“I sit in the front car one or two seats back from the driver.”

“You’re never safe.”

“Not enough light walking to bus stop or car.”

Comment accompanying one response of “sometimes”:

“The later the worse”: 1

If not, does your disability contribute to not feeling safe?

Yes: 3

No: 4

What could the transportation companies do to help? [a fill-in-the-blank question]

“Cleaner buses”: 1

“Make sure disabled people are respected on their system”: 1

“Nothing—It’s the people who take the bus”: 1

“Don’t know”: 1

“N/A”: 1

How often, if ever, are you delayed because the driver has stopped the bus or train due to passengers behaving inappropriately?

(a fill-in-the-blank question)

Never: 2

Once: 2

Not much: 2

Not lately: 1

Many times: 1

One respondent commented, “Many times stuff goes unnoticed.”

Do you ever come late for, or miss, a class or an on-campus appointment because of a different problem with public transportation? If yes, please explain.

Yes: 4

No: 7

Comments accompanying “yes” answers:

“This is why I don’t usually ride transit”: 1

“Bus late”: 1 “Bus broke down”: 1

Comment accompanying answer of “no”:

“I always plan ahead and allow at least one to two hours”: 1

Is it easy or difficult to understand how to use public transportation to get to a certain place at a certain time?

Easy: 6

Difficult: 2

Comment: “Usually easy but connections can be difficult”: 1

How easy or difficult? (No one answered this question directly.)

Comment: "I could read the time": 1

If difficult, what would help you? (No one answered this question.)

Do you use a watch when traveling?

Yes: 9 No: 3

Do drivers and other riders treat you with courtesy?

Yes: 7 No: 5 Usually: 1

Does their treatment of you have anything to do with your disability?

Yes: 0 No: 9

"Maybe" (not one of the options to check in this question—written in): 1

Would increased hours of bus operation, or buses running more often, make available to you classes, campus services or campus events that you now cannot attend? Yes: 6 No: 5

If yes, which buses?

#55: 2 E-tran: 2 (respondents did not say which E-tran buses.)

What other improvements could be made?

"None": 1

"Light rail extension to CRC, but it looks like that may not happen for budget reasons.": 1

If you use a wheelchair:

Do you ever have to wait for the next bus because the bus cannot accommodate any more wheelchairs? (No one answered this question.)

Do drivers always secure your wheelchair?

Yes: 0 No: 1

Other Comments:

"Light rail is okay": 1

"Buses don't run often enough": 1

"Bus 55 stops running too early": 2

(continued)

Other comments (continued)

“I need a ride home from someone twice a week because bus stops running”: 1

“Sometimes crowded on bus”: 1

“Well, I’m happy it’s a block from my apartment, but I’m unhappy about the long struggling walk from the bus to my classes. I wish I could ride a buggy”: 1

“On campus, if they would give me a ride on one of their carriers that they have to my class I would appreciate it”: 1

“Some drivers just let it go. On the bus, many people are loud, play music, use threatening words or inappropriate behavior which is becoming common on many buses”: 1

INTERPRETATION

Among respondents to this questionnaire, the public transit (bus or light rail or both) ridership rate of CRC students with disabilities is far greater than that of the general student population at CRC. Forty-four percent of the questionnaire respondents ride public transit. WALKSacramento’s district-wide study in the spring of 2007, in partnership with the Los Rios District, researched the transportation patterns of the general CRC student population. It found that 11.5% always took buses to school, 9.2% sometimes did, 6.8% always took the light rail to school and 8.0 sometimes did. Since there is no light rail going directly to CRC, anyone traveling there via light rail would also need to take a bus. Therefore, the students taking the light rail are some of the same ones taking the buses.

Rider satisfaction: Nine of the 12 riders answered the question about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with public transit. Of these nine, seven expressed satisfaction with transit. Only one rider said, in response to a generic direct question, that he or she was dissatisfied in general. However, some said, when asked about specific issues, that they were unhappy with certain aspects of transit. Non-riders had a great deal to say about why they rarely or never use public transit. Some wished they could use it. Five riders out of twelve mentioned specific things that public transit does well. These five positive comments each came from a different person.

Issues and recommendations

This section discusses reasons respondents gave for not using public transit, as well as for using it infrequently. It also includes answers riders gave about their difficulties with public transit. These are the same issues; they keep some students away from public transit altogether but do not deter other students. In addition to the suggestions below, a general recommendation for all issues is the obvious one to publicize most improvements heavily as they are completed.

Making transit more convenient and practical

The most frequent complaint about public transit from both riders and non-riders was that there is not enough of it. Twenty-seven respondents said they did not ride transit. They gave 40 answers of nine kinds as to why not that were related to transit being too inconvenient or impractical. All amounted to saying transit either was impossible because it did not serve their areas, or was too time-consuming for various reasons. One person commented that she is not supposed to drive because a medication she is taking causes impaired judgment, making driving dangerous, but she drives anyway because there is no public transit near her home. It appears that the same impairment in judgment that makes it unsafe for to

drive has made her decide to do so. Making transit more feasible would give students in such situations a safer option.

Observation: When I first began working at CRC, my workday began at 8:00 a.m. To be on time, I had to leave my home at 6:00, which meant getting up at 4:30.

Recommendation: The planned light rail extension to CRC should be a great help to people in situations like this one. However, some students, faculty and staff members will not be using the light rail because its location will not be helpful to them in getting to the campus. Their path may cross it only at the campus and never parallel it. For them, improvement in bus connections and frequency, as well as bringing bus service to more areas where members of the campus community live, would be a possible solution. Scott Crosier's study of where CRC students live would be helpful in planning where to place the new routes or extend existing ones.

Slightly more than half of respondents said there are campus events or classes they cannot go to because they cannot get transit services at the right hours or often enough. This question and others showed that students were especially concerned with the early ending of the service day, 6:37 p.m. on weekdays, for RT line #55.

Recommendation: RT could solve this part of the problem by continuing line 55 hours of operation

Observation of a related issue concerning American River College: The connection between the Watt/I-80 light rail train and the RT #1 bus to American River College is poorly coordinated. On weekdays, before 9:07 a.m., and between 2:46 and 9:13 p.m., the #1 bus runs every 15 minutes. During these hours, passengers getting off the train generally miss the bus connection by about one minute or less and must wait 15 to 20 minutes for this bus if it is on time. Often it is delayed. The rest of the time on weekdays, the bus runs every 20 minutes and is still poorly coordinated with the train, causing long waits. Over the past eight years, I have made this transfer approximately 400 times. On at least 90% of these occasions, I have barely missed the bus (often watching it pull away), then waited 15 to 20 minutes or more. To reach the bus stop from the light rail station, one must walk about 100 to 200 feet, then go up two flights of stairs or take an elevator. Taking the elevator virtually guarantees missing the bus. The only way I was able to catch the bus without a long wait was to rush up the stairs, and if I was fast enough and there was a delay in the bus's departure (for example, if two people in wheelchairs needed to board), there was time for me to catch the conveniently timed bus and not have to wait for the next one. People with disabilities which make them unable to use the stairs or move very fast probably miss this bus almost invariably.

Recommendation: RT could solve this problem by adjusting the #1 bus line's schedule to have the buses run at the same intervals as the light rail trains-- every 15 minutes all day on weekdays. (Light rail trains' frequency falls to once every half-hour starting between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., but I am not suggesting similarly reducing the frequency of the #1 buses. Doing so would not be helpful. In fact, it could make travel more inconvenient and less safe for ARC students.) Weekday #1 buses could: a) be scheduled to reach the Watt/I-80 stop five minutes after the train arrives; or b) if scheduled to leave within one or two minutes of the train's arrival, wait for the train as long as it is not more than one or two minutes late. There is a precedent for RT buses waiting for light rail trains. They already wait short intervals for trains at the University/65th Street transit center adjacent to the University/65th Street light rail station.

Alleviating confusion

Much of the population discussed in this report is easily confused. On average, half of the students served by most community colleges' DSPS offices have learning disabilities or some other type of cognitive disability such as developmental delay, autism spectrum disorders or attention deficit disorder. The same is true of the students which Cosumnes River College's DSPS serves. In all, significantly more than half of the students with disabilities at CRC have some kind of cognitive difficulty—over 200 students. We can gather that there more students at CRC with cognitive difficulties than these 200 or more served at DSPS. As stated above, many students with disabilities do not want to identify themselves.

In addition, other disabilities, not cognitive in nature, frequently cause cognitive problems as symptoms. For example, many people with depression of any type can find their concentration and memory impaired. The illnesses themselves and the medications used to treat them can both have this effect. People with physical problems who take prescription pain medications can experience the same difficulties, particularly if their physical problems are serious enough to be classified as disabilities.

Whether their cognitive challenges stem from their medical problems or from the medicines used to treat them, students with psychiatric disabilities and those with physical problems frequently must choose between going to school with medication-induced concentration difficulties and not going to school at all. Sometimes the best medical care can avoid these problems, but many community college students typically cannot afford the best care. Many have little money and must rely on Medi-Cal or other systems in which the less expensive medications are often the drugs of first choice. People already not thinking clearly are not always equipped to deal assertively with these systems to get a level of care which would allow them to function as effectively as possible given their disabilities.

The question on the cost of riding transit was asked only of transit riders. One-third of the students who answered the question did not know that public transportation is free for CRC students after they have paid five to fifteen dollars (depending on unit count) for a student access card.

Recommendation: The college and RT could solve this problem by publicizing the following: Los Rios students can ride free by showing their student access cards. They can get these at their campuses for five to fifteen dollars.

Five out of the only seven people answering the question of where to get transit information on campus did not know. No one knew it is available at the Student Development Office on the first floor of the library building. This is the only place on campus that gives out bus schedules. One-third of students answering on where to get transit information online didn't know. One other person apparently did not understand the question.

One-third do not use a watch when traveling.

Recommendation: Although the sample is small, putting a clock at the east steps/Bruceville Road stop could be helpful. This is a large stop where many different bus lines converge. There is already a clock in the middle of the light rail stop at 8th and K streets in downtown Sacramento that was placed there since the light rail station opened.

While the number of answers is small, with only one-third of those responding saying they understand transit riding, action is needed to assist the other two-thirds. No one answered the question “How easy or difficult?” directly, but one person responded to it with the comment “I could read the time.” The incompleteness or irrelevancy of this answer, among others shown in the data for this project, points up the difficulties some people surveyed have with following directions.

Observation: On a light rail train, a young woman approached me. She said she was a college student with a learning disability and that she was disoriented and having a difficult time finding her way to her destination. I asked her where she wanted to go. When she told me, I was able to let her know at what station stop to get off the train and that she would need to walk south. She could not keep north, south, east and west distinct in her mind but could distinguish left from right. Since it was late afternoon on a sunny day, I advised her to keep the sun on her right side in order to walk south. This experience simply illustrates how much in need of help some students with disabilities are. This student started her trip without knowing how to get to her destination.

Recommendations:

The CRC campus web site could have information prominently displayed regarding buses that serve the campus. It could have links to the RT site so students can click on a link to each bus line and be taken automatically to that line’s schedule on RT’s site. E-tran and Paratransit should also be included.

RT could add an especially disability-friendly section to its web site. The section could have features helpful to those with cognitive and other difficulties. Transit riding instructions could include a reminder about the importance of knowing how to get to the destination before starting out. People with learning disabilities can read more easily when their reading material contains a lot of background space. They also have an easier time if they do not have to keep switching their attention from one set of text to another. Blocks of information are best uninterrupted. For them, a notation would be helpful letting them know that once they have clicked on a particular route number for information, they do not have to click on a particular direction or day but can scroll down to it if they wish. Migraine sufferers would benefit from having this section’s color scheme emit reduced light. A grayed-down dark teal blue background with turquoise type in a Times New Roman or other not-too-thin font would be ideal. White on black, while it emits minimal light, presents too great a contrast. In addition, the page could include a magnifying option so users could enlarge the font to 14-, 16- or 20-point size.

During the first two weeks of each semester, RT could station some employees at CRC’s east steps bus stop to offer bus schedules, answer transit-related questions and tell riders how to get to various places. Others could assist passengers at the Meadowview and Florin light rail stations, which have stops for buses going to CRC along with several stops for buses going elsewhere. They could let riders know which buses will get them to CRC, when these run, and where to stand to catch them. RT provided similar help in downtown Sacramento when it moved some downtown light rail stops.

The college or district could include information on transit riding in mailings of other information typically sent to students shortly before the beginning of each semester. This transit information could include facts about the disability-friendly section of the RT website once this is up and running. If there are no hard-copy mailings at a suitable time, the information could be e-mailed.

Transit information could be included in CRC’s freshman seminars.

Observation: CRC bus stop between east steps and Bruceville Road, Spring, 2007, about 5:15 p.m.: I was trying to find the first bus that would take me to the light rail. The sign on the east steps is so far away from where the buses stop that a person could miss the bus because of that distance while looking at the sign. Buses' head signs typically show their last destination, but not always. Buses going to the light rail do not always have signs saying so. One with a sign saying only "Meadowview Road" drove up. It ends its route at the Meadowview light rail station, but I did not know this at first. I was not ready to assume without asking that "Meadowview Road" also meant "Meadowview light rail." Since buses serving CRC come once or twice an hour and most stop running in the early evening, it is important to understand clearly where they are going when one gets on them. When I asked whether the bus went to the light rail, the driver said no one should need to ask that question because the sign said "Meadowview Road."

Observation: CRC bus stop between east steps and Bruceville Road, January, 2006 through November, 2007: Almost every time I have stood at that stop, I have heard students asking bus drivers questions about where the buses go.

Recommendations:

A possible solution is signs with bus routes and schedules printed on them at the campus bus stops, right where the buses actually stop rather than up on the east steps. Each stop could have a sign for each line that stops there. These would be especially useful for students with cognitive difficulties. Many students with cognitive disabilities (or cognitive difficulties resulting from other disabilities) struggle with organizational skills and are apt to lose paper bus schedules.

In addition, a single sign could be put up at CRC's main bus stop, the one between the east steps and Bruceville Road, with information about all buses going from there to the light rail. This stop is quite large, more like a transit center than a simple bus stop. With a specialized sign, students could clear up for themselves the confusing question of what, at any given time, is the next bus going to the light rail. It is possibly the single most-sought bus destination from CRC. A sample format appears below.

Buses that go from here to the light rail		
Time	Bus	Head sign
5:15 p.m.	RT 54	Florin light rail

Brochures could be printed showing the combined information on which buses leave the east steps/Bruceville stop for the light rail at what times.

It would also be helpful to have transit schedules available at DSPS. The DSPS office is small and has little display space available, so a sign could be put up saying that schedules for buses serving the campus, and for the light rail, are available there. These items could be kept in a desk or file drawer and given to students who request them. If necessary, students could use the computers in the adjacent assistive technology room to find out which schedules they need if they do so quietly. Testing takes place in that room, but DSPS students are allowed to use the computers in it for non-testing purposes. Students with disabilities often are not good at follow-through because of poor memory, confusion, or low energy, as well as multiple difficulties complicating their lives. They are more likely to use transit if they do not have to go elsewhere for information in addition to their DSPS visits.

Helping students feel, and be, safe—dealing with threatening behavior

Regardless of how safe or unsafe it may be to ride transit, the perception that it is unsafe is causing some people to avoid doing so. Of the 27 non-riders answering the questionnaire, five said they do not ride because they do not feel that it is safe. Half of the twelve riders said that they felt safe and half that they did not feel safe.

Observation: CRC bus stop by east steps, 2007, shortly after 5:00 p.m.: This stop is in the cul-de-sac between the east steps and Bruceville Road. A crowd of about eight to ten people surrounded and physically attacked a man. I arrived too late to see what had precipitated the attack. I do not know whether the crowd itself was committing a crime against him or defending someone from him. In either case, something inappropriate on someone's part had taken place. No law enforcement personnel were present, nor did any arrive while I was there.

Observation: CRC bus stop by east steps, Oct., 2007, shortly after 5:00 p.m.: A lone young white woman approached a bus and told the driver, who was sitting in the bus, "A woman over there is threatening to beat me up." A crowd of African Americans advanced on the young woman who had spoken to the bus driver, nearly surrounding her, so that there was only one direction she could go. In this way, they forced her out into the traffic, some of them saying, "Run, bitch, run." No one assisted the pursued woman. Eventually the crowd backed off, although no one had intervened. They allowed the woman to return to the curb. I boarded a bus and suggested that the driver call the police. He did not do so. Then an African-American man forced the woman back out into the traffic and grabbed her. He, too, backed off without anyone having intervened. The woman got back to the curb and began walking toward the east steps. No one followed her. An African-American woman who had been at the bus stop got into a car and yelled to a bus driver and passengers, "She said something about my kids."

Recommendations: A possible solution is to have the CRC campus police show a greater presence at campus bus stops, particularly the east one between the east steps and Bruceville Road. An officer could be stationed there for as much time as possible during each school day and evening--ideally, the whole time classes are in session and for a time after the last class in the evening finishes. If this is not feasible, at least an officer could be there at peak periods when the greatest numbers of students are present, and at the times when students waiting for buses are most vulnerable based on crime reports. Alternatively, transit police could do this same work. I have never seen a transit company security guard or campus police officer on foot or in a parked car at the East steps/Bruceville Road bus stop, or any other bus stop at Cosumnes River College. Only three times since January, 2006, have I seen campus police drive by, although I have stood at the bus stop there about 300 times totaling approximately 100 hours. Never have I seen police respond to any of the incidents I have observed. Many RT stops have security people regularly present. At some of the others which do not, I have never seen a crime committed. However, at the CRC Bruceville stop, there is never a uniformed RT official present, and I have witnessed several crimes there and seen reports of others. Clearly, this stop could benefit from having security personnel present for long periods of time on school days.

In addition, more publicity for the campus police escort to bus stops at CRC and other Los Rios campuses would be helpful for more students to feel, and be, safe. This service is already available.

Observation: Watt/I-80 light rail, 2004: Meadowview Light rail, 2006: I pushed the "emergency" button on the light rail train on two occasions. In neither instance did I get a response.

Recommendation: RT should instruct personnel to respond to the emergency button, and should test the emergency buttons often to make sure they work. Perhaps RT is already doing both of these things.

Observation, Watt/I-80 light rail, 2004: A man sitting next to me described to another man a rape that he had committed and said there was nothing wrong with committing rape. I have no recommendations for dealing with something like this and do not believe a person can be removed from a train for making these statements. The anecdote is included here to illustrate why some students do not feel safe using public transit.

Observation, Watt/I-80 light rail, 2004: Halfway down the length of each light rail car there is an area with no seats to allow the car to turn. People sit on the floor in this area to hide. I saw one person sell drugs to another in this part of a light rail car.

Observation, Meadowview light rail, spring, 2007: This light rail route is the closest one to CRC. Two feet from me, a woman was having a shouting match with a man seated across the aisle and one row forward from hers. As she rose, yelling and lunging at him, stabbing toward his throat with an uncapped pen, another man grabbed her to stop her. Apparently he was a passenger not employed by RT. I came to this conclusion because he was not in uniform, did not identify himself as a plainclothes RT security official, and did not make any record or report of the incident during the subsequent half-hour that I was on the train.

Recommendation: More uniformed security personnel on trains are a possible solution. Cameras, especially those monitored in real time, may lower the crime rate. These are also in use on buses and at some light rail stations. However, in my opinion these are deterrents designed to discourage people from committing crimes in the first place, and they work for this purpose only on people who are thinking clearly in terms of cause and effect. Many people are not.

The following incident is not part of my observations, and it occurred after I had collected all the questionnaires from the students. It is included for its relevance to the safety issues that the students brought up. A gunman shot someone in the face at CRC's main bus stop around 7:30 p.m. November 22, 2007 (Carreon, 2007). The appendix to this project contains a Sacramento Bee newspaper article detailing the shooting and its circumstances.

Normally the CRC campus police are quick to inform the campus community of crimes occurring on the campus. However, according to newspaper accounts accompanying this project, the most serious recent crime went unreported for seven days. The college's lateness in informing students of the shooting is a concern. The bus stop where the shooting occurred, the one pictured in the one of the stories, is the same stop where I witnessed the two ignored mob attacks on lone individuals.

Recommendation: The college should report on-campus crimes, including crimes committed at the campus bus stops, promptly to students, staff and faculty. Students, particularly those with psychiatric disabilities, will feel safer if they believe they can trust that the college was not withholding information from them.

One other behavior, while not threatening, may be contributing to riders' not feeling safe if they have disabilities. The only person to answer the question "Do drivers always secure your wheelchair?" answered "No."

Observation: Drivers of buses I have ridden always secure passengers' wheelchairs.

Recommendation: RT could reemphasize to drivers the need to secure wheelchairs, but I am confident that drivers are trained to do this.

Dealing with other inappropriate behavior

What may appear to some people to be minor issues can prevent other people from riding transit. One person's annoyance is another person's threat. Rudeness can escalate into threats and assaults. The recent shooting at a CRC bus stop began as an argument (Carreon, 2007). (Please see the article on the CRC bus stop shooting in the Appendix.)

Respondents to the questionnaire stated almost unanimously that others' behavior toward them was unrelated to their disabilities. However, six of eight people said they had been delayed by inappropriate passenger behavior because it was so rude the bus had to be stopped for a time.

Observation: Watt/I-80 light rail traveling from American River College toward downtown Sacramento, 2004: A drunken man was made to leave the light rail train for yelling and rolling glass bottles around on the floor in addition to being drunk. It took 20 to 30 minutes, from Del Paso Heights to the downtown stop at Saint Rose of Lima Park, for officers to arrive to remove him from the train.

Observation: On RT bus #1, which serves American River College, a driver made two men get off the bus for making sexually explicit joking remarks.

Observation :Watt/I-80 light rail, 2003: This incident was a bit long, graphic and quite rude, but it shows the kinds of things people sometimes hear on their way to American River College. Once we got on the bus, everyone on the bus probably could hear these loud people. Beginning on the light rail, two apparently homeless men were talking. One said, "When I find the son of a bitch who stole my wedding ring, I'm gonna kill him. I know where I can get a 22, a pistol, a sawed-off shotgun. Seventeen years down the drain. I used to be a nice person, but not no more." When we reached the end of the line, the two men got off and waited at the bus station there, where I also had to wait. A woman, possibly the wife of the one whose ring was gone, met them. The man embraced her and kissed her, and seemed very glad to see her.

When my bus came, they all got on. The possible husband said to the woman, "How come you stole my weddin' ring? Their voices got louder and louder. Other passengers stopped talking and stared at them. "I didn't take your wedding ring. Remember? Ya got mad at me and threw it in the creek." There followed a very crude and graphic argument in which he accused her of cheating with another man. She replied that she had not, then changed her approach to provoke him. In obscene language he threatened to kill her if she cheated on him "again." At this point, the driver began yelling. "Hey! I don't know where you guys think you are!" The angry homeless man continued: "Whadja have to go and steal my weddin' ring for?" The woman replied, "Quit sayin' I took it. Ya threw it in the damn pond, remember? Now be quiet."

Recommendation: On buses, a possible solution is to have drivers and transit police deal more promptly with inappropriate passenger behavior.

Observation: I have seen "No Smoking" signs at very few bus and light rail stations. Generally, the only ones I have seen were four or five inches wide and placed high up on inner walls of light rail

station shelters, hard to see. Some exceptions are the Cordova Town Center stop, where one of these small signs is placed on the front of the shelter, and the Mather Field/Mills stop. Even where signs are posted, people are often smoking in the shelter, and those with lung problems or migraine conditions then cannot comfortably use the shelter.

Recommendation: “No Smoking” signs could be posted at more bus and light rail stops. They could be made bigger and more noticeable, and placed in more conspicuous parts of the shelters. Security people, when present, could enforce more fully the rule against smoking in a shelter that has a “no smoking” sign.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

More research into this topic would be beneficial. Space limitations prevent going further into some of the issues raised. It would be especially interesting to combine Scott Crosier’s work with information on where transit does and does not go, incorporating, of course, the planned CRC light rail.

APPENDIX 1

Sacramento Bee story:

Teen boy shot in face at Cosumnes River campus

Published 6:34 am PST Friday, November 23, 2007

Story appeared in METRO section, Page B2

SACRAMENTO – A teenage boy was shot in the face on the Cosumnes River College campus Thursday night but was expected to survive. Sacramento police were searching for the gunman.

Police and paramedics were called shortly after 7:30 p.m. to the 7000 block of Calvine Road, where they found a 15-year-old boy who had been shot "through-and-through" his cheeks, according to early dispatch reports.

The teen was apparently part of a group of people waiting at a bus stop on the south Sacramento campus when an argument broke out, then escalated into a fistfight, Lt. Cara Westin said.

A man "on the losing side" of the fight, she said, pulled out a gun and opened fire.

The victim, who was conscious when authorities arrived, was taken to Methodist Hospital of Sacramento, where he was in stable condition, police said.

A detailed description of the shooter was not available.

The CRC campus is closed for the Thanksgiving recess.

– Crystal Carreon

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire

WalkSacramento is working to improve public transportation to and from this campus. This questionnaire is part of that process for students with disabilities.

Do you use public transportation to travel to or from the campus? Yes _____ No _____

If not, why not? Please check all that apply

Takes too long _____ Too confusing _____ Passengers behave badly _____
 Drivers are rude _____ Don't feel safe _____
 Bus stop is too far from my home _____ Have to transfer too many times _____
 Buses don't run often enough _____ It doesn't come to my area _____
 Don't know where to get information on schedules, routes, stops, etc. _____
 Discrimination because of disability (please) _____
 Other(Please describe) _____

If you qualify to use Paratransit but do not use it, why not?

If you take public transit please continue with the questionnaire. If not, please stop.

What public transportation bus companies do you use—which bus companies, and do you use light rail?

How much does it cost for you to ride each time?

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with this transportation? Please state how happy or unhappy you are with each bus company (or light rail).

What does public transit do well?

Where on campus is information available about bus and light rail transportation?

How would you go about getting bus, light rail or Paratransit information online? What web address would you use, or if you don't know, how would you get the address?

Do you feel safe from harassment and physical attack while using public transportation to travel to and from the campus?

Yes _____ No _____

Please go to Page 2

If not, does your disability contribute to not feeling safe? Yes _____ No _____

What could the transportation companies do to help?

How often, if ever, are you delayed because the driver has stopped the bus or train due to passengers behaving inappropriately?

Do you ever come late for, or miss, a class or an on-campus appointment because of a different problem with public transportation?

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please explain.

Is it easy _____ or difficult _____ to understand how to use public transportation to get to a certain place at a certain time?

How easy or difficult?

If difficult, what would help you?

Do you use a watch when traveling? Yes _____ No _____

Do drivers and other riders treat you with courtesy? Yes _____ No _____

Does their treatment of you have anything to do with your disability? Yes _____ No _____

Would increased hours of bus operation, or buses running more often, make available to you classes, campus services or campus events that you now cannot attend? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which buses?

What other improvements could be made?

If you use a wheelchair:

Do you ever have to wait for the next bus because the bus cannot accommodate any more wheelchairs?

Do drivers always secure your wheelchair? Yes _____ No _____

Other Comments:

References

Carreon, Crystal. (2007, November 23). Teen boy shot in face at Cosumnes River campus. *Sacramento Bee*, p. B2.

Los Rios Community College District and WALKSacramento. Survey of transportation patterns of Los Rios students." July, 2007. <http://irweb.losrios.edu>. p. 1: . Executive Summary.