

# POINT OF DEPARTURE

Navigating Nashville as a College Commuter





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Tennessee College Access and Success Network (TCASN) is a nationally recognized, statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential and foster a culture of college-going across the state. TCASN works to remove barriers to higher education, promote college persistence, and increase postsecondary completion. TCASN focuses on connecting leaders, advocating for access and completion, and increasing the capacity of individuals and institutions to produce successful and equitable outcomes for underrepresented students. TCASN's team has decades of collective expertise spanning state and federal college access programs, urban and rural initiatives, schools, and higher education institutions. Questions can be directed to TCASN executive director, Bob Obrohta, at [bobrohta@tncollegeaccess.org](mailto:bobrohta@tncollegeaccess.org).

## NOTE TO READER

The purpose of this report is to focus on college accessibility as it relates to Nashville's public transit system, with a specific focus on college students who commute. The report was funded by the **JP Morgan Chase New Skills Ready Grant** which focuses on improving high-quality, high-wage pathways for students with specific investments in students graduating from John Overton, Maplewood, Pearl-Cohn, and Whites Creek high schools and students attending Nashville State Community College, the Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Nashville, and Middle Tennessee State University. This report does not address the needs of all passengers. For more in-depth information about plans regarding local and regional public transit development, we ask the reader to access the latest reports by **WeGo**, the **Nashville Department of Transportation**, the **Greater Nashville Regional Council**, and the **Metro Nashville mayor's office**. A list of these can be found in the Appendix (page 13).





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The majority of Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) graduates attending college are commuters. This is true for community college students as well as students pursuing a bachelor’s degree at one of the local universities – where most Nashville students attend. Previous studies have shown that even before the 2020 COVID pandemic, Nashville students were living at home and commuting to school due to affordability issues and/or family responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> This trend accelerated post-pandemic with heightened family responsibilities and increased numbers of students choosing closer-to-home college options.

The lower a student’s income, the more reliant a student is on public transit to achieve higher education success. From 2017-2022, 77% of MNPS students enrolled at Nashville State Community College (NSCC) were low-income.<sup>2</sup> These students are more likely to be balancing full-time jobs and classes. Almost half of students at Tennessee’s public universities and 62% of community college students work at least part-time while enrolled.<sup>3</sup>

**Three categories of students most at-risk of not enrolling or completing college are low-income students, commuters, and students working over 15 hours per week.**<sup>4</sup> This makes up the majority of Nashville’s higher education student population. Transportation, especially public transit, is a common thread running between these three. While some low-income students have successfully accessed higher education and completed a degree despite transportation barriers, most have not. Only 44% of MNPS graduates went on to enroll in a postsecondary program in 2021, and only an estimated 27% of MNPS grads will earn a postsecondary credential within six years of high school graduation.

For this report, we have talked to public transit experts, higher education professionals, and, most importantly, college students who make daily commutes to higher education campuses. All names have been changed to protect student privacy.

## FINDINGS

1. Students’ lives are complex and multi-faceted, creating a diverse set of transportation-related barriers.
2. When considering students’ transportation challenges, we must account for all the supportive resources available on campuses and not solely focus on students’ ability to get to and from class.
3. The majority of college campuses in the Greater Nashville Area have a bus stop within walking distance.
4. While most colleges are accessible by public transit lines, transit accessibility is about more than a rider’s destination.
5. Public transit commutes are long with infrequent buses, numerous route stops, and students often needing to go downtown to transfer lines.
6. The plans for a more accessible public transit system are in place, but Nashville needs dedicated funding for public transit to make it happen.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Nashville is the only metro area of its size in the country **without** a local, dedicated source of funding for public transit.

<sup>1</sup> 2018 Bridge to Completion: A Framework for Developing Nashville’s Campaign for College Success, p.13, TCASN

<sup>2</sup> NSCC Office of Institutional Research, data provided March 2023

<sup>3</sup> Walter G. Ecton, Carolyn J. Heinrich, and Celeste K. Carruthers, “Earning to Learn: Working While Enrolled in Tennessee Colleges and Universities”, p. 2, AERA Open 2023 10.1177/23328584221140410

<sup>4</sup> Learning While Earning: The New Normal, Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, [cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/workinglearners](http://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/workinglearners)

Most of the experts TCASN talked to said that without dedicated funding, improvements to Nashville’s transit infrastructure will be limited. Transportation is a significant barrier for low-income college students, and investing in a public transit system that ensures the ability of current and future college students to access higher education is essential to the equitable growth of Nashville.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The city of Nashville should commit to making public transit free for students attending public colleges in Davidson County.
2. Nashville State Community College should partner with WeGo to establish a shuttle service that connects the

college’s Southeast and North Davidson campuses to their White Bridge campus.

3. City and college leadership should improve access to Nashville State Community College and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Nashville from Nashville’s highest need zip codes.
4. City and WeGo leadership should intentionally engage with college students when developing future transit plans.
5. City leadership should secure dedicated funding for public transit.
6. City and regional leadership should increase access to bachelor’s degrees for low-income students by improving public transit access to Middle Tennessee public universities.



### FINDING #1

## Students’ lives are complex and multi-faceted, creating a diverse set of transportation-related barriers.

College commuters rely on several modes of transportation. Some have personal cars, others rely on their parents for rides to and from school, and some are nearly completely dependent on public transit. All students interviewed utilize rideshare services like Uber or Lyft to supplement their usual mode of transportation but do not rely exclusively on these services as they are too expensive. Students at community colleges will pay more, on average, in transportation costs than students attending a residential 4-year public or private university. Community colleges serve a significant number of low-income

students and students of color, and the financial burden of transportation is noteworthy.

Owning a car is inaccessible for many low-income students. Even when students can purchase a personal vehicle, or have their parents help them get one, transportation is still a challenge. Students with personal vehicles cite the costs of car payments, gas, insurance, and car repairs as challenges. The United States Bureau of Transportation Statistics estimates the average annual cost of owning a car to be \$10,729,<sup>5</sup> but the amount institutions budget for transportation costs when determining their overall cost and therefore the amount students can access in financial aid (cost of attendance) is much lower. Institutions nationally include an average cost of \$1,230 for students attending public universities and \$1,840 for community college students.<sup>6</sup> Nashville State Community College uses \$2,115 as their average transportation cost, which is still under 20% of the amount estimated by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Maximum student financial aid, which is based on cost of attendance, is therefore only covering a small portion of annual expenses for students who have or use a personal vehicle. Financial aid is likely sufficient to cover students’ gas costs but fails to account for car payments, maintenance, and repairs. Students who are unable to afford the high cost of car ownership must endure longer commutes, inflexible schedules,



### DID YOU KNOW?

Colleges calculate cost of attendance (COA) by estimating the average educational expenses for an enrolled student. In addition to tuition and fees, the COA includes books, supplies, transportation, room and board, and more.

Cost of attendance is the cornerstone of establishing a student’s financial need, setting the amount of aid a student can receive for several need-based grants, and is one of the basic components of calculating students’ Pell Grant awards.

<sup>5</sup> [www.bts.gov/content/average-cost-owning-and-operating-automobilea-assuming-15000-vehicle-miles-year](http://www.bts.gov/content/average-cost-owning-and-operating-automobilea-assuming-15000-vehicle-miles-year)

<sup>6</sup> Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021, p. 11, College Board



and their academic and employment opportunities are often limited by what they can access efficiently by public transit.

Some college students rely on a shared family car or depend on a family member to take them to campus. While these students enjoy the same shorter commute times as students with a personal car, they must schedule classes around family members' work schedules, and it is difficult for them to leave campus once dropped off. This is especially challenging on a campus like Nashville State Community College where there is no cafeteria. Due to their dependence on a family vehicle and schedule, these students struggle to balance attending classes and finding flexible employment that fits both their schedule and their family's.

Students who do not have a personal or family car rely almost entirely on public transit. The average commute to Nashville State Community College for the students we interviewed was approximately one hour and thirty minutes – in both directions. Most students have jobs while enrolled, and in balancing successful coursework and employment, students must maximize their time. Time spent commuting on public transit subtracts from hours spent in the classroom, on the job, and/or with their families. The majority of students we interviewed who rely on public transit live within a ten-minute walk of the closest bus stop. Not all low-income Nashvillians live close to a stop, making their lack of access to public transit a barrier to even enrolling in college.



## STUDENT STORY

Jessica is a single mother of three attending Nashville State Community College. When she enrolled in classes, Jessica had a personal vehicle that allowed her to get to campus for class, to work, and to get her children to childcare. A few months after enrolling, her car died, and having

lost her job during the COVID-19 pandemic, she was unable to afford the repairs. Luckily, Jessica lived close to a bus stop, allowing easy access to the city's public transit system for her and her children.

However, Jessica's commute to campus went from a 15-20-minute drive in her own car to an hour and a half commute on the bus.

The additional commute time and restricted mobility impacted her ability to find a new job, make it to class on time, access childcare for her children, and get to appointments on and off campus. Despite these challenges, Jessica decided to stay in college and is only one semester away from completing her program.



## FINDING #2

# When considering students' transportation challenges, we must account for all the supportive resources available on campuses and not solely focus on students' ability to get to and from class.

Colleges have made significant progress in meeting the needs of low-income students, but many resources students need to succeed in higher education are only accessible on campus. Programs like **Nashville GRAD** and **Nashville Flex**<sup>7</sup> support full-time and part-time students, respectively, with one-on-one success advisors and peer networks, and provide participating students with monthly gift cards to help with non-tuition financial needs (like transportation and groceries). NSCC also employs a social worker to support students with social, emotional, and

academic challenges and has opened food pantries on four of their campuses for students who struggle with food insecurity.

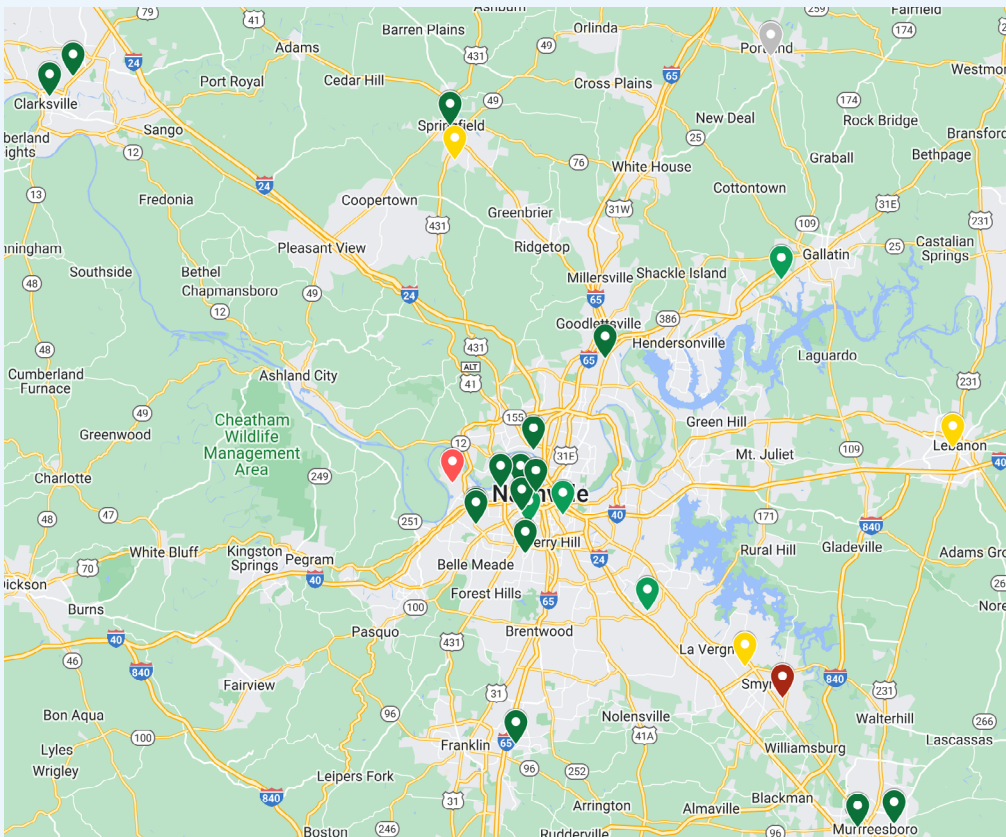
Additionally, students without reliable internet access at home often depend on campus internet access to study and complete assignments. Increased access to campus also allows for students to get involved in extracurricular activities, deepening their sense of belonging. The likelihood of student success increases with a student's ability to be immersed in the learning and social environment of the campus.

<sup>7</sup> Partners on Nashville Flex include Nashville State Community College, the Tennessee College Access and Success Network, and Vanderbilt University.

# The majority of college campuses in the Greater Nashville Area have a bus stop within walking distance.



TCASN partnered with the **Civic Mapping Initiative**, a project of the **Seldin/Haring-Smith Foundation**, to explore public transit accessibility to Nashville’s colleges and universities. In their 2021 research brief *Waiting for the Bus?* the group examined transit accessibility at the main campuses of community and technical colleges in the United States. They found that about 57% of community and technical college main campuses are within walking distance (less than half a mile) to a public transit stop and an additional 25% of community colleges could be made accessible by extending existing infrastructure. A map of Tennessee main community and technical college campuses and their proximity to a bus stop can be found [here](#).



## IN THE NEWS

Findings from *Waiting for the Bus? Transit Infrastructure at America’s Community and Technical Colleges*

- According to the Biden Administration, **40%** of Americans lack access to affordable public transit.
- Nationally, **56.5%** of community and technical college main campuses are within walking distance of a public transit stop. **25%** of community colleges could be made accessible by extending existing transit lines.
- In the southeastern United States, **30.3%** of community and technical college campuses are within 0.5-4.5 miles of a transit line and could be made accessible by extending existing transit lines.

### SHSF TN SUBSET DATA

- Within 0.2 miles
- Within 0.5 miles
- Within 1 mile
- Nothing within 4.5 miles
- Nothing within 1-2 miles
- Nothing within 2-4.5 miles



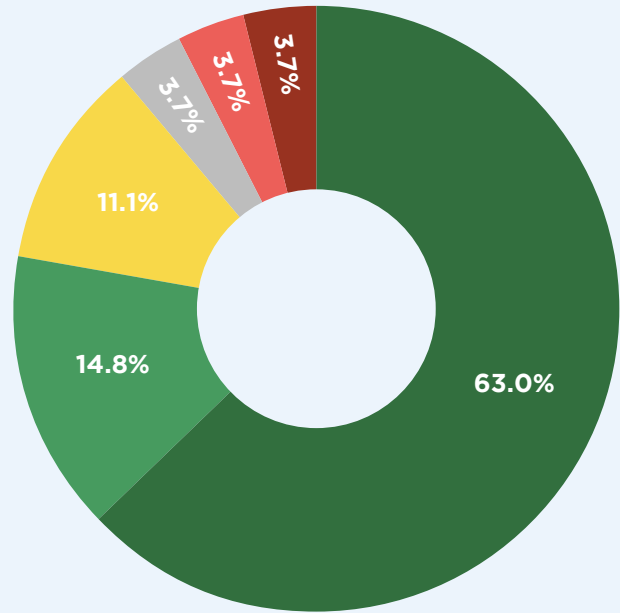
In the Greater Nashville Area, about 80% of the college campuses and satellite college campuses examined are within walking distance (half a mile or less “as the crow flies”) of a bus stop. All campuses located within Davidson County have a bus stop within 0.2 miles, except for the Cockrill Bend satellite campus of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Nashville, located almost 2 miles from the closest bus stop. Institutions located in Clarksville (Austin Peay State University and Nashville State Community College’s Clarksville campus), Franklin (Columbia State Community College’s Franklin campus), and Murfreesboro (Middle Tennessee State

University and TCAT Murfreesboro) are also within walking distance from bus stops.

Both Volunteer State Community College’s main campus and TCAT Nashville’s Springfield campus are within walking distance from a bus stop, but they are exceptions when it comes to college campuses in rural areas. Cumberland University, the Smyrna campuses of Motlow State Community College and TCAT Murfreesboro, and Volunteer State Community College’s Springfield campus are all more than half a mile from the closest bus stop, and TCAT Nashville’s Portland campus is not accessible by public transit at all.

### NEAREST PUBLIC TRANSIT STOPS TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE GREATER NASHVILLE, TN AREA

- Within 0.2 miles
- Within 0.5 miles
- Within 1 mile
- Nothing within 4.5 miles
- Nothing within 1-2 miles
- Nothing within 2-4.5 miles



#### FINDING #4

## While most colleges are accessible by public transit lines, points of departure are not easily accessible for students.

Colleges being located on public transit lines is important, but **transit accessibility is about more than a rider’s destination.** Students must also be able to get to a transit line to board the bus. In 2016, Nashville city leadership estimated that only 230,000 residents live within walking distance to a bus stop, and only about 1,700 of Davidson County’s low-income and minority residents had the same level of access.<sup>8</sup>



#### DID YOU KNOW?

As of 2020, only about 19% of roads in Nashville had sidewalks, forcing many students who rely on public transit to walk on the side of roadways to get to a bus stop.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> nMotion 2016 | Nashville MTA/RTA Strategic Plan, p. 4-2, Nashville MTA  
<sup>9</sup> WalknBike Nashville 2017, p. 3, Metro Public Works

One solution the city has implemented to better meet the transportation needs of those living in areas without access is **WeGo Link**. This service provides first- and last-mile service in designated areas through a partnership with Uber, making public transit accessible at a subsidized rate for riders who live in these designated areas but do not have a bus stop within walking distance. Riders must pay the first \$2 for the ride, and

while an additional \$8 is covered through this partnership, the rider must pay any additional costs as well. While helpful, this solution does not remove the additional financial burden on students who may not have a car and lack access to public transit otherwise as this service is not covered by free bus passes provided by colleges.



## STUDENT STORY

Sharron is an adult college student with a disability who attends Nashville State Community College. Even though she does not live within walking distance from a bus stop, Sharron's disability status makes her eligible for **WeGo Access**, the city's paratransit service for those who are unable to use WeGo's fixed-route system. The program provides Sharron with door-to-door access to Nashville State's campus for classes

and on-campus appointments.

Without the WeGo Access program, Sharron would not have had the opportunity to go to college, but she sometimes still struggles to make it to class. To ensure she is not late, she schedules her pickup for three hours before her first class begins. The drive from Sharron's house to campus is only 20-40 minutes, depending on traffic, but because Access riders are given a 30-minute window for pickup, Sharron ensures she has enough time to make it to campus. Additionally,

because the service relies on taxis when Access vans are not available, Sharron sometimes gets taxi drivers who are not prepared or equipped to accommodate her and at times have not showed up at all. Because rides must be scheduled 24 hours in advance, it is difficult for her to make changes to her reservation when these issues arise. In these cases (and when she needs transportation on short notice), Sharron relies on rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, which are significantly more expensive than public transit.



## FINDING #5

# Public transit commutes are long with infrequent buses, numerous route stops, and students often needing to go downtown to transfer lines.

While WeGo has made, and continues to make, progress on increasing bus frequency, the majority of buses run every 30-45 minutes.<sup>10</sup> While buses run more often during peak hours (typically 6:00-9:00am and 3:00-6:00pm), this increased service is intended to accommodate commuting workers traveling during normal business hours. These hours do not reflect the reality of today's community college student whose schedule does not likely mirror a traditional 9-5 work schedule. This is especially true for students who may need to ride the bus to and from multiple locations throughout the day, like those balancing college, jobs, and family responsibilities like childcare.

To get a better understanding of transit accessibility and commute times to area public institutions for Metro Nashville Public Schools graduates, we looked at commute times from

the four MNPS New Skills Ready schools: Maplewood High School, Whites Creek High School, Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet High School, and John Overton High School. Out of the four schools, only one, Pearl-Cohn,



## DID YOU KNOW?

Student riders reported an average commute time of 1.5 hours to Nashville State's White Bridge campus from their homes in the Metro Center and East Nashville areas of Nashville. Along with infrequent service, students cited long commutes on buses as a challenge to getting to campus.

<sup>10</sup> More information on bus frequency can be found in [WeGo's Better Bus plan](#).



is within half a mile of public transit. The closest bus stop to Maplewood High School is 0.7 miles away, and the other two schools, Whites Creek and Overton, require excessive travel by foot or bike to reach a public transit route.

WeGo currently operates express lines to both Clarksville, home of Austin Peay State University, and Murfreesboro, home of Middle Tennessee State University. The express bus to Murfreesboro (Route 84) runs between WeGo Central in

Downtown Nashville and MTSU's campus, stopping only twice along the way. WeGo's express line to Clarksville (Route 94) runs between downtown Nashville and a park-and-ride off Exit 11 on Interstate 24. However, this line does not connect with the Clarksville Transit System, making seamless transfer between the two systems impossible. While Clarksville's public transit system has access to Austin Peay, the campus is inaccessible by public transit for Nashville area students.

## COMMUTING TIMES FROM NEW SKILLS READY HIGH SCHOOLS TO NASHVILLE AREA COLLEGE CAMPUSES: DRIVING VS. PUBLIC TRANSIT

Name of High School	Mode of Transportation	NSCC White Bridge and TCAT Nashville	NSCC Southeast	NSCC North Davidson	TSU	MTSU	APSU
Pearl-Cohn High School	Driving	10-16 minutes	20-35 minutes	16-24 minutes	5 minutes	40 minutes to 1 hour	50 minutes to 1 hour and 5 minutes
	Public transit	1 hour and 6 minutes, 1 transfer	1 hour and 29 minutes, 1 transfer	1 hour and 12 minutes, 1 transfer	Within walking distance	2 hours, 1 transfer	Inaccessible
Maplewood High School	Driving	16-26 minutes	24-40 minutes	9-16 minutes	12-26 minutes	45 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes	45 minutes to 1 hour and 10 minutes
	Public transit	1 hour and 13 minutes, 1 transfer	1 hour and 32 minutes, 1 transfer	43 minutes, 2 transfers	1 hour, 1 transfer	2 hours, 1 transfer	Inaccessible
John Overton High School	Driving	16-28 minutes	14-28 minutes	24-40 minutes	14-20 minutes	35 minutes to 1 hour	1 hour to 1 hour and 25 minutes
	Public transit	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible
Whites Creek High School	Driving	18-26 minutes	28-50 minutes	14-24 minutes	14-20 minutes	50 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes	40 minutes to 1 hour
	Public transit	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	Inaccessible



### FINDING #6

## The plans for a more accessible public transit system are in place, but Nashville needs dedicated funding for public transit to make it happen.

As the Nashville area has grown, city and regional leaders have increased their focus on improving transit infrastructure. Many plans that propose improvements to the transit system have been released in recent years. Nashville's long-term strategic plan for transit in the region, *nMotion*, was released in 2016

and proposes an improved bus system, bus service to more areas, and the development of a high-capacity transit network. *Better Bus*, Nashville's shorter-term and lower-cost plan for improvements, recommends many of the same improvements to bus lines, including longer hours of service, more frequent



Transportation is a significant barrier for low-income college students, and investing in a public transit system that ensures the ability of current and future college students to access higher education is essential to the equitable growth of Nashville.

buses, extending existing routes, and adding a new bus route. **The investments outlined in *nMotion* and *Better Bus* would increase transit accessibility for current students and make college more accessible to Nashvillians who have not engaged with higher education because of transportation barriers.**

In order for these improvements to happen, changes in how the city funds public transit must be considered. Nashville is the only metro area of its size in the country without a local, dedicated source of funding for public transit and depends on the city's fluctuating operating budget each year. This makes it

difficult for Nashville to receive competitive state and federal grants for public transit, which often require a 20% local match of the total project cost.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the experts TCASN interviewed said that without dedicated funding, improvements to Nashville's transit infrastructure will be limited. Transportation is a significant barrier for low-income college students, and investing in a public transit system that ensures the ability of current and future college students to access higher education is essential to the equitable growth of Nashville.

<sup>11</sup> *Federal Financial Support for Public Transportation*, p. 9, United States Congressional Budget Office



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATION #1

### The city of Nashville should commit to making public transit free for students attending public colleges in Davidson County.

To mitigate student transportation barriers, many area private colleges (i.e. Vanderbilt, Belmont, and Lipscomb Universities) cover the cost of bus passes for their entire student bodies. However, public colleges and universities that enroll students with the most need to leverage public transit do not have the resources to offer the same service.

Nashville leadership's commitment to making public transit free for area college students would build upon the city's **StrIDe program**, an initiative that makes public transit free

for MNPS middle and high school students, deepening the city's investment in Nashville area students as they transition into college. This investment would free up public college and foundation funds to be used to help meet the basic needs (food security, housing, etc.) of low-income students, making it easier for the student to focus on coursework and more likely to complete a degree. This increased access to college campuses and improved student outcomes would positively contribute to the city and region's workforce and economic development.

## RECOMMENDATION #2

### Nashville State Community College should partner with WeGo to establish a shuttle service that connects the college's Southeast and North Davidson campuses to their White Bridge campus.

Currently, about 141 students are enrolled in classes at multiple Nashville locations. This service would make all Davidson County campuses more accessible for students. Current and prospective NSCC students living in proximity to one of the college's Davidson County campuses would be able to easily access the others, whether they typically drive or take public transit. NSCC's course and program offerings differ from campus to campus. This service would increase students' access to all that the college has to offer. This would also save students with personal vehicles gas money by allowing them to park at the campus closest to them and ride to other NSCC campuses for classes, appointments, or extracurricular activities.



#### CREATIVE APPROACHES

Delaware County Community College in Pennsylvania has partnered with their local transit authority to establish a shuttle service that runs between three of their campuses. The shuttle runs Monday through Friday. You can find more information about Delaware County Community College's shuttle program at [www.dccc.edu/shuttle](http://www.dccc.edu/shuttle).

## RECOMMENDATION #3

# City and college leadership should improve access to Nashville State Community College and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology – Nashville from Nashville’s highest need zip codes.

These institutions provide Nashvillians with accessible postsecondary programs to gain skills and access to higher-wage jobs. The priority of Nashville’s public transit system should be to increase opportunity for those who depend on it.

## IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS TO WHITE BRIDGE CAMPUSES OF NSCC AND TCAT NASHVILLE

We recommend that WeGo explore opportunities to shorten public transit commute times from the 37208 zip code to NSCC and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology Nashville. The 37208 area has the highest poverty rate in Davidson County and has the highest rate of incarceration in the United States.<sup>12</sup> This area would greatly benefit from increased access to the economic opportunity provided by

increased higher education access, but there are currently only 49 students from this area enrolled at Nashville State Community College. NSCC’s White Bridge campus and TCAT Nashville are a short drive from this area, but students must spend over an hour commuting on public transit.

## ESTABLISH LOCAL SATELLITE CAMPUS

Nashville State Community College should also explore locating a satellite campus in the 37208 area to ease transportation access, increase the institution’s presence, and demonstrate a commitment to an underserved area of Nashville. A new campus could also increase enrollment for the institution. Nashville State Community College already has a satellite campus in the Global Mall at the Crossings which serves the zip code with the highest enrollment in the city, 37013 (Antioch).



## CREATIVE APPROACHES

Lone Star College - Houston North has partnered with METRO, the city’s public transit system, to improve access to the college’s Fallbrook campus. The pilot establishes a shuttle that connects the campus to three established public transit lines. The shuttle runs Monday-Saturday from 7:30am-7:30pm.

## RECOMMENDATION #4

# City and WeGo leadership should intentionally engage with college students who rely on public transit when developing future transit plans.

More research needs to be done to better understand how public transit can better serve college students and individuals who may enroll if a campus were more accessible. We recommend that leadership engages these stakeholders in the development of future plans to ensure higher education is accessible for those who could most benefit.

<sup>12</sup> *Work and opportunity before and after incarceration* p. 17, The Brookings Institution



## RECOMMENDATION #5

# City leadership should secure dedicated funding for public transit.

Ensuring colleges are easily accessible for Nashville's current and future college students will take significant investment. Nashville is the only metro area of its size in the country without a local, dedicated source of funding for public transit. The current lack of dedicated funding makes the city ineligible for most federal and state grants, which require a local match.

## RECOMMENDATION #6

# City and regional leadership should increase access to bachelor's degrees for low-income students by improving public transit access to Middle Tennessee public universities.

Regional express lines provide quick access to Murfreesboro and Clarksville. Both lines depart from WeGo Central in downtown Nashville and stop very few times until they reach their destinations. We recommend connecting WeGo route 94 Clarksville to Clarksville Transit System and adding one stop for each of these regional lines to improve access to Austin Peay State University in Clarksville and Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro.

## CONNECT WEGO ROUTE 94 WITH CLARKSVILLE TRANSIT SYSTEM

To improve access to Austin Peay State University, we recommend creating the opportunity to transfer between WeGo route 94 Clarksville and Clarksville Transit System by extending WeGo route 94 Clarksville or by extending Clarksville Transit System route 5 or 6. We also recommend

adding a stop for WeGo route 94 Clarksville near the intersection of Interstate 24 and Briley Parkway, close to Brick Church Pike. This area is accessible by many public transit lines and is close to several low-income areas, and the addition of this stop would increase access to Austin Peay State University for residents of these areas.

## CREATE ADDITIONAL TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES TO MURFREESBORO

To improve access to Middle Tennessee State University, we recommend creating the opportunity to transfer between WeGo routes 84 Murfreesboro and 55 Murfreesboro Pike by adding a stop to 84 Murfreesboro and extending 55 Murfreesboro Pike to meet it. This connection will increase access to Middle Tennessee State University for students living in the Antioch area.

# APPENDIX

## Local and Regional Transit Development Plans

- **Better Bus, WeGo Public Transit**
- **Middle Tennessee Connected Regional Transportation Plan 2021-2045, Greater Nashville Regional Council**
- **nMotion 2016**, WeGo Public Transit and the Regional Transit Authority of Middle Tennessee

## PROXIMITY OF NASHVILLE AREA COLLEGES TO THE CLOSEST BUS STOP

Campus	Distance from stop	Classification
American Baptist College	0.058	● Within 0.2 Miles
Austin Peay State University	0.026	● Within 0.2 Miles
Belmont University	0.234	● Within 0.5 Miles
Columbia State Community College, Franklin Campus	0.028	● Within 0.2 Miles
Cumberland University	0.528	● Within 1 Mile
Fisk University	0.047	● Within 0.2 Miles
John A. Gupton College	0.188	● Within 0.2 Miles
Lipscomb University	0.127	● Within 0.2 Miles
Middle Tennessee State University	0.155	● Within 0.2 Miles
Motlow State Community College, Smyrna Campus	0.824	● Within 1 Mile
Nashville State Community College, Clarksville Campus	0.092	● Within 0.2 Miles
Nashville State Community College, North Davidson Campus	0.068	● Within 0.2 Miles
Nashville State Community College, Southeast Campus	0.225	● Within 0.5 Miles
Nashville State Community College, White Bridge Campus	0.068	● Within 0.2 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Murfreesboro, Main Campus	0.127	● Within 0.2 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Murfreesboro, Smyrna Campus	2.348	● Within 2-4.5 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Nashville, Cockrill Bend Campus	1.947	● Within 1-2 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Nashville, Portland Campus	N/A	● Nothing within 4.5 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Nashville, Springfield Campus	0.045	● Within 0.2 Miles
Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Nashville, White Bridge Campus	0.065	● Within 0.2 Miles
Tennessee State University	0.08	● Within 0.2 Miles
Tennessee State University, Avon Williams Campus	0.059	● Within 0.2 Miles
Trevecca Nazarene University	0.302	● Within 0.5 Miles
Vanderbilt University	0.16	● Within 0.2 Miles
Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin Campus	0.332	● Within 0.5 Miles
Volunteer State Community College, Springfield Campus	0.699	● Within 1 Mile
Watkins College of Art at Belmont	0.191	● Within 0.2 Miles





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