



Graduate
Student Senate

Graduate Student Senate President's Report

Board of Trustees

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In response to the recent [announcement](#) of service reductions by Green Mountain Transit (GMT), the Graduate Student Senate Executive Council, in collaboration with James Smith, the Director of Transportation and Parking Services, assembled a survey for graduate students, asking for feedback. Given the schedule for providing input, the survey was only open for a 12-hour window in which we collected 208 responses.

We are submitting this report to provide a detailed summary of feedback from graduate students regarding the proposed reductions in GMT bus services.

The Graduate Student Senate (GSS) has other priorities besides addressing transportation concerns, but we would like to devote the bulk of our written report to this issue.

Briefly, other priorities for GSS in the 2024-2025 academic year include initiating and funding our own conference grant program, as the current conference grant program is only serving a few students. We would also like to provide opportunities for professional development for graduate students. We are searching for revenue streams to support this endeavor. The annual GSS survey is undergoing review, and we hope to deploy it later this fall to learn more about graduate student needs.

Transportation and the UVM Graduate Student Community

Many graduate students rely on public transportation to commute between campus and their homes, access essential services, and ensure their personal safety. The following key concerns have been raised by the student body:

1. Essential Role of Public Transportation

- **High Dependence:** Many students do not own cars due to financial constraints and rely solely on GMT buses to commute. The cost of living in Burlington has already forced many students to live farther from campus, making public transportation a vital resource.
- **International and Low-Income Students:** Students from marginalized communities, especially international and low-income students, are particularly reliant on buses for daily activities like attending classes, shopping, and visiting healthcare providers.

2. Impact on Academic Success

- **Attendance and Punctuality:** Students noted that bus reductions would make it harder for them to attend early morning or evening classes, resulting in potential academic repercussions. Inconsistent or infrequent bus services may cause significant delays and impact academic performance.

- **Graduate Students at Catamount Run:** Many graduate students who live off-campus face limited transportation options. Several responses noted that students living at Catamount Run, a graduate student housing area, face unreliable bus service, which hinders their ability to commute to UVM on time.

3. Safety Concerns

- **Late-Night Travel:** Reduced bus services during evening hours would put students, especially women, at risk. Many respondents expressed fears of walking long distances in the dark or through unsafe areas, particularly during the winter months.
- **Winter Weather:** Vermont's harsh winter weather makes walking or biking unsafe for long distances, especially on icy or poorly lit roads. Public transportation is seen as a safer and more reliable option, and students are deeply concerned about the reduction of these services during the winter season.

4. Financial Burden

- **Parking Costs and Availability:** Parking at UVM is already limited and expensive, leaving students with no other affordable options if bus services are cut. Many graduate students mentioned that they cannot afford parking permits, forcing them to depend on public transit.
- **Living Costs:** With housing near UVM increasingly unaffordable, students have been pushed to live farther away from campus, in areas where public transportation is their only affordable commuting option. Cutting bus services would exacerbate these financial challenges.

5. Environmental Concerns

- **Sustainability:** Many students highlighted the environmental benefits of using public transportation to reduce traffic congestion and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing bus services would likely lead to more private vehicle usage, increasing the university's carbon footprint.
- **Increased Emissions:** The proposed cuts would run counter to the university's sustainability goals, as more students would be forced to drive personal vehicles, contributing to environmental degradation.

6. Proposed Solutions and Alternatives

- **Improved Frequency:** Rather than reducing services, students suggested that GMT improve the frequency of key bus routes, particularly during rush hours and late evenings when many students are traveling to and from campus.
- **Shuttle Services:** Some students suggested that UVM could introduce university-sponsored shuttle services to key areas, such as Catamount Run, to help mitigate the impact of reduced GMT services.

Conclusion

The survey responses overwhelmingly indicate that cutting bus services would severely disrupt the daily lives of many graduate students, particularly those without alternative means of transportation. These reductions would not only affect students' ability to attend classes and meet other academic responsibilities but also jeopardize their personal safety and financial stability. The university must prioritize accessible and reliable transportation for its students as part of its commitment to equity, sustainability, and academic success.

We strongly urge the Board of Trustees and the administration to take these concerns into account and work closely with GMT to explore alternative solutions that do not disproportionately impact graduate students or the broader UVM community.

We are happy to make the results of the survey available to the Board of Trustees.