

Route 50 adds bus to cut crowding

GVSU spends extra \$100,000 to prevent students from being passed en-route to campus from GR

By Kyle Meinke

GVL News Editor

Don't worry, relief is on the way.

After almost 20,000 riders per day taxed The Rapid during the first week of school — that's a 28 percent increase from the same period last year — an additional bus was added Wednesday to the Campus Connector route.

That means seven buses will now run the line per hour — up from five last year — and a total of 20 buses will service the Grand Valley State University routes.

The addition will cost GVSU about \$100,000 for the year, but will decrease pickup intervals during peak times from seven to six minutes.

"We try not to just jump at adding another bus, but our routes are just too overcrowded and we know that," said Erin Babson, operations manager for GVSU. "We found out that it's occurring all day long. We tried to get creative, but at this point, there weren't a whole lot of other ideas."

The Campus Connector is the busiest route, registering almost 9,000 rides per day during the first week of this academic year. The route has become so busy that drivers are leaving people at stops because their buses reach capacity before arriving at their destination.

"We've been crowded in the past, but this is the first year (riders) have had to wait two and three buses to get on," Babson said.

Adding to the congestion is the addition of the Park and Ride stop at the Walker Fire Station, which Babson



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Problematic boarding: Buses continue to be overcrowded despite changes in their routes, thus GVSU added a bus Wednesday to help.

said has been "extremely full."

Other routes are experiencing heavy traffic as well. Routes 37 and 48 have split completely, with the 37 covering north off-campus housing and the 48 hitting the south. Off-campus routes registered a combined 9,000 rides during the first week of classes, up 38

percent from last year.

But ridership has been heaviest on Route 50.

Nick Lobaito, a senior history major from St. Clair Shores, Mich., said Campus Connectors have passed

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over him at least five times in the first two weeks of classes because they were full.

"There just weren't enough buses for the volume of students," he said. "You could leave an 1.5 early, then still have to sprint to class. Every day there were at least one or two stops when

I was on the bus that the driver (couldn't) let someone on."

Rapid bus driver Gary Welch, now in his second year operating the Campus Connector, said he noticed a considerable jump in riders this year and has to leave people at the bus stop daily.

"It's definitely more packed this year," he said. "But so far (Wednesday), the extra bus has helped quite a bit. I haven't had

to leave anybody at a stop yet, and my buses haven't even been that full."

Aaron Wynn, a computer science major from Rockford, Mich., has been late to work and class because of the overcrowding.

"One time I had three buses pass by when I had class at 6 (p.m.)," he said. "I was pissed because there was nothing I

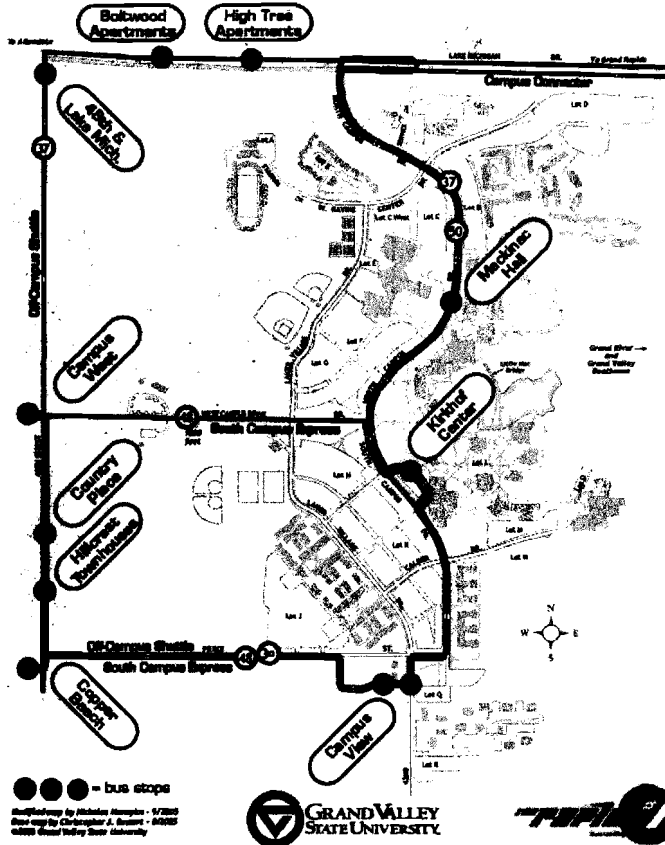
could do but wait."

The addition is expected to last the remainder of the academic year. No other changes are scheduled at this time.

The additional Route 50 bus will run from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Friday.

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