

Fall River Route 6 – Pleasant St: Service Change Proposal

April 2023

I. Description

The Fall River Route 6 – Pleasant St (FR6) serves the Flint neighborhood in Fall River with service to Wal-Mart on Quequechan Street. The route operates hourly headways with a weekday span of service from 6:35 AM to 6:06 PM and a Saturday span of service from 7:35 AM to 6:06 PM. The entire route duplicates service operated on several other fixed routes, mostly the Fall River Route 10 – Rodman (FR10) St that also serves Wal-Mar and Quequechan Street and Quarry Street, and the New Bedford Intercity Route which serves Pleasant Street.

The recently completed Fall River Bus Service Evaluation identified the FR6 as a route that is fully duplicated in service and could be discontinued with only minimal impact to the public. The FR6 was previously suspended as part of the COVID-19 response and returned to service when all routes were restored to their pre-pandemic service levels. During the route suspension, there was very little negative feedback from the public about the suspension of the FR6.

II. Proposed Changes

The proposal for the FR6 is a complete elimination of service.

III. Title VI Equity Analysis

A Title VI Equity Analysis is required by the SRTA Title VI Program whenever a service change will result in a change of more than 25% of the revenue mileage for the route. Both alternatives exceed the 25% threshold and warrant an equity analysis. The parameters for a Title VI equity analysis is described in Chapter 8 to the 2022 SRTA Title VI Program and evaluates two factors: the effects of the change on racial minority groups and the effects of the change on low-income populations. In both measures, the effects are measured against the current conditions by establishing a baseline for racial minorities and low-income populations. If the affected population is more than 60% of the total, the change is determined to have an adverse impact.

Disparate Impact Analysis

A disparate impact is one that affects a racial minority population that is more than 60% of the total population for the affected area. The United State Census most recent data for race and population was from the 2020 census; data at the census block level is the smallest geographic representation for the data and is the dataset used to determine disparate impact. The table below shows the results of the analysis.

| | Current Condition | % Racial Minority | Proposed Service | % Racial Minority | % Affected |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Racial Minority | 1,284 | | N/A | | |
| Racial Majority | 2,173 | | N/A | | |
| Total | 3,457 | 37.14% | N/A | N/A | 100% |

The complete elimination of the FR6 will affect both racial minority and racial majority populations equally. The service change doesn't meet the threshold for a disparate impact, however the effects of a complete elimination of a route shouldn't be overlooked either. There are mitigating factors to this elimination that suggest it won't be detrimental to those protected by Title VI. Service will remain on Pleasant St served by the New Bedford Intercity Route; service will remain on Quequechan St and Quarry St served by the FR10. Additionally, the FR10 is subject of a service change proposal that recommends increasing headways from sixty-minute to thirty-minute as mitigation for eliminating the FR6. Decreasing headway times will maintain thirty-minute service to Wal-Mart, a destination of high demand for both the FR6 and FR10.

Disproportionate Burden Analysis

A disparate burden is one that affects low-income populations more so than non-low-income populations. Low income is defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services as any household with annual income less than \$26,500. Data on low-income is provided by the American Community Survey in table B17001; data for the 2021 5-year estimates. The smallest geographic area for the data is a Census tract, a much larger area than a Census block, which explains why the population numbers in the table below are larger than in the table for Disparate Impact Analysis.

| | Current Condition | % Low income | Proposed Service | % Low income | % Affected |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Low-Income | 4,642 | | N/A | | |
| Non-Low-Income | 13,085 | | N/A | | |
| Total | 17,727 | 26.19% | N/A | N/A | 100% |

The complete elimination of the FR6 will affect both low-income and non-low-income populations equally. The service change doesn't meet the threshold for a disproportionate burden, however the effects of a complete elimination of a route shouldn't be overlooked either. There are mitigating factors to this elimination that suggest it won't be detrimental to those protected by Title VI. Service will remain on Pleasant St served by the New Bedford Intercity Route; service will remain on Quequechan St and Quarry St served by the FR10. Additionally, the FR10 is subject of a service change proposal that recommends increasing headways from sixty-minute to thirty-minute as mitigation for eliminating the FR6. Decreasing headway times will maintain thirty-minute service to Wal-Mart, a destination of high demand for both the FR6 and FR10.

IV. Discussion

The elimination of FR6 was first tested as a COVID-19 response and was suspended from July 2020 through June 2021. During that time, SRTA received very little negative feedback from customers about the service suspension. The service was restored, however it was identified as a potential service change in the Fall River Bus Service Evaluation completed in early 2023. During public outreach, customer feedback suggested that as long as the New Bedford Intercity Route continues to operate on Pleasant St and the FR10 continues to serve Wal-Mart, it would not inconvenience customers.

The results of the Title VI Equity Analysis are confusing because the threshold for impact requires that more than 60% of the population affected is either a racial minority or low-income. The threshold was not met; however, it doesn't mean there is no impact. Ordinarily, a service elimination would be a significant impact to the residents that rely on the service. This service elimination is unique in that it doesn't result in less coverage, frequency, or span of service. The FR6 is a duplicate route and eliminating it will not be detrimental to the community.

V. Recommendation

The FR6 is a duplicate route. Eliminating the service is fully mitigated by other fixed route services that will remain in operation. Eliminating the FR6 will reduce the operating costs of the SRTA fixed route system without reducing the benefit to the community. It is recommended that this service change goes forward with implementation.