

# Route 204 – Ashley Blvd: Service Change Proposal

July 2023

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## I. Description

Route 204 Ashley Blvd is a local, primarily north-south, route that connects Downtown New Bedford to the north end and New Bedford Business Park via Phillips Road. Route 204 provides service to residential areas, schools, and shopping centers. On weekdays, Route 204 operates every 30 minutes from 5:30 AM to 8:45 PM. On Saturdays, this route operates every 30 minutes from 7:45 AM to 5:45 PM.

Service to the New Bedford Business Park is infrequent: two trips on weekdays in the morning and one trip on weekdays in the afternoon. The Business Park, which is home to many large employers and the New Bedford branch of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles is a regular request for service by customers and businesses. The Business Park entrance at the intersection of Phillips Rd and Theodore Rice Blvd is currently served by the Route 221. A proposal to eliminate the Route 221 – North End Shuttle due to low ridership would leave the Business Park without day-time service.

## II. Proposed Changes

The proposed alignment is a variation of the existing New Bedford Business Park deviation. The outbound pattern will continue north on Church St (which becomes Phillips Rd) instead of turning east on Staron St as the current outbound pattern does. From Phillips Rd, the route turns west on Theodore Rice Blvd and north on Duchaine Blvd and terminates at the end of Duchaine Blvd. The inbound pattern uses the turn-around to travel south on Duchaine Blvd, turns east on Theodore Rive Blvd, south on Phillips Rd, turns east on Staron St and continues the current inbound pattern to the New Bedford Terminal. The route will operate the proposed pattern for all trips on weekdays and Saturday.

## 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.

The service proposal increases weekday revenue mileage from 347.1 to 466.8, a 26% increase; and increases Saturday revenue mileage from 213.4 to 309.6, a 45% increase. The increase in revenue miles meets the threshold for a Title VI Equity Analysis.

### **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.

	<b>Current Condition</b>	<b>% Racial Minority</b>	<b>Alternative A</b>	<b>% Racial Minority</b>	<b>% Affected</b>
Racial Minority	12,507		13,181		5.11%
Racial Majority	16,886		19,892		15.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,393</b>	<b>42.55%</b>	<b>33,073</b>	<b>39.85%</b>	<b>11.13%</b>

The proposal increases the length of the route and in so doing, expands the service area covered by the route. The expanded coverage will increase the total population served from 29,393 to 33,073, an 11.13% increase in population. Only one of the 463 census blocks served by the route exceeds the threshold for residents of the racial minority and that census block is within the coverage of a route segment not affected by this change. Based on the results of the analysis, there is no disparate impact resulting from this service change.

### **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, and why the population numbers in the table below are larger than in the table for Disparate Impact Analysis.

	<b>Current Condition</b>	<b>% Low Income</b>	<b>Alternative A</b>	<b>% Low Income</b>	<b>% Affected</b>
Low-income	12,189		12,189		0.00%
Non-low-income	39,878		39,878		0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,067</b>	<b>23.41%</b>	<b>52,067</b>	<b>23.41%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>

The proposal increases the length of the route; however, the expansion is within a census tract currently served by the route. Because the expansion is within a census tract already served by the route, the results of the analysis showed no change in the total population served. None of the census tracts served by the route exceed the threshold for Low-Income residents; the tract in which the expansion is located is 13% low-income. Based on the results of the analysis, there is no disproportionate burden resulting from this service change.

## **IV. Discussion**

The expansion of Route 204 to the New Bedford Business Park is a mitigation for eliminating Route 221. The expansion maintains a transit connection to an important destination for the residents and workforce in New Bedford. The expansion improves access to the business park because Route 204 operates a longer span of service with a greater frequency of service than Route 221. Additionally, Route 221 only serves the entrance of the business park whereas the

Route 204 expansion will enter the park on every trip and will continue to serve the interior of the park with the trips currently operated in the morning and afternoon.

The added service to the New Bedford Business Park and Phillips Rd is a net benefit to the community. The service to the park will be more direct and faster than the current service, making transit access to jobs and housing more attractive to the residents and workforce of New Bedford.

## V. Public Input

## VI. Recommendation