

Route 221 – North End Shuttle: Service Change Proposal

July 2023

I. Description

Route 221 is a local, route that operates a long loop connecting the Fieldstone Marketplace to areas in New Bedford's Far North End including Inland Park and Vibra Hospital via Acushnet Ave. Route 221 provides service to medium- to low-density residential neighborhoods, New Bedford RMV, multiple supermarkets (e.g., Stop & Shop), and the Fieldstone Marketplace. On weekdays, Route 221 operates every 40 minutes from 9:05 AM 5:01 PM. On Saturdays, the route operates every 40 minutes from 9:05 AM to 4:55 PM.

Route 221 has long been a low ridership route, often identified for service improvement. The route was evaluated in 2015 for changes and at the time it was determined that maintaining service coverage with alternate routes would not yield operational savings; no changes were made. The area served by the route is low-density single detached residential neighborhoods for middle class families, many of which drive as a primary mode of transportation. The service is underutilized. There are few destinations along the route, and many of those destinations are served by other routes. The most requested destination, the New Bedford branch of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles is not directly served. Additionally, Trucchis Supermarket and Lund's Corner are served by other routes.

II. Proposed Changes

The service proposal is to eliminate Route 221 from 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.

The service proposal reduces weekday revenue miles from 146.4 to 0.0 and Saturday revenue miles from 146.4 to 0.0. The elimination of Route 221 exceeds the threshold for a Major Service Change and warrants 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.

	Current Condition	% Racial Minority	Alternative A	% Racial Minority	% Affected
Racial Minority	3459		0		-100.00%
Racial Majority	15107		0		-100.00%
Total	18,566	18.63%	0	0.00%	-100.00%

The results of the equity analysis indicate that the overall population of racial minority residents served by the route does not exceed 60% of the population as a whole; no single census block exceeds 60% racial minority. Based on these findings, 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.

	Current Condition	% Low Income	Alternative A	% Low Income	% Affected
Low-income	2931		0		-100.00%
Non-low-income	30976		0		-100.00%
Total	33,907	8.64%	0	0.00%	-100.00%

The results of the equity analysis indicate that the overall population of low-income residents served by the route does not exceed 60% of the population as a whole; no single census tract exceeds 60% low-income. Based on these findings, there is no disproportionate burden resulting from this service change.

IV. Discussion

Route 221 has long been a route with low, but regular ridership. Often listed as a route needing improvement due to low ridership, there are few options available to improve the route due to the environment it operates. The far north end of New Bedford is generally a middle-class suburbanized area of the city. Larger lots, larger single detached homes, most with driveways and multiple cars, Route 221 operates in an area that is not transit supportive. This is evident in the Title VI equity analysis as indicated by the low populations of racial minorities and low-income residents; populations that tend to ride SRTA in greater numbers than their counterparts.

Eliminating a route is not an easy decision. Route 221 may have low ridership, but for those that do ride, it is an important connection to the region. To mitigate the effects of this service change, there are service proposals to provide coverage where the highest demand was found on the

route. The extension of Route 208 to King's Highway Stop & Shop addresses access to a grocery store for the riders that use Route 208 and continue through as a transfer to Route 221 to reach the store. The extension of Route 204 to the New Bedford Business Park maintains service to an important destination for Route 221 riders: Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. Additionally, the Route 204 extension will maintain service along Church St and Phillips Rd where several apartment buildings generate demand for service on Route 221. Route 204 will continue to serve Trucchi's Supermarket, another popular destination for Route 221.

V. Public Input

VI. Recommendation