

North Natomas Route 11 Assessment Report

This report represents the findings of the Route 11 assessment conducted by the North Natomas Mobility Committee (NNMC), an advisory committee to the North Natomas Transportation Management Association (NNTMA). The purpose of the assessment was to determine the quality of the bus service in North Natomas and to what degree problems might affect transit ridership, as well as to make recommendations to improve the system. This assessment reflects a “snapshot,” and recognizes that in this fast-growing community, changes happen frequently.

During a period beginning in December 2003 and lasting through February 2004, the committee evaluated the condition of all 20 bus stops located within the community. The Bus Stop Assessment Form was adapted from Virginia’s Arlington Transit assessment tool. It provided a consistent format for the evaluation of the bus stop identification and location, pedestrian access features, passenger comfort amenities, safety and security features, and bus information features. Following a presentation by Steve Jacoby, a landscape architect with years of community design experience, committee members each evaluated two to four stops. The attached data gives all information collected for the bus stops, but this report will focus on the main findings and recommendations of the committee.

In addition, the committee also reviewed the bus service itself and made recommendations based on community comments, North Natomas TMA survey data, and other observations.

STOP IDENTIFICATION/LOCATION

In the Identification/Location section of the assessment, committee members reported on the bus stop location in relation to the adjacent property and distance from the prior bus stop. In general, most of the stops were found to be appropriately located. The stops averaged $\frac{1}{4}$ mile apart, and where the stops were further apart, there was generally no pedestrian access, such as along the canal on Natomas Blvd., or no current development to warrant use of a stop. As the community continues to grow and develop, it will be essential to review the

bus stop locations annually. As more businesses and apartment complexes are built along the Truxel/Natomas corridor, more stops may be needed. Most stops were also placed near enough to intersections for pedestrian access, but not so close as to block intersection traffic or crosswalks.

The biggest concern was the lack of a stop close to the Park Place shopping center. The Raley's grocery store in particular is a good trip generator, but the current distance to and location of the nearest bus stops would be prohibitive to some potential users. Shoppers now must cross the busy intersection of Natomas Blvd./Del Paso Road and walk an additional several hundred feet to reach the stops going either north or south on the line. The committee felt that bus stops would be much more accessible if placed along Natomas Blvd. at Park Place North, with a well-marked crosswalk and pedestrian signal light. As Phase 2 of the Park Place shopping center opens up this summer, there will be even more trip generators for these stops.

The committee suggested the stop at Fredericksburg and North Park be moved to the southwest corner of the intersection. This corner is currently undeveloped and can be built as an ideal stop, with all the room needed for a landing area, shelter, and wheelchair access. This may also be a beneficial spot to include a newspaper box and a pay phone.

Another suggestion is to move the southbound stop at Natomas Crossing closer to the intersection for more convenience for riders in the Natomas Crossing neighborhood.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FEATURES

In the Pedestrian Access Features, the committee evaluated both the landing area at the bus stop and the connection to the landing area.

Many landing areas were simply the sidewalks themselves and not large enough to accommodate shelters, boarding and waiting riders, wheelchairs and strollers, and passing pedestrians. More work must be done to widen these areas before shelters are placed. The committee recommends a landing area of at least 5 feet wide by 8 feet deep to allow room for wheelchairs, strollers, and pedestrian passage.

On the positive side, most stops do have good wheelchair access. Along North Park though, the landing areas are grass with no wheelchair access, nor do they have an appropriate place for riders to sit or stand.

The connection to the landing area usually included good sidewalks from the nearest intersections and trip generators. There is some concern however for the condition of the sidewalks along Truxel where there are no current developments. These sidewalks are generally deeply cracked with weeds, and pose a potential hazard to accessing bus stops, especially for wheelchairs.

The stop at Banfield and North Park does not have safe access for the residences across the street that would use this stop. Traffic along North Park can be busy and fast, especially during peak periods. A very visible crosswalk should be added here.

Also, there is great safety concern for pedestrians crossing along Truxel, especially at the busy intersection at Gateway Park. Pedestrians here must now cross nine lanes of traffic to access the bus stops going north bound or south bound. It is essential to improve pedestrian safety at this location. This will become even more important when the Promenade development is completed in the fall of 2005. Solutions may include a longer signal light for pedestrian crossings, an island in the middle of the street, and a more visible crosswalk. The committee also recommends that the feasibility of pedestrian overpass be researched. This project may be included as part of construction in the area for the upcoming DNA line.

PASSENGER COMFORT AMENITIES

The committee also evaluated the Passenger Comfort Amenities, which include shelter and/or seating, and the presence of trash cans and newspaper boxes.

Only one bus stop has a shelter at this time, although we understand there are plans for more soon. Since the evaluations were completed, many bus stops now have benches, which will not be reflected in the data. The benches definitely provide more comfort for those waiting for a bus, but the committee still recommends that shelters be provided to protect riders from the elements, especially at the most frequently used stops. Shelters are likely to attract more potential riders. The committee also felt that shade trees would be as important

as shelters for comfort and health, providing both shade and protection from harmful solar radiation.

Most of the benches are located close to or in the sidewalk area and pedestrian pathways are partially obstructed by the bench. If anyone is sitting on the bench, their legs would also obstruct passersby.

Also, only one bus stop has a trash can. A trash can should be located at all the busiest stops to avoid litter problems in the community. Specifically, the stop at Club Center and Natomas Blvd. requires a trash can. Staff members of the Club have expressed that there are problems due to daily trash cleanup after the morning's peak period commute.

Newspaper boxes are also rare, but would be a welcome addition to many of the busier bus stops. It would be a benefit to riders to be able to pick up a paper to read while waiting for and riding on the bus. Again, the stop at Club Center and Natomas Blvd. would be improved by the presence of a newspaper box, since the area is primarily residential with no opportunities to purchase a paper nearby.

SAFETY/SECURITY FEATURES

In the Safety/Security Features section of the assessment, the committee looked at the general traffic and pedestrian safety issues, the quality of lighting, the presence of pay phones, and the landscaping in the bus stop area.

Most of the bus stops are located in the travel lanes. It would improve traffic safety and flow if the bus did not block traffic, especially at the busier stops where it requires more time to unload and load passengers.

None of the streets that the bus route uses allow for on-street parking, so there are no problems with cars parked near enough to the stops to prevent easy access for the bus.

Many of the stops do not have adequate lighting, especially within the residential area. General street lighting is usually not bright enough, and stops should be located directly under street lamps whenever possible, or another source of lighting should be provided. Solar lighting may be appropriate at the bus stops in the residential areas.

The committee recommends moving the south bound Northborough bus stop to the intersection of Northborough and Club Center. This will improve lighting and increase security by placing the bus stop in a more open area. The current stop is isolated from view by walls on both sides of Northborough.

Although no stops have pay phones, they are probably not always needed. Many riders do carry cell phones, and in the commercial districts, phones would be available in the case of an emergency. A pay phone may be a benefit at the stop at Fredericksburg and North Park.

INFORMATION FEATURES

Finally, the committee assessed the Bus Information Features. All bus stops were marked with RT signs and the route number. In general, the signs were easy to spot, with no problems of landscaping or other features to block the view.

Only one stop included route schedule information. The committee feels it is very important for the schedule to be posted at all stops, especially considering the long time (1-hour) between midday buses. A route map would also be beneficial.

SERVICE AND FREQUENCY

Committee members and the NNTMA staff have heard from many residents that the Route 11 bus does not operate timely. One committee member rode the bus from downtown to North Natomas in February 2004, and the bus was a half hour late arriving. She was told by others at the stop that "this was typical, it was always late in the afternoon." Reliability is a key factor when people choose their commute mode. The committee recommends that RT explore all possible ways to improve the reliability and timeliness of this route. The NNTMA Employee and Resident Transportation Survey indicates that 19% of residents who do not ride transit currently felt that transit was a possible option. More than 6% of residents reported using the bus or light rail as a previous mode of commuting, yet only 2% currently use these forms of transit.

There is a definite potential ridership in North Natomas, but the service must meet these commuters' needs.

When asked what incentives to use transit mattered, nearly 5% of the residents cited more frequent service as an important consideration. High-frequency service would allow for less waiting times and reduce the need to consult schedules. It also allows for more likely transfers to other lines. The committee recommends that RT increase the frequency of Route 11 to every fifteen minutes in peak periods and every half hour during the non peak periods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve reliability of route schedule.
(See Service and Frequency).
2. Increase route frequency to fifteen minutes during peak periods and every half hour during non-peak periods.
(See Service and Frequency).
3. Add additional bus stops on both sides of Natomas Blvd. at Park Place North. (See Stop Identification/Location).
4. Improve pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Truxel and Gateway Park. (See Pedestrian Access Features).
5. Move bench at south bound bus stop at the Natomas Marketplace at Gateway Park further back from the road and sidewalk.
(See Passenger Comfort Amenities.)
6. Add a very visible crosswalk at the stop at Banfield and North Park to provide safe access from nearby residences to the bus stop.
(See Pedestrian Access Features).
7. Move the south bound Northborough bus stop to the intersection of Northborough and Club Center.
(See Safety and Security Features).

8. Relocate the stop at Fredericksburg and North Park to the southwest corner of the intersection.
(See Stop Identification/Location).
9. Post route schedules and maps at all bus stops.
(See Information Features).
10. Provide solar lighting at bus stops in the residential areas.
(See Safety & Security Features).
11. Move the southbound stop at Natomas Crossing closer to the intersection for more convenience for riders in the Natomas Crossing neighborhood.
(See Stop Identification/Location).
12. Add shelters and/or plant trees for all or most bus stops.
(See Passenger Comfort Amenities).

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Attachments:

Bus Stop Data

Route 11 Map

Stop ID Table

Assessment Form

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