



RIDE ON, GV

GVL / Eric Coulter

Take the ride: Students wait for their stop on Grand Valley State University's Rapid Route 37. GVSU's transportation services recently sent out a survey to the entire GVSU community as a "quality control measure," asking questions that will help the university better gauge transportation needs of students, faculty and staff to make the appropriate adjustments and improvements.

Transportation administers campus-wide survey, reports no plans for bussing changes on the horizon

BY LIZZY BALBOA
GVL NEWS EDITOR

Transportation Services of Grand Valley State University recently sent out its annual survey to members of the GVSU community to determine the usage and overall satisfaction with the transportation system.

"The annual survey is a quality control measure which also helps us gauge the transportation needs of our students, faculty and staff," said Pew Campus Operations Manager Mark Rambo. "We want to know how we are doing and what we can improve upon."

The survey inquired into the frequency of bus use, time of bus use and overall satisfaction of the busing system, which were all asked and analyzed in previous

years' surveys. Some new questions were more complex, though, and probed at deeper issues.

For example, one question asked, "Has the GVSU transportation system influenced your decision to attend or remain at GVSU?" While the question may seem drastic, Rambo said the relationship between available transportation and academic choice is an important study to consider.

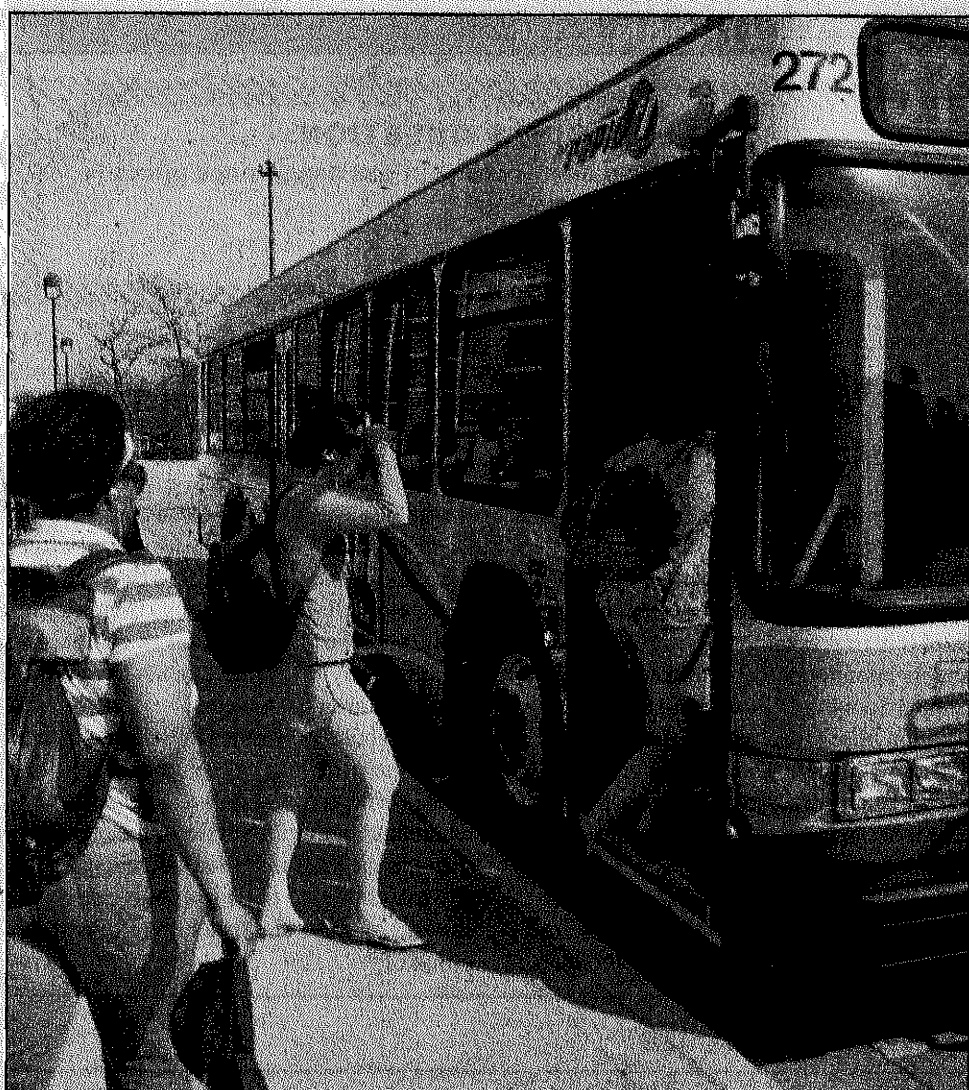
"Riding the bus has become part of the culture of Grand Valley and we would like to know if it has a correlation to enrollment and retention," he said.

Another question asked whether the respondent would continue to use the GVSU buses even if they were required to pay a fee, and the following question asked

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MARK RAMBO
PEW CAMPUS
OPERATIONS MANAGER

SEE BUS, A3



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On the road again: Students at Grand Valley State University hop on the Rapid's Route 37, an off-campus apartment connector, around midday on Wednesday outside of GVSU's Kirkhof Center.

BUS

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the highest amount of money a person would pay to continue using the buses. Although the question pointedly addressed a financial opportunity currently unpracticed at the university, Rambo said GVSU officials have no intention of imposing fees on bus riders at this time.

In fact, these probing questions do not reflect any potential changes to the busing system, he said. As of now, no major modifications are planned for GVSU transportation services.

However, some changes may be beyond the school's control. Current labor disputes between the Amalgamated Transit Union and The Rapid, or Interurban Transit Partnership, could potentially leave GVSU riders with inconsistent bus drivers, said Richard Jackson, vice president of ATU Local-836.

Jackson said the ATU and ITP have undergone many attempts at negotiating the employment contracts of bus drivers, mechanics, technicians and maintenance workers, but a compromise has yet to be made. The union and The Rapid will return to the bargaining table again soon, but if they cannot come to an agreement after a certain period of time, ITP can impose work rules unwanted by the union.

Jackson said the biggest change GVSU students could possibly see is an inconsistency in bus drivers, who currently pick their own schedules and routes based on seniority. Unsuccessful negotiations could cause The Rapid to adopt the scheme of "rostering," which would do away with the seniority rule and allow different bus drivers to alternate shifts.

While this may not be a problem for some riders, Jackson said other regular

riders prefer to rely on the same driver for the same shifts.

GVSU Transportation Services does take into account the riders' opinion of bus drivers by asking about satisfaction on the survey. Rambo said the department is concerned with drivers' safety, customer service and driving ability, but the university cannot select which drivers take the GVSU routes.

Regardless of the university's limited power over bus drivers, results from the Winter 2010 and 2011 survey show a majority of survey takers had good or excellent experiences with their bus drivers in terms of safety and attitude.

PCO will close the 2012 survey in a few weeks and post the results online shortly after.

To review the survey results from 2010 and 2011, visit www.gvsu.edu/bus/transportation-survey-results-49.htm.

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