

Opinion

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THE BATTALION

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Sit down, Bus Ops! Whoop!

Texas A&M Bus Operation's new routes cause turmoil among drivers, passengers

Faced with construction beginning on Wellborn Road, Bus Operations had three months during the summer to plan new bus routes to get around the construction, but three months must not have been long enough. The decisions made by Bus Operations to change bus routes have turned the bus system into a nightmare for some of its passengers. The ExCEL bus, for example, experienced a move that gives the traditionally Southside route a 20-minute detour to the other side of campus.

The new routes for some of the buses are necessary because of the construction on Wellborn and the fact that they cannot go down Joe Routh or across Wellborn. Numerous routes stop off at the Memorial Student Center, which would have caused bottlenecks at the Albritton Tower as the buses exited main campus. Two off-campus routes, Elephant Walk and

Hullabaloo, were moved to the Trigon area near the Psychology building and Heldenfels in an effort to ease the traffic. Bus Operations then sent Trigon routes, including ExCEL and Aggie Band, to the opposite side of campus near Blocker.

Where is the rationale behind changing bus routes that would have continued to run smoothly despite the construction? Rather than devising a plan to correct the MSC and other West campus routes that truly needed to be changed, the system has been turned completely upside down. The first two weeks of school, it became almost routine for ExCEL passengers to wait up to 25 minutes for a bus to arrive at the main campus stop. This was understandable at the time, considering the route change, but still a long time to wait for a bus.

Undoubtedly, conditions have improved and there is more regularity on the route now, but the fact remains that Bus Operations moved a smooth-running route to a completely different stop. What was once a short eight-minute ride to campus has turned into

a marathon tour through College Station. The ExCEL route travels all the way down Texas Avenue and then down University straight into arguably the most congested area of campus, where it once drove straight down George Bush Drive.

In the spirit of democracy and sensing some dissent among its passengers, ExCEL riders were given an opportunity by Bus Operations to vote on the route and where its main campus stop should be. The ballot given to ExCEL passengers was seemingly carefully crafted to achieve an outcome convenient for Bus Operations. There were positives and negatives listed for three possible bus stops and then a space to vote at the bottom. Positives listed for the current route and stop on Ireland Street included "easier to remember" and "close to main campus classes." These are hardly positive aspects of the current route, it is not difficult to get on a bus and remember where it stops, and Blocker may not be close to someone's classes. No negative aspects concerning the 20-minute ride to campus

were listed, rather, the obvious "Ross Street causes big delays" was the only negative to be considered by voters. For the proposed G. Rollie White Coliseum stop, a positive was "near MSC," which is a fact not a positive, and the negative was that it was "not as close to classes."

Gary Jackson, Bus Operations manager, released a memo to ExCEL passengers on September 24 stating that 45 percent of passengers voted to keep the route the same. He cited the democratic process in keeping the route on Ireland Street and vowed to continue monitoring the situation in hopes that the route would continue to improve. The fact that the majority of its passengers did not ride ExCEL last year when it dropped off at the Trigon coupled with the poorly planned ballot allowed for the landslide victory for the Ireland Street stop.

We cannot allow passengers to vote on bus routes, as their minds would change every semester with the location of their classes. Bus Operations has a duty to serve students in the best

manner possible, and this includes planning well-thought-out bus routes that get students where they need to be in an efficient way.

Ballot, voting and democracy aside when paying for a service, there is a standard that must be demanded by patrons. A&M students all incur a bus fee, and the system should reflect the best possible product for their money. Waiting over 25 minutes to get to campus and accepting a standard much less than one previously in place are not things that ExCEL passengers should settle for.

Luckily for Bus Operation, the traffic conditions on Ross Street have eased, taking some of the pressure off of them and the routes that they send into this congested area. The decrease in traffic conceals the fact that Bus Operations ignored previously existing traffic conditions and made thoughtless, illogical changes in bus routes that passengers counted on.

Kelln Zimmer is a junior English major.



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MAIL CALL

More talk about tolerance is needed

In response to Jessica Crutcher's Oct. 11th column:

I was very pleased to read Ms. Crutcher's column in *The Battalion*. I would like to see more talk of tolerance here at Texas A&M, though sadly, I do not. I realize that A&M is a generally conservative campus, but I do not think that means that we have to be intolerant to other ideas as well.

I realize that Ms. Crutcher's main idea is tolerance towards homosexuals, but I believe that this doctrine can be expanded to cover many other aspects of our lives, including sex, religion, race, and so on. I know it is hard to listen to someone who has an

opinion that is directly opposite of yours, but we must be adults about these matters and realize that there is room for all manner of perspectives here in our great university.

Mack Nolan
Class of 2004

Conservatives are only fighting back

In response to Jessica Crutcher's Oct. 11th column:

I find it appalling the claims that were made in the article by Ms. Crutcher. The Young Conservatives started Traditional Family Values Week in response to Coming Out Week. The purpose of Coming Out Week is to educate and show support for

Gays, Lesbians, etc. The purpose of Family Values Week is to educate and show support for family values. One statement that was made in the article was concerning the fact that YCTAM is in the wrong for actively approaching people in order to get their message across.

However, I seem to recall that on Monday there were gay advocates standing right in the middle of the Rudder Fountain area passing out fliers to hapless passers by, many of whom were offended at what the fliers said.

For years, we have sat on the sidelines watching the GLBTA have their events, all the while, making Texas A&M into a more pro-homosexual campus.

Adding to this, the Texas A&M administration has accommodated the GLBTA by providing resources and funds to promote their cause. If a student decides not to accept the homosexual value system as equal to their own, they certainly have the right to do that.

The bottom line is that there are two sides to every issue and in this case, their values are in direct conflict with ours. GLBTA promotes the pro-homosexual side, and YCTAM promotes the side of pro-family values that this nation was founded on.

If the GLBTA continues to promote their ideas, then it is the right of YCTAM to promote theirs and for anyone to fault us for this is both self-righteous and hypocritical.

David Rushing
Class of 2002

ResLife: Too much control

Since the Aggie Bonfire collapse, Texas

A&M has placed a huge emphasis on risk management to divert future accidents. All of these efforts are well-intentioned and most are very effective. However, some fall short of their intended goal of keeping students safe and actually prevent some students from helping other students, and change is needed.

Risk management is a process of identifying, reducing and eliminating risk involved with a particular activity. The purpose of risk management should be to protect the safety and health of students, first and foremost. The minor role in risk management should be eliminating University liability — only after the student's safety is ensured, A&M is one of the top universities in the nation and is striving to become better. To achieve the goals of Vision 2020, student safety and welfare should be placed above everything else.

Unfortunately, at times limiting liability can take away from ensuring student's safety. The University exists for the students, students do not exist for the University. That is why student's welfare should be the first priority in all situations.

If a student is injured or sick and needs immediate medical attention, the Department of Residence Life instructs all resident advisors not to drive that student to the hospital, but rather call someone else. Under no circumstances can an RA drive a student to the hospital. Because the RA is an employee of the University, the University is afraid of lawsuits that may come in any situation. In the past RAs had been told to drive sick or injured students to the hospital, but now the importance has been placed on the welfare of the University and not that of a student. This is not keeping the student's best interest in mind, but rather the financial interest of the University as the top priority. If someone needs medical attention, the RA should be allowed to bring

them to the best possible medical care. That would be putting the student's interests first.

RAs must now turn in event planners that outline their proposed event and all possible risks involved. This is a great idea in theory, but not when it goes too far.

RAs must even document that a paper cut is a possibility in a dorm hall card tournament. This shows how something good for Aggies has been taken too far.

Will Frederick, a junior psychology major, believes that spontaneity is one of the best parts of college life.

"Part of the college experience is just doing things on the spur of the moment," Frederick said. "I love just going out with my friends with no prior plans and having a great time."

The new RA rules about prior planning of events prohibits this. An event plan has to be filled out in advance, negating the possibility of a spontaneous activities coordinated by the R.A.

A&M offers a fine education, and prides itself on the "other education" offered here. Students are able to get hands-on training and new experiences through a wide range of clubs and organizations. If A&M required a one-hour course in risk management for incoming freshmen, new students would learn essential life skills to benefit them both during their stay at A&M and throughout their life. Risk management skills are very important, and an available course would benefit A&M as a whole.

Having risk management skills taught to students on campus instead of only the student leaders would make A&M an inherently safer campus.

ResLife has great intentions in keeping the students and the University safe. With the new risk management implementations there will be obvious kinks in the system. It is a work in progress, and as such, should be reevaluated. There may be growing pains with a new program, but they should be corrected for the full benefit of students.

Thomas Campbell is a senior agricultural journalism major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



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