

Driver Shortage Forces MCT To Consider Service Reductions

by Ellie Carrow

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PONTOON BEACH - As transit agencies across the country struggle to provide service amid a national driver shortage, Madison County Transit (MCT) finds itself in a difficult position: reduce service or face daily service interruptions. Nearly 30 bus drivers down,

MCT is proposing weekday frequency reductions on three routes and the elimination of a low-performing route, for the upcoming January 2023 service change. The existing workforce is in desperate need of relief after 18 months of mandated overtime. MCT's mission is to provide safe, affordable, and reliable public transportation service but with the current driver shortage reliability is compromised.

The proposed changes would reduce weekday frequency from every 30 minutes to every 60 minutes on the #4 Madison-Edwardsville, #7 Alton-Edwardsville, and #18 Collinsville Regional. In addition, MCT proposes to eliminate the #23 Gateway Commerce Center Shuttle due to low ridership and the duplication of service offered on the #20 Granite City-Pontoon Beach Shuttle. These proposed reductions would ensure that MCT's service would remain predictable and reliable.

Proposed Service Reductions & Elimination:

- #4 Madison-Edwardsville: Decrease weekday frequency between Granite City and Edwardsville from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.
- #7 Alton-Edwardsville: Decrease frequency between Alton and Edwardsville Station from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. Discontinue service to Alton Regional Multimodal Transportation Center while continuing service to Alton Square Mall.
- #18 Collinsville Regional: Decrease weekday frequency between Collinsville and Emerson Park MetroLink from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.
- #23 Gateway Commerce Center Shuttle: Discontinue route due to low ridership.

MCT recognizes the impact these changes could have on passengers who rely on this service to reach work and school, to run vital errands, to access medical appointments, and to visit family and friends. To engage the public, gather feedback, and answer questions about the proposed changes, MCT will host several open house-style information sessions at the times, dates, and locations listed below:

- Tuesday, October 18 MCT Edwardsville Station 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 18 MCT Wood River Station 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 19 Virtual Meeting (visit mct.org for a link) 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Thursday, October 20 Alton Regional Multimodal Station 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
- Thursday, October 20 MCT Collinsville Station 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

“Reducing or eliminating service is the last resort,” said MCT Managing Director SJ Morrison. “But we can’t continue to force our drivers to work this much overtime, we’re burning out our workforce.”

Employment Opportunities

Agency for Community Transit (ACT) employs MCT's bus drivers and is always seeking to hire friendly, energetic professionals to drive MCT's green and white buses. No experience is needed as all training is provided. In an effort to recruit drivers and expedite the application and hiring process, ACT has deployed a mobile recruitment center, dubbed "The Hiring Bus," to travel throughout Madison County. "The Hiring Bus" is an MCT bus offering individuals interested in working for ACT the ability to apply and be interviewed the same day. "The Hiring Bus" will be at the following locations in the month of October:

- Tuesday, October 11 9 – 11 a.m. MCT Eastgate Park & Ride, East Alton
- Thursday, October 13 9 – 11 a.m. Kohl's Parking Lot, Collinsville
- Tuesday, October 18 9 – 11 a.m. MCT Troy Park & Ride, Troy
- Thursday, October 20 1 – 3 p.m. AMC Edwardsville 12 Theatre, Edwardsville
- Tuesday, October 25 9 – 11 a.m. Outrageous Outdoors, Jerseyville
- Thursday, October 27 1 – 3 p.m. Madison Meat Market, Madison

ACT offers drivers competitive wages with an increase upon completion of a probationary period. Full-time work is available upon hire, as well as health and retirement benefits. Positions in high demand, such as drivers, fuelers, cleaners, and mechanics qualify for a \$1,000 sign-on bonus. For a list of all open positions and their descriptions, or to apply online, visit www.ACTinfo.org/jobs. ACT is a drug free workplace and an equal opportunity employer.

"It's our hope that over the course of the next few months, enough drivers will be hired in order to reduce or even cancel these proposed service changes," said Morrison. "We're urging the public to spread the word about this critical need for drivers in order to help keep this service consistent and reliable for the thousands of Madison County residents who need it the most."

To learn more about the proposed January 2023 Service Change visit www.mct.org, email info@mct.org, or call 618-797-INFO (4636).

Madison County Transit (MCT) provides multi-modal transportation services for Madison County, Illinois. MCT operates a fixed-route bus service, connecting to MetroLink; express weekday commuter service directly to and from downtown St. Louis; and seasonal express service the Muny. For elderly and disabled residents who are unable to use the fixed-route buses, MCT provides complementary door to door service. MCT is also responsible for the construction and maintenance of more than 138 miles of bikeways that comprise the MCT Trails system, as well as overseeing RideFinders, the St. Louis region's FREE carpooling and vanpooling program.