AU Tiger Transit sets record for number of riders

Record numbers of Auburn students are riding Tiger Transit this fall.

Buses from Groome Transportation, which operates the AU transit system, carried 72,000 riders the week of Aug. 22-26, the first full week of classes, and are averaging more than 60,000 riders per week, not including football Saturdays.

The numbers are 10,000 riders per week higher than this time last year and 20,000 per week higher than two years ago.

“More students than ever are riding buses to campus and leaving their vehicles parked at their apartments,” said David George, AU’s director of parking and transit services. “They see Tiger Transit as an alternative to the traffic congestion and parking problems they would face if they drove in and spent time looking for a parking spot.”

Even students who drive to campus make heavy use of the buses to get from parking areas to their classes and back, he added.

The increased demand joined with construction detours and employee turnover among drivers to cause delays on some routes in the semester’s first few weeks. In response, the system added buses, routed around detours and trained new drivers.

Tiger Transit, which ran up to 32 buses a day last year, is running up to 35 per day this fall. The transit system has added three large Blue-Bird buses this fall to help handle continuing increases in riders on the busiest routes. While the standard Tiger Transit buses seat 30 riders and can accommodate approximately 10 standing passengers, the Blue Bird buses seat 44 and can hold up to 20 standing riders.

The first two full-size buses are operating on the Longleaf and South Auburn routes, and the third bus was added last week on the Ross-Harper route.

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Administrative, professional staff vote to grant A&P Assembly authority

AU administrative and professional staff members will meet on Oct. 20 to consider granting more authority to the A&P Assembly.

Employees classified as administrative or professional will vote at the 3 p.m. session in Foy 213 on a proposal to take a section out of the university’s constitution. Such action would enable the representative body to recommend changes in procedures to the administration in the future without the need to call a vote of the membership on each change. The 23-member assembly represents 2,167 employees, but few attend the meetings.

If approved in the Oct. 20 vote, the proposed changes would give the interim President Ed Richardson further authority.

If the section is removed from the assembly’s constitution, the assembly must approve any rules regarding grievances that will remain in effect. The proposed change would not affect the university’s grievance policy and procedures as outlined in an AU employee handbook, or the role of the assembly’s grievance committee in administering grievances filed by administrative or professional employees.

A&P officers say the assembly needs the authority to act on behalf of its members without having to put procedures in writing twice, or to a full vote of the membership. They also note that the assembly’s constitution is not binding on the administration. With no grievances by administrative or professional employees pending against supervisors or the university at the time, the assembly voted in August to call the upcoming general session for all its representatives to consider taking the grievance policy out of the group’s constitution.

The assembly also has posted a draft of grievance policy changes online at www.auburn.edu/administration/govenance/ap.

The representative body is examining its constitutional section on grievances after Lynne Hammond, AU’s assistant vice president for human resources, cited inconsistencies in procedures for the university’s two non-faculty groups.

The Office of Human Resources is working with the A&P Assembly and the Staff Council to update and standardize grievance procedures for all employees who are represented by either body.

The proposed change does not affect faculty, who are represented by the University Senate, which has its own constitution and operating procedures.

Upcoming Events

The College of Sciences and Mathematics has two new department chairs.

Dean Stewart Schneller has announced the appointment of Charles E. Savrda as chair of the Department of Geology and Geography and S. D. Worley as interim chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Savrda replaces Robert B. Cook, who stepped down over the summer to return to the classroom, and Worley replaces William E. Hill, who recently retired after 35 years on the Auburn faculty.

“COASAM is fortunate to have the talented leadership that Drs. Worley and Savrda will provide as we continue the progress established by their predecessors in teaching, research and outreach,” Schneller said.

On the faculty since 1986, Savrda is a past recipient of the Dean’s Award for Outstanding Teaching and the Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Award of the Auburn University Alumni Association.

Savrda earned his bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University, and his master’s and doctorate in Geological Sciences from the University of California.

Worley has been on the faculty for 31 years. In 2004, the American Chemical Society presented him with the Charles Noyce Award for recognizing him as the outstanding chemist of the year in the Southeast.

Worley earned his bachelor’s degree from Auburn in 1964, conducted graduate work at the University of Tennessee and earned a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Texas in 1969.

“Our most important responsibility this year in the department will be to recruit new faculty members to replace people who have retired,” said Worley. “Certainly, our priority will be the search for a permanent chair.”

Professor invited to speak at international conference on nutrition

Margaret Craig-Schmidt of the College of Human Sciences was an invited speaker at an international conference on nutrition in Denmark in September.

Craig-Schmidt, a professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science since 1977, spoke in Copenhagen at the First International Symposium on Trans Fatty Acids and Health, which was sponsored by the Danish Nutrition Council.

The Auburn professor, who has conducted extensive research on nutrition, spoke on “Worldwide Consumption of Trans Fatty Acids.”

Trans fatty acids, some of which are saturated fats, are found in most margarine and shortening products and are widely used in snack foods, crackers and baked goods. Due to health concerns, most doctors recommend limiting these foods in their patients’ diets.
**AU Theatre ‘Defying Gravity’ next week in launch of new season at Telfair Peet**

AU Theatre launches its 2005-06 season on Oct. 18 with “Defying Gravity,” a play about the emotional impact of a highly public family tragedy. The play by Jane Alexander presents a fictionalized account of the final days of Christa McAuliffe, the teacher-passenger who died with the crew of the Space Shuttle Challenger in the shuttle’s 1986 explosion. In the play, however, the teacher is never identified by name. The teacher’s daughter narrates the family’s perspective of the events leading up to and after the fatal launch. The tale maintains its focus on ordinary lives but takes a wider turn in exploring the impact of the disaster on witnesses who were expecting a flawless launch.

“Defying Gravity” will run at Telfair Peet Theatre from Oct. 18-22 at 7:30 p.m., with a 2:30 p.m. matinee on Oct. 22. The play will return on Nov. 16 and 18 in repertory with Neil LaBute’s “The Shape of Things,” a dark comedy about manipulation and isolation in modern society, on Nov. 15 and 17. LaBute’s play will also run Nov. 8-13. The two plays in October and November were moved to the top of the AU Theatre’s calendar for 2005-06 after the department rescheduled “Best Little Whorehouse in Texas” from late September to April to fit all the season’s plays in the current fiscal year, which started on Oct. 1.

AU Theatre is offering free student admission to all plays in the 2005-06 season. Faculty, staff and senior citizen tickets are $18 each, and general admission is $20. For tickets, call 844-4154 from noon-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

**New survey finds strong backing for open-air ag market**

A survey of customers at the inaugural season of the College of Agriculture’s weekly farmers market shows strong public support for the open-air market. Freshness and the opportunity to buy directly from farmers were cited as the top reasons for shopping at the market by 86 percent of respondents in the informal poll.

**How Auburn Stacks Up**

Source: Institutional Research and Assessment

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