



4. seasonal bus service

Seasonal buses are slightly different than commuter buses, but offer a similar concept in that the service is highly tailored to a specific need. Seasonal bus services generally refer to services that are available part-year and associated with a specific demand and often in response to a specific infrastructure need, such as not enough parking or excessive traffic congestion. As a result, many seasonal services are associated with vacation or resort communities, such as beach and national park communities in the summer or ski resorts in the winter. In other examples, seasonal service may be affiliated with an academic calendar.

How it works

The concept behind seasonal services are that demand from a place exceeds either the roadway capacity or parking resources. For instance, employers associated with the hospitality trade need employees to get to work reliably, but typically also want to save their parking spots for visitors. As a result, they thus have a strong incentive to encourage employees to commute by alternative modes. Employees are also attracted to alternative commute option to save money.



Seasonal services can be challenging to implement because transit agencies must add short-term drivers who are qualified and willing to work and provide vehicles that may not be in service at other times of the year. In some cases, agencies have been able to work within the constraints because demand is so acute, they are compelled to meet it. In other cases, seasonal services align with each other (i.e. summer services and public school bus schedules), to create a full year of service. In addition, sometimes, agencies are able to accommodate shorter seasonal demands through creative strategies, such as re-assigning vehicles and hiring temporary workers. Agencies may be motivated to pursue these types of services because of the potential for additional contract revenue that can be used as local match.

Best Practice

The **Milwaukee County Transit Authority** offers a series of summertime services, including service to Milwaukee Brewers Games, Lakefront Festival, the Wisconsin State Fair, and other summer time special events. While many of these events are focused on getting participants to and from the events, at least two of the services – the Milwaukee Brewers Game service and the Lakefront Festivals are also designed with employees in mind. Events are frequent enough, so that combined; they represent a fairly significant increase in service needs.



Application to the Mid-South Region

Seasonal service, especially as it relates to specific employer needs, on the other hand, may have a more immediate application. The need for seasonal service reflects the fact that the Mid-South economy has a strong logistics sector, which typically has a strong seasonal fluctuation around the holiday period (i.e. Thanksgiving to early January). As a result, many employers add staff during the



holidays, including employers such as Federal Express, who rely on a large evening shift of employees to sort and pack mail and packages. Seasonal hiring during the holiday period is also evident at the shopping malls. Demand for people to get to and from worksites is stronger during the holiday period at some major employment locations, such as Federal Express, Ingram Micro, the Wolfchase Mall, retail activity along Germantown Road. In addition, because many people may not work at these locations regularly, transportation and parking challenges may be more acute and people may be more willing to explore new and different options. Providing added Parking for seasonal peaks can carry additional costs also.

MATA may work with some of the major employers to develop specific bus routes to meet a need for seasonal commuter runs at peak times. Discussions should also include strategies to help support tailored transit services, either through direct funding or cost sharing strategies such as purchasing bus passes in bulk. These types of bus routes would not meet all employee needs but four or five routes could be designed to bring employees from key neighborhoods with high concentrations of workers to the work site. Seasonal services could be designed similar to school bus service, so they make a handful of stops to pick up employees and then bring these workers to the front door of their job site. This type of direct service avoids challenges associated with walking to and from a bus stop at night or when the weather is bad.

