

# Using Blacksburg Transit to Commute to Campus

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## Technical Description

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Catching a bus from Blacksburg Transit is one of the most convenient ways for students living off campus to commute to their classes. This guide will focus on using Blacksburg Transit for commuting to class during weekdays, although many of the tips could also be applied in using BT for transportation on weekends or during late-night reduced service.

During Fall and Spring semesters, BT is on a **Full Service** schedule. At other times of the year, buses run the routes considerably less frequently. This is called the **Reduced Service** schedule.

	FULL SERVICE HOURS	REDUCED SERVICE HOURS
Monday - Thursday	7 a.m. - 12:45 a.m.	7 a.m. - 10:15 p.m.
Friday	7 a.m. - 2:45 a.m.	7a.m. - 10:15 p.m.
Saturday	9:30 a.m. - 2:45 a.m.	9:30 a.m. - 7:15 p.m.
Sunday	11:30 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.	11:30 a.m. - 7:15 p.m.

<http://www.blacksburg.gov/Index.aspx?page=1048> Retrieved 3/20/2014

There are routes which make their way to most apartment complexes and townhouse communities in the Blacksburg area. Some larger communities, such as Terrace View, have several stops spread around their perimeter, and therefore see buses from multiple routes.

If a route is overcrowded, BT may send a Tripper. These buses make single trips along routes where necessary in order to pick up individuals who were left behind when the normal bus was full. Sometimes they are sent preemptively along certain routes a few times a day when there has been a history of commuters frequently outnumbering the bus capacities. For example, Pheasant Run sees a Tripper very often, as the Patrick Henry route passes many complexes and is very popular. Trippers may also be utilized when a bus is running late and will likely not make it to a Time Check on schedule.

Service is free for students, as long as they are carrying their Hokie Passport. The cost of fare without a Hokie Passport is fifty cents per trip. Bus drivers are not able to give change, as the money is placed by the rider directly into a sealed container.

The first few times you ride on a route, you should give yourself a buffer and choose earlier times than the one you think you will take regularly, since you are not sure how long the trip to campus may take. Most routes require thirty minutes or less for a bus to travel all the way around, but many things can affect the time it takes for a trip on any given day. Foot traffic in the crosswalks often prevents buses from moving through campus for several minutes.

Blacksburg Transit tries hard to provide a reliable service to students. Routes connect to most communities throughout blacksburg, Trippers are used when necessary, and fare is always free to students with their Hokie Passports. The best source of reference for the current state of service and any questions or concerns is the BT website listed in the following procedure.

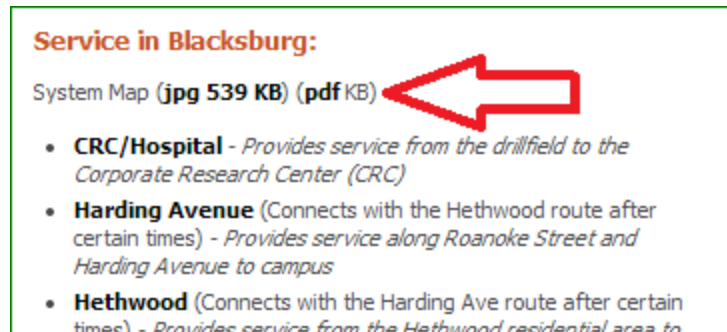
# Procedure

## Required materials:

- internet access
- Hokie Passport (or fifty cents per intended trip)

## Steps:

1. Access the Blacksburg Transit website at <http://www.blacksburg.gov/index.aspx?page=791> and click on the **Schedules & Maps** section
2. Open the “System Map” in the **Service in Blacksburg** section, and create a list of the routes which pass within a reasonable distance of where you will be leaving to catch the bus.



<http://www.blacksburg.gov/Index.aspx?page=885> Retrieved on 3/19/2014

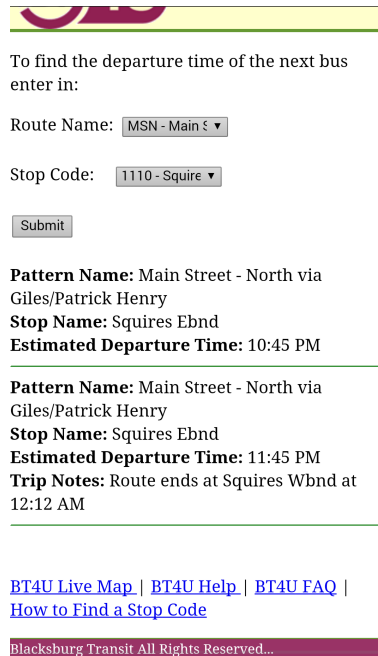
3. Head back to the **Schedules & Maps** section, and then open the page for each route you listed in the previous step.
  - a. Shown on these maps are some of the specific stops the buses on each route make. Since Blacksburg Transit has over 200 stops in Blacksburg alone, not every stop appears on the maps. If you have seen a stop close to your home which is not shown on the maps, write down the four digit Stop Code on the BT Bus Stop sign and check that number as well when you access BT4U in Step 5c.
4. Narrow your list down further to one stop per route at most.
5. Now, there are two ways to find a specific bus to catch:
  - a. use the timetables on the Blacksburg Transit website

**NOTE: The timetables only list times for Time Checks.**

**This makes it necessary to determine the closest Time Check before your potential stops, then the time of a specific stop must be estimated.**



- b. access [BT4U](#) and choose the **BT4U Classic** interface
  - i. Choose the route then stop name, and a list of times will display down to the minute when a bus should be arriving at the stop.



The screenshot shows the BT4U Classic interface. At the top, there is a header with the BT4U logo. Below the header, a prompt says "To find the departure time of the next bus enter in:". There are two dropdown menus: "Route Name:" with "MSN - Main St" selected, and "Stop Code:" with "1110 - Squire" selected. A "Submit" button is below these. The results are displayed in two sections. The first section shows: "Pattern Name: Main Street - North via Giles/Patrick Henry", "Stop Name: Squires Ebnd", and "Estimated Departure Time: 10:45 PM". The second section shows: "Pattern Name: Main Street - North via Giles/Patrick Henry", "Stop Name: Squires Ebnd", "Estimated Departure Time: 11:45 PM", and "Trip Notes: Route ends at Squires Wbnd at 12:12 AM". At the bottom, there are links for "BT4U Live Map", "BT4U Help", "BT4U FAQ", and "How to Find a Stop Code". A footer at the very bottom says "Blacksburg Transit All Rights Reserved..."

<http://bt4u.org/Mobile.aspx> Retrieved on 3/27/2014

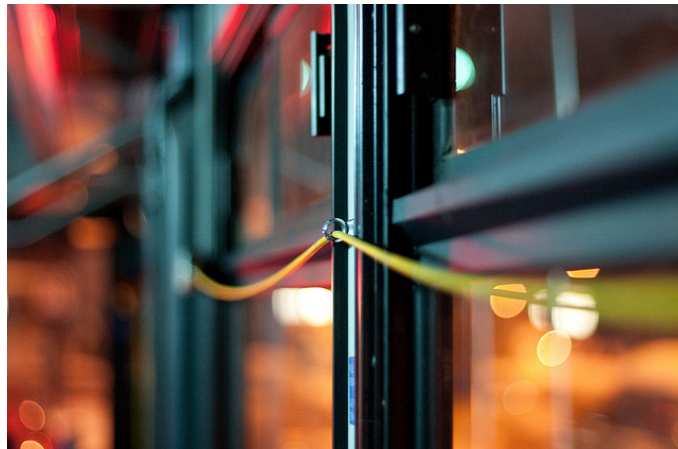
6. Pick a stop and time that work for you.
7. Plan to be at the stop a few minutes before the bus should arrive, sometimes they will arrive early and leave almost immediately if the stop is not a Time Check.
8. Before leaving, make sure you have your Hokie Passport with you. Being caught without it means you may not be able to get on the bus unless you pay.
9. Head to your chosen stop.
10. Watch the display on the front of the bus as it approaches to make sure it is running the route you want.

**NOTE: If a Tripper arrives, denoted by "Tripper" occasionally flashing in place of the route name, it is likely that the buses on the route are overcrowded. You should likely still use the Tripper to get to campus, but it will only make one stop once there and everyone must exit.**

**WARNING: Do not stand right on the curb as the bus is approaching. The front end is raised and in pulling up to the stop the bumper may pass beyond the edge of the curb onto the sidewalk.**

11. Board the bus at the front door only.
12. Display your Hokie Passport to the driver while boarding. As long as enough of the face of the card is visible for the driver to see that it is indeed a Hokie Passport bearing your photo, you do not need to remove it from your wallet or any casing you keep it in.

- a. Alternatively, you can pay by inserting money into the slot on top of the glass box to the right when you step on.
- 13.** Find a seat. This is mostly arbitrary, but consider the following.
- a. The front section of seats facing inwards must be given up to elderly or disabled passengers if there are none in that section open. If the bus is overly crowded and there is potential that all riders at a stop may not fit on the bus, the bus driver will instruct all passengers in the front section to stand up and fold up their seats in order to make more room.
  - b. When you are seated, it is generally acceptable to place your belongings on the seat next to you only if there are other seats available. It is heavily frowned upon to keep your backpack on a seat while passengers are forced to stand because they can't find an open spot.
- 14.** Pull any of the yellow cords as the bus is approaching the stop where you wish to exit to signal to the driver that he/she should allow passengers to exit at the next stop.



“Pull to Stop” by Eric Magnuson

- 15.** Check to make sure you have all of your belongings, then exit from one of the rear doors, as other passengers will likely be boarding from the front.
- 16.** Catch a bus from the same route you rode to campus on when you are ready to head home. This is much easier because all bus routes that go through campus have a Time Check on campus as well. Use the route maps and BT4U in the same manner as before to locate the Time Check for your route and find available times to board.

A bus parked and waiting at the Burruss Time Check→

“Virginia Tech to celebrate Earth Week with Commuter Challenge” by Blue Ridge Business Journal



# Glossary

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**Blacksburg Transit** - bus system in Blacksburg which is free for students.

**BT** - acronym for Blacksburg Transit. The organization itself is fond of using this shortened name.

**BT4U** - web-app provided by Blacksburg Transit to check bus arrival times for individual stops.

**Full Service** - schedule used during Fall and Spring semesters to provide for the increased demands of a larger student body.

**Reduced Service** - schedule used outside of Fall and Spring semesters. Trips are less frequent.

**Time Check** - bus stops where buses must park and wait if they arrive before the scheduled departure time. They help to keep the routes on schedule and are useful for passengers determining when and where they can board.

**Trippler** - bus used to pick up single trips along a route when necessary.

## Sources

*Blacksburg Transit*. The Town of Blacksburg, 2014. Web, 27 March, 2014

“Pull to Stop” *Flickr photostream*. Eric Magnuson, 29 Oct. 2009. Web. 23 March, 2014.

“Virginia Tech to celebrate Earth Week with Commuter Challenge” *Flickr photostream*. Blue Ridge Business Journal, 11 Apr. 2008. Web. 23 March, 2014.