

The Honorable Gene F. McGee (Mayor)
City of Ridgeland
100 West School Street
Ridgeland, MS
39157

November 28, 2023

Dear Mayor McGee,

As a transportation and livable communities advocate, person with mobility limitations, and Citizen of Jackson, Mississippi, I am writing to ask you to welcome JTRAN's new proposed bus routes to Northpark Mall and the Walmart on Wheatley Street.

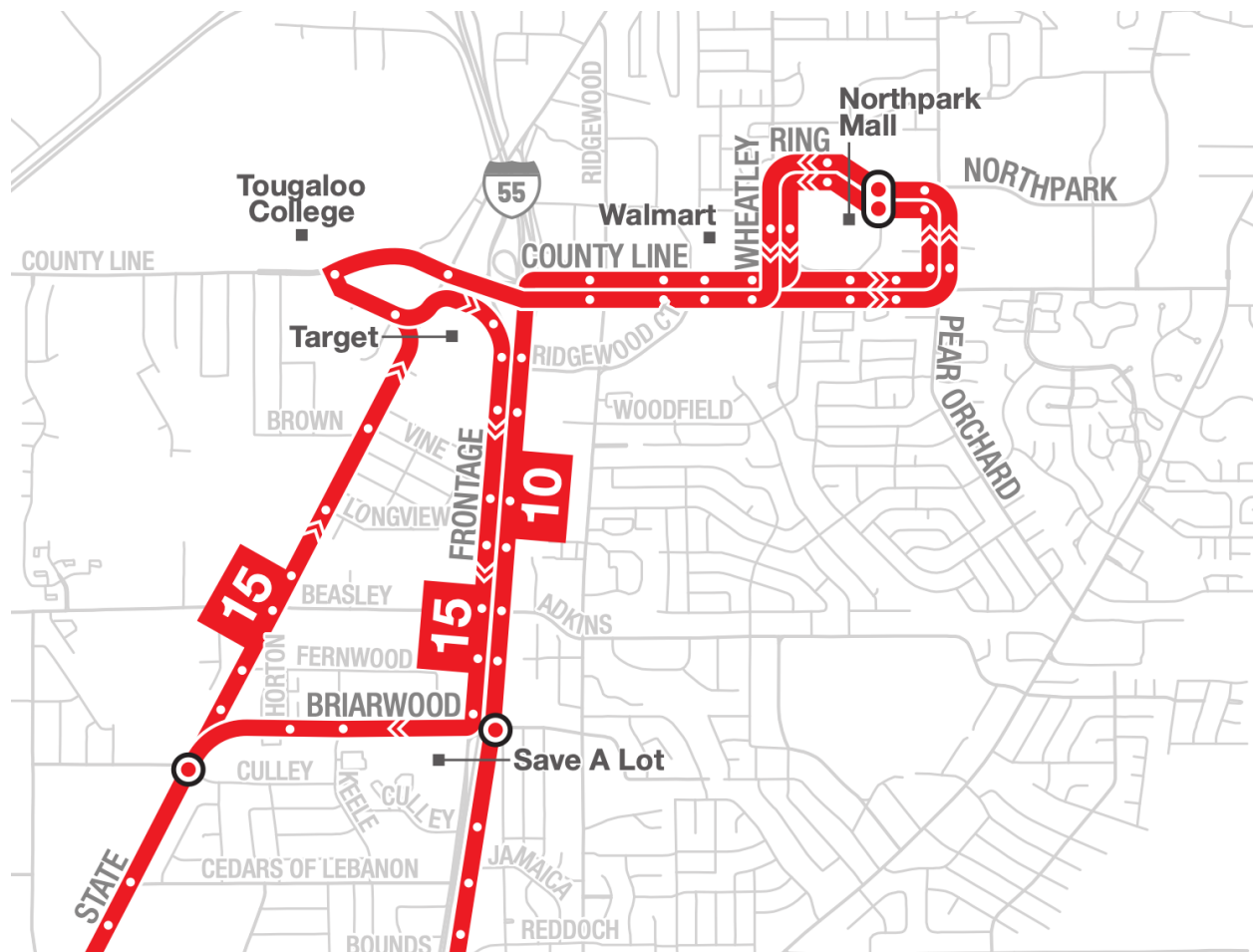
In 2020, the City of Jackson received federal funding to hire Connectics Transportation Group to assist in writing the ConnectJXN Transit Plan. It received broad public input from various stakeholder groups, was shared and vetted by our Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPDD), and went through several iterations before its final release in early 2022. The plan is available [here](#).

As a member of the ConnectJXN Transit stakeholder group and a frequent rider of JTRAN Fixed Route and Paratransit buses, I see immense value in adopting the new Transit Routes for so many reasons and I hope you will as well. Here are just a *few* of them.

One: The New Routes offer economic benefits to both Ridgeland and Jackson:

As you are probably aware, transit riders visiting Northeast Jackson, Northpark Mall, and the Walmart on Wheatley Road currently have to ride two buses: Route #1 (North State Street) to I-55 Frontage Road, then transfer to Route #12 (County Line Connector) for a very long, inefficient, circuitous ride around North Jackson only to get off on the South side of County Line Road, at or near "Ollie's Bargain Outlet".

The current indirect-, circuitous journey creates a powerful dis-incentive to visit County Line Road and all the businesses there. The **new** Transit Plan would have two routes (10 and 15) going directly from Downtown Jackson all the way to Northpark and Walmart in one seamless, easy-to-use trip (diagramed below).



Speaking as a long-standing transit user, this is simply **brilliant** and a key feature of the new transit plan. It will certainly increase commerce at both Northpark Mall and Walmart on Wheatley Street, not to mention all the surrounding businesses (Lowe’s, etc.).

Two: Improves Sales Tax Income:

Making it fast and easy for people to access Walmart and Northpark Mall from Jackson will improve business at both and of course, that increases sales tax goes to both cities. This is an obvious benefit to your constituents as well as those in Jackson.

Three: Improved Workforce:

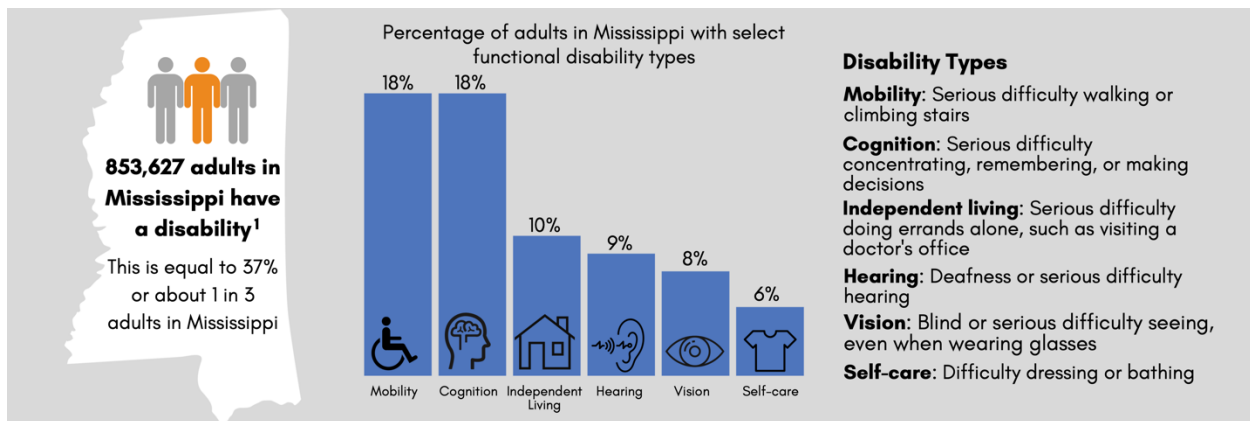
People in Jackson are available to work and only need a quicker and more streamlined way to get to jobs at Northpark Mall, Walmart, and the Ridgeland businesses surrounding them. The new transit routes (10 and 15) elegantly provide that efficiency. I’m certain that stores in south Ridgeland will benefit from a robust workforce that has more affordable and reliable transportation.

Of course, workforce development works both ways! Residents of Ridgeland will now have the opportunity to “Park and Ride” to jobs in Jackson along one seamless, easy-to-use route downtown. Routes 10 and 15 start at Northpark and pass right in front of the University of

Mississippi Medical Center and Baptist Hospitals, plus many government buildings. On their way home, stopping at Northpark Mall and Walmart creates an easy way to pick up a bite to eat at the food court, or get shopping done on their way home: truly a WIN-WIN!

Four: Creating a more “Livable” Community for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities:

Many older adults and those with disabilities in both Ridgeland and Jackson are looking for an integrated, seamless way to get around without having to drive. According to the CDC, roughly **one in three** (37%) of Mississippi’s adults have some sort of disability. Here is the breakdown by type:



Source: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

I’m one of the 18% of Mississippians that has a mobility disability, due to progressive multiple sclerosis. I now use a power wheelchair for all my ambulation and rely on community transportation because muscle spasms make me unsafe to drive.

Without being able to get to the mall via transit, riders are forced to make the perilous journey across County Line Road without adequate pedestrian infrastructure. I’ve done it myself in my wheelchair, and it is both harrowing and dangerous. The closest we can currently get is the “Ollie’s” parking lot at the corner of Wheatley Street and County Line Road, but there is no crosswalk, sidewalk, or pedestrian access to the north side of the street. Getting to Northpark or Walmart requires crossing without any safe means and walking/riding in the street, as the photos below show:

View looking north at the intersection of Wheatly Street and County Line Road from the “Ollie’s” parking lot.



View crossing County Line Road in my wheelchair. There is no crosswalk here nor pedestrian access route (sidewalk). Transit riders currently have to walk/roll in the street:



View of the sign that reads “Living Right in Ridgeland”. There is no sidewalk.



Riding along Wheatley Street in my wheelchair on my way to the mall:



JTRAN is simply vital to people like me, and many others who cannot drive due to a disability. Being able to get to Northpark Mall, the businesses along County Line Road, and Walmart is literally a “life-saver” for us. The solution is both simple and easy. We urge you to welcome our buses -our primary and only safe mode of transit- to Ridgeland.

In conclusion, I hope you see how allowing JTRAN transit buses access to Northpark Mall and a very small portion of Wheatley Street benefits **both** Ridgeland as well as the City of Jackson. Moreover, it is the safest way to welcome people with transportation disadvantages to

Ridgeland, and from Ridgeland to Jackson. When I was growing up in Vicksburg, it was commonplace to hear people refer to Mississippi as “The Hospitality State”. My friends and I that ride transit trust that Ridgeland believes in that value too.

Please do me the courtesy of a reply. Thank you.

Most sincerely yours,

Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D.
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Cc: Ridgeland Alderman Bill Lee – Ward 5