

Meattleburghtown



Traffic is one of the most aggravating struggles for locals in supporting small business.



WISH LIST

Wider lanes on high-traffic roads like Beechurst, Patteson, University, and the Westover bridge.

Pedestrian bridges, tunnels, or signals at popular student crossings.

Turn signals and traffic sensors at congested points like University Avenue and Stewart Street.

Regular pothole prevention and maintenance, particularly along Beechurst—lovingly nicknamed “Pothole Canyon.”

A water taxi system with service between Morgantown, Fairmont, and even Pittsburgh.

Expanding the PRT into a light-rail system with multiple stops in town, and connections to major parking garages in the Wharf and other areas.

Sidewalks along high traffic areas like Van Voorhis Road, and better maintenance and beautification for existing paths.

Increased bike awareness. See more about bike transit on page 62.

“The first couple of years we were here, we thought the restaurant would be dead for spring break and summer, but the sales went up,” says Chad Bartlett, general manager at Mountain State Brewing Company. “The locals came out. People here thrive on the students leaving, and that’s a shame.”

The best thing anyone can say about traffic in Morgantown is that the city bands together in hating it. It sounds like a Don Knotts punch line, but it’s true—be it potholes or WVU game day traffic reroutes or general rush-hour mayhem, in Morgantown traffic is an ice breaker for meeting new people in the same way strange weather is for everyone else.

Trips across town that should take 10 minutes take 20 or 30 instead. Drivers fight with congested lights, while on the lookout for pedestrians and holes in the road. Those of us who have been around long enough know not to leave our offices and houses at certain times of day. To alleviate all traffic woes, we pull from the best of cities like Seattle and Pittsburgh to present Meattleburghtown.

“I want sidewalks, bike lanes, and a good bus service so I don’t get killed while walking or biking because there is no place for those things. Mass transit would cut the traffic so students who are texting while driving don’t crash into my car.”

BARRY WENDELL,
a retired substitute teacher

LIGHT-RAIL



FERRY



TAXI



CURRENTLY

Since the late 1970s Morgantown has boasted a rather unusual above-ground transit system in WVU’s PRT—Personal Rapid Transit—system. While the system primarily serves college students, anyone can hitch a ride to one of the five stops for just 50 cents.

For decades Morgantown residents have watched fully loaded barges tug up and down the Monongahela River. Years ago the city developed around the river, and the community uses it for personal and recreation use, but there is plenty more we could use it for.

Yellow Cab taxi is the only standard taxi service in town. Where Morgantown might benefit from competing services, it’s not possible to start a new service here without going through the state Public Service Commission in Charleston.

THE DREAM

The PRT runs between Walnut Street, Beechurst Avenue, and WVU’s engineering, residential, and medical campuses in Evansdale. We’d love to expand the system to include the Wharf and Star City areas, and maybe even attach it to a light rail with service to Pittsburgh.

Seattle is known for its ferries. So are New York City and other water-based metros. What if Morgantown had a commercial river taxi that moved people along major points around town—the Wharf, Star City, Granville, and Westover—as well as south to Fairmont and north to Pittsburgh?

We’d love to see another taxi service or two in town. This would assist with both traffic and parking issues, as well as provide WVU students and townies a safe ride home after a night on the town.

THE REALITY

WVU is already spending millions of dollars to upgrade the PRT system as it currently is. Any new developments would likely cost millions more and require the city, the state, WVU, and neighboring municipalities to work together.

The locks system along the Mon River makes moving up and down stream relatively easy. The major factor here may just be the time it would take to board a boat instead of taking a car. What may be a 10-minute drive would likely take much longer on a boat.

The city has said in the past that it would support the arrival of another taxi service in town, but so far no one company has stepped up to the plate. We do have one enterprising young resident in town—Eric Watkins—who founded the Dub V Safe Ride program—a designated driving service in Morgantown.

“My dream would be to expand WVU’s PRT out to a major parking complex in Star City, Westover, or the Wharf.”

BRYAN JARRELL,
local pastor



DID YOU KNOW?

For less than a dollar you can hop on a Mountain Line bus and travel nearly anywhere in town. The cost is 75 cents one way, with transfers costing an additional fare. WVU students, faculty, and staff ride free, in addition to several other discount programs available for city residents. If public transit were to really take off in Morgantown we’d love to see a metro pass allowing residents to access PRT, bus, and taxi services through one convenient card.