



# All You Need Is Amp

By Aryn Van Dyke

**O**ur address was a street in Brooklyn and our destination was a bakery on the Upper West Side. The locations are about 10 miles apart — separated by a river, bustling streets, and flocks of pedestrians. The trip seems daunting, costly, and time consuming, but thanks to a thing called the subway, we will save ourselves at least \$20 and all the sitting in traffic and make it to the bakery in 20 minutes.

From about 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. the turnstiles are in constant motion. Your chances of getting a seat are 50/50. The trains are made up of suits and heels, the young professionals with dreams of climbing the corporate ladder. They are made up of students, falling back asleep to the subtle rocking of the car. They are made up of homeless people who gathered just enough change to buy a single trip pass. They are made up of beggars, the ones searching for someone with a big enough heart to give away a dollar. If they're lucky, two. But never mind these specific groups. The trains are made up of people who just want to be moved — not by some emotional power, but physically transported from one place to another.

The subway is a popular form of transportation in New York City. As long as you aren't a germaphobe, the cleanliness isn't bad, it is cheap, and most of the time efficient. I recently visited some friends there and we

took the subway everywhere. I spent \$30 dollars total on my subway card for the day and a half I was there. However, that gave me a ride to every place we visited. We were able to travel through the entire city with no traffic. We went seamlessly from Brooklyn to Manhattan (what river?) and from Uptown to Downtown. With \$30 I probably would have only gotten two rides in a cab.

I took another trip a couple months ago to Atlanta for a music festival. The festival took place in a park only a couple miles from downtown where my friend and I were staying, but the blocks between weren't the safest, and we didn't want to spend our time and energy before the festival walking there. Luckily, Atlanta has MARTA — otherwise known as the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. MARTA consists of bus lines and rail lines and runs throughout downtown Atlanta and surrounding neighborhoods. We were able to take the MARTA rail line to a stop only a couple blocks from the park for only a couple of dollars.

We sat on the benches waiting for the train to arrive. My friend ate the peanut butter sandwich he packed for the festival. The station was made of stone and we waited among fellow festival goers and business professionals. Once we were on the train we made friends with another group because they were confused. It was obvious they had never been on a subway

before, so they piggybacked on us. Lucky for them I had experience navigating the Chicago rail line and have a knack for directions. Even through their perpetual confusion, they made it to the festival quicker and cheaper than any other transportation option.

Public transportation is good thing. Reliable and efficient public transportation is an even better thing. Nashville, the ever-growing sizzling city of the South, is lacking the latter. Yes, you see the Nashville MTA cruising down the road, but, with all due respect to the drivers and the city, the system is unreliable. Many city-goers refuse the bus option and instead drive personal vehicles to work. With downtown lots filling up and additional parking options being drawn up, it is time for Nashville to start considering a better public transportation system.

Not to mention, Nashville tourism is going through the roof. In 2013, Nashville hosted more than 12.2 million visitors. I think it is also important to note these visitors resulted in more than \$4 billion in revenues. It is safe to say these visitors are a vital piece to the Nashville economy.

I had the opportunity to intern at the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation this past summer and I spent a good amount of time in the Visitors Center talking with tourists. One of the questions I got the most was in regards to public transportation. The visitors from Europe are so used to having easy access to a public transit system and they are confused by our lack of one. They looked at me with wide eyes, like Nashville was some alien planet. In their minds every major city has a convenient and traveler-friend-



ly way to get around. But Nashville doesn't compare. There is no one map, rather multiple small maps for each different bus line. If they aren't renting a car, we recommend a taxi or we do our best to explain the bus system and cross our fingers they can figure it out.

If Nashville wants to compete in the same league as a city like Atlanta, it needs to up it's public transportation and it needs to do it fast. Nashville's popularity has been rising for the past few years and it is continuing to climb. However, it's peak will level out if it stops trying to further it's growth. The new Music City Center gives Nashville plenty of convention space, but expectations for it fell short. They by no means failed, but without enough hotel space and proper public transportation, Nashville will lose large conventions and events to bigger cities every time.

It's not just the business growth that depends on this change, but also the residential growth. The population here is tremendously increasing and without growing the city physically and adding more efficient public transportation system, problems will ensue. According to one fact sheet, Nashville is projected to have 1 million new residents by 2035 plus about 500,000 additional cars. Again, problems will ensue.

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will receive funding from President Obama. Now it is time for Nashville residents to take the “Stop Amp” signs out of their yards and hop on board.

For the people who have no use for the Amp, they are doing their best to stop it from coming to life. Whether or not you need the service it provides, it is important for the city as a whole. When it comes to public needs, it necessary to put all your high tide opinions aside and think about what is best for the community you live in. In this case, the Nashville community needs a better public transportation system and the Amp is a great starting point.

The city will need to start thinking about adding additional lines in the near future to really connect the city and make more accessible. This may even include lines to Murfreesboro and Franklin. Not only will this create a better way for locals to get to and from work and around the city with their families on a Saturday, but it will help aid with Nashville tourism—Tennessee's second largest industry behind healthcare. It is this reasoning that should propel the Amp forward. Better public transit is vital to keeping Music City alive.

No matter what your opinions are of Nashville's growth and popularity, there is no fighting it. It will only continue to increase. So in order to keep the complaining in the future to a minimum, it is necessary to take measures now. Creating better public transportation for this city will only do good and it's time that Nashvillians warm up to the idea. It's the only way to carry us into a less frustrating and more reliable future.



To combat this, the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee has proposed the Amp, a.k.a. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). As stated on Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee's website, “it is a 7.1-mile rapid transit project that will travel through the heart of the city—from Five Points in East Nashville to the Saint Thomas Hospital area in West Nashville.”

The Amp will eliminate a good portion of car usage and provide a fast and affordable way to travel through the city. That is only if it ever gets approved. As of now, the project isn't progressing the way it was hoped and that is not a good sign for the future of Nashville. Mayor Karl Dean has put the Amp on pause for now—left it to be handled by the next mayor. So far there is only one candidate who has mentioned Amp and thankfully for Nashville it was in a positive light. There is funding from the Metro Council and fingers crossed the Amp

