

Improving Transit in Wichita: Marrying the Old and the New

Mercy Umeri

Hugo Wall School of Public and Urban Affairs, Wichita State University

The transportation system in Wichita has served a diverse customer base over the years with its traditional system of large buses on fixed routes and smaller buses for specialized transportation (such as for the physically challenged, or elderly). Shrinking state revenues, increases in population and a more diverse set of needs have necessitated a push to find creative solutions to transit service delivery. Advances in technology have brought about variety and technology-enabled services that have increased choice in urban transit. Ride-sharing firms like Uber and Lyft employ a business model that combines personal services with technology. This business model fits the competitive opportunities of today's marketplace and dovetails seamlessly with the larger dynamics shaping tomorrow's marketplace. In my research, I examine the informal transportation system with its rich mix of services, the use of technology-based transportation in the United States and the transportation sector in Wichita, Kansas. A combination of the case study method, participant observation and empirical data will be used. Results from my studies will inform decision makers as they seek solutions to improve transit in the Wichita area.