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10-25-2021

### Gardner-Webb Looks Into Adding Transportation Service

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#### Recommended Citation

Williams, Latrice, "Gardner-Webb Looks Into Adding Transportation Service" (2021). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2313.

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**CAMPUS NEWS**

# Gardner-Webb Looks Into Adding Transportation Service

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 25, 2021



## System could connect Shelby and Boiling Springs

By Latrice Williams, Star Reporter

Gardner-Webb University is exploring the option of adding a transportation system to bus students who commute from Shelby to Boiling Springs.

President William Downs said students have expressed a need for reliable transportation not only to school, but to places like Walmart, where they need to purchase basic essentials.

“Americans love choice and variety,” said Downs. “We have Shelby right up the road, but some of our people can’t get up there.”

The plan is in the beginning stages, but Boiling Springs Town Manager Justin Longino is on board with the proposal.

“Right now the idea is to have something that would run through Boiling Springs and Shelby,” said Longino. “Then you could potentially tie into the bigger Cleveland County transportation network.”

Downs said having a reliable system could make education accessible for all.



▲ Gardner-Webb President Dr.  
William Downs

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“Anything we can do to make access to us easier or make the lives of our students easier once they get here, I am all in for at least trying it,” said Downs. “I’ve been here for two years, and it is one of the things I have heard consistently from them. We have all these students here but not all of them have cars. Although we are just seven or eight miles from them, it ends up feeling like a lot more.”

In addition, Downs said the university wants to keep their student population in Cleveland County Saturdays and Sundays. A campus bussing service would allow them to dine and play throughout the county instead of catching a ride back to their hometown. Out of 4,000 students, 2,000 hold residence on campus.

“We have had a big push to keep our students here on the weekends,” said Downs. “We want them to feel like they are thriving. There is no public transportation, and our students would like to be able to get to restaurants, shops and entertainment. We have 600 student athletes, and a lot of them are international students. Most of them come from places where there is a bussing system.”

Downs has a bigger picture in mind too. He wants Shelby to be part of the Gardner-Webb community and would like to see more of Cleveland County participate in the events taking place on campus.

“You think about the folks in Shelby – here we are, a Division 1 athletics school, and we have sporting events, concerts and theater,” said Downs. “We want Shelby to come to Boiling Springs. If we have a major football game and people want to avoid the traffic and the parking, they can hop on the bus and come to the game.”

Downs has been eager to get the ball rolling, but COVID-19 has put a damper on their plans to push their agenda forward. Still, he has not given up and wants to make a move now.

“It’s a good idea that has percolated,” said Downs. “COVID put those conversations on hold. We think we are turning the corner with COVID. We have not had a logistical conversation, but I believe I have the support from the folks in Shelby and Boiling Springs.”

There are a lot of logistics that go into making the bussing system a reality, such as hiring drivers and creating a route that would be easily accessible.

“You’ve got to have buses,” said Downs. “You have to have drivers, a pricing system, a sense of utilization, high peak times and then you have to experiment and see who shows up.”

## Are you a commuter?

The town of Boiling Springs, in conjunction with Gardner-Webb, put together a poll and would like feedback from students and residents within Cleveland County regarding their transportation needs to and from Boiling Springs. Need a lift? Fill out the poll at [surveymonkeys.com/r/JBG9W5F](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/JBG9W5F) (<http://surveymonkeys.com/r/JBG9W5F>).

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