

# Morning runs axed again

Continuing maintenance problems keep dozens of needed buses off city streets

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Ottawa Sun

They said it would be corrected, but for a second day in a row, many OC Transpo buses didn't make it out of the garage for their morning runs yesterday.

On Monday, OC Transpo general manager Alain Mercier said 52 buses required mechanical work, but he pledged the service would be back to normal yesterday.

Mercier didn't identify which routes were affected on Monday, but 94 runs were cancelled.

In a memo to city councilors, Mercier said there isn't enough space in maintenance facilities to service all the

buses that require work after sitting idle for extended periods of time over the holidays.

In another memo sent yesterday, Mercier said 27 buses didn't make it out of the garage in the morning and remained out of service in the afternoon. Fifty-five runs were cancelled.

Mercier said he expected normal service to resume by the end of the day.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279 president Andre Cornellier claimed 38 buses didn't hit the road yesterday morning, affecting as many as 100 runs.

"It all depends on which routes they were, but ... there were a lot of people in the cold

who did not get service (yesterday) morning," he said.

Either way, commuters were in no mood for excuses.

"(Yesterday) morning the 101 Kanata was supposed to arrive at Queensway Station at 6:55 a.m.," said Sue Mackin in an e-mail to the Sun. "Guess what, no bus arrived until 7:19 a.m., which was the next scheduled bus. So, the 6:55 a.m. 101 Kanata bus was a complete no-show."

Fiona Pinard offered a similar story.

"On Monday, I was wondering why some of us were waiting for over 20 minutes

for the 118 Kanata ... (a bus) eventually arrived, but was

packed past the yellow line, so a few of us, including myself, weren't able to get on," Pinard said in an e-mail.

The problems Monday prompted Orleans Coun. Bob Monette to call for a review of bus maintenance issues.

"We should have learned our lesson," Monette said yesterday, adding the holidays happen every year and it's "unacceptable" to have reduced runs because of predictable maintenance issues.

Monette said he will make an inquiry at the next council meeting if the issue isn't on the agenda by then.

— With files from Jon Willing

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