

ROUTE 38

5th-Market to Wissahickon Transportation Center

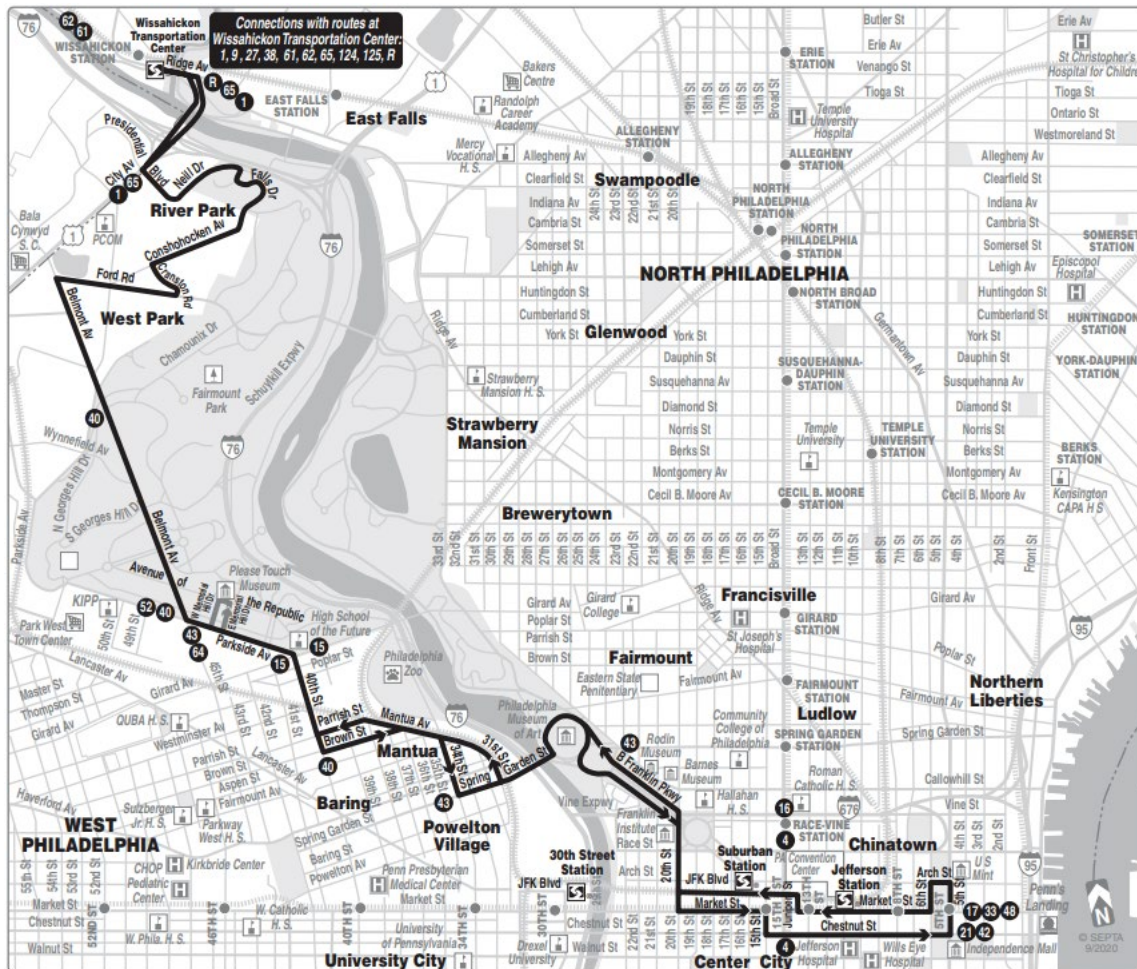
KEY SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

- *Route 38 provides connections between the neighborhoods of Wynnefield Heights, East Falls, Parkside, Belmont and Mantua and connections to the rest of the SEPTA system at Wissahickon Transportation Center and to and from Center City.*
- *The route is circuitous, but necessarily so given the local area roadway network and the locations of major apartment complexes at the outer end of the route. The route also provides unique service.*
- *The major weakness of the route is its unreliable service.*

ROUTE OVERVIEW

Route 38 operates between Wissahickon Transportation Center and Center City via River Park, West Park, and the northern edge of West Philadelphia (see Figure 1)

Figure 1 | Route Map



Route 38's alignment is circuitous, including indirect routing in and near Fairmount Park, around the Art Museum and in the Mantua neighborhood. In order to connect several high-density residential developments in Wynnefield Heights to Wissahickon Transportation Center, Route 38 operates a winding alignment along Neill Drive, Falls Road, Conshohocken Avenue, Cranston Road, and Ford Road. However, the circuitousness is necessary given the local roadway network and the locations of major apartment complexes at the outer end of the route.

Route 38's alignment between West Philadelphia and 5th Street at Market Street is similarly circuitous, operating via several one-way couplets in Mantua. One couplet – 31st Street and 34th Street – is separated by almost one-quarter mile. Route 38 also operates around the Philadelphia Museum of Art via Anne d'Harnoncourt Drive instead of the more direct alignment taken by Route 43 via Eakins Oval.

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Schedule

Route 38 operates about 19 hours a day on weekdays from 6:19 AM until 1:17 AM. On Saturdays, it operates from 6:18 AM until 1:17 AM. On Sundays, the service operates from 7:14 AM until 1:18 AM.

Table 1 | Schedule Statistics

Service Day	Span Of Service	Frequency (Range)	Frequency (Average)
Weekdays	6:19 AM to 1:17 AM		
Early AM	4:00 AM to 5:59 AM	N/A	N/A
AM Peak	6:00 AM to 8:59 AM	15 - 30	22
Midday	9:00 AM to 2:59 PM	18 - 21	20
PM Peak	3:00 PM to 5:59 PM	15 - 21	18
Evening	6:00 PM to 9:59 PM	15 - 39	25
Late Night	10:00 PM to 11:59 PM	45 - 59	48
Owl	Midnight to 1:17 AM	59 - 62	60
Saturdays	6:18 AM to 1:17 AM		
Day	8:00 AM to 5:59 PM	28 - 39	32
Night	Before 8:00 AM & After 5:59 PM	28 - 62	43
Sundays	7:14 AM to 1:18 AM		
Day	8:00 AM to 5:59 PM	39 - 51	45
Night	Before 8:00 AM & After 5:59 PM	41 - 61	53

Note: Span of service reflects the time the first bus begins service until the time the last bus finishes service.

On weekdays, average frequencies range from 18 to 25 minutes, except between 10:00 PM and 4:00 AM, when they average between 48 and 60 minutes. On Saturdays, service frequencies average 32 minutes during the day and 43 minutes at night. On Sundays, frequencies average 45 minutes during the day and 53 minutes at night.

Actual frequencies vary from the averages on all days.

Service Patterns

Route 38 operates with two service patterns in each direction, with the difference being that service deviates to the front door of the Please Touch Museum when it is open but stays on Parkside Avenue when it is closed.

Table 2 | Service Patterns

Pattern	Origin	Destination	Unique Feature	Unique Stops	Trips Per Day		
					Wkd	Sat	Sun
Eastbound							
229531	Wissahickon Transportation Center	5 th Street at Market Street	Deviation to Please Touch Museum	1	38	23	16
229532	Wissahickon Transportation Center	5 th Street at Market Street	Primary pattern	0	11	9	7
Westbound							
229533	5 th Street at Market Street	Wissahickon Transportation Center	Deviation to Please Touch Museum	1	35	22	17
229534	5 th Street at Market Street	Wissahickon Transportation Center	Primary pattern	0	13	10	6

RIDERSHIP

In Fall 2019, Route 38 carried approximately 2,800 passengers on weekdays, 1,440 on Saturdays, and 900 on Sundays (see Table 3).

Table 3 | Fall 2019 Ridership and Productivity

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
Daily Ridership	2,804	1,440	917
Rank	64	57	59
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	32.0	28.6	27.4
Rank	85	73	70

Transfer Patterns

The largest weekday transfer volumes on Route 38 are to and from:

- The Market-Frankford Line (9.0% of all trips)
- The Broad Street Line (4.1%)
- Route 65 Germantown-Chelten to 69th Street Transportation Center (4.0%)
- Route 40 2nd-Lombard to Conshohocken-Monument (2.7%)
- Route 33 Penn’s Landing to 23rd-Venango (2.1%)

Weekend transfer volumes are similar.

Ridership by Stop

Route 38's highest ridership activity occurs at transfer points with other routes including the Wissahickon Transportation Center, at the high-density residential communities in Wynnefield Heights near Fairmount Park, and in Center City. Major ridership patterns in Fall 2019 on eastbound trips were as follows (see also Figure 2):

Figure 2 | Weekday Eastbound Ridership by Stop



- The largest number of passengers – 219 – boarded at the Wissahickon Transportation Center.
- 90 passengers boarded and 34 alighted at Conshohocken Avenue at West Country Club. This stop serves several large apartment complexes.
- Ridership ramped down as Route 38 traveled southbound on Belmont Avenue into Fairmount Park. Most stops served between 10 and 30 boardings and fewer than 10 alightings. Stops south of Monument Road served very few boardings or alightings.
- Ridership along Route 38's alignment between Belmont Avenue and 31st Street was higher and more consistent. This portion of the alignment provides local service for the East Parkside, Belmont, and Mantua neighborhoods.
 - Only one passenger boarded and 5 alighted at the Please Touch Museum
 - 40 passengers boarded and 8 alighted at Parkside Avenue at 42nd Street. This stop serves the core of the East Parkside neighborhood.

- 37 passengers boarded and 29 alighted at Parkside Avenue at 40th Street. This is a transfer point with Trolley Route 15 (63rd-Girard to Richmond-Westmoreland), and it is the stop that serves the School of the Future.
- 53 passengers boarded and 112 alighted at 40th Street at Poplar Street. This stop serves the Heavenly Hall Community Center.
- There were fewer than 5 boardings and alightings per day at Mantua Avenue at 36th Street and at Mantua Avenue at 35th Street.
- 69 passengers boarded and 14 alighted at Art Museum Drive at Kelly Drive. This stop serves the Philadelphia Museum of Art and several high-rise residential complexes near Fairmount Avenue at Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Alightings began to outnumber boardings beginning at Ben Franklin Parkway at 20th Street, where there were five boardings and 30 alightings.
- Two-thirds of Route 38's alightings occurred on Route 38's Center City alignment on Market Street and Chestnut Streets. Along this segment, most stops served 10 to 30 boardings and more than 40 alightings. This segment is also served by other SEPTA bus routes as well as the Market Frankford Line and trolley routes.
- 26 passengers boarded and 121 alighted at Market Street at 16th Street, and 35 passengers boarded and 203 alighted at Market Street at 15th Street. These two stops serve the densest part of Center City, and provide connections to trolley lines, Regional Rail and two rapid transit lines.
- 80 passengers alight at the last two stops on 5th Street.

Westbound patterns mirror eastbound patterns. Weekend patterns are also similar but with lower volumes.

Ridership by Time of Day

Ridership by Hour

In Fall 2019, demand was highest during peak hours, (see Figure 3). Evening ridership was much lower than midday ridership and fell quickly after 6:00 PM. Saturday and Sunday ridership did not exhibit peaks and gradually increased through mid-afternoon and then gradually decreased.

Ridership and Maximum Loads by Trip

In Fall 2019, weekday ridership per trip was moderate throughout most of the day, again with more passengers on peak period trips (see Figure 4):

- During the AM and PM peaks, most trips carried between 40 and 50 total passengers. Due to turnover along the route, all trips operated below seated capacity, with maximum loads generally 30 to 35 passengers or fewer.
- Midday trips generally carried about 30 passengers with maximum loads of 15 or less. Ridership increased to PM peak levels at approximately 3:00 PM, when maximum loads increased to about 30 passengers.
- In the evening, ridership decreased to around 20 riders per trip at 6:00 PM, and to 10 or less after midnight.

On Saturdays, ridership ramped up from 20 passengers in the morning to approximately 40 riders per trip in the afternoon and then declined to about 20 passengers per trip at 6:00 PM. There were fewer than 20 passengers per trip after midnight. Sunday ridership by trip patterns were very similar to those on Saturday but with most individual trips carrying slightly lower ridership.

Figure 3 | Ridership by Hour: Pre-Pandemic Fall 2019

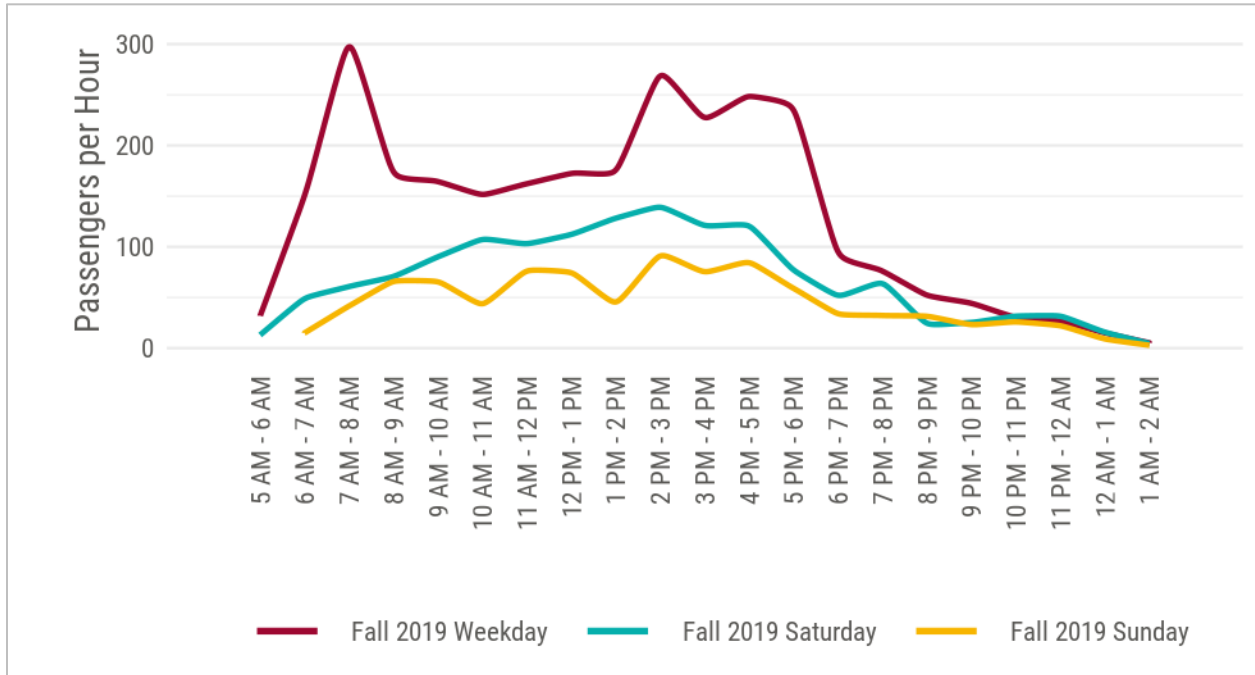
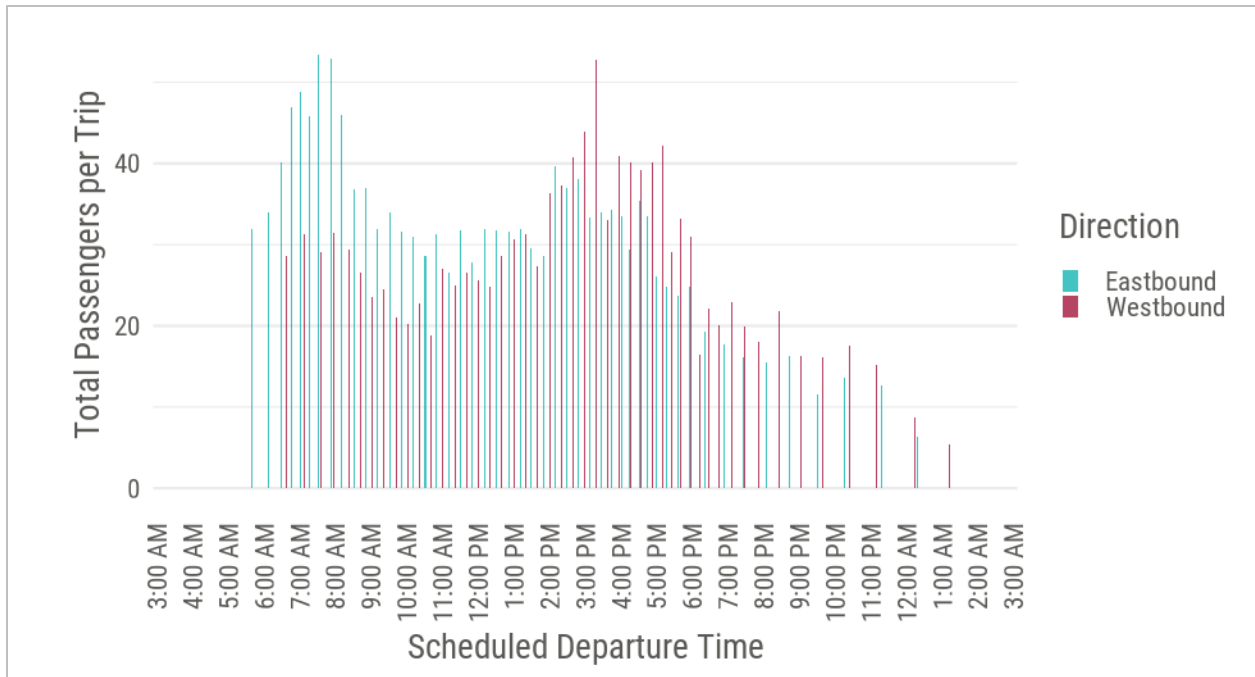


Figure 4 | Weekday Ridership by Trip



ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND RUNNING TIMES

On-Time Performance

In Fall 2019, Route 38’s on-time performance (OTP) was 68% on weekdays, 69% on Saturdays, and 75% on Sundays, with most OTP issues occurring on late trips but also a significant number of early trips (see Table 4). The combination of early and later trips also produced a significant amount of bunching – generally over 40% of trips for much of the day.

Dropped trips are a moderate issue for Route 38, with 1.9% of trips not operated on weekdays, 3.4% of trips not operated on Saturdays, and 2.2% of trips not operated on Sundays.

Table 4 | On-Time Performance

	Early	On Time	Late	Missed Trips
	(>2 Mins Early)	(<2 Mins Early to 6 Mins Late)	(>6 Mins Late)	
Goal		80%		
Fall 2019 Actual				
Weekday	13%	68%	20%	1.9%
Saturday	8%	69%	23%	3.4%
Sunday	4%	75%	21%	2.2%

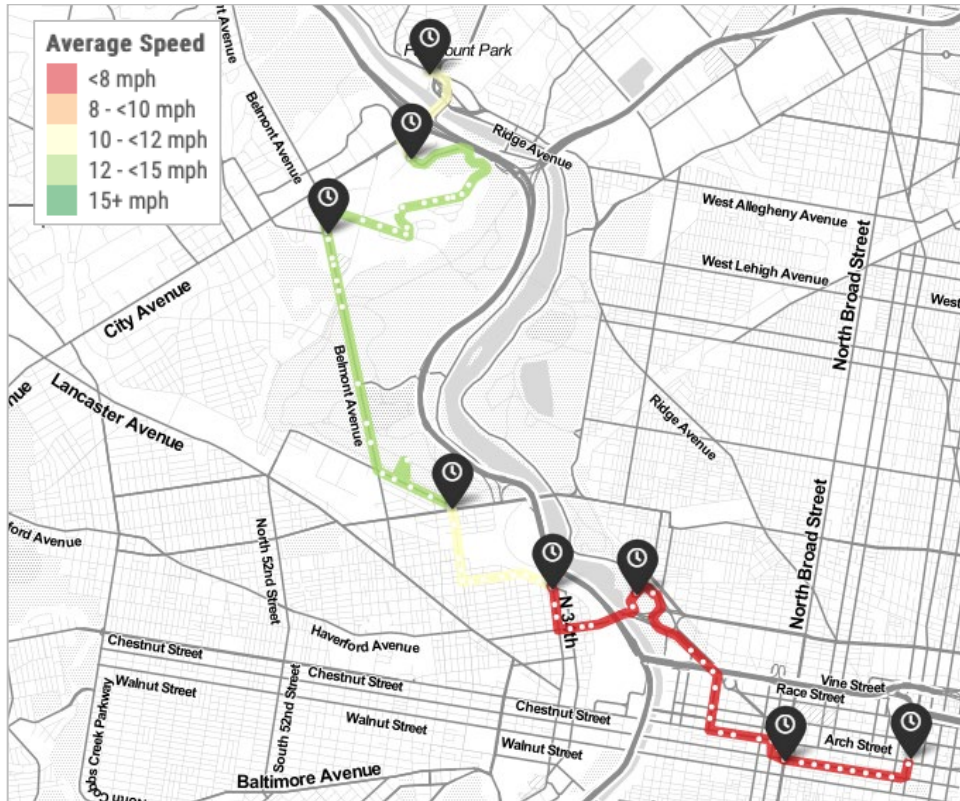
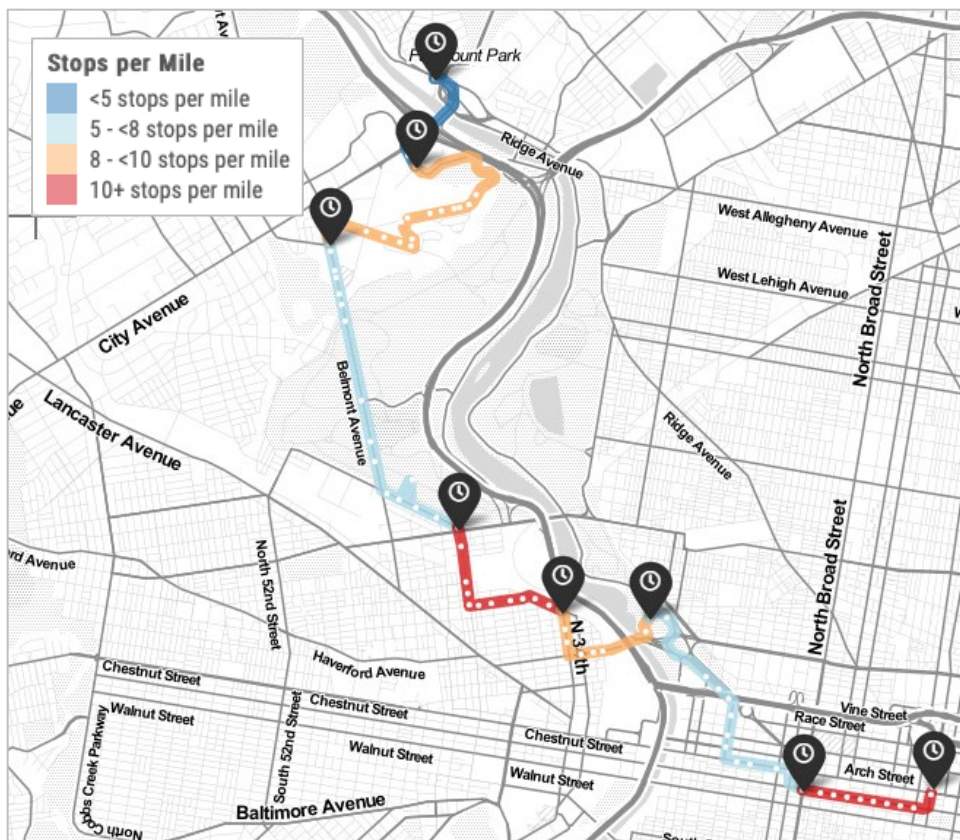
Note: On-time percentages are for trips that are run (do not include dropped trips)

AVERAGE SPEEDS AND STOP SPACING

In Fall 2019, Route 38’s overall average speed on weekdays was 11.0 mph. This represented an average of relatively good speeds along its northern half and very slow speeds along its southern/eastern half (see Figure 5).

Route 38 is a slow route in Center City and University City, largely due to a congested operating environment in those areas.

Route 38 has an overall average of seven stops per mile but over ten stops per mile in some areas (see Figure 6). The segments with more than ten stops per mile mean that stops are less than 600 feet, or only a two-minute walk, apart on average.

Figure 5 | Average Speeds: PM Peak Eastbound

Figure 6 | Stop Spacing by Route Segment


Rider Characteristics

The ridership characteristics of Route 38 riders are similar to those of the entire system, with the exception that the route serves more senior riders (see Table 5).

Table 5 | Rider Characteristics

	Route 38 Riders	Systemwide Average
Median Household Income	\$32,198	\$32,713
Share in Poverty	31%	30%
Ethnicity		
White	37%	38%
Black	47%	46%
Hispanic	6%	10%
Other	10%	7%
Without a Vehicle	42%	37%
Seniors	23%	15%
With a Disability	3%	2%

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities to strengthen Route 38 are listed below. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route.

- Discontinue Service to Please Touch Museum:** Most trips operate a four-tenths of a mile deviation from Parkside Avenue to serve the Please Touch Museum directly. The closest stop for the Please Touch Museum without this deviation is on Parkside Avenue and only approximately 800 feet from the museum. With consistently low ridership activity at the Please Touch Museum stop and the travel time cost to most riders, the deviation does not seem warranted.
- Operate Bi-Directional Service via a Closer One-Way Couplet in Mantua:** Service in Mantua area operates northbound on Mantua Avenue while southbound service operates along 34th Street, which is as much as three blocks away (see). Service would be simpler if it operated northbound on 33rd Street, which is the northbound counterpart



to 34th Street.

- Terminate at 30th Street Station:** Route 38 duplicates several other SEPTA routes and the seasonal Phlash shuttle service along Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Instead of operating Route 38 across the Schuylkill River, it could terminate at 30th Street Station. This new alignment would provide a new north-south connection between Mantua and

Market Street. Discontinuing service on Market Street, which is already served by multiple SEPTA bus routes and the Market-Frankford Line could enable more frequent service on the remainder of the route.