

ROUTE 56

23rd-Venango and Bakers Centre to Torresdale-Cottman

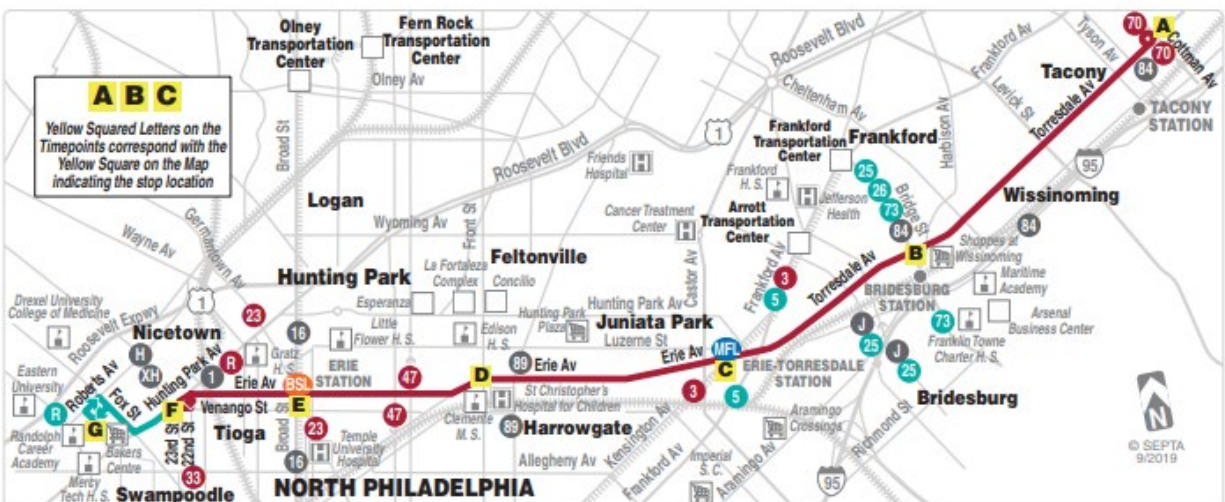
KEY SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Route 56 provides east-west crosstown service in North Philadelphia along Erie Avenue and Torresdale Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia. The route carried almost 12,000 passengers per weekday in Fall 2019 and is one of SEPTA's highest ridership and most productive routes on all days of the week.
- The route connects with both the Broad Street and Market-Frankford Lines and many passengers transfer to these services. Ridership is consistent along the route with the exception of the western extension to the Bakers Centre shopping area, which could be better served with another route.
- SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia have already planned bus priority treatments on some portions of Route 56's alignment. Ideally, these measures would eventually be implemented along the entire corridor.

ROUTE OVERVIEW

Route 56 operates along Erie and Torresdale Avenues between 23rd-Venango in the Nicetown-Tioga section of North Philadelphia and Torresdale-Cottman in the Tacony section of Northeast Philadelphia (see Figure 1). This route is one of the highest ridership and most productive in the SEPTA network. Plans are underway for bus priority treatments on some portions of the route and ideally these initiatives would eventually be implemented along the entire route.

Figure 1 | Route Map



SERVICE OVERVIEW

Schedule

Route 56 operates 24 hours on all days of the week. Frequencies vary by time of day (see Table 1):

- On weekdays, service is very frequent during peak periods with average headways of 6 minutes. During middays service is every 12 minutes on average. Service is every 15 minutes or better on weekdays between 6:00 AM and 9:00 PM.
- On weekends, service frequencies average every 21 minutes during the day on Saturday, every 26 minutes during the day on Sunday, and every 32-36 minutes during weekend nights.

Table 1 | Schedule Statistics

Service Day	Span Of Service	Frequency (Range)	Frequency (Average)
Weekdays	24 Hours		
Early AM	4: 00 AM to 5:59 AM	9-60	26
AM Peak	6:00 AM to 8:59 AM	1-20	6
Midday	9:00 AM to 2:59 PM	1-17	11
PM Peak	3:00 PM to 5:59 PM	1-10	6
Evening	6:00 PM to 9:59 PM	1-40	10
Late Night	10:00 PM to 11:59 PM	1-51	32
Owl	Midnight to 3:59 AM	1-60	45
Saturdays	24 Hours		
Day	8:00 AM to 5:59 PM	19-25	21
Night	Before 8:00 AM & After 5:59 PM	1-69	32
Sundays	24 Hours		
Day	8:00 AM to 5:59 PM	24-32	26
Night	Before 8:00 AM & After 5:59 PM	1-65	36

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

Service Patterns

Route 56 has ten service patterns: four in the eastbound direction and six westbound (see Table 2). Some differences are very minor variations from the primary patterns, but the major difference is that some trips are extended on the western end from 23rd-Venango to the Bakers Centre shopping area.

Table 2 | Service Patterns

Pattern	Origin	Destination	Unique Feature	Unique Stops	Trips Per Day		
					Wkd	Sat	Sun
Eastbound							
229669	23 rd St & Venango St Loop	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Primary Pattern	0	63	0	0
229672	23 rd St & Venango St Loop	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Primary Weekend Pattern	0	20	15	14
229670	Bakers Centre	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Extension Pattern	8	24	0	0
229673	Bakers Centre	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Extension Pattern	8	9	36	31
Westbound							
229660	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	23 rd St & Venango St Loop	Primary Pattern	0	45	0	0
229661	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Bakers Centre	Extension Pattern	6	27	0	0
229666	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Bakers Centre	Extension Pattern	6	9	36	33
229665	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	23 rd St & Venango St Loop	Primary Weekend Pattern	0	16	11	10
229659	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Erie Ave & 22 nd St	Alternate Drop-off Location	0	12	0	0
229663	Torresdale Ave & Cottman Ave Loop	Erie Ave & 22 nd St	Alternate Drop-off Location;	0	10	6	2

Note: Unique stops are those not served by the primary pattern

RIDERSHIP

In Fall 2019, Route 56 carried 11,983 passengers on weekdays, 4,774 on Saturdays, and 3,685 on Sundays (see Table 3). On all days, this route has one of the highest overall ridership volumes and is one of the most productive routes as measured by boardings per revenue vehicle hour.

Table 3 | Fall 2019 Ridership and Productivity

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
Daily Ridership	11,983	4,774	3,685
Rank	6	11	10
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	72.1	65.6	61.1
Rank	8	4	7

Transfer Patterns

Many Route 56 trips involve a transfer to rapid transit service. The largest transfer volumes are to and from:

- Market-Frankford Line (26.4% of all trips)
- Broad Street Line (16.4%)
- Route 47 Whitman Plaza to 5th-Godfrey (3.6%)
- Route 70 Frankford-Gregg and Torresdale-Cottman to Fern Rock Transportation Center (3.1%)
- Route 23 Center City to Chestnut Hill (2.7%)

Weekend transfer patterns are similar but at a slightly lower rate.

Ridership by Stop

Demand is consistent along the route (see Figure 2). For eastbound weekday trips, some highlights include:

- 358 passengers boarded at the origin (23rd-Venango)
- 1,075 passengers boarded and 340 alighted at Broad Street at Erie Avenue
- There were 236 boardings and 89 alightings at 6th Street at Erie Avenue
- 181 passengers boarded and 127 alighted at Front Street at Erie Avenue
- 956 passengers boarded and 629 alighted at Kensington Avenue at Torresdale (2 combined stops)
- 776 passengers alighted at the last stop in the Torresdale-Cottman Loop

Figure 2 | Weekday Eastbound Ridership by Stop

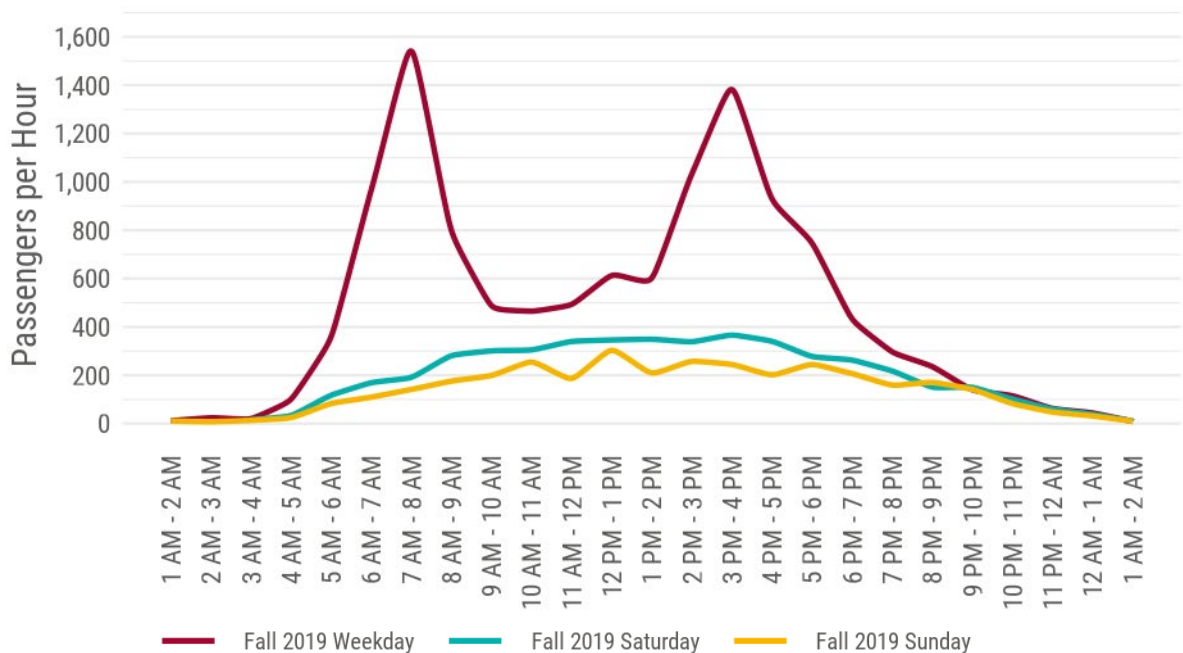


Ridership by Time of Day

Ridership by Hour

In Fall 2019, weekday ridership was much higher during the peak periods than at other times (see Figure 3). Midday ridership was less than half of the peak ridership per hour. Ridership decreases quickly after 6:00 PM. Weekend ridership was steadier throughout the day and much less than on weekdays, with most ridership between about 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

Figure 3 | Ridership by Hour: Fall 2019



Ridership and Maximum Loads by Trip

In Fall 2019, weekday ridership per trip was moderately strong throughout the day with higher ridership during peak periods (see Figure 4):

- AM peak trips carried 60 to 100 passengers
- Midday trips carried 45 to 80 passengers
- PM peak trips carried 60 to 100 passengers with a single afternoon trip carrying over 120 riders – this trip likely includes many students
- After 6:00 PM, ridership decreased from 60 passengers to about 45 per trip
- After midnight ridership was 20 or fewer riders per trip

There are high levels of turnover along Route 56, so maximum loads are below seating capacity on all trips except for a few AM Peak trips (see Figure 5).

Ridership on weekend days was steady with most trips carrying between 50 and 70 riders. All weekend trips had maximum loads within the seating capacity.

Figure 4 | Fall 2019 Weekday Ridership by Trip

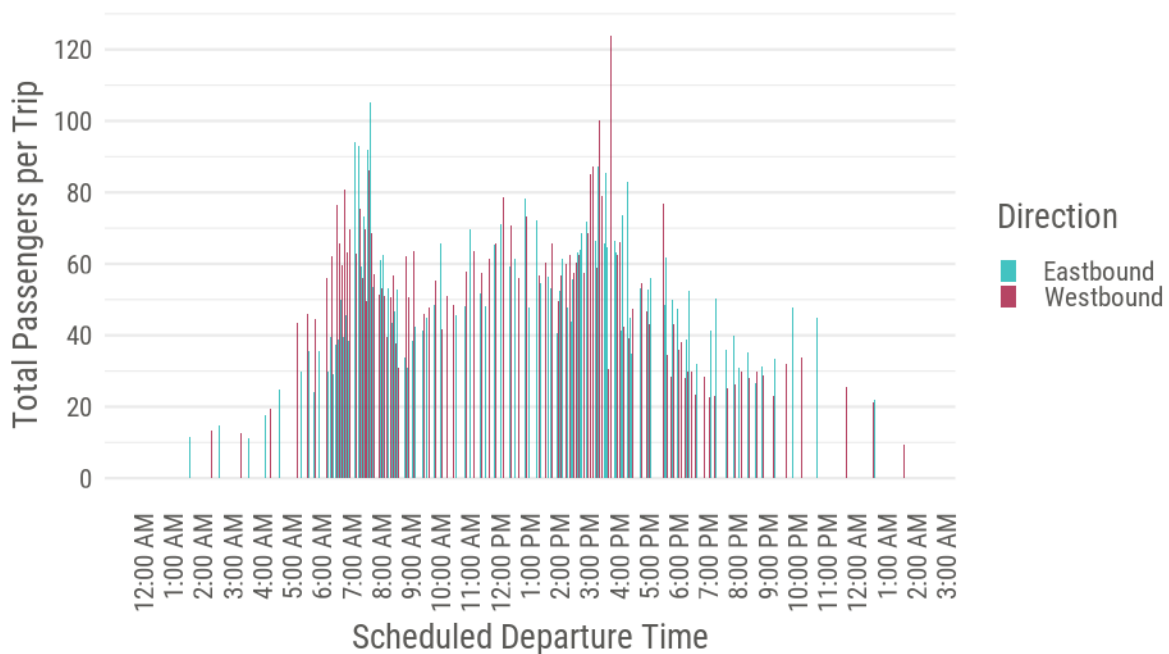
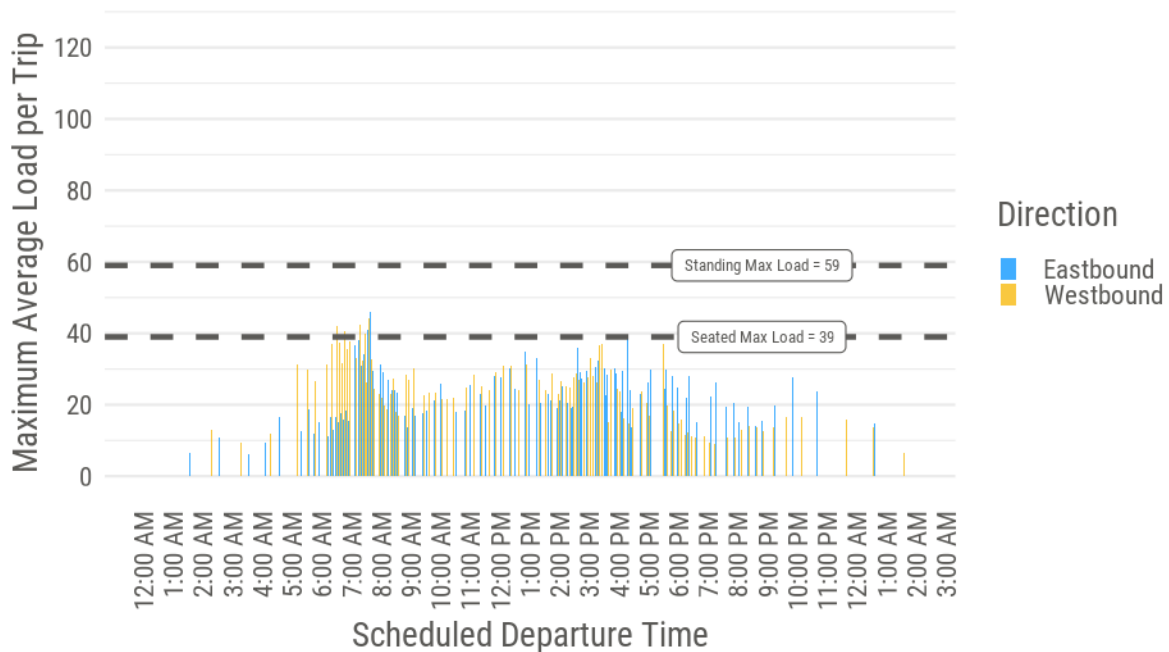


Figure 5 | Fall 2019 Weekday Maximum Loads by Trip



ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND RUNNING TIMES

On-Time Performance

In Fall 2019, Route 56 had poor on-time performance with 70% of weekday trips meeting SEPTA’s standard. Saturdays and Sundays had better on-time performance with 75% of Saturday trips and 80% of Sunday trips meeting the on-time performance standard (see Table 4). Weekday trips were more likely to be late than early, but weekend trips showed the opposite pattern.

Table 4 | Fall 2019 On-Time Performance

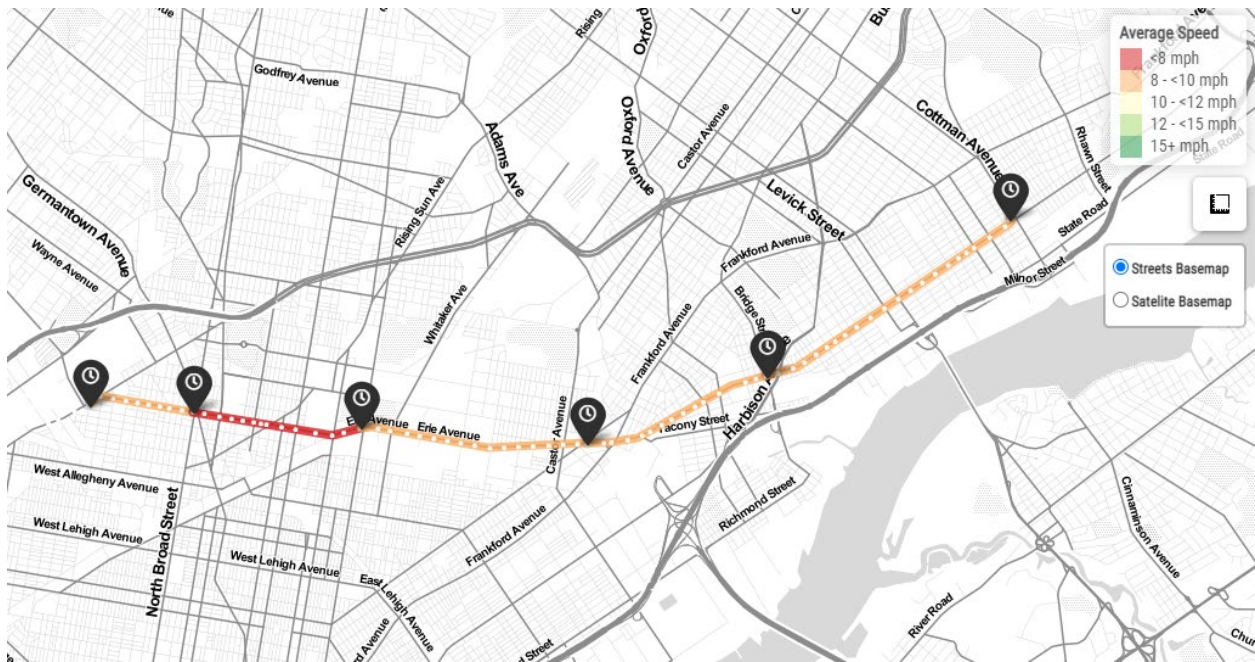
	Early (>2 Mins Early)	On Time (<2 Mins Early to 6 Mins Late)	Late (>6 Mins Late)	Missed Trips
Goal		80%		
Fall 2019 Actual				
Weekday	9.7%	69.7%	20.6%	3.1%
Saturday	14.0%	75.3%	10.8%	4.3%
Sunday	12.6%	79.7%	7.7%	1.4%

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

AVERAGE SPEEDS AND STOP SPACING

Weekday speeds on Route 56 are slow, with buses traveling most of the route at less than 10 mph during the PM peak and even slower on the segment just east of Broad Street (see Figure 6).

Slow speeds result in part from stop spacing. Stops on Route 56 average almost 10 per mile along the entire corridor and some segments have more than 12 stops per mile (see Figure 7).

Figure 6 | Fall 2019 PM Peak Eastbound Speeds

Figure 7 | Stop Spacing by Route Segment


RIDER CHARACTERISTICS

As compared with SEPTA's service area overall, Route 56 riders are more likely to be Hispanic and have lower incomes, and somewhat more likely to lack access to a vehicle (see Table 5). Route 56 riders are also somewhat less likely to be seniors.

Table 5 | Rider Characteristics

	Route 56 Riders	Systemwide Average
Median Household Income	\$27,020	\$32,713
Share in Poverty	40%	30%
Ethnicity		
White	27%	38%
Black	49%	46%
Hispanic	21%	10%
Other	3%	7%
Without a Vehicle	43%	37%
Seniors	10%	15%
With a Disability	3%	2%

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Route 56 is a strong route and a very important element of the SEPTA network. Opportunities to strengthen Route 56 are listed below. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route.

- Operate Route 56 to a Consistent Western Terminal:** Route 56 operates some trips to Bakers Centre via an extension from 23rd Street at Venango. To make service easier to understand, Route 56 should operate all service to the same eastern terminal for all trips.
- Upgrade with Bus Priority Treatments:** SEPTA and the City have already collaborated on a grant application for portions of Erie Avenue which would significantly improve bus service. Future initiatives can extend these treatments to the entire Route 56 corridor since both Erie and Torresdale Avenues have ridership and frequency of service which justify these improvements.
- Collaborate with City on Improved Parking/Curb Management Operations:** New technology and policies could allow bus cameras to assist with better parking and curb management operations along Erie and Torresdale Avenues, which in turn would help improve bus speed.