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Bus riders look forward to depot

Indoor station will replace hub on Deaderick St.

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The days of braving the elements — and dodging traffic — at Nashville's bus transfer hub downtown are coming to an end.

Metro Transit Authority's new \$53.6 million indoor bus depot will begin running buses out of the facility on Oct. 26, and Deaderick Street transit mall will cease to exist.

"Deaderick: It's mediocre at best," said frequent bus rider Steve Gild, one of many passengers looking forward to moving indoors to the new Music City Central.

After nearly four years of planning and 15 months of construction, transit officials are set to showcase the center they say will change public transportation in Nashville. A grand opening celebration will be Oct. 24.

"This is a facility that is long overdue and will help our city as we move forward to try and increase transportation options for the public," said Patricia Harris-Morehead, communications director for MTA.

Tours and informational exhibits at the grand opening will show bus riders how to use and navigate the 434,314- square-foot facility on Charlotte Avenue. The winner of the Music City Central theme song contest — soon to be selected — is likely to perform.

"The facility is designed for the efficient transfer of the rider, and a lot of thought has gone into the comfort of the riders," said Otho Webster, vice president of Balfour Beatty Construction. "It will help alleviate all the congestion that has been seen on Deaderick Street for years."

Music City Central will have restrooms, security guards, ticket machines, a Dunkin Donuts and vending machines. There will be 24 bays where the buses will pick up passengers. Every bus route will be assigned a bay, and monitors with bus schedules will inform riders where to go.

Passengers who bring a bicycle on the bus will be able to wheel the bikes to the different levels of the facility up a concrete track that runs alongside the escalator.

Gild, a Vanderbilt University employee who takes advantage of the college's employees-ride-free program, said it will be nice for passengers not to worry about whether they have to be outside in the cold or the sweltering heat on Deaderick as they wait for the bus.

"There are a lot of smokers and you are out in the elements," Gild said. "Having an indoor station will improve bus rider satisfaction."

Security planned

A security firm, which the MTA board is set to approve Thursday, will enforce a strict code of conduct to keep passengers safe, Harris-Morehead said.

"There was no place to put a code of conduct on an outdoor street," she said. "There will be a code of conduct for Music City Central. We're not going to tolerate inappropriate behavior in this facility."

Music City Central in the days leading up to the opening will be a flurry of activity as construction crews and MTA officials make finishing touches. Workers are laying terrazzo flooring and completing the bathrooms.

"A lot of planning went into this facility, particularly the design part of it," said Webster. "It will serve Nashville for many decades to come."
