

Transportation

The women in our focus groups told us that while most of them rely on the SunTran system, it had serious issues that made it difficult for them. They reported:

- Unreliability, especially in summer
- Infrequency
- Crime and violence on the buses, such as drug -dealing, drinking and fights.



Tina* has to take the bus to get around – she can't afford a car. But, because she is recovering from addiction, it can be hard for her. There is a lot of dealing on the bus, and a lot of conversation about drugs, she says. "I feel it's safe, but it's not like I want to spend time – so many things that can trigger a relapse."

-Focus Group, 2013

Crime was the most concerning issue about SunTran that we uncovered in almost every focus group. Women didn't want to take the bus due to the wide presence of drug dealing, drinking, and even gang fights on buses. As one woman said "I wouldn't feel comfortable letting my children on the bus."

Unreliability was another issue. Women were sometimes unable to show up to focus groups, or came an hour late, because a bus had broken down. Older women we interviewed had issues with getting on or off the buses, or waiting in extreme heat during the summertime. One reported that the bus simply drove off after she had fallen down the stairs onto the pavement.

Recommendations

- **Partner with Tucson Police Department to better police buses and bus stops.** No one should have to put up with the level of crime that the women in our focus groups described. An increased partnership with Tucson Police Department could help reduce the level of crime on buses and make them safer. Because of SunTran's reputation, many riders who might choose public transportation do not. If SunTran were made safer, this may encourage riders who have the option to choose it, and likely pay full-fare, which may help fund improvements.
- **Improve stops.** Many of the SunTran stops around the city are uncovered, which can be dangerous in summer. Additionally, schedules and routes are rarely posted, making it difficult to know when a bus is coming or to map a route. Making sure that stops are covered and posting this vital information would be a useful upgrade.
- **Improve efficiency and increase frequency.** For low-income riders, a late bus can mean the difference between keeping a job and losing it. In order to make sure that SunTran is useful, buses need to be kept in good working order and may need to increase frequency in order to make sure that passengers can arrive on time.