

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts: Jennifer Weston, Engineering Communications, 919/515-3848
or weston@ncsu.edu
Keith Nichols, News Services, 919/515-3470 or
keith_nichols@ncsu.edu

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New System Tracks NC State's Wolfline Bus Locations Online

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

This fall, the North Carolina State University campus community has an innovative resource for navigating the university's Wolfline bus system – a new technology that uses the Web to track public transportation in a novel way.

The university's Transportation Office contracted with TransLoc, a company founded by four NC State computer science graduates, to offer real-time information on the location of each of the Wolfline buses through a Web site.

Joshua Whiton, co-founder and chief executive officer of TransLoc who graduated with a computer science degree in 2004, developed the idea for an online, Web-based locator while waiting for the bus with friend and co-founder, Dominique Bischof, who has both bachelor's and master's degrees from NC State.

"People had kicked around the idea for a while, but no one ever really pursued it," Whiton said. "We were standing at the bus stop and just said that it was possible and then set out to make it happen."

The team, which also includes Jesse Lovelace, a 2005 graduate in computer science, and Justin Harris, a 2004 graduate in computer science, formed an intelligent transportation system (ITS) company to develop and market the innovative Transit Visualization System (TVS) that provides real-time tracking of multiple vehicles. They researched global positioning systems, radio systems and tracking programs. After building and testing several prototypes, they were ready to field-test the package.

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Because the company founders were familiar with the university's traffic patterns, and the needs of bus riders, the Wolfline system on campus was a perfect fit for testing the system. Their Centennial Campus-based office made it very easy to perform fieldwork and testing.

TVS is easy to use and can be accessed from any location offering Internet access. Riders can go to www.ncsu.edu/wolfline and click on the Transit Visualization System link to view a map with color-coded bus routes and balloon icons that show the progress of buses along their routes in real time.

TransLoc is the first to deliver some of the innovative aspects that can be found in the Wolfline's TVS. Usage of the system by NC State students, staff, and faculty doubled from July to August and then doubled again from August to September.

"With the new AVL technology in place, we are able to provide safer, more convenient transportation services," said Pat Mitchell, transportation transit manager. "Rather than waiting at a stop in inclement weather or after dark, riders can check the TVS Web site and find out exactly when their bus is approaching their stop."

The TransLoc team is marketing its real-time online tracking system to mass transit providers in larger markets. The system offers public transportation officials another tool for managing a fleet of buses and other vehicles as well as enhancing the attractiveness of transit service for riders.

"We envision a time when a large display screen in a high-traffic area can give bus and train riders up-to-the-minute information about the transportation system," Bischof says. "It would take the worry about missing the bus out of the equation."