



Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs / Sun City Editor

A TCAT bus during a blizzard in Ithaca in March of 2017.

TRANSPORTATION

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TCAT to Offer Free Rides on All Routes Thursday in Response to Bitter Wind Chill

By Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs

This post has been updated.

With Ithaca's wind chill projected to reach as low as minus 21 degrees overnight, Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit announced that the bus service will offer free rides for all routes on Thursday.

The National Weather Service has placed Ithaca and much of Central New York under a wind chill warning until 6 p.m. Thursday, warning that the temperature and wind could cause frostbite in just 30 minutes.

"TCAT is doing its part to make sure folks who happen to be out and about have an option to escape the elements by boarding a warm bus," TCAT General Manager Scot Vanderpool said in a statement.

Ducson Nguyen, a Second Ward alderperson who became chair of the TCAT board of directors earlier this month, said bus service is expected to operate as usual, but without the fares.

"It's obviously dangerous temperatures tonight and tomorrow," Nguyen said. "TCAT wants to do everything it can to do to protect our community and provide a way for people to get around without having to walk or bike if that's their only option."

The transportation agency's assistant general manager encouraged riders to still use their Cornell IDs and day-based passes — which will not be charged — so that TCAT can collect ridership data.

Mike Smith, the assistant general manager, also said bus drivers may not be able to lower buses when they arrive at bus stops, which drivers regularly do to make getting on and off easier for riders. The weather will be so cold on Thursday, however, that the suspensions' air lines may

freeze, causing buses to not be able to rise up to driving height again. Bus operators will still be able to manually lower ramps.

The National Weather Service said the high temperature on Thursday will be 10 degrees, but that wind chill values are expected to plunge as low as minus 20, with the potential to reach a minimum of minus 29. The wind is expected to fluctuate between 14 and 17 miles per hour.

The service urged people to stay indoors as much as possible Thursday and to wear multiple layers if going outside.

“If you are out and about, please keep TCAT in mind as an option to protect yourself from these dangerous temperatures,” Vanderpool said.
