

arvalley.com

our valley. our city. our news.

AR Valley Water Secure

Robert Parson

Fort Smith Utility officials say they have strong measures in place to keep hackers out of the water control system. A pair of recent incidents have revealed possible vulnerabilities in the nation's infrastructure. A recent intrusion at an Illinois water utility that burned out a water pump was originally thought to originate from a foreign country, but has since been found to be an error by a contractor who accessed the system remotely while in Russia. Meanwhile, a hacker has claimed to have acquired the schematics to a Texas water utility and posted them online.

Director Steve Parke is confident the Fort Smith water system is safe from attack. "Our SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system is a closed system. It is not on a network."

According to Parke, security was a high priority when the system was designed and built in the 1980s. "It was done deliberately to provide protection against that sort of intrusion." He says the computers that control the system are only connected to plant processes. "It does make it a little more difficult because we sometimes have to change computers to do all our work, but it's worth it."

The utility department manages the control system independently with its own Information Technology staff. Parke also says the terminals are in secure locations and are constantly monitored.

He believes the security measures in place here are "fairly uncommon" in the industry. "The main thing to remember is that we don't present the opportunity (for an intrusion by a hacker) because our system is not on the Internet."

arvalley.com

our valley. our city. our news.

Trimmed Transit Hours Possible

Robert Parson

Low usage in the early morning and late afternoon is prompting the Fort Smith Transit to consider eliminating service on the fixed routes during those hours. Director Ken Savage says they replaced pen and paper with iPads a few months ago to track passengers and fares. He says since the new electronic system includes a time stamp every time a passenger boards a bus they can now track hourly usage.

The fixed routes currently operate from 5:30am to 7:00pm "It appears darkness is the main reason," Savage says. "People may not want to walk in the dark and wait at a bus stop." The Transit Commission is recommending 7:00am to 6:00pm as the new hours for the fixed routes.

The demand-response service will have no change in hours. "We have strong usage early in the day. Trimming the hours on the fixed routes will free up at least five drivers, and we could expand demand-response during the early morning." The demand-response service allows people to call 24 hours or more in advance for door-to-door service. It costs \$2.00 per trip, while the charge to ride a bus on the fixed routes is \$1.00.

Anyone wishing to comment on the proposed new hours for the fixed-routes can call the Transit Authority at 479 783 6464, email transit@fortsmithar.gov, or write ATTN: Transit Director, P.O. Box 1908, Fort Smith, AR 72902. The comment period ends December 6th.