

Tampa Judge Axes Shelters At Bus Stop

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TAMPA — Curbside bus stop shelters have been removed from the sidewalks in front of the downtown post office and federal court building by U.S. marshals on the order of U.S. District Judge William Terrell Hodges.

The shelters were removed Sunday, leaving about 3,000 daily bus riders with no protection from the sun and rain and almost nowhere to sit while waiting.

Hodges' order was not challenged by the city of Tampa or the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART), but did evoke calls from angry riders. HART Executive Director Cliff Hayden said the authority received calls from about 100 angry riders last week.

"They can't understand what gives the judge the authority to take them down," he said.

"I just don't have any comment to make about it," Hodges said Sunday.

Hayden said a new bus plaza is planned nearby but it will be a year before it will be operating. He said HART has no plans to provide seating for riders outside the courthouse.

"I guess they'll be standing on the sidewalk and some (sitting) on the courthouse steps," Hayden said.

Hodges issued the order several weeks ago because he said the people massed around the shelters waiting for buses caused intolerable congestion and hampered the coming and going of federal court jurors.

He gave the city and HART an ultimatum -- remove the shelters or he would have U.S. marshals do the job.

Neither the city nor HART acted. On Sunday, a team of seven marshals aided by a welder, spent five hours dismantling and removing the shelters.