Public Transportation Arrives in Bend

by K_Guice

The long awaited public transit system has finally arrived. In celebration riders are invited to travel for free September 27-October 3.

The Bend Area Transit (BAT) service launches on Wednesday and will cost riders $1 per trip or they can purchase an unlimited day pass for $2. Seniors and the disabled will pay $.50 or $1 for an unlimited pass for the day.

BAT is the cityâ€™s first fixed route public transportation service and Heather Ornelas, the City of Bend transit mobility manager, says people are excited.

"We have about 175 bus signs going up," Ornelas said. Now that people are seeing the signs going up, the city is getting feedback that most people are happy, but some wish it was even closer to where they reside. "They are calling saying, 'Why don't you have a route near my house,'" she said.

However, she added that some homeowners arenâ€™t happy with where the route is and in some cases where the signs are being planted.

â€œWeâ€™ve had some, four or five property owners saying they donâ€™t want a bus stop on their property,â€• Ornelas said. The city is working with the homeowners to sort it out and in some cases have moved a few of the signs.

When service begins, the buses will run throughout the city Monday-Friday in half-hour intervals from 6:15 a.m. through 6:15 p.m.

Ornelas says it is important for riders to note; the first routes start at the end point of the city and make their way into town.

"On Saturday, we will have (bus) service from 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. That will run hourly," she added.

Then there is what Ornelas refers to as the peak route. It will run during the hours the city believes it will be needed most.

â€œPeople need to travel in certain directions or at certain times, so they will run a peak route to school or work and back again,â€• Ornelas said. â€œThat goes from our main Hawthorne Station west to NorthWest Crossing,â€• she added.

The buses are not only great for people looking to save on gas, the vehicles run on low-sulfur, clean-burning diesel, so they are environmentally friendly.

Low-sulfur diesel is a specially refined fuel with significantly lower sulfur content than regular highway diesel.

In addition, each transit bus is said to remove 25 vehicles from the road for each hour of service, according a press release from the City of Bend Transit.

Dial-a-Ride is still available for low-income seniors and people with disabilities who are not near or unable to use the fix-route service. Residents can call 322-5870 to schedule their transportation needs.

For more information on BAT, call 322-5870 or visit www.bendareatransit.com.

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