

Chillicothe Gazette

NEWS

Transit department provides on-demand rides, trackless trolley coming soon

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Published 5:36 a.m. ET Feb. 6, 2022

CHILLICOTHE— The transit department has started a 12-month pilot program for free, on-demand rides within city limits.

The on-demand transit, similar to Uber and Lyft, is a point-to-point service within city limits, including Ohio 159 to Ohio 207 interchange and Ohio 104 to the VA hospital. The rides can be pre-scheduled or requested on the same day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday

Within the first month of the program, the on-demand bus has made over 2,200 trips for 308 people.

Asti Powell, director of planning and development and former transit director, said the idea was generated by residents and has received, "overwhelmingly positive feedback."

"We are able to get a lot of individuals directly to work that we hadn't been able to service before," Powell said. "We have a lot of families and mothers that have been able to use it whether they're transporting their children to daycare or preschool."

Pre-scheduled trips are recommended for medical appointments and going to work. Riders can also make a same-day or instant request. The bus may arrive up to 20 minutes early or five minutes after the scheduled time.

Riders can schedule an on-demand ride by calling 740-773-1569 or by booking online at rider.chillicotheoh.gov. Riders can get text alerts and track the location of the driver online. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

The transit department is also adding a trackless trolley to its public transportation system. The trolley is being assembled and is expected to be available to the public in the spring.

Last summer, the transit department ran a two-day trial run with the trolley to track community engagement. During the trial, more than 700 trips were taken.

"We had people who are not transit-dependent who got really excited about the look and feel and what it brought to the community," Powell said. "It was more of an experience for them."

Chillicothe City Council previously approved the appropriation of \$200,000 for the purchase of the trolley, but the final cost is under budget at about \$160,000.

The transit department has worked with Chillicothe residents for their feedback on every aspect of the new additions to transit. Residents have chimed in to give their opinions on how the trolley should be utilized.

The tentative plan is for the trolley to be used for a downtown loop and hotel shuttle in the summer and historical and Christmas light tours in the winter to provide unique experiences to community members and visitors.

Residents on Facebook have suggested different uses for the trolley, like wedding transportation, ghost tours and a booze cruise.

"We've heard a lot of great feedback last summer and I think it's something that we can get really creative with to support the city and support the community and different things going on," Powell said.

Both new services are part of a redesign of the Chillicothe transit system. Last year, the transit department partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropies and Harvard University to improve and expand transit in Chillicothe.

The transit department also consulted with the engineering department, police department and over 400 community members.

"They see it and they have a different perspective on ways that it can be used," Powell said. "We're trying to take that feedback and incorporate it and really build the best transit system for the community."

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