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Council expected to extend Pointe des Chenes transit pilot project one more summer

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City council will be asked to extend a Pointe des Chenes transit pilot project for an additional summer.

Council will receive a report at its Tuesday meeting providing the data of the pilot project that saw a city transit bus travelling to and from Pointe des Chenes beach this summer.

The service was offered on weekends throughout the summer months, from June 26 to Sept. 6, including statutory holidays.

A report to council states that 419 rides were tallied throughout the summer.

“Utilization to the beach was heaviest at the 12:15 p.m departure time with 208 rides and the lowest at 9:15 a.m. with only 18 rides,” the report reads. “There were also seven days with zero rides due to poor weather.”

On average there were 19 trips per day, increasing to 27 trips per day when the rain dates were eliminated.

“It was evident during the pilot that it provided a new opportunity for individuals and families from the downtown core to access the beach,” the report states.

Staff are recommending to council that the pilot project be extended for another summer.

Ward 3 Coun. Matthew Shoemaker, who first proposed the idea, said he’s thrilled that more than 400 people accessed the service and he anticipates it can grow next summer.

“I knew it would be a benefit to folks with transportation restrictions or limitations and low income families,” he said.

Should council choose to extend the pilot project, it also recommends that the morning departure time be eliminated and the first scheduled trip leave between 12:15 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. Return trips should be scheduled to leave between 4:15 p.m. and 5:15 p.m.

Shoemaker agrees that the tweaking of departure times makes sense given the numbers who used the service in the early morning.

It also recommends that the service be cancelled for projected rain days, with advanced notice provided on the city’s website and through social media platforms.

A third recommendation by staff suggests that social services and the local immigration partnership be used to promote the service with their clients and partnering agencies, and that the city continue to promote the pilot project through social media throughout the summer months.

A mid-case costing scenario suggests that the service would require about an \$11,000 increase in operating funding for 2022 for the two return trips daily from the downtown terminal, also servicing the Northern Transfer Point and other points along the way.

“That is an extremely minimal cost for a service that gets people out to the municipality’s only beach,” Shoemaker said. “Obviously I’m supportive of the \$11,000 for the next year and I

suspect if the results are the same or greater, this will become permanent in the years that follow.”

Other city councillors have also suggested similar transit projects should be tried to get residents to other outdoor recreational areas across the city, including Hiawatha.

Ward 1 Coun. Sandra Hollingsworth had told council she would like to see a bus travel to and from Hiawatha so residents can enjoy the outdoor recreation in that area of the city as well.

Shoemaker said this year’s pilot project has created a road map for potential expansion.

City council meets virtually Tuesday at 4:30 p.m.