

MTA expands bus service

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

New bus routes and increased service hours, including express trips on routes to Olympia and Belfair from Shelton, are in the works for Mason Transit Authority riders this spring, provided the agency can hire enough drivers this month.

The transit authority board approved a 2015 budget that included funding for three service change projects, however, the agency must hire between five and seven new drivers, as well as a new supervisor to train those drivers before some of the projects can be rolled out.

"We have the funding allocated for it, we just don't have the manpower," said Christina Kramer, MTA outreach manager. "We are looking at an April 4 rollout, the caveat being that we will only move forward if we have enough

staff hired to cover the increase in service hours."

Project 1 is fully funded and will be implemented with the opening of the new Transit-Community Center in downtown Shelton in April.

The project realigns all routes to service the transit center and eliminates the existing Routes 9 and 10, reallocating those funds toward a new Route 9 that will service the Shelton Mountain View

area to the downtown.

Routes 9 and 10 were originally created to alleviate Routes 5 and 7, which serve the same areas of Shelton in a North and South Loop, connecting communities in Mountain View, Arcadia, Northcliff Road, Turner Avenue and more to downtown and Wallace Kneeland Boulevard.

"We will cover the same areas, but we're making it more effective and efficient,"

Kramer said.

The new Route 9 will service the Mason County Senior Activities Center, Capitol Hill and Railroad Avenue.

Projects 2 and 3 increase service hours on routes that travel to Belfair and Olympia, however those service changes may be implemented gradually as the agency hires more drivers.

The proposed changes within the projects include a morning and afternoon express trip on weekdays on Route 6 from Shelton to Olympia, as well as two new

roundtrips added to Route 6 on all service days.

If the projects are implemented, Saturday service also will be increased on Routes 6 and 7 and a new Saturday service will be added to Route 4, which serves Belfair locally.

Route 1 from Shelton to Belfair via Grapeview Loop Road and Highway 3 will see a new morning express trip on weekdays added as well.

For more information on Mason Transit Authority, visit www.masontransit.org or call 427-5033. ■



PHOTO BY ARLA SHEPHARD
Christina Kramer, outreach manager of Mason Transit Authority, stands by a Mason Transit bus. The transit agency plans to add new routes and service hours for Mason County riders this spring.

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January 9th, 2015