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Bus travel could be a 'Breeze'

■ A new Lane Transit District shuttle bus system may soon be serving the campus

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

It runs on electricity, is tentatively named the "Breeze" and could be taking University students and faculty downtown and to the Valley River Center mall every 10 minutes by September.

"It" is a planned shuttle bus system that will be offered by the Lane Transit District and was recommended for approval by the University Planning Committee at its meeting Thursday afternoon.

If the shuttle bus route receives final approval from University President Dave Frohnmayer, it will serve the campus from the two existing LTD stops throughout the day and then begin picking up passengers at five stops on campus after 6:30 p.m.

Several committee members expressed their concerns about adding more vehicular traffic to the closed section of 13th Avenue, but these concerns were allayed by other committee members and LTD planners at the meeting. The committee voted unanimously to recommend the bus.

In their presentation to the committee, LTD planners stressed the safety benefits and unique aspects of the shuttle buses to sell their plan.

Andy Vobora, a service planning manager with LTD, said the 22-foot long buses, which can hold as many as 33 people, will not be a disturbance because the buses' hybrid electric motors will make them far quieter than regular buses.

"This isn't just a shortcut through campus," he said, "but really a way to serve the campus."

Vobora said LTD is also considering painting the buses with a special paint that changes color depending on how light reflects off it.

Committee member Carole Daly expressed concern about whether or not the buses may be too quiet.

"What about visually impaired people? If it's really, really quiet, would that be a concern?" she said.

The LTD staff members admitted that it could possibly lead to some accidents but said they were thinking about adding a "little ice cream truck" sound to the buses that could help visually impaired people become aware of them.

After the decision to recommend the plans, committee discussion centered on the signs for the shuttle's stops.

Cynthia Girling, department head of landscape architecture, said LTD should make shuttle signs on campus as innocuous as the shuttle buses are touted to be.

"My opinion would be to make them as simple and modest, not unique," she said.

However, Rand Stamm, parking and transportation manager for the Department of Public Safety, said blending signs too well into the campus area can be a problem.

"[People] overlook it completely because it's subtle and aesthetically pleasing," he said. "It's not serving the purpose of a sign."

The committee decided to halt discussion on the signs and forward that issue to its subcommittee, which deals with signs.

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