

Public transit options to change in Grand Ronde

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Grand Ronde-area residents who rely on public transit to get to and from Salem will have a new ride starting in 2018.

On July 27, the Salem Area Mass Transit District Board of Directors voted to end the Cherriots 2X service between Salem and Grand Ronde on Friday, Dec. 29.

The route currently provides public transit service from Spirit Mountain Casino to Salem eight times daily Monday through Friday starting at 7:30 a.m. and running through 11:30 p.m.

The Salem Area Mass Transit District has been operating the bus service between Grand Ronde and Salem since 2009 through a contract with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Funding for the bus service comes primarily from federal Tribal transit dollars provided through the Tribe's federal and state transit grants from the Federal Transit Administration and the Oregon Department of Transportation. The Transit District agreed to cover the cost of one of the round-trips.

When the Tribe recently requested new proposals for the same route, the Salem Area Mass Transit District decided not to bid again, according to the board's meeting memo.

Much of the reasoning had to do with declining ridership, Transportation Development Director Stephen Dickey said.

Ridership on the Cherriots 2X route hit an annual high of 25,514 in fiscal year 2011-12 and declined to 17,204 in fiscal year 2016-17. During the last two fiscal years, Cherriots 2X has seen double-digit percentage decreases in ridership. "It's not an anomaly," Dickey



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

A rider boards a Cherriots 2X bus at Spirit Mountain Casino on Wednesday, Aug. 9. The bus that provides service between Salem and Grand Ronde will end on Friday, Dec. 29. The Tribe is working with the Tillamook County Transportation District to provide service between Grand Ronde and Salem in 2018.

said about other public transit providers, such as Tri-Met in Portland, seeing a decline in ridership. "Lower gas prices are putting more cars on the road."

Tribal Planning & Grants Manager Kim Rogers said the service was originally going to end in September, but the board opted to end the service at the end of the year to give the Tribe more time to arrange another public transit option for Tribal members, area residents and casino employees.

Rogers said the Tribe is working with the Tillamook County Transportation District to provide service between Grand Ronde and Salem.

Tillamook County Transit District currently operates the Coastal Connector that runs from Lincoln City to Grand Ronde three times daily and on to Salem on Saturday and Sunday. Cherriots 2X does not

operate on weekends.

"TCTD has new grant funds to help provide three daily round-trips all the way to Salem instead of just weekends, including going to the Amtrak station," Rogers said. "The Tribe has met with TCTD about adding more Grand Ronde-to-Salem round-trips during the week."

Rogers said that it would probably be an additional three round-trips for a total of six weekly trips

to Salem.

"The schedule has yet to be developed and no contract has been signed regarding these added trips, but that is what TCTD and the Tribe plan to do," Rogers said.

In August 2015, the Grand Ronde Tribe signed an agreement with the Tillamook County Transportation District to start a Coastal Connector route from Lincoln City to Grand Ronde Monday through Friday and all the way to Salem on weekends. Earlier this year, the Tillamook County Transit District updated its transit plan and recommended that it run daily to Salem instead of transferring to Cherriots in Grand Ronde.

Salem Area Mass Transit District funds used to help pay for the Cherriots 2X route will be allocated to the West Salem fixed-route service, the board's meeting memo stated.

The Tribal agreement with the Transit District for the route was originally drawn up with the intent that the Tribe would pay the added cost to the Transit District to provide the route, except for one round-trip. When the current finances of the agreement were reviewed in more detail, as part of potential renewal, the Transit District determined it was covering the cost of more than three of the eight round-trips, Rogers said. ■



Are you frustrated with your diabetes control?

Do you have questions about diabetes?

Do you need help managing your diabetes?

If so...

Call the Medical Clinic today at 503-879-2002

To schedule an individual diabetes education appointment

Hoop for Health!

CTGR NATIVE YOUTH
3 ON 3
2017

When: August 18th-20th

Tournament times: **Friday, Aug. 18** | 5 p.m.- 8 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 19 | 8 a.m.- 9 p.m.
Sunday Aug. 20 | 8 a.m.- Until finished (if needed)

Who can play: Coed Middle school and High school brackets (teams of 4)
2016-2017 school year, must bring ID.

Where: 'Uyxat Pow Wow Grounds - Grand Ronde, Oregon

Cost: Free!

3 point contest | Prizes for 3 point contest, 1st, and 2nd place teams!

All teams must have a coach, 18 years or older | Limited Team spots available!

Presentation on healthy lifestyle awareness!

Recreation Department

To register a team Contact Harris Reibach: 503-879-1369

**NATIVE AMERICAN LIFE SKILLS
EMPOWERMENT TRAINING**

When: Wednesday's
Sept. 6 through Oct. 11
TIME: 10 a.m. -12 p.m. (lunch & childcare provided)

WHERE: The Community Center
9615 Grand Ronde Rd. Grand Ronde, OR

**NATIVE
VOICES**

Registration Deadline: Sept. 1, 2017

RSVP: Aliea Finney 503-879-2041 or aliea.finney@grandronde.org

Facilitators: Aliea Finney & Carmen Mercier