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Base shuttle service expanding

By Julie Smith/Northwest Guardian

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Getting around Joint Base Lewis-McChord during off-duty hours gets a lot easier next week.

The installation's shuttle service is expanding its hours and days of operation to include weekends beginning Monday, despite the government shutdown.

Soon, service- and family members will be able to shop or go to the gym without spending money on taxis or gas, said Miriam Easley, JBLM sustainability outreach coordinator.

Two additional stops will also be added to the shuttle service. The Orange Route will make its last stop at Four Chaplains Chapel on Lewis Main and the Purple Route will originate at 17th Fires Brigade barracks on Lewis North. Both routes will run from 7 a.m. to approximately 9 p.m. every day of the week.

"The biggest benefit I see is to service members' and family members' pockets," Easley said. "If they can utilize some of these alternative modes of transportation that we're providing, some family members who can get around base to get things done might be able to forgo that second car payment."

The shuttle service was created to only cover duty hours, but a recent examination of the regulation found the service could be expanded to evenings and weekends to support certain Morale, Welfare and Recreation functions.

"So now we can support that single service member who needs to get to the Main Exchange, or the family who wants to go to church," Easley said.

Even for individuals who live off base, Easley said there could be benefit.

"It could be that people use the van pool through the Mass Transit Benefit Program to get on base and then use the shuttle to get around," she said. "There would be no need to bring your vehicle on base."

That could be a significant environmental impact to the installation, Easley said, since traffic, fuel consumption and vehicle miles traveled could be reduced, thereby improving the air quality.

The extended service hours will be funded by the proceeds from JBLM's Qualified Recycling Program, and service members will be tasked to serve as shuttle drivers.

Transportation motor pool NCOIC Sgt. Torence Jones said a large number of individuals used the shuttle service last month, and he hopes usage keeps growing as more people become aware of the expanded service.

"It's a great program," Jones said.

New shuttle routes

- Both routes begin at 7 a.m. and operate every 30 minutes.
- The new Orange Route (Madigan to Soldiers Field House) stops at Madigan, Stone Education Center, Waller Hall, Sheridan Gym, JBLM Reception Center, Soldiers Field House, Four Chaplains Chapel
- The new Purple Route (17th Fires Brigade Barracks to Madigan) stops at 17th Fires Brigade Barracks, Hawk Education Center/Warrior

Zone, Waller Hall, Stone Education Center, Madigan

- For more information about the JBLM shuttle service, call 253-967-4897.

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