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## Hydrogen-powered bus to begin service on JBLM next week

Jessica Hall/Northwest Guardian

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As part of a Hydrogen Fuel Cell Initiative, Joint Base Lewis-McChord received a hydrogen bus last year to develop a route to take Airmen and Soldiers, civilian employees and family members around the installation.

The JBLM Duty Shuttle begins service on Monday. The two-route shuttle system will cover main roads from McChord Field to Lewis Main and Lewis North.

When establishing the route, officials at Directorate of Logistics thought about where the most Soldiers and Airmen were throughout the day, and where they most often need to go.

“The purpose of the bus is to get people back and forth between appointments during the duty day,” Lt. Col. A.J. Mims, 627th Logistics Readiness Squadron commander and DOL deputy director, said.

The Blue Route will start at 62nd Airlift Wing Headquarters and make stops at McChord Health and Wellness Center, McChord Clinic, McChord Education Center and Madigan Army Medical Center. It will then turn around and head back to 62nd AW Headquarters with the same stops. The route will go through gates between McChord Field and Lewis Main but will not need to be stopped for an ID check, as riders will already have been vetted when they entered JBLM for work that day. The bus on this route is expected to be a Bluebird bus and not the one hydrogen bus.

The hydrogen bus will be used for the Green Route. The route will run from the Hawk Education Center on Lewis North to Madigan where it will pick up and drop off passengers who need to ride the blue route, and turn around to head back to Lewis North. Stops include Lewis Army Museum, Garrison headquarters, Waller Hall, Lewis Main Exchange, Stone Education Center and Madigan.

The busses will have signs in the window designating it the Duty Shuttle and there will also be signage at each stop with information on the bus and route times.

Another part of the planning process was making sure wait times were not too long.

“Reliability is important,” Jerry Reed, DOL service delivery officer, said.

Before coming to JBLM, Reed worked on establishing and maintaining similar shuttles on installations worldwide.

The shuttle will give rider priority to active-duty service members on duty and in uniform, then off-duty Soldiers and civilian employees, Reserve and National Guard members, dependents of active-duty personnel, retirees and JBLM visitors. If a bus is full and on-duty service members are waiting the driver will ask those on the bus with lower priority to wait for the next bus.

Department of Defense regulations do not allow government vehicles to transport individuals from their home to work, unless under specific circumstances. Shuttle busses in particular can only be used to move service members and employees to and from work locations or to public mass transit stations. Previously Pierce County operated a bus on JBLM but cut service due to recent budget cuts and lack of ridership.

The new JBLM route will be free, unlike the one operated by Pierce County.

Another driving factor in starting the bus route now is that the General Services Administration non-tactical fleet will be reduced in the next few years.

“There will be fewer government vehicles on the road in the next two years,” Garey Heumphreus, DOL director, said. “Having a reliable bus route should help.”

Ridership will be accessed throughout the pilot period that is expected to end in October. At that point, the decision will be made whether or not to continue the program and if the routes will remain the same or additional ones are needed.

Those involved in the planning and execution of the shuttle hope that it catches on. At a recent Earth Day event where the hydrogen bus was displayed, some new JBLM Soldiers expressed their hope that it was already running to one of the drivers of the bus, Cpl. Gary Salazar of the 593rd Sustainment Brigade.

“They can hopefully expect to be on time and get where they need to go,” Salazar said. He is looking forward to driving the route once service begins.

Tom Olsen, JBLM Directorate of Public Works Air Program manager, has been working on the Hydrogen Fuel Initiatives on the installation, including hydrogen fuel- powered forklifts and a fuel station. The bus is the one piece of the project that everyone at JBLM can really see and potentially use. The time to embrace public transportation is now according to Olsen.

“Though it’s cool to own your own car, it doesn’t mean you have to drive it everywhere,” Olsen said. “The bus gives folks options to get out of their car and take a form of mass transit, and in this case a form of mass transit that emits no emissions.”

The bus routes begin Monday and will run from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. They will not run on holidays, weekends or days with inclement weather. For more information visit: [www.facebook.com/jblmcommutes](http://www.facebook.com/jblmcommutes) or call 982-2684 (option No. 4).

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