

Airport bus service to begin July 1

■ **PEOPLE MOVER:** Transit will be available hourly from two parts of town.

By ROSEMARY SHINOHARA
Anchorage Daily News

People Mover bus service to Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport has been started and stopped several times in recent years, but it will be on again beginning July 1, and this time city bus officials think the route will succeed.

Airport bus service was never fre-

quent enough or accessible from enough places around town to work well in prior attempts, said city transit planner Jody Karcz. So when it came time to trim costs, it would get chopped.

But beginning in July, city buses will drive to the airport from two parts of town every hour from about 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Riders will be able to catch an airport bus from downtown, Spenard, Dimond Center, or stops en route, she said.

Airport workers and tourists will need to ride to make it a productive route, Karcz said.

The airport route is one of a set of bus service improvements planned this summer using federal transportation money. The additions will cost \$1.47 million, Karcz said. The money is available annually for three years.

Besides airport service, the changes will include more frequent trips on some routes, and more predictable arrival and departure times at bus stops on about half the routes. Buses on those routes will leave each bus stop hourly, at the same number of minutes past the hour.

For example, Route 1 from Muldoon

■ **PEOPLE MOVER** has scheduled public meetings to discuss the changes and hear comment on them from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday in Room 700 of City Hall downtown. Copies of new schedules are available on city buses, at the Downtown Transit Center, and on the Internet at www.peoplemover.org.

to Dimond Center will leave Muldoon Mall at a quarter past each hour from 6:15 a.m. to 9:15 p.m.

These changes are part of a long-

range plan to expand the bus system and increase the number of riders.

Any steps to make the system work better are to the good, said Elayne Janiak, a bus rider and transit activist. But she said she expected more in this round of improvements. In January, city transit officials presented a plan to an advisory committee that Janiak sits on. It called for making Muldoon Mall a bigger transit hub, with more buses coming and going at once, and converting more routes to

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regular hourly service, all to happen this summer.

Karcz said People Mover had intended to launch more improvements this July. "But a lot of things couldn't happen."

Mainly, she said, the system wasn't able to get additional buses as quickly as it hoped to. One deal to obtain more buses fell through. It takes more than six months to buy and receive delivery of the buses, and People Mover is just starting the purchasing after the failed first attempt, she said.

Lack of buses will prevent changing more routes to the regular hourly service, she said, but that is still the ultimate plan. Buses not on hourly service sometimes take 45 minutes between trips to a stop and sometimes take an hour and a half. A consultant recommended more predictable service.

People Mover is unable to use the Muldoon Mall parking lot as a transit hub, with several buses arriving at once so that people can conveniently transfer, because mall businesses have gotten busier and bus use of the parking lot is limited, Karcz said.

Instead, the bus system is increasing turnout space along both sides of Muldoon Road to accommodate more buses. But the extra room won't be ready by July, she said.

More improvements, with the addi-

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tional buses being ordered, are probably about a year off, Karcz said.

Routes converting to the predictable hourly service include:

- Route 1 from Muldoon to Dimond Center via Providence Alaska Medical Center and Lake Otis Parkway.
- Route 2 from downtown out C Street and 36th Avenue to Dimond Center.
- Route 7, from downtown to Spenard to International Airport, Jewel Lake, and Dimond Center.
- Route 9 from downtown to Dimond Center via Arctic Boulevard.
- Route 14 from downtown to Government Hill.
- Route 60 from downtown to Dimond Center, Oceanview and Huffman Business Park.
- Route 75 from downtown to Muldoon Mall and the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

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