

British double-decker dresses up downtown

By JOHN LINDBACK
Daily News reporter

Downtown Anchorage has taken on a new British flavor. At least until the snow flies, that is.

The municipality's new English double-decker bus began experimental downtown shuttle

service last week.

The 67-passenger vehicle was purchased and renovated for American driving at a cost of \$24,490.

The double-decker offers a free ride and its route is designed to serve fringe parking areas of the central business

district, allowing workers to park and ride to most downtown businesses and employment centers, Municipal Press-Officer Kathy Madison said.

The bus, part of the People Mover transit system, travels a circuitous route downtown from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Mondays

through Fridays and 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

The bus is a 1967 model. The chassis and engine were constructed in Bristol, on England's south coast, and the body was built by Eastern Counties Coach Works in Lowestoft.

It was first used for public transit in the county of Hampshire and was operated by the Hants and Dorset Motor Services Company Ltd.

Though the new route is considered an experiment, there is no date set for the end of the trial period, Madison said. The original concept was for it to operate only in the summer, she said.

"It's anticipated it will not be running regularly after the snow falls," Madison said.

The double-decker may reappear for special occasions, such as Fur Rendezvous, during the winter, she said.

The bus was refurbished in Norfolk, Va., where the steering was changed from the right to left side. The original leather is still on the seats, Madison said.

