

Free rides boost People Mover use

By LARRY CAMPBELL
Daily News reporter

Anchorage residents definitely know the meaning of the word "free." Since People Mover's free bus service started Nov. 1, ridership has jumped 25 percent.

"This is much better than we even expected," said Bob Kniefel, director of the Municipal Public Transportation Department.

Using the last week of October as a reference point, ridership in the first week of November rose 21 percent, from a little more than 60,000 to nearly 73,000. The second week, 75,500 riders jumped on the bus.

The increases have occurred on every day of the week. The biggest gains were on Sundays, with a 60 percent increase in riders; Fridays, with a 40 percent increase; and Tuesdays, with a 36 per-

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cent increase.

People Mover drivers have also noticed an increase in commuter use. The Eagle River parking lot, where drivers catch a bus into Anchorage, was packed with 25 vehicles last week, more than double the usual number, Kniefel said.

A \$450,000 federal Department of Transportation grant is being used to pay for the free service through Jan. 31, 2000. The grant is part of a combined effort with the city

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Week 1 - Ridership was up 21% (72,908) over base week (60,339).

Week 2 - Ridership was up 25% (75,504) over base week despite Nov. 11 being Veterans Day with most government offices and many businesses closed.

Two week average percent change in ridership:
+28% +36% +18% +3% +40% +37% +59%



CHARLES ATKINS / Anchorage Daily News

Department of Health and Human Services and the state Department of Environmental Conservation to fight

Anchorage air pollution.

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