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From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: Peter J. Dame
Deputy Village Manager
708.358.5778

Free Shuttle Extends Hours During Summer Months

To make it even easier for residents and visitors to frequent restaurants, shops and recreation centers throughout the Village during the summer, the free Oak Park shuttle is once again offering extended hours on Thursday and Friday evenings through Labor Day.

The two conversion vans, each equipped with a wheelchair lift, typically operate on an hour-long loop from 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., seven days a week, except major holidays. But during the extended hours, Shuttle 1 will end its route at 9 p.m. at Oak Park Avenue and North Boulevard (stop number 1 on the route), and Shuttle 2 will complete its final circuit there at 9:30 p.m.

The shuttle route includes 21 stops at 30-minute intervals along an eight-mile course designed to offer access to a range of important sites, and easy connections to many popular mass transit routes. Among the stops are key Village shopping and dining destinations including downtown, in the Lake Street-Oak Park Avenue area and in the Oak Park-Eisenhower business district.

The shuttle also stops at two major Park District facilities with pools and evening public swimming during the extended shuttle hours. The shuttle stops in the parking lot of Ridgeland Common, 415 W. Lake St., and at the Oak Park Conservatory across the street from Rehm Park and Pool, 515 Garfield St. (For information on Park District programs visit www.oakparkparks.com.)

Several shuttle stops offer easy transfer to a host of mass transit options at points throughout the Village, including PACE and CTA buses, and the CTA's green and blue lines. Among the shuttle stops is the downtown intermodal transportation station, which links Metra's commuter rail west line and CTA trains and buses at a central location near the Marion Street Mall.

Riders can board a shuttle at any of the stops, which are marked by signs including a route map, a list of attractions near each stop and the arrival time of each of the two vans. In addition to times and stops, the maps note nearby mass transit connection options.

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Shuttle extended hours

Potential riders also can call 615.1830 for the most up-to-date route information, to seek assistance, ask questions or make comments. A route map and schedule is available on the Village website, www.oak-park.us.

The Shuttle was developed in 2004 in partnership with the Pace Municipal Vanpool Program to test a community-based public transportation service. In the first year of service, more than 17,000 riders took the shuttle, prompting the Village Board to extend the program and incorporate it into this year's base municipal services budget.

At the six-month point in last year's test period, Pace officials indicated that the Oak Park Shuttle was their model for a successful community circulator in the Chicago region, an approach to community based services embodied in Pace's long-term plan, *Vision 2020*. Pace just recently nominated the Oak Park Shuttle for an *American Public Transportation Association Innovation Award* presented annually in recognition of innovative concepts in public transportation services.

Shuttle vans are provided by Pace and maintained by mechanics in the Public Works Department. Future plans include working with PACE to acquire vehicles that are not only larger, more attractive and more easily accessible, but also are environmentally friendly. The goal is to eventually have vehicles that use clean fuels, have a more historic appearance and offer easy side access.

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