

Cities, RTA team to provide rides to workplaces

Jeff Piorkowski *Special to Sun News*

Mayfield is planning to team with Highland Heights and the Regional Transit Authority to provide a shuttle service that will aid riders heading to their jobs on Alpha and Beta drives and other nearby areas.

Mayfield Village Council heard during a caucus meeting Monday of an agreement that, if council gives expected approval later this month, would enact in December an extra transportation service augmenting an existing RTA route.

RTA's current 7A route takes passengers down Wilson Mills Road east, into Mayfield, then turns right and heads south on SOM Center Road, toward Hillcrest Hospital in Mayfield Heights.

Mayfield Economic Development Manager John Marquart said that when the "micro transit program" begins, the 7A will stop at its usual stop at Wilson Mills Road

and Alpha Drive in Highland Heights, in front of Progressive's Campus 1, 1,755 Alpha Drive. From that stop, riders who are going to work on Alpha Drive, or Beta Drive in Mayfield, or other spots on or near SOM Center Road in the village, can board the smaller bus and get a lift closer to their job site.

The shuttle will first enter Progressive's Campus 1, then return to Wilson Mills Road. From there, it will head down Beta Drive, then proceed north on SOM Center Road to Progressive's Campus 2, 300 N. Commons Blvd. The shuttle, operated by Standard Parking Plus, will then head south on SOM Center Road, enter Highland Road westbound to Alpha Drive, and continue on Alpha south and back to Wilson Mills Road.

Marquart said the circulator will be a 12- to 14-passenger bus similar to those seen operating on University Circle.

SEE SHUTTLE, A6



Workers with jobs on Beta Drive, shown here, and Alpha Drive in Highland Heights will be among those who benefit from a new circulator being planned to take employees the "last mile" to their job sites. The circulator could be operating by December.

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Continues from A1

To pay for the service, RTA has supplied a ConnectWorks grant totaling \$119,198, while Mayfield and Highland Heights will each pay \$59,599. The project's total cost is \$238,396. Marquart said that a used bus will carry passengers until a new bus can be delivered in just over a year.

In explaining one benefit of the service, Marquart said, "An example we give is, there's currently a (7A route RTA) stop at the driveway of Progressive Campus 1 at Alpha Drive (and Wilson Mills Road). However, the (Progressive) buildings are so far back (from Wilson Mills) that it's still about a 15-minute walk for employees (who get off a bus).

"We think this will make it more attractive for folks to use transit. It'll help our employers reach new labor markets they may not be reaching now, so we're real excited about it."

The service will help make for much shorter walks for those who work on Alpha or Beta Drives, north of Wilson Mills Road, who are now let off the 7A bus on Wilson Mills. Riders will pay the fare to ride the 7A, but there will be no charge to ride the circulator.

The circulator will operate from 6:20 a.m. to 6:40 p.m. each weekday to coincide with RTA's existing 7A bus service. It will make 15 total stops, and 16 in the summer.

Marquart said Progressive Insurance, the area's largest employer, got the ball rolling on the project.

"Progressive actually asked us what we thought about getting something like this together for a couple reasons," he said. "One was to make it more attractive for people who come back to work, versus staying home (to work). And, secondly, a lot of the contract employees, like service, janitorial, groundskeeping, things like that, were having difficulty getting to work. So we thought this might be the solution to help."

Before the pandemic, when Progressive workers began to work from home, about 8,000 of the company's employees worked on its campuses. Progressive is now allowing its workforce to return to its offices on a voluntary basis. Marquart said 5%-10% of Progressive's workforce is currently choosing to work from the company's offices. Still, he said, with only a small percentage of Progressive workers back at the offices, Alpha and Beta drives are home to 10,000-11,000 employees of the streets' various businesses.

Highland Heights City Council also must pass an ordinance for the pilot program to go forward. It has already passed a resolution of support.

In accordance with the terms of the RTA grant, the service will run for 18 months as a pilot program. At that time, RTA will evaluate ridership to gauge whether it is successful enough for RTA to operate the route without Standard Parking Plus. Mayfield and Highland Heights will also evaluate the pilot program's success and future viability.

Sun 8/4/22

MAYFIELD VILLAGE

Assault *North Commons Boulevard*

A woman reported July 25 that she was in a fight with a co-worker at their place of work at a healthcare facility.

Responding officers determined that she was the primary aggressor and arrested the Shaker Heights woman, 19, for assault.

Suspicious person *Wilson Mills Road*

Some people were found walking around with flashlights in the stadium at the high school around 1 a.m. July 21.

The group said they had nothing better to do. They were sent on their way, and a few under age 18 were advised of curfew laws.

Impaired driving *Interstate 271*

Officers found the driver of a vehicle asleep at the wheel after it sat through multiple light cycles at the exit ramp to Wilson Mills Road around 2 a.m. July 22.

The Mayfield Heights driver, 38, failed sobriety tests and falsely identified himself. He was found to be driving under suspension. He was charged for that offense, for giving false information and OVI.

Marijuana and illegal mushrooms were also found in the vehicle. Further charges are pending lab results.

Parking complaint *SOM Center Road*

Approximately 35 parking citations were issued July 22 for vehicles that were illegally parked at the Grove and softball

fields. Many were found parked on the grass.

The citations were written after announcements about the parking law had been made at each facility.

Police are reminding visitors that vehicles must be parked in marked parking spaces while attending events.

Criminal mischief *Aintree Park Drive*

A fire extinguisher was used in an apartment garage July 24 and left residue on several vehicles. No suspects were identified, and special attention was given to the area.

Hit-skip *Interstate 271*

A man reported July 25 that his vehicle had been sideswiped by another vehicle July 25. He said he and the other driver both stopped and spoke before the other man returned to his vehicle and fled at a high rate of speed after learning that police were being called. The incident is under investigation.

Seen
8/4/22

Police Blotter