

COUNCIL WORKSHOP ITEM

ITEM: Grove Commuter Shuttle – Proposed Marketing Plan
DATE: June 1, 2004
PREPARED BY: David H. Barber, P.E., Director of Public Works
Dorin Fera, AICP, Traffic Manager
PURPOSE: For Village Council Information Only

DISCUSSION:

The Local Transportation Subcommittee (LTS) held a meeting on Thursday, May 27, 2004 for the purposes of discussing a proposed bus marketing plan for the Grove Commuter Shuttle in response to Village Council request to increase bus ridership. The goal is to help increase the number of daily riders from 176 passengers (round-trip rides) by 50% (88 new riders) to 264 daily riders by April 2005.

The Village does not currently have any programs to promote the use of the Shuttle, other than word of mouth by the users. The discussion at this meeting focused action steps needed to get the word out to potential users of the Shuttle service.

This Marketing Plan is proposed to be “budget-neutral”, through the use of Village staff, various available resources, including Village Newsletter, Cable TV, water billing statements, and the Village Corner, among others.

ATTACHMENT:

Proposed Bus Marketing Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

The LTS is providing this correspondence at this time to Village Council for Information only.



**Village of Downers Grove
Public Works
Memo**

To: Local Transportation Subcommittee

From: David Barber, Director of Public Works
Dorin Fera, Traffic Manager

Date: May 7, 2004

Subject: **Grove Commuter Shuttle – 2004-05
Marketing Program for Increasing Ridership**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this communication is to provide suggestions for an effort to market the Grove Commuter Shuttle to increase the number of riders during 2004. Village Council requested the efforts be implemented to increase the number of daily riders from 176 passengers (round-trip rides) by 50% (88 new riders) to 264 daily riders by April 2005.

BACKGROUND:

The Village does not currently have any programs in place to promote the use of the Grove Commuter Shuttle to potential new passengers to increase use of the system. To meet the goal of a 50% increase in daily riders by April 2005 staff will need to implement a program to promote the use of the Grove Commuter Shuttle to achieve this goal. The efforts being proposed by Public Works staff at this time are intended to be low cost and specific to those potential customers that might chose this means of travel to and from the Metra facilities at Belmont Avenue (Bristol Club) and Main Street (North, Southeast and Southwest routes).

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Listed below are several actions proposed by the staff to help improve the visibility of the Grove Commuter Shuttle. The specific purpose of increasing the visibility of this system is to increase the number of daily riders to help increase revenues to the system.

Action Step 1 – Review and update the current fliers describing the Grove Commuter Shuttle. The reference to the Charters needs to be deleted from the current flier. The fees for the service are being reviewed and a recommendation to adjust the current fees will be presented in a separate communication. Once the proposed fees are approved these new rates also need to be added to the updated flier.

Action Step 2 – Once the Grove Commuter Shuttle flier is updated we need to do more than simply make it available at a few locations like the Train Stations, Public Works Building, Village Hall and the Police Station. We would propose that directed mailings be made to neighborhoods around the routes of the shuttle service. A copy will also be posted on the Village's Home Page. We also

propose to identify those daily fee parkers using Village spaces and mail them a copy to encourage the use of the bus system. We would also suggest a mailing to all persons listed on the current waiting lists for permit parking spaces at all three train stations.

Action Step 3 – The current routes have not been adjusted in several years. Staff will be undertaking an examination of the current routes to determine changes might be made to increase system exposure and to make access more convenient for current and potential customers. If any changes result from this analysis they can be implemented later in 2004 and an update to our flier can be made in a second printing. We will not be able to complete this route review in adequate time to meet the schedule for the first update of the flier. We do not propose delaying publication of the updated flier as the rate adjustment information will be one of the keys in increasing ridership.

Action Step 4 – We anticipate promotion of the Park-N-Ride facility at 75th Street. This could be added to the new flier in the space vacated by the discussion on the charter service. We would also propose that as the routes are reviewed (Step 3) that a second possible Park-N-Ride site be developed for the southwest route. Increased use of the Park-N-Ride and the Grove Commuter Shuttle will help reduced the demand on parking around the train stations and will decrease traffic congestion.

Action Step 5 – The use of signs for commuter stops is proposed to help identify specific stops and to increase the visibility of the system. Staff proposes to fabricate these signs in-house to help keep costs to a minimum.

Action Step 6 – We will increase the visibility of the Grove Commuter Shuttle through the use of existing media. We anticipate using the Village Corner, Village Newsletter, Home Page, Water Billing Notices, Cable Channel 6 and any other outlets that might be helpful to increase the visibility of the system.

Action Step 7 – We propose to implement periodic rider promotions. As an example, we might conduct a drawing for all new (first-time) monthly permit purchasers and award a free monthly bus permit for the following month. We might seek METRA participation and we could raffle “donated” monthly passes or 10-ride passes for the rail service. We could also offer gift certificates for Joyful’s Café at the Train Station as a part of the prize package. We could implement a periodic “Rider Appreciation Day” promotion and offer free coffee at the train station (using a refund card) or free newspapers for all of our customers on the set day.

Action Step 8 – We need customer feedback and suggest periodic distribution of customer comment cards. Hearing periodically from our customers will help us know what needs might be going unmet and where we can possibly enhance service to improve ridership.

Action Step 9 – To help show the value of the system and to encourage customer comment we would suggest periodically a day for appropriate Village officials (elected and appointed) to ride the bus routes and talk to the customers. This opportunity allows for the Village to hear directly from the customer about the service we are providing.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting consideration of implementing a more direct marketing program including some or all of the above features to encourage additional riders on the Grove Commuter Shuttle. Staff has suggested several ideas to help increase the visibility of the program as well as to encourage riders to the system. Local Transportation Subcommittee concurrence is requested.