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Two experimental free shuttles to operate in Estes Park

The Town of Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park will experiment this summer with two free shuttle services aimed at enhancing services for visitors – a Shopper Shuttle and a Hiker Shuttle.

Both systems will be operated from July 1 through Labor Day by McDonald Transit Association, the firm already used by Rocky Mountain National Park for its park and ride system. Both routes will use the Estes Park Visitors Center as a hub for operations.

Two vehicles will provide continuous loop Shopper Shuttle service from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Individuals can board shuttles at seven locations east of the Visitors Center, at delivery pull-offs on both sides of Elkhorn Avenue through the core downtown area and at Performance Park. It is anticipated that using two vehicles for the Shopper Shuttle will allow 20-minute intervals between stops. Route maps and other materials about the Shuttles will be available before the inaugural service run.

“Town officials spent the past two years looking at similar systems in use in other parts of the United States that also have consistently high seasonal traffic limited land mass available for expanding parking. Leaders in communities bordering Zion National Park and Arcadia National Park provided us wonderful advice and a blueprint for what they found works. Beginning 10 years ago experts have been telling us Estes Park needed to establish a reliable public transportation system. We’re hopeful that this system will be embraced by our visitors as it has been in other communities.”

The National Park’s “hiker shuttle” will run from the Town of Estes Park Visitor Center to the Beaver Meadows Visitors Center and then to the Park & Ride on an hourly schedule. The first bus will leave the Town of Estes Park Visitors Center at 9 a.m. and the last bus will leave the Park & Ride bound for Estes Park at 8 p.m.

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A park pass will be required to board the bus. Campers who are staying at Moraine Park Campground and Glacier Basin Campground can also utilize this route to go to Estes Park, leaving their cars and/or RVs behind in these two park campgrounds.

Passes can be purchased at automated fee machines located at the Town of Estes Park Visitors Center and Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.

“We are excited to partner with the town of Estes Park to provide visitors with a shuttle bus service directly to Rocky Mountain National Park. This adds another choice for how visitors can experience the park and how campers, in two of the park’s campgrounds, can enjoy the amenities found in Estes Park. It is also a great opportunity for visitors to reduce their fuel consumption!”

This experiment, costing the Town of Estes Park about \$95,000 this year, is the first of its kind in the area and will explore whether visitors are interested in leaving their cars behind in Estes Park to board a bus that brings them to the core downtown shopping area or directly to Rocky Mountain National Park. To support the shuttle systems, about 250 parking spaces have been added to two Visitors Center parking areas.

In addition to providing shuttle services for Rocky Mountain National Park, McDonald Transit Association provides mass transportation systems for cities and universities throughout the United States. The company operated the transit system for the Salt Lake Olympics and, more recently, the X-games in Aspen.

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