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June 15, 2006

Free Estes Park shuttles ready to roll

After nearly two years on the drawing board, free, experimental shuttle service for downtown Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park are ready to roll.

The Shopper Shuttle and the Hiker Shuttle 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 28-passenger 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. Route maps and other materials about the Shuttles are available at the Estes Park Visitors Center, 500 Big Thompson Ave., and at multiple locations along the route.

"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 and 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," said Randy Repola, Town Administrator.

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.

A park pass still will be required for entry into Rocky Mountain National Park, but the shuttle ride is free. 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, said Kyle Patterson, spokesperson for 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!"

For information about the routes and schedules, call the Estes Park Visitors Center at 800-443-7837 or 970-577-9900. Rocky Mountain National Park personnel also provide information at 970-586-1206.

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