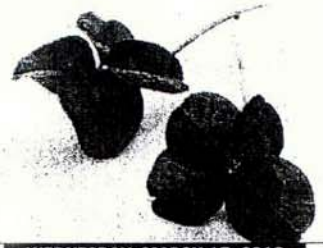


Happy St. Patrick's Day! Parade map inside on B3

THE PLAIN DEALER

MORE THAN 1.3 MILLION READERS IN PRINT AND ON CLEVELAND.COM WEEKLY | 75¢ NEWSSTAND 55¢ HOME DELIVERY



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2010

★ ★ ★ ★

RTA to offer shopper bus in Lakewood, Cleveland

KAREN FARKAS
Plain Dealer Reporter

A one-day-a-week shopper bus service in Lakewood and Cleveland's Clifton-Detroit neighborhood will begin March 26, six months after RTA discontinued its community circulators.

An RTA paratransit vehicle will travel a route that includes Detroit and Madison avenues and West 117th Street on Fridays from noon to 6 p.m.

Its 17 stops include several apartment buildings, Giant Eagle, Walgreens, Lakewood Library and Lakewood Hospital. The vehicle will complete about four 90-minute trips during the six-hour span.

A ticket costs \$2.25, which must be paid every time a person boards. So if someone plans several stops during the afternoon, it is better to purchase a \$5 all-

day pass from the driver, said RTA officials. The single-ride fare for seniors, the disabled and children is \$1, and an all-day pass is \$2.50. More information about fares can be found at riderta.com

Lakewood residents were the most vocal when the 12 circulators were eliminated last September as the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority scrambled to balance its budget. They continued to press for a shopper service.

Lakewood City Council on Monday approved a one-year contract with RTA. Lakewood will pay \$10,000, and Cleveland is expected to pay \$5,000, which will cover about half the operating costs.

"We are happy it will be up and running, but it is certainly not an adequate substitute for what we had," Lakewood Mayor Ed FitzGerald said Tuesday. "We

think we have the most need for this kind of local route."

Lakewood does provide transportation for seniors who make a reservation. FitzGerald said the city is seeking grants and financial help from local businesses and organizations to fund another day of shopper service using the city's small bus.

"We would be willing to provide the bus, fuel and maintenance if the private sector paid for the driver," he said.

Several cities and Cleveland neighborhoods expressed interest when RTA proposed a weekly shopper service. The agency is currently working on arrangements with the Kamm's Corners area in West Park and Slavic Village, said spokesman Jerry Masek.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:
kfarkas@plaind.com, 216-999-5079