Mayor-president exploring options for UL, downtown bus loop to connect students

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Lafayette Mayor President Joel Robideaux is preparing a plan that may give University of Louisiana at Lafayette students easier access to downtown Lafayette and Freetown via an environmentally conscious bus loop.

Robideaux said the 20-minute loop, which is still in its conceptual stages, would deploy a trolley or electric vehicle that would make its way through Freetown, which houses McKinley Street bars such as the Bulldog and Poet’s as well as The Quarters, and loop through downtown and return to campus.

The result, he said, would thin the amount of traffic on arterial roads.

"That also keeps us kind of off University (Avenue) and off Johnston Street," he said.

According to The Independent, the bus loop, which will be open for public use, will grow depending on how well received the service proves. This will affect where the stops will be and how many there will be.

Robideaux said he expects the public to receive the bus service well.

"My hope is that from day one, they’re engaged so that I have to look at adding either another vehicle or getting one that has more capacity on the vehicle," he said.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization, a transportation planning agency for urban Lafayette that is part of the Acadia Planning Commission, is seeking to move $2 million currently set aside for Ambassador Caffery and Johnston Street improvements that are reportedly no longer necessary.

According to Melanie Bordelon, MPO manager, the transfer of funds may take place at their May meeting.

Stuart Glaeser, director of UL Lafayette's Office of Transportation Services, said he is unsure how the loop will be used to get to campus.

"I don’t know how many people in the downtown Lafayette area would use that bus to get to campus opposed to driving out and parking at Cajun Field," he said.

Glaeser said he doesn’t think the new bus loop will affect the transportation services at UL Lafayette.

"It all depends on where that proposed route is and if it’s going to affect anybody that can get on that bus opposed to driving out," said Glaeser.

Glaeser said he thinks the UL Lafayette transit system will not be affected by this new bus loop other than a few new buses around campus. Glaeser said because UL Lafayette doesn’t provide transit services in the downtown area, it would increase the riders of the Lafayette Transit System.

Kate Durio, director of marketing and communications for Downtown Development Authority, described the plan as a "double benefit" for both businesses and public transportation.

"Not only do you connect the students with the rest of your community by offering something like this loop, but the other thing you’re doing is you’re actually creating kind of a new generation of public transportation riders," Durio said.

Dominic Santiny, a sophomore education major, said he thinks the new bus loop could be helpful to students getting to and from downtown amenities because most students are not well-funded and downtown parking is sparse.

Santiny said the bus loop could also be beneficial to students because not all students have vehicles or are uncomfortable driving downtown.

"It may get mixed reviews," said Santiny. "Like I said, some may benefit from it, such as those without vehicles. Some may see it as an added expense. Some may worry about who’s going to pay for this, especially with the decline in TOPS and the uncertainty of it. A lot of people are kind of holding tight to their wallets."

Santiny said he would ride the new bus because he hasn’t really experienced downtown yet. "It’s a chance for me to see downtown. I don’t know how people in the downtown Lafayette area would use that bus to get to campus opposed to driving out and parking at Cajun Field," he said.

Santiny said he expects the public to receive the bus service well.

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SGA announces partnership with NAACP, Omega Psi Phi, UPC

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The Student Government Association announced a partnership with NAACP, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Gamma Delta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi and the University Program Council for upcoming events happening for the remainder of the semester.

The Big Three attended the Eminent Faculty and Staff Awards on March 23. President Wil Perkins expressed his gratitude for the university faculty and staff.

He also said he enjoyed the program’s impact on UL Lafayette community members.

"Going to this program, you never realize what the faculty and staff really do for us until you have the opportunity to come to something like this," he said. "The faculty at UL really go above and beyond for their students and it really makes you appreciate them a lot more."

Vice President Mary McMahon was elated about the SGA week turn out.

"SGA week went great," she announced. "NAMI on Campus enjoyed working with us and the Party on the Green event had a great turnout."

McMahon said the annual campus clean-up is scheduled for April 8 from 8 a.m. to noon. She said the service provides a way to obtain service hours. Any organization is welcomed to join, and food and drinks will also be served.

Vice President Thomas Schumacher announced SGA will release the Big Three election video either tonight or tomorrow. The video, he said, was created to make students more aware of The Big Three and the senators’ roles, as well as the importance of voting.

The annual SGA banquet planning is also in progress. The date is planned to be on April 24 after the weekly Monday SGA meeting.

University Program Council and SGA are teaming up with the Ragin' Carnival event on March 30 from 5-8 p.m.