



the last several decades," she said. "In order for our city to continue to grow as it has, we have to include planning for parking not only downtown, but in other areas like the Medical Center, Midtown and Montrose."

The Public Parking Commission should provide business owners and other stakeholders a valuable input into planning for parking in the city. Downtown residents and nighttime visitors will benefit from an upgraded, cheaper parking system and increased security provided by Rambo's newly trained corps of traffic enforcement officers.

One thing. Just don't call them "meter maids." The term doesn't fit the job description anymore.

GRAND VALLEY STATE U. TRIPLES BUS RIDERSHIP IN TWO YEARS

From the press office: Grand Valley State University in September 2002, provided a little less than 40,000 rides per month to college students — in September 2004 the number of rides provided each month jumped to 120,000. This staggering jump in ridership required months of work between GVSU and the Grand Rapid's public transportation system and a complete communication campaign

geared at both the students and the community. The success shows in the high number of students taking the bus and the rider satisfaction surveys conducted by the university: 90 percent rate the bus service as good or excellent.

"We knew increasing transportation options for our students was critical. We have a residential campus 14 miles from our growing downtown campus. The campuses are very connected and dependent on one another, and many students take classes on both campuses," said Lisa Haynes, director of operations — Pew Campus and Regional Center. "Offering free and frequent transportation options for our students makes our institution stronger. Transit provides many other bene-

fits both economically and environmentally, which we have worked to communicate to our students."

Financially it also made sense for the University to expand bus service each year to help limit its investment in new parking structures.

Similar to the dramatic growth in bus ridership, GVSU as an institution has known phenomenal growth since it was established in 1960. Each decade enrollment jumped dramatically, and currently it serves nearly 23,000 students.

The main campus in Allendale, Michigan, is nestled in a small community 14 miles west of Grand Rapids. Bus service between Allendale and Grand Rapids had been offered on a limited basis since the late 1980s. The expansion of several departments into Grand Rapids, the state's second largest city, eventually led to a complete downtown campus in fall, 2000. The Pew Campus now includes four academic buildings and two student housing facilities.

Although more than 2,000 parking spaces, including a new parking structure, were added, the need for broader transportation services became more apparent as the University expanded into the already crowded and thriving Grand Rapids city limits. With the opening of the Pew Campus, the University doubled bus service by contracting with "The Rapid," the busses of the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP)—formerly known as the Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority.

The Rapid now serves GVSU's Campus Connector and runs between the Pew Campus and Allendale every 15 minutes, Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday service runs from noon until 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, a Weekend Connector makes stops every two hours in two nearby towns with a local superstore and a shopping mall.

The contract between the ITP and the University also allows GVSU students to ride any other

city bus free of charge with their student I.D. In addition, GVSU contracted with the ITP to provide an off-campus apartment shuttle service to surrounding apartment complexes populated with students. "Each time we conduct satisfaction surveys, students are asked how GVSU can expand the bus service

to better serve them," said Haynes. "We knew part of creating a growing transit culture would require listening carefully to our students."

Surveys were just one part of an entire campaign conducted by GVSU. The administration felt confident if it implemented an effective communication campaign everyone

PARKING IN THE NEWS



would see the benefits of taking the bus. Initiated in 2000, the campaign included flyers, a poster series, releases to student and Grand Rapids area press, and forums on parking problems and solutions.

In promotional pieces and information meetings, GVSU staff gave several reasons why students should consider traveling by bus. The service is free, it saves students money on gas, and it helps the environment. The shuttle means no traffic stress to and from Grand Rapids (about a 30-minute drive from Allendale). Due to the limited parking in many places, the walking distance from the bus stop to the classroom or other student destination is often shorter than if students parked their own car and had to walk.

Since the campaign started ridership has skyrocketed. Each year additional times and routes have been added to the schedule.

The university's work with the city's public transportation system is relatively unique; GVSU is the 19th University in the United States to develop a relationship with a public transit authority. The University views the situation as more than a business relationship – they consider it a partnership. ITP has called the arrangement “fabulous.”

The University contracts annually with ITP and is billed monthly at about \$49 per bus per hour. The cost is billed to the University transportation budget.

Tim Schad, GVSU vice president for finance and administration,

is impressed by the economic and environmental impact the transit program has had on the GVSU community. “In the 2004-2005 school year, we saved the students almost \$2.4 million in car operating costs and more than 230 thousand gallons of gas — the same amount as 19 of the large gas tankers you see driving on the highway.”

RISE IN MOPED OWNERSHIP SPURS NEW LAWS

Moped owners will have to start following the rules of the road this week as the UW-Madison