Island Transit Starts Modified Service Plan on July 6 under Phase 3 of Safe Start

Coupeville, WA -- On July 6, Island Transit will start operating on a new Modified Service Plan to provide the community with more access to public transit as Island County enters Phase 3 of Washington Safe Start during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Modified Service Plan provides more service than has been available since March and shifts some resources to high-demand areas to better serve the community.

Most existing route paths under the Modified Service Plan will remain the same with more frequency and longer span of service hours. Saturday service will begin July 11 and the NASWI Commuter Services will resume on July 6. Some routes that had been eliminated when the pandemic began will be restored.

“The Modified Service Plan takes our new reality of social distancing into account to slow the spread of COVID-19. Out of care and concern for our passengers and operators, we cannot allow as many people on the buses. That means we need more vehicles and drivers to carry the same number of passengers on many routes, which increases operating costs for those routes,” says Todd Morrow, Executive Director of Island Transit, adding that the need to maintain new health and safety standards during the pandemic comes at a time when resources are getting tighter. “The Modified Service Plan supports the right mix of service and safety, shifting some resources from low-ridership areas to provide the highest level of service to the most people. Customers will experience much more service starting July 6.”

Ridership limits on buses have changed during the pandemic from 38 to 11 on two-door buses, 25 to eight on one-door buses and eight to two on paratransit buses to maintain social distancing.

With the economic impact of COVID-19 effecting retail sales, the agency could lose up to 30 percent in local sales tax revenues which make up 70 percent of the agency’s operating budget. “We’re moving forward with an eye on fiscal responsibility as well as service to the public,” says Morrow.

The new Modified Service Plan will provide more service on both Whidbey and Camano islands, moving from 8 to 14 routes during week days with schedule modifications on all but one route. Here are some highlights:

**Whidbey Island Service:**

**Route 1:** Adding AM/PM routes with half-hour service from 11 AM to 4:30 PM. No service to Ken’s Corner on evening commuter run.

**Route 3:** Restoring service with 5 runs a day: 2 AM, 1 mid-day, and 2 PM.
Route 6: Restoring service to this route connecting the Coupeville Ferry to Oak Harbor.
Route 14: Adding a new route. Runs every half hour and expands service to Oak Harbor High School, Oak Harbor Middle School, Oak Harbor Senior Center, John Vanderzicht Memorial Pool, and Summer Hill Assisted Living.
Route 58: Restoring service to a modified route with 2 AM and 2 PM trips.
Route 60: Adding 2 AM and 2 PM trips to this route serving Langley.
NASWI Commuter Service: Fully restored with 2 AM and 2 PM runs.

Routes 10, 12 and 22 will be combined with the new Route 14. Route 57 will not be restored but much of the service included in that area will be covered by Route 60. Service to Lone Lake and Goss Road areas will end with that change.

Camano Island Service:
Route 1W: Adding 4 trips: 1 AM, 1 mid-day and 2 PM.
Route 2: Adding 4 trips: 2 AM and 2 PM.
Route 3: Adding 7 trips: 3 AM, 1 midday and 3 PM.
Route 411C: Adding 3 trips: 2 AM and 1 PM.
Route 412: Restoring to 4 roundtrips daily: 2 AM and 2 PM.

Saturday Service will begin again on Saturday, July 11, on Whidbey Routes 1, 14, 411W and 60, as well as on Camano Routes 1, 2, 3 and 411C.

The Modified Service Plan was designed with ridership data driving decisions on which routes to expand, which hours and frequency to modify, and which service to reduce. The substitution of Route 57 and changes to Route 58 will affect some paratransit customers. Island Transit is working to find alternative transportation for the customers impacted by these service modifications.

“While we may not have as much service as we were running before the Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders limited travel, we will be offering much more service than has been available since March 22,” says Morrow. “We’re still in a time of uncertainty. As we better understand the impacts of COVID-19, we hope to be able to provide more service in the future.”

A full schedule of the new Modified Service Plan can be found at www.islandtransit.org on Friday, June 26. Connecting transit agencies have implemented emergency service plans that may affect transfers. Reference their websites for the most current information.
With Washington’s new law requiring the use of face coverings in public places, passengers are asked to wear a face mask while riding the bus and will be provided a mask if they don’t have one. A full explanation of new health and safety guidelines for riding the bus during the pandemic can be found at www.islandtransit.org/covid-19-response.

Customers who need further assistance or have questions should contact Island Transit Customer Service at (360) 678-7771.

The mission of Island Transit is to provide safe, accessible, convenient, and friendly public transportation services which enhance our island quality of life.

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