

Snoqualmie Valley Transportation PO Box 806 1308 Boalch Ave NW North Bend, WA 98045

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Free bus rides for Valley students

Schools are almost out for the summer, and families are creating their summer schedules. To help parents get family members to camp, work, summer school or other destinations, Snoqualmie Valley Transportation is launching its new Summer Freedom program, free rides for students, ages 10 to 18, anywhere SVT buses go, all summer from June through August.

"Summer Freedom will help families with their transportation needs and get the next generation familiar with using public transportation and with SVT," says Snoqualmie Valley Transportation Director Amy Biggs. "We want to get people where they need to go, and we think this is a great way to do it while helping a lot of parents. Some parents spend their summers feeling like chauffeurs! We're here for them."

At Snoqualmie Valley School District, where the transportation department is very familiar with parents' transportation concerns, the staff is looking forward to the start of this program.

"I know kids like to get from the lower valley up here to the upper valley," said District Transportation Director Jim Garhart. "This program will take a lot of pressure off parents."

The district has provided bus service to and from its summer school classes for the past three years, but the parents need to get their students to centralized pickup points. For this type of service and for the students' ability to go between points in the valley on their own, students, parents and everyone else in the valley can rely on SVT.

Summer Freedom is a pilot program and if the ridership is good, SVT plans on making it an annual event. The new program will include all current Monday-through-Friday SVT routes: Valley Shuttle, between North Bend and Duvall; Cedar Falls Loop, a fixed route connecting downtown North Bend with the Wilderness Rim, Rattlesnake Lake and Riverbend communities;

Downtown Loop, a fixed route connecting the downtown areas of Snoqualmie and North Bend; Ridge Loop, a fixed route connecting downtown Snoqualmie and the Ridge, with stops in historic downtown, Snoqualmie Ridge, Snoqualmie Valley Hospital and Snoqualmie Casino; Door-to-Door, the call-in-advance service throughout Snoqualmie Valley; and Duvall-Monroe Shuttle, a fixed route connecting downtown Duvall and several locations in Monroe including Walmart, movie theaters and hospitals.

Summer Freedom is open to all valley students. The program runs from June 1 to Aug. 31. To find out more about how kids can ride free, call (425) 888-7001, or visit www.svtbus.org.

About Snoqualmie Valley Transportation: Snoqualmie Valley Transportation (SVT) is a project of Mt. Si Senior Center. SVT began its services in 2003 with funding assistance from Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, King County Metro Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Learn more about the bus services and find maps and schedules at www.svtbus.org, or call 425-888-7001.