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Principal® Foundation funds DART pilot to provide weekend service to Johnston's Merle Hay thoroughfare and North Des Moines

Weekend service begins Sunday, Nov. 13 on Local Route 5

A second pilot program between DART and Principal® Foundation will explore the impact daily transit access, including weekends, has for bus riders and residents of North Des Moines and Johnston. As part of DART's upcoming service change on Sunday, Nov. 13, Principal® Foundation is providing funding for DART to begin operating Saturday and Sunday service on Local Route 5 – Franklin Ave/Johnston. This expands access to transit on the weekends, especially in the underserved corridor along Merle Hay Road, including Merle Hay Mall and north to the Johnston Public Library. (See map link next page for this and another Nov. service change.)

The pilot is responsive to feedback DART frequently receives from riders to provide more weekend service, especially to the area served by Local Route 5, a significant retail and high-density thoroughfare. This service was identified in DART's long-range planning effort, the Transit Optimization Study, adopted by the DART Board of Commissioners earlier this year. In addition to the current riders who utilize route 5, this expansion will benefit the future residents of a new Anawim Housing Facility being built in a former Days Inn south of the Interstate along Merle Hay Road and the growing number of employees needed for this retail corridor. DART is working directly with the cities of Johnston, Des Moines, and Urbandale to coordinate the addition of stops and safe road use precautions that will benefit riders, pedestrians, and businesses along Merle Hay Road.

"Striving to create communities where financial security is accessible to all is at the heart of Principal® Foundation's quest to help people live their best lives," said Jo Christine Miles, director, Principal® Foundation and community relations. "Not having access to transportation every day of the week is a major barrier to people living, working and traveling within this area. We hope our support will lead to financial stability for those utilizing this expanded service, and the businesses and residents along this route will also benefit from the economic impact in this diverse and growing region."

"This corridor provides access to a significant number of jobs and shopping destinations, which is why we are so pleased to be able to add this service prior to the holiday shopping season," said Luis Montoya,, DART Chief Planning Officer. "This is exactly the kind of service that helps us enrich lives, connect communities and expand opportunities and we're eager to see how our continued partnership with Principal® Foundation enables us to reduce transit barriers for those we serve."

DART and Principal® Foundation Partnership – Three Projects

The Local Route 5 weekend service pilot is the second of three DART projects to be funded through Principal Foundation grants. The first grant provided free transportation for Des Moines Public School students attending North High School and Harding Middle School for the 2022-23 school year. And the third and final project will focus on improving financial wellbeing by removing transportation

barriers for a north Des Moines neighborhood that has the lowest incomes in our region. More information on this third initiative will be shared in early 2023.

November 2022 service changes

Along with the expansion of weekend service on Local Route 5, DART is making one other service change in November. Effective Sunday, Nov. 13, weekend schedule times will change for some trips on Local Route 17 – Hubbell Avenue/Altoona. Those interested in viewing schedules for both route changes can find schedules online now at ridedart.com/November.

[Click here to access images and maps to use for promotion of this news release.](#)

About DART

Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is Iowa's largest, and only, regional transit agency, providing service in and around Polk County. DART operates a family of transportation services, providing nearly 4.5 million annual rides that connect thousands of people every day to jobs, school, healthcare and other essential destinations. Twelve member governments make up DART's service area, where the agency carries out its mission to enrich lives, connect communities and expand opportunities for central Iowans. For more information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit the website at ridedart.com, download the free MyDART app or call 515-283-8100.

About Principal Foundation

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