New Health Care Center Shuttle Bus Provides Access to Medical Services

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Health Care Centers announce the arrival of a new 2015 14-passenger bus for use on the County Health Care Center Shuttle service. Replacing a 2006 passenger van, the new specially-designed bus will be providing origin to destination transportation, three days per week, for North County residents to medical appointments in the Santa Barbara city region.

The County Health Care Center Shuttle has been operated since 1984 by SMOOTH, Inc., a non-profit transportation corporation in Santa Maria. The Shuttle provides an average of 1,800 passenger trips per year to medical services available at the Santa Barbara Health Care Center on 345 Camino del Remedio, which are not available in the north county.

This project comes as a result of a unique multi-departmental and inter-agency collaboration in the county. As the operator of the Shuttle, SMOOTH management staff began conversations with Health Care Center management in late 2013 to lay the groundwork for needed funding for the $70,000 project. During a subsequent transit planning meeting, County Public Works Alternative Transportation Manager, Matt Dobberteen, suggested the use of the Public Transportation Modernization, Improvement, and Service Enhancement Account (PTMISEA) grant, a state-wide program approved by California voters in 2006 as part of Proposition 1B. With review and approval from the County Board of Supervisors, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), and county transportation planning jurisdictions, Dobberteen submitted the PTMISEA grant in early 2014 and was awarded the funds by the state shortly thereafter.

Aware of the sometimes lengthy drive time for Shuttle passengers, SMOOTH Executive Director, Jim Talbott, helped develop the design of the bus with passenger comfort and safety in mind. A Glaval coach was selected through a State-approved procurement program, for its quieter ride and available reclining seatbacks. Extra-plush seat upholstery, additional stereo speakers, tinted windows, and a more soothing color décor were added to further enhance passenger comfort. The vehicle also features an ADA compliant wheelchair lift and seating capacity for two wheelchairs for those facing mobility challenges.

Talbott offered his assessment of the project by stating, “It was great working with so many different collaborating entities in this project, leading to a true win-win-win environment for the county and a wonderful vehicle for our deserving Shuttle passengers.”

This is designed for County Health Care Center patients. For information on using the County’s Health Care Center Shuttle, phone SMOOTH in Santa Maria at (805) 922-8476.

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