

## Staff Report

**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Spencer Starke, Transit Planner  
**Date:** March 26, 2026

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**Agenda Item:** 5.6 Recreation Shuttles Service & Budget Presentation

### **Recommendation:**

Discussion only.

### **Discussion:**

#### **2025 Pilot Program Overview**

The recreation shuttle pilot launched on September 13, 2025, and operated through October 26, 2025. Service ran on both Saturdays and Sundays for eight hours each day, providing community members with access to recreation areas throughout the pilot period.

#### **Operations**

The service utilized cutaway vehicles equipped with trailer hitches. Huck Wagon, a bicycle trailer manufacturer, loaned the agency a bike trailer that accommodated cyclists traveling to and from Marshall Mountain. Operations staff responded positively to the work, and riders found the service enjoyable and pleasant.

Community outreach and coordination were essential to the pilot's success. Partners from the Front Country Recreation Collaborative and Missoula County Parks and Trails, along with other community members, assisted with spreading awareness and securing turnaround space for the service.

#### **Ridership**

Ridership data was not tracked consistently or correctly during the pilot period. Based on available information, the shuttle provided approximately thirty rides per day. Improved data collection is identified as a key priority for the 2026 season. Ridership is anticipated to increase in the second season as community awareness grows.

#### **2025 Cost Summary**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Operating Costs (including training)	\$4,766.93

Materials (hitches, etc.)	\$804
Trailer Delivery	\$1,200
Marketing Materials (design and printing; includes baseline design work that is reused in other projects)	\$10,182.90
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$16,953.99</b>

### 2026 Recreation Shuttle Service Plan

Building on the pilot, the 2026 recreation shuttle service will expand significantly in scope and duration. The program will retain the same routing established in 2025 and leverage the training already completed, while rolling out service earlier in the season for a longer operational window.

### Service Parameters

Parameter	Detail
Service Period	First weekend in May to last weekend in October
Total Service Days	53 days
Total Operating Hours	525 hours
Routing	Same as 2025 pilot

### 2026 Cost Summary

Cost Category	Amount
Operations (No Training)	\$18,000
Huck Wagon Trailer	\$15,000
Marketing Materials	TBD
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>TBD</b>

### 2026 Opportunities & Goals

The 2026 season presents several opportunities to strengthen and mature the recreation shuttle program:

**Better Data Collection:** Implement consistent ridership tracking from day one to build a reliable dataset for future planning and funding justification.

**Longer Service Time to Mature:** A full season running from May through October will allow the service to establish ridership patterns and build community familiarity.

**Secure Funding Partnerships:** Pursue dedicated funding sources and sponsors to reduce reliance on one-time project funding and ensure long-term sustainability.

**Build Long-term Grant Funding Capacity:** Develop a program that is competitive for federal grant support.

**Continue to Expand Community Partnerships:** Deepen relationships with Front County Recreation Collaborative members and other community stakeholders to broaden outreach and operational support.

**Assist with Trailhead Congestion:** Position the shuttle as a solution for reducing vehicle congestion at a popular trailhead, adding transportation value to the broader recreation system.

**Align with Community Values:** Ensure the service reflects and supports community priorities around outdoor access, sustainability, and equitable transportation.

**Financial Impact and Funding Source:**

Service for 2026 is a budgeted expense. The agency is finalizing funding partnerships with philanthropic partners to offset expenses.

**DBE Certified:**

Not applicable