

Tuesday, December 23, 2008

Talks could establish a SMART route to Rochester

By **Dave Groves**, news editor

Oakland University officials are exploring the prospect of a new transportation option that would significantly enhance the campus community's access to all that the Rochester area has to offer.

Mary Beth Snyder, vice president for student affairs, said the recent development of a partnership between OU and the Royal Park Hotel in Rochester sparked conversations about how students, faculty, staff and others could more easily make their way to and from the city and its environs. This led to conversations with the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) about creating a new bus route to popular destinations including the downtown area and local shopping malls.

Since then, discussion has grown to include Rochester area merchants and service providers, chamber of commerce representatives, local apartment complex managers and municipal officials.

"We have been bringing all interested parties to the table in this discussion ... and I would say there's nearly unanimous support for it," Snyder explained.

Oakland University also conducted a survey of about 6,000 students and found there's already a great deal of interest in such a service.

Unfortunately, tough economic times make the task of funding the new service a formidable challenge. Snyder said that creating a route is estimated to cost about \$400,000 annually.

"It's not going to be easy. It's not a slam dunk as far as the funding is concerned," she explained. She added, however, "I think there's a strong enough will out there that we're going to get this job done."

Meanwhile, university officials encourage members of the OU community to take advantage of existing bus routes that connect the campus will popular destinations all over southeastern Michigan. **Maps** of routes covering the immediate vicinity are available on the Center for Student Activities Web site. Additional information on SMART bus routes, fares and more is available at www.smartbus.org.

SUMMARY

Oakland University officials are exploring a new transportation option that would enhance the campus community's access to all the Rochester area has to offer.

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