

Agenda Item: 2.b

Meeting Date: December 2, 2025

MEMORANDUM

To: City Commission

Through:

From: Kathy Gademer

Date: 2025-11-21

Subject: Annual review of the Freebee Loop Contract including funding and ridership discussion

Presenter(s): George Kinney, Director, Community Development Department; Kathy Gademer, Project Manager, Community Development Department

Staff Recommendation: Direction to staff on continuing the looper service

Strategic Themes: Multi-Modal Transit

Boards & Committees: n/a

Budget Impact: Freebee Loop Budget Impact

March 23, 2023 - Commission awarded RFP #23-1217 for the implementation of a downtown looper/mobility service to Beefree LLC in the amount of \$127,830.

May 2, 2024 - Commission approved to extend the freebee Loop Pilot Project for 35 days starting May 3, 2024 and concluding Jun 7, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$16,129 and at a reduced level of service.

June 4, 2024 - Commission approved to extend the freebee Loop Pilot Project for 35 days starting June 8, 2024 and concluding July 13, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$16,129 and at a reduced level of service.

July 14, 2024 - City Manager approved to extend the Freebee Loop Pilot Project for 35 days starting July 14, 2024 and concluding on August 18, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$16,129 and at a reduced level of service.

August 6, 2024 - City Manager approved to extend the

Freebee Loop Pilot Project for 35 days starting August 19, 2024 and concluding on September 22, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$16,129 and at a reduced level of service.

â€¢ September 19, 2024 â€“ City Commission approved the Fifth Amendment to the Freebee Contract for 90 days starting September 23, 2024 and concluding December 22, 2024 at a cost not to exceed \$48,387.

â€¢ September 23, 2025 â€“ City Commission approved the FY 2026 Final Budget containing the Freebee Loopâ€™s annual operating cost of \$219,000 and \$219,000 annual through FY 2031.

â€¢ December 17, 2024 â€“ City Commission approved the 1st annual (12 month) contract commencing on December 22, 2024 and concluding December 21, 2025 at a cost not to exceed \$219,000. The contract expires one (1) year after the Effective Date with options to extend the Term for four (4) additional one (1) year periods.

Past Action:

Freebee Loop Background and Past Action:

â€¢ On May 2, 2023, the Downtown Looper Mobility Service Internal Working Group (George Kinney, Nicole Delfino, Sue Burness, Vince Gizzi, Trevor Davis, Mary Sheets, Jason Spiegel, Grant Painter, and Kathy Gademer) met with Jason Spiegel, Freebee, to discuss program parameters, routes and timing.

As a result of this feedback, Freebee prepared a schedule and implementation time frame and presented it to the internal working group at the July 28, 2023 meeting.

â€¢ On July 28, 2023, the Internal Working Group met with Jason to discuss two (2) different route options that encompassed all the key City locations discussed during the May 2, 2023 meeting. The list of special events and road closures was provided to Jason. The group discussed route designs, vehicle headway, service utilization, hours and days of operation, wayfinding and signage, marketing, and special events.

â€¢ On August 10, 2023, the Internal Working Group met with Jason to review the revised routes and times and days of operation. The revised route added Mease Life Assisted Living Facility. To accommodate access to the building and the pickup/drop-off circle, an extra 3-4 minutes was added to the route.

â€¢ On October 3, 2023 â€“ City Commission approved the Downtown Looper Routes and Program Parameters.

On April 2, 2024, Freebee submitted its 6-month pilot program custom monitoring and comprehensive final report regarding the feasibility of a permanent long-term service.

April 16, 2024 – City Commission agreed for City Manager Bramley to have the conversation with Freebee and City staff regarding the future service, keeping the service as is through the pilot period.

April 30, 2024 – City Commission postponed the Freebee Loop Pilot Project item until May 2, 2024.

September 19, 2024 – City Commission approved the Fifth Amendment to the Freebee Contract for 90 days starting September 23, 2024 and concluding on December 21, 2024 and added the Flex Pilot 90 day (3 month) off-peak season pilot program.

December 17, 2024 – City Commission approved the Freebee Flex Route Annual Contract starting December 22, 2024 and concluding on December 21, 2025. (Exhibit A).

Next Action: N/A

Attachments: [A. Annual Contract - 1222-2024 through 1221-2025 executed.pdf](#)
[B. Loop Ridership 2023-11 November through 2025-10 October PPT.pdf](#)

Background: Ridership Analysis November 2023 through October 2025.

Riders request rides by waving a vehicle down anywhere along the route, through the Ride Freebee mobile app or by calling Freebee's dispatch center for on-demand service. Throughout the life of the Freebee contracts, City's records show a total ridership of 29,847. More than one-half of the riders sequestered a ride using the Freebee app and less than one-half of the riders flagged down a Loop vehicle. (Exhibit A).

The hours of operation for the Flex Program are as follows: Peak Service Hours between January 16th through April 14th utilizing three (3) Vehicles with hours of operation as follows:

Thursday: 11am - 10pm
Friday/Saturday: 11am - 12am
Sunday: 11am - 7pm

Non-Peak Service Hours between April 15th through January 15th utilizing two (2) Vehicles with hours of operation as follows:

- â€¢ Thursdays â€“ 5pm to 10pm
- â€¢ Fridays â€“ 3pm to 12am
- â€¢ Saturdays â€“ 11am to 12am
- â€¢ Sundays â€“ 11am to 7pm

The first two (2) months, year 2023, of the program enabled 2,589 riders compared to the same time frame in 2024 which decreased an average of 22% or 2,026 riders.

During the period of January through October 2024 and using the same time period in 2025, total ridership increased on the average of 37%, 10,652 and 14,480, respectively. Highest total ridership increase was in August (183%) and September (113%).

On May 21, 2025, the City Commission approved a flex route with geofencing solutions. The flex service utilizes geofencing technology using the borders between San Christopher, Keene Road, Union Street and Edgewater Drive / Alt 19. The program offers on-demand service and require drop-off or pick-up in the downtown core as outlined in the pilot program. The two-year flex route increased in ridership on average by 20%, starting in late May and continual increases are seen until late October 2025.

Throughout the life of the contract, Saturdays had the highest ridership (11,714) while Thursdays had the lowest ridership (4,603).

Pickups from and drop-offs at nonresidential addresses were approximately six (6) times more popular than pickups and drop-offs at residential addresses.

On the days of special events, the Loop saw 8,832 customers. Spring training had highest ridership at 1,697 in 2024 and 1,709 and 2025, for a total of 3,406. The average trend for special events over the life of the contracts shows an increase in ridership.

The City applied for three (3) grants.

1. Public Transit Service Development Program (FDOT). This three (3) grant is for new services showing growth. The grant request was for \$657,000 at a 50% match or \$328,500.
2. TD Bank Charitable Foundation. This grant supports and improves the quality of life for individuals and communities that are aligned with connected communities, financial security and a vibrant plant. The grant request was for one year of service at \$219,000.
3. T-Mobile Hometown Grant. This is a small city grant and supports products ranging from technology upgrades to improving public spaces and high impact engagement. The grant request was for \$50,000.

The City was denied all three (3) grant requests.

The Annual Contract is consistent with the City of Dunedin Comprehensive Plan:

â€¢ Policy 1.2.13.: The City will examine the benefits and potential impacts of ride service vendors, including micromobility devices, ride share services, and bike share services, to ensure that the anticipated impacts are properly addressed and mitigated as well as providing appropriate infrastructure /facilities for such services.

The Annual Contract is consistent with the City of Dunedin Multimodal Transportation Plan:

â€¢ Action 1.02: Promote First Mile / Last Mile strategies to fill gaps to transit stops, schools, parks, and connect to off-site parking locations.

â€¢ Action 1.09: Implement a downtown curb lane management plan (include loading / unloading, ride share pickup / drop-off, dining, potential micromobility locations).

â€¢ Action 4.09: Explore additional micromobility options such as a looper, downtown, etc to connect to downtown, Mease Dunedin Hospital and TD Ballpark.