

Buses added to Preston-Logan line aim to improve air quality

By **NECIA P. SEAMONS**

The Preston Citizen

Pocatello Regional Transit has two new small buses providing mid-day transportation service from Logan to Preston.

The small “cutaway” buses were purchased from funds provided by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The goal of the new buses is to get more people using PRT’s



services, thus reducing vehicles on the road and the overall emissions from motor vehicles.

Cache Valley Transit District and PRT have a joint agreement to service the Logan-to-Preston route, with the small PRT buses running at mid-day during the week and the larger CVTD buses running on weekday mornings and evenings.

The bus stop in Preston is located next to the LDS Church on 100 East and 100 South. The PRT bus stops at noon to pick up passengers there, then arrives at the Transit Center in

Logan at 12:50 p.m. after stops in Franklin, Lewiston, Richmond, Smithfield and North Logan. Additionally, PRT provides a Demand Response Service (door-to-door). Contact PRT Dispatch at 208-232-ABUS (2287) to make reservations for this service.

Bus driver Garth C. Porter said he likes the new buses because they have a ramp that makes boarding easier for riders using wheelchairs or those having difficulties using steps. He feels the buses are safer



SUBMITTED PHOTO/CHRIS WERNERT

Bus driver Garth C. Porter likes the new Pocatello Regional Transit bus because it has a ramp that makes it easy for riders using wheelchairs or those having difficulties using steps.

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Recently, a family heading to Logan from Franklin County for a doctor appointment boarded the bus together. The dad uses the bus almost daily for getting to his work sites in Logan, and the family finds the bus a convenient and economical way to get to Logan from their home in Franklin County.

Bruce Spackman, a retiree living in Preston, said he rides the PRT Preston/Logan Commuter bus two to three times a week to visit his grandchildren in Logan and to be involved in their activities.

CVTD started its Idaho route in 2006, and PRT entered the picture a couple of years later.

According to Skyler Beebe, director of PRT, ridership on the buses has gone up and down since the program was implemented.

On the midday Preston to Logan Commuter Route, which is 80 percent funded through federal transit grants, Medicaid and contributions from the county, ridership was 3,427 in 2015. It dropped to 2,701 in 2017 and has risen since then. This year, between October and April, ridership was up 138 trips from the same timeframe last year.

“It’s working its way back up. Part of it is awareness,” Beebe said. “We’re definitely going the right direction.

We are getting more vehicles off the street, and these new vehicles run a lot cleaner than the older buses.”

Suggested donations for regular riders is \$2, which helps the department apply for the federal grants that keep the service running.

PRT’s door-to-door service, called Demand Response Ridership, was 11,996 last year, up from 5,474 in 2015. This year, those trips are up 895 rides from the same timeframe in 2018.

Idaho DEQ has been working on a grant through the Environmental Protection Agency that is focused on improving the air quality in the Cache Valley, said Chris Wernert, an analyst with the Idaho DEQ.