**PRESS CONFERENCE ROLL OF SHOW**

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**To:** Press Conference Partners

**Re:** Roll of Show Outline: **Route 19 fare-free k** **ickoff**

**When:** **10:30 AM (ET)** – **Please plan to arrive by no later than 10:15 AM for prep**

Monday, August 27, 2018

**Where:** Rosa Parks Circle

35 Monroe Center St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**Roll of Show: Total Estimated Time (15 minutes)**

**Welcome/Introduction –** Mayor Bliss at podium and thanks audience for attending the press conference.

**Mayor Bliss Suggested Talking Points (2 minutes)**

* We have exciting news to announce – and it’s going to celebrated by those of us who want to travel and get around downtown easier and faster.
* Today we are kicking off a three-year pilot program partnership with The Rapid and Spectrum Health.
* This private-public partnership – another great example of our collaborative city – will improve bus service by offering free rides along the Michigan Street Corridor.
* Providing free rides on the new and improved Route 19 will help reduce traffic and ease parking congestion along the busiest street downtown.
* I’m honored to be joined this morning by representatives of some of the organizations that have helped produce this innovative vision.
* Please allow me to introduce:
  + The Rapid’s new CEO **Andrew Johnson**
  + Mobile GR and Parking Services Manager **Josh Naramore**
  + Downtown Grand Rapids Incorporated President and CEO **Tim Kelly**
  + City Commissioner **Ruth Kelly,** and
  + City Commissioner **Joe Jones**
  + They serve the Second Ward that includes Michigan Street.
* Now let’s hear about some of the highlights of the new and improved Route 19 service from Andrew Johnson.
* **Please welcome** **Andrew** !

**Andrew Johnson Suggested Talking Points (3 minutes)**

* Thank you, Mayor Bliss.
* One of the reasons my family and I wanted to move to Grand Rapids is because of the tremendous commitment we see here to quality public transportation.
* So as somebody who is new to The Rapid, please believe me when I say how impressed I am by what this public-private partnership has achieved.
* The debut today of the new and improved Route 19 – in combination with the City’s fare-free DASH service and City-sponsored fare-free portion of the Silver Line north of Wealthy Street – will essentially allow free travel throughout downtown Grand Rapids without the hassle of parking.
* Let me repeat that:
* *The new Route 19 provides free travel throughout downtown Grand Rapids – and without the hassle of parking*!
* Another feature is the convenience of buses coming every 10 minutes on Michigan Street during peak afternoon and evening travel demand.
* The Rapid’s new and improved Route 19 is a game changer for Grand Rapids.
* For people who live, work, study or enjoy relaxing near the Michigan Street corridor or want to travel fare-free on the DASH throughout downtown…
* Then the new Route 19 service is Grand Rapids fast and easy way to all the places and activities that this great city offers.
* Again, as a newcomer to Grand Rapids, I just want to say that I have long-admired The Rapid and I am thrilled to lead this team in serving the greater Grand Rapids community.
* There is a solid history of performance, great community support, and most importantly, a dedicated group of people, both employees and Board members, who believe as I do.
* Accessibility and mobility are critical to a healthy, successful, and economically prosperous community.
* I also want to thank Peter Varga for his many years of service and his long list of accomplishments at The Rapid.
* The system is well-positioned for future success due in large part to his leadership.
* **Now let’s hear from Mobile GR and Parking Services Director** **Josh Naramore.**

**Josh Naramore Suggested Talking Points (3 minutes)**

* Thank you, Andrew.
* We are pleased to have you here in Grand Rapids.
* And I know we all look forward to continued success with you and The Rapid team, which will be as outstanding as the news we are announcing today.
* Grand Rapids is part of a national trend of businesses increasingly drawn to downtown environments where they can attract young talent.
* The improvements on Route 19 are part of Grand Rapids’ broad strategy to alleviate parking congestion as more businesses and workers locate downtown.
* I am confident the new Route 19 will benefit the City’s parking customers by providing them with more options.
* For example, this partnership allows Michigan Street corridor employees and residents to connect with existing facilities that have capacity on the west side of the river.
* I’m talking about the Scribner Lot and Lots 7, 8 and 9, which have available monthly permit parking for $48 or daily parking ranging from $2 to $4.
* It also gives us the opportunity to pursue additional park-and-ride investments along the corridor to deliver more capacity and options.
* I have just a few more highlights to share:
* **First, we are expanding the service** to operate from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday.
* This will better meet the needs of employees and students.
* Estimates suggest Route 19 ridership will grow from approximately 54 daily passengers to as many as 800 during the workweek.
* **In addition, we are increasing the frequency** of The Rapid’s Route 19 service.
* Buses will arrive and depart at stops every 15 minutes from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. as well as from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
* And buses will stop every 10 minutes during the afternoon and evening peak from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
* The new and improved Route 19 would not be possible without Spectrum Health’s leadership and vision.
* **The only way we can begin offering free fares** today is with funding support of Spectrum Health.
* Together, we are also kicking off an awareness and education outreach effort.
* The goal is to encourage Spectrum Health staff to use The Rapid to travel between offices and the medical center for meetings as an alternative to driving personal vehicles.
* So you can definitely call this three-way partnership a “win-win-win” opportunity for Grand Rapids!
* **Please allow me to turn the microphone over to Commissioners Kelly and Jones.**

**[Commissioners go to podium together]**

**Commissioners Kelly and Jones Suggested Talking Points (3 minutes)**

**Kelly**

* Thank you, Josh.
* There are thousands of staff, patients and visitors who go to Spectrum Health on any given day.
* A large number of these individuals benefit from The Rapid service, and not only for travel purposes.
* Even those of us who never ride a bus are served by The Rapid.
* That’s because public transportation helps to reduce demand on our parking systems.
* On behalf of the entire City Commission, we want to express our deep appreciation for Spectrum’s leadership in developing this agreement.
* This investment shows Spectrum’s strong belief that access to public transportation is an investment in our residents and the quality of life we enjoy in Greater Grand Rapids.
* Now let’s hear my colleague, Commissioner Jones.

**Jones**

* Thank you, Commissioner Kelly.
* I agree totally with Commissioner Kelly’s praise for Spectrum stepping up here in a big way.
* Today’s announcement about the new and improved free-fare Route 19 builds on a history of accomplishment that Spectrum has pioneered in terms of public transit.
* Spectrum began offering incentives to their staff to ride The Rapid in 2007.
* Today, Spectrum workers take an average of 4,200 rides on The Rapid per day, or almost 52,000 rides annually.
* Our hope is that learning about the convenience of the new Route 19 service will inspire even more people who have never previously considered public transportation.
* Seeing how simple it is to ride The Rapid for free along Michigan Street will build acceptance of transit as a viable alternative for getting around Grand Rapids easily and efficiently.
* Ultimately, this public-private partnership will help improve quality of life, create jobs and support reliable transportation for both workers and people who live along Route 19.
* **Now let’s hear from the President and CEO of Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., Tim Kelly.**

**Tim Kelly Suggested Talking Points (3 minutes)**

* Thank you.
* This is yet another example that reinforces why Grand Rapids is regarded as one of the best cities in the United States.
* Grand Rapids new Michigan Street Corridor partnership will help our community achieve its goal of providing safe and equitable service that connects people to jobs…
* Promotes economic development in a vital business district and…
* Offers a first-class transit experience!
* Just listen to the list of stops and anchor institutions along the new fare-free Route 19:
  + Spectrum Health
  + Grand Valley State University
  + Grand Rapids Community College
  + Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine
  + Meijer’s new B Bridge Street Market that is opening this week…
  + And more than 50 additional popular, high-traffic destinations.
  + Many of these businesses will offer month-long special deals and discounts to their patrons to help promote the new Route 19.
  + Some of these businesses that we want recognize for their support include:
    - The Knickerbocker/New Holland Brewing
    - Swift Printing
    - Dukes Bar
    - Seven Monks
    - AM Yoga
    - Sovengard
    - Ando Sushi
    - Harmony Hall
    - Westside Massage
    - A Healing Touch, and
    - Grapevine Wine and Deli.
  + All you have to do is mention the “Route 19 Discount” while you’re at participating establishments through Sept. 23.
  + You can learn more details at Ride The Rapid Dot O-R-G SLASH ROUTE hyphen 19.
* **Now let’s hear some closing remarks from Mayor Bliss.**

**CLOSE: MAYOR BLISS (2 minutes)**

* Riding The Rapid and the DASH is really about community.
* It’s about the ways in which public transportation changes lives for the better, every day.
* Everybody in Greater Grand Rapids wins with a strong public transportation system.
* Grand Rapids is a more vibrant community when we have a strong, connected network of transportation options.
* This completes the public-speaking portion of our new and improved Michigan Street Corridor Route 19 kickoff press conference now.
* However, we are going to stick around for a while afterward.
* And we will be glad to answer any questions you or our friends in the media may have one-on-one.
* Thank you all for joining us today!

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