



**COMMISSION MEMORANDUM**

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: June 25, 2025

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE, AT ITS JANUARY 29, 2025 MEETING, APPROVING THE ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY AT SENIOR CENTERS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEDICATED MID-SIZE BUS SERVICE; AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO IMPLEMENT THE SERVICE, SUBJECT TO FUNDING APPROPRIATION IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET PROCESS.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Should the Mayor and City Commission ("City Commission") adopt the Resolution, the City Administration ("Administration") could implement a new dedicated senior bus transportation service from/to various senior living facilities in the City and the Walmart Supercenter in North Miami Beach.

The Administration recommends that while the City Commission evaluates the implementation of a new bus transportation service for seniors, it also carefully considers several critical factors that will significantly impact the Transportation Fund and General Fund budgets, beginning in Fiscal Year ("FY") 2026:

1. The operating costs of a new citywide transit circulator service and water taxi service, both which are currently in procurement;
2. The City's increasing unfunded capital improvement program;
3. Long-term General Fund financial projections indicating a potential shortfall in upcoming fiscal years; and
4. The passage of Amendment 5 in November 2024, which increases the homestead exemption and further constrains the growth of taxable property values.

Funding for this service has not been identified, budgeted, or appropriated in the Transportation and Mobility Department's FY 2025 Operating Budget. The considerations outlined above are essential to ensure that decisions regarding this potential transportation resource align with the City's broader long-term financial stability and strategic priorities. If the City Commission recommends funding the new senior transportation service, the Administration recommends that it be considered as part of the FY 2026 budget process.

**BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

At the June 26, 2024 City Commission meeting, at the request of Mayor Steven Meiner ("Mayor Meiner"), the City Commission referred an item (C4 AR) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC" or "Committee") to discuss enhancing public transportation accessibility and efficiency at senior centers with a dedicated mid-size bus service.

On November 16, 2020, the City of Miami Beach ("City") launched the Freebee On-Demand

Transit Service for Seniors ("Freebee Senior Service"). The Freebee Senior Service provides a free shuttle service for senior residents (65 and older) living in affordable housing facilities throughout the City and/or participating in any of the senior programs provided by UNIDAD, Jewish Community Services or Little Havana Activities and Nutrition Center. The Freebee Senior Service is currently provided to/from approximately 40 senior facilities located in South Beach, Mid-Beach, and North Beach and the closest Publix supermarket or pharmacy. The Freebee Senior Service operates seven (7) days a week, from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with two (2) Gem e6 golf-type electric vehicles. Senior residents are required to register with Freebee in advance to enroll in the service.

Since the inception of the Freebee Senior Service, the ridership data has consistently indicated that the majority (approximately 65%) of all requests citywide originate from Rebecca Towers residents. This statistic highlights the high demand for transportation services to/from this facility. To address this high demand effectively, Mayor Meiner's proposal includes exploring the implementation of a dedicated mid-size bus service, equipped with the latest platforms to accommodate the mobility aids and necessities of senior residents.

It is worth noting that the Administration is currently in concurrent negotiations with three (3) selected vendors for the implementation of a Citywide Municipal Transit Circulator Service to replace the current Miami Beach Trolley service which has been in operation since 2014. While all our current trolley vehicles in service (low-floor and high-floor) meet the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") requirements, including being equipped with electric wheelchair lifts, kneeling capabilities, and ADA ramps, the high-floor vehicles used for the Mid-Beach and North Beach loops are particularly inconvenient for senior passengers with mobility challenges and/or small carts due to the various steps required to board and disembark the vehicles. The forthcoming Citywide Municipal Transit Circulator Service is intended to provide a world-class, reliable, eco-friendly, and customer-friendly service utilizing "next generation" low-floor transit vehicles that are more convenient for passengers, particularly senior residents, to board and disembark.

In addition to the Freebee Senior Service and the Miami Beach Trolley service, the City also provides the Senior Enhanced Transit Services ("SETS") program which has been a valuable resource for senior residents since its inception in 2007. The SETS program, managed by the Parks and Recreation Department, operates with an annual budget of \$50,000 and provides transportation for seniors aged 65 and older. The SETS program focuses on connecting seniors to community organizations and offering opportunities for recreational outings, such as trips to local theaters, parks, museums, movies, and other cultural events. Its primary intent is to encourage healthy, active lifestyles that enhance the quality of life for senior residents. Based on recent conversations with the Parks and Recreation Department staff, there is a lack of resources to expand the SETS program to include trips for essential needs such as grocery shopping. Additionally, the type of vehicles currently used for the SETS program (e.g. school buses) are not ADA-compliant vehicles and lack ramps and other accessibility features required for seniors with mobility aids or grocery carts, which further limits their utility for senior transportation services.

At the November 13, 2024 PSNQLC meeting, the Committee discussed this item and recommended that the Administration continue working with the Mayor's Office to provide further input and refine a plan to enhance public transportation accessibility for senior residents through a dedicated mid-size bus service. Pursuant to the Committee's recommendation, the Transportation and Mobility Department staff met with the Mayor's Office staff to identify the key parameters for the development of such transportation service for seniors and potential next steps.

At the January 29, 2025 PSNQLC meeting, the Committee discussed this item and endorsed a dedicated mid-size bus service to enhance public transportation accessibility and efficiency at senior centers. The Committee moved the item to the City Commission with a favorable recommendation.

The discussion item R9 AE was not reached during the February 26, 2025 City Commission meeting.

The discussion item R9 U was not reached during the March 19, 2025 City Commission meeting.

The discussion item R9 R was not reached during the April 23, 2025 City Commission meeting.

The discussion item R9 S was not reached during the May 21, 2025 City Commission meeting.

## **ANALYSIS**

The City has received consistent feedback from senior residents expressing a strong desire for reliable transportation options to access essential services, particularly for monthly grocery shopping at Walmart. Based on input from the item sponsor, Mayor Meiner, a senior bus transportation service could potentially be provided on a once-a-month basis, from/to senior housing facilities in the City, including Rebecca Towers, Stella Maris, Four Freedoms, Council Towers, and Federation Towers, and the Walmart Supercenter located at 1425 NE 163 Street in North Miami Beach.

To operate this service, the Transportation and Mobility Department could utilize the existing agreement with Limousines of South Florida, Inc. ("LSF") for citywide trolley service. Under the terms of the current agreement, LSF would provide dedicated, ADA-compliant/low-floor buses, each with a seating capacity of approximately 30 passengers, for monthly recurring round-trips from each participating senior housing facility to the Walmart Supercenter in North Miami Beach. The trips would be coordinated and pre-scheduled with each participating senior housing facility. It is anticipated that each round-trip from/to each senior housing facility and Walmart will take approximately four (4) to six (6) hours to complete, depending on passenger demand and operational logistics, and billed at LSF's current contract rate of \$80 per hour, per bus for special event transportation service.

Each participating senior housing facility would be responsible for assigning dedicated personnel to coordinate directly with the City and LSF for trip-scheduling purposes and to serve as an on-site representative to assist and accompany senior residents on each bus trip.

Should the City Commission adopt this Resolution, the Transportation and Mobility Department staff would coordinate with each participating senior housing facility to ascertain passenger demand and develop a tailored monthly bus transportation schedule for each facility. In addition, City staff would coordinate with LSF to ensure the delivery of an efficient mobility service that meets the needs of our senior residents.

## **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

If approved by the City Commission, the Administration could utilize the City's existing agreement with LSF to provide monthly recurring bus transportation services for senior residents from/to five (5) major senior housing facilities and the Walmart Supercenter in North Miami Beach. It is anticipated that the dedicated bus for seniors could operate between four (4) to eight (8) service hours per day, per facility, per month, at the contract rate of \$80 per hour, per bus. Therefore, based on these parameters, the estimated monthly cost to serve the five (5) aforementioned senior housing facilities would range from \$1,600/month to \$3,200/month. This would result in an annual cost ranging from \$19,200 to \$38,400. Note if passenger demand exceeds the capacity of one (1) bus (25 passengers seated), additional buses may be required, which could increase the estimated cost of the senior transportation service.

**Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?**  
(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

If applicable, the Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on:  
See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

TBD

## **CONCLUSION**

In response to feedback from senior residents, the Administration supports enhancing transit accessibility for senior residents living in senior housing facilities throughout the City. As such, should the City Commission adopt this Resolution, the Administration could initiate a new senior transportation service, utilizing the City's existing agreement with LSF for citywide trolley service. The new senior transportation service could offer once-a-month, pre-scheduled bus trips from/to five (5) major senior housing facilities in the City - Rebecca Towers, Stella Maris, Four Freedoms, Council Towers, and Federation Towers – and the Walmart Supercenter in North Miami Beach. Each senior housing facility would be responsible for providing dedicated staff to coordinate passenger demand and accompany senior residents on the bus, ensuring both logistical efficiency and passenger assistance throughout the trips.

The monthly round-trip service is anticipated to operate for four (4) to eight (8) hours per facility, per month, billed at \$80 per hour, per bus, using LSF's ADA-compliant/low-floor buses. This new senior transportation service could help address a clearly identified need among senior residents and offer a practical, fiscally responsible solution using existing contractual resources.

The Transportation and Mobility Department staff would work with senior housing facilities and LSF to develop a schedule that meets the needs of senior residents. In addition, City staff would assess opportunities for service adjustments and potential expansion of the new senior transportation service based on community response and program performance.

## **Applicable Area**

Citywide

**Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

No

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?**

No

**Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying?** No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s): N/A

## **Department**

Transportation and Mobility

## **Sponsor(s)**

Mayor Steven Meiner

## **Co-sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Laura Dominguez  
Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

**Condensed Title**

Enhance Public Transportation, Sr Centers Mid-Size Bus Service. (SM/LD/KRG) TR

**Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)**