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COUGAR LINE ENHANCEMENTS

Houston, October 6, 2010 – Parking and Transportation Services recently completed a number of enhancements to its Cougar Line shuttle service. These enhancements are the result of ongoing efforts to provide an efficient and effective shuttle service that remains responsive to campus needs.

The most noticeable of these enhancements are the buses themselves. Currently almost all of the buses serving the campus are low-floor “kneeling” buses, with automatic wheelchair ramps. These ramps can be manually deployed as well, ensuring consistent access for all riders. In addition, the majority of buses on campus are “green” buses featuring reduced-carbon emission engines which significantly reduce the amount of emissions often synonymous with diesel engines.

Beyond the buses, riders are benefitting from NextBus, the real-time prediction service which allows riders to obtain specific arrival information for any Cougar Line stop on campus. By visiting the Cougar Line website riders can view route maps and see arrival predictions for their stop. This service is also available via text messaging, allowing any rider to know when the next bus will arrive at whatever stop they are using. Signs posted at each stop provide the phone number and stop number for riders who want to use the text-based service.

“NextBus offers both convenience and safety for our riders,” explains Bob Browand, Director of Parking and Transportation Services. “In addition to allowing riders to avoid standing outside in the heat or rain, it provides security for late night riders, who can use the service to minimize their time at the stop late at night.”

Additionally, a new page specifically for the Cougar Line has been added to the Parking and Transportation website. Users can visit www.uh.edu/cougarline to see printable schedules for each route and learn more about NextBus. There is also an email link for riders who need help locating a lost item. Riders are also encouraged to provide feedback on their experience using the online survey. By answering a few questions, riders can provide information and data that will be used to plan future Cougar Line enhancements.

All Cougar Line riders are encouraged to “Make Your Ride Count!” By swiping their Cougar Card each time they board a bus, riders help provide valuable data, including rider counts and trends, which are
used to schedule the number and timing of buses on each route. This information helps ensure that the buses are where they need to be, when they need to be.

“Accurate rider data is the most important information we can obtain for routing buses,” explains Browand. “By identifying peak times on the routes, and knowing how many passengers get on at each stop, we can determine how to route the buses, and how many buses are needed. Swiping their Cougar Cards is the most accurate way for riders to assist us in gathering this information.”

The Cougar Line service carries over 1.2 million riders/year, using five routes to transport students and employees across campus. To learn more about the Cougar Line, or other Parking and Transportation services, visit www.uh.edu/parking.

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