Beach shuttle program delayed until summer

By CAROLYN HEEBNER-SWIFT

Live Oak residents who had hoped to see an early spring reprieve from beach neighborhood parking congestion must now wait until midsummer before the "Lot-to-Sea," shuttle buses will appear.

Neil McLaughlin, project coordinator for the federally-sponsored park-and-ride demonstration project, said this week that target date for the system has been pushed from mid-May to mid-July, but details are progressing smoothly.

McLaughlin was visited in early April by Bert Arrillaga, chief of the pricing policy division for the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA), which provided the grant for the Live Oak project. McLaughlin said UMTA is eager to get the program underway, and Arrillaga gave the final approval from the federal agency.

"He came from the UMTA office in Washington to review the program and its progress," the coordinator said, "They are anxious to get it going, and feel the results will be useful in planning similar programs elsewhere."

UMTA is financing the two-year demonstration program which has the unique feature of a park-and-ride system together with park pricing in beachside neighborhoods. A total of some $319,700 will be used to test this service near Live Oak beaches.

The program will give the beach visitor the option to either pay for parking on the street or to park in established lots at no charge with shuttle service provided.

A permit zone has also been established between the Yacht Harbor and 41st Avenue, south of East Cliff Drive. Residents within this zone are subject to parking regulations, and visitors who park in these neighborhoods will need either a guest pass from a resident, or a paid permit.

One of the greatest challenges of the program planning has been to establish the parking areas to be serviced by the beach shuttles. McLaughlin said the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission approved plans on March 28 to allow the system use of the Granite Rock property at 17th Avenue for its major parking site.

Plans for the Granite Rock property lot have now been submitted to the Coastal Commission, and the coordinator said he expects the item to appear on the commission's agenda in about four weeks.

Opinion and suggestions from the community have not been forgotten either, McLaughlin said, and a public meeting will be scheduled sometime in May. And once public comment has been collected, an ordinance will be drafted for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

The coordinator said an enabling ordinance will be necessary as part of a parking ordinance, and will describe the area in which the permit system will be enforced. Under law, an ordinance is needed to allow the park-and-ride system to operate as a business.

In the meantime, McLaughlin has been busy ordering some of the equipment such as permit street signs and lot markers. However, the final purchase order will not be made until after the supervisors make their decision on the ordinance, he added.

Arrangements have also been lmade with the transit district to provide shuttle service with 25-passenger twin coaches. These are the same buses already contracted to Santa Cruz and Capitola to make beach runs under the rainbow logo. These will be marked with the "Lot-to-Sea," title to identify them with the Live Oak project.

McLaughlin said the delays suffered by the project have been of a technical nature. For example, the design of the 17th Avenue parking lot has to meet coastal and planning regulations, so it had to be redesigned from its original plan in order to avoid drainage of oil products from the parking lot into Schwan Lagoon.

Making plans for art show

An organizational and planning meeting for the Third Annual YWCA Women's Art Show will be held at noon Wednesday at the Santa Cruz YWCA, 303 Walnut Ave., Santa Cruz.

Women may attend who are interested in showing their

GEMS, Etc.