

Transit Center Opens Its Doors

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The city's new Northwest Transit Center opened for use Tuesday, and it proved to be a bigger draw than expected.

"We had about 285 cars show up" to use the Park & Ride accommodations, ABQ Ride Director Greg Payne said on opening day. "We were filled in the paved (parking) section by 7:30 a.m. "The response has been terrific."

The \$2.5 million bus hub serves eight routes, including the Route 790 Rapid Ride

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"Blue Line" that has now been extended farther north, past Montañito, to connect with the new transit center.

The center sits on the northwest corner of Ellison and Coors Bypass NW.

Payne said demand on the limited-stop, express-bus line became so great that more service needed to be added.

"We're having to put another Rapid Ride bus out during the commuting hours

in the morning and in the evening because the Rapid Rides are jampacked," he said. "In some cases this morning the bus was so full the driver had to pass people by. They just didn't have room on the bus for them."

Those passed by had to wait for the next bus to drive by.

"We don't want to have that happen," he said. "So we're going to put some more

buses out there to help avoid that."

The Northwest Transit Center is similar to ABQ Ride's Uptown bus hub, with such amenities as a canopy to shield travelers from the sun or bad weather, bus bays, bus staging area and bike racks.

The center was built with 176 paved parking spaces and the overflow lot can handle about 140 more vehicles. That overflow lot will be surfaced within two weeks, transit officials said Tuesday.

While the center has opened for use, some

finishing work is still taking place.

Mayor Martin Chávez said the first-day turnout "underscores the desire of the people of Albuquerque to seek alternative transportation."

"More specifically," Chávez said, "the activity at the Northwest Transit Center (Tuesday) morning proves the West Side is ready for mass transit."

For more information about which routes connect with the center, go to www.cabq.gov/abqride or call 243-RIDE.

