Dawson County considers public transit merger

Written by Deb Egenberger Friday, 18 January 2013 15:38 -



LEXINGTON—With expertise in public transportation across six central Nebraska counties and years of experience dealing with federal funding, officials from RYDE Transit and Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation believe a merger with Dawson County's handi-bus system could provide more efficient service to county residents.

Dawson County commissioners heard a presentation by Reach Your Destination Easily (RYDE) Transit during their regular bimonthly meeting Tuesday morning.

RYDE, based in Kearney, covers approximately 3,600 square miles or a population of roughly 100,000 people in Adams, Buffalo, Franklin, Gosper, Hamilton and Kearney counties.

RYDE buses travel an average of 34,000 miles a year with 130,000 boardings annually, according to Charles McGraw, RYDE's transportation director.

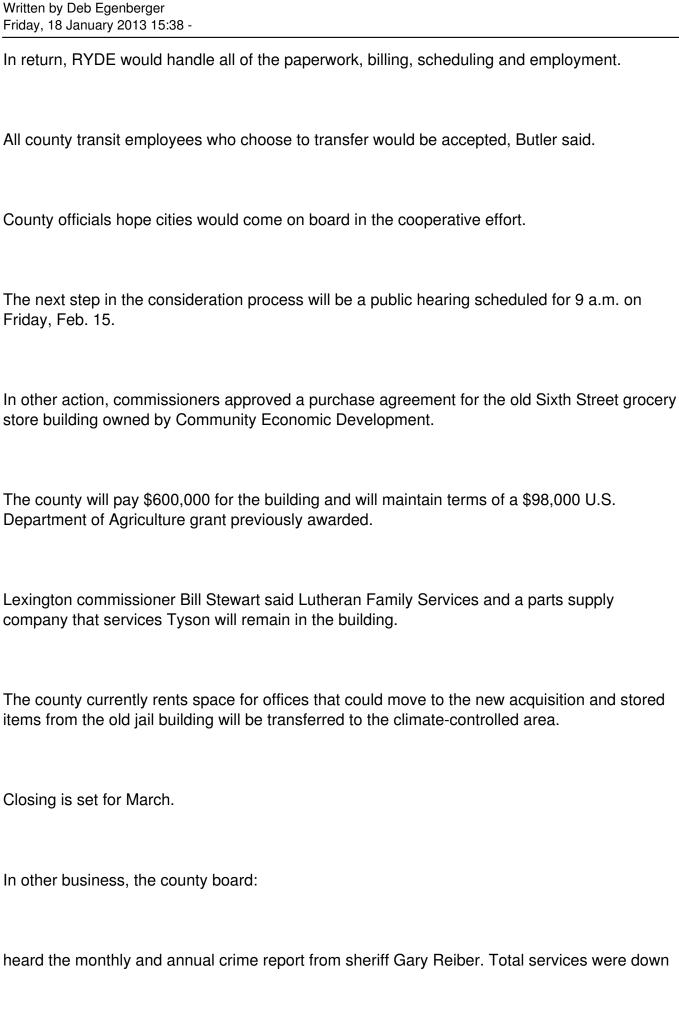
The system works similarly to Dawson County's public transit in that customers of all ages can request rides 24 hours in advance to and from work, medical appointments, shopping or social events.

County commissioners have been considering consolidating services with RYDE for about a year with the intention of offering same or better services at a reduced cost.

"We think we can do a fairly decent job of running your system," said Ed Butler, business manager for Mid-Nebraska Community Services, which administers RYDE.

The county's buses, equipment and building would be leased to the RYDE system for a low fee.

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slightly for the month of December with 2012 calls to dispatch at 17,614 and total services at 11,026.

discussed the possibility of offering a prescription drug discount card endorsed by the National Association of County Officials that would be no cost to Dawson County but make discounts available to any county resident on prescriptions not covered by insurance. Commissioners want more information before making the required five-year commitment.

authorized an agreement between the county and state for survey services on Highway 47 north of Gothenburg for locating and replacing section corner markers when the state resurfaces the road later this year.

learned two global information system websites containing county information have been opened to the public. Links to extended map layers and parcel/soil information sites are available on the assessor's page of the county website, dawsoncountyne.org.