



## CITY OF DORAL Office of the City Manager Letter to Council

LTC No.: 024-2023

To: The Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Barbara Hernandez, City Manager

Date: October 3, 2023

Subject: **Freebee Service Inquiries**

The purpose of this Letter to Council (LTC) is to provide the Mayor and City Councilmembers information on the Freebee On-Demand Transit Service Including its history, ridership, average wait times, and pick up policy.

### **Background**

On April 1, 2019, the City of Doral launched a six-month Pilot Program with Freebee to operate Global Electric Motorcars (GEM), which are low-speed, fully electric, open-air vehicles resembling oversized golf carts. Each vehicle can transport up to five passengers, plus the driver. Freebee provides free of charge door-to-door on demand transit service to predefined areas where the posted speed limit is 35 MPH or less. The coverage area originally included the Downtown Doral Area.

With the success of the Freebee Pilot Program, at the September 2019 Council Meeting, the Mayor and City Councilmembers adopted Resolution No. 19-234 waiving the competitive bid process with Freebee and entering into a one-year contract with an optional one-year renewal. However, as to not have a lapse in service, Freebee agreed to extend the Pilot Program for one month at no cost to the City. This agreement commenced on November 1, 2019, and expired on November 1, 2021. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Freebee service was suspended on

Friday, March 16, 2020, and resumed on Monday June 1, 2020. Once the service was reinstated, the City received numerous requests from the public to expand the service area. On June 1, 2021, service was expanded to the Intercontinental Hotel, the Mirador Apartments, and surrounding areas.

Due to the uncertainty of the financial impacts to the City's PTP funding from the Pandemic, in September 2021, the Mayor and City Councilmembers approved Resolution No. 21-212 authorizing a one-year contract extension under the original contract agreement terms and conditions with Freebee.

During this period, the PWD continued to receive additional requests to expand service, however due to the restrictions of the GEM vehicles being able to travel on roadways 35 MPH or greater, the PWD had not been able to expand services. Upon discussions with Freebee, the company provided the option of Tesla Model X vehicles that would allow greater coverage area and increased efficiency. The GEM vehicles have a 60–70-mile range per battery charge compared to 200 miles for the Tesla vehicles. The Tesla vehicles provide air conditioning and require less maintenance compared to the GEM vehicles.

At the October 2022 Council Meeting, the Mayor and City Councilmembers adopted Resolution No. 22-197 authorizing a contract extension with Freebee for a one (1) year period. This new contract extension amended the Scope of Services and Rates respectively, to include the Tesla Model X vehicles. Additionally, the service coverage area was expanded to cover other commercial and residential areas along NW 87<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW 79<sup>th</sup> Avenue between NW 58<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 25<sup>th</sup> Street. The City inaugurated the Freebee service area expansion with the Tesla Model X vehicles on Monday, January 9, 2023.

During the August 9, 2023, Council Meeting, members of the Council expressed concerns with the current service and requested additional information. Please see below information addressing the questions and concerns.

### **Total Trips**

Since Freebee's Pilot Program launch on April 1, 2019, the ridership has increased from 902 riders in the month of April 2019 to an average of 4,500 monthly riders with the launch of the expanded service with the Tesla Model X vehicles. Below please find Table I showing the Completed Rides and Total Passengers per month since the start of the Freebee program.

**Table I - Monthly Completed Rides and Total Passengers**

	Month	Completed Rides	Total Passengers	
Pilot Program	Apr-19	491	902	
	May-19	476	800	
	Jun-19	499	966	
	Jul-19	552	1,170	
	Aug-19	686	1,286	
	Sep-19	938	1,754	
	Oct-19	1,082	2,028	
	Nov-19	1,745	3,277	
	Dec-19	2,262	4,041	
	Jan-20	2,626	4,529	
	Feb-20	2,549	4,271	
	Mar-20	1,316	2,100	*
	Apr-20	-	-	
	May-20	-	-	
	Jun-20	770	1,157	**
	Jul-20	1,150	1,728	
	Aug-20	1,383	1,940	
	Sep-20	1,553	2,198	
	Oct-20	2,015	3,149	
	Nov-20	1,752	2,757	
	Dec-20	1,992	3,122	
	Jan-21	2,039	3,305	
	Feb-21	1,927	3,071	
	Mar-21	2,141	3,337	
	Apr-21	1,997	3,215	
	May-21	2,396	3,866	
	Jun-21	2,552	4,184	***
	Jul-21	2,808	4,400	
	Aug-21	2,622	3,996	
	Sep-21	2,735	4,000	
	Oct-21	3,340	5,115	
	Nov-21	2,974	4,293	
	Dec-21	2,850	4,258	
	Jan-22	2,887	4,201	
	Feb-22	2,786	4,071	
	Mar-22	3,020	4,297	
	Apr-22	3,000	4,287	
	May-22	2,836	4,078	
	Jun-22	2,719	3,884	
	Jul-22	3,024	4,377	
	Aug-22	4,423	3,096	
	Sep-22	2,593	3,674	
	Oct-22	2,738	4,016	
	Nov-22	2,646	3,843	
	Dec-22	2,792	4,198	
	Jan-23	3,021	4,527	****
	Feb-23	3,081	4,541	
	Mar-23	3,467	5,042	
	Apr-23	3,262	4,747	
	May-23	3,119	4,489	
	Jun-23	3,185	4,700	
	Jul-23	3,220	4,708	
	Aug-23	3,024	4,185	
	Sep-23	2,900	3,934	

\*Service was suspended on Friday, March 16, 2020 due to COVID-19.

\*\* Service was resumed on Monday, June 1, 2020.

\*\*\*Expanded service area to the Intercontinental Hotel, the Mirador Apartments, and surrounding areas on Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

\*\*\*\*Launched the Tesla Model X service on Monday, January 9, 2023.

### Average Wait Time

With the launch of the Tesla Model X vehicles on Monday, January 9, 2023, there have been a total of 27,645 completed Freebee rides to date. Of the total completed rides during this period, 43% (11,771 rides) had to wait less than 10 minutes to board the Freebee, 19% (5,305 rides) had to wait 10-15 minutes, 13% (3,636 rides) had to wait 15-20 minutes, 14% (3,985 rides) had to wait 20-30 minutes, and 11% (2,948 rides) had to wait more than 30 minutes. The wait times vary throughout the day as demands for the service increase. Table 2 below provides the Average Wait Times per ride since the launch of the Tesla Model X vehicles on Monday, January 9, 2023.

**Table 2 - 2023 Average Wait Times**

	<b>0 10 mins</b>	<b>10 15 mins</b>	<b>15 20 mins</b>	<b>20 30 mins</b>	<b>30+ mins</b>
23 Jan	1,126	440	285	293	220
23 Feb	1,403	582	407	388	313
23 Mar	1,495	652	436	510	374
23 Apr	1,416	612	428	474	343
23 May	1,297	608	399	456	359
23 Jun	1,328	595	398	497	367
23 Jul	1,369	652	416	456	327
23 Aug	1,125	597	463	489	350
23 Sep	1,212	567	404	422	295
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,771</b>	<b>5,305</b>	<b>3,636</b>	<b>3,985</b>	<b>2,948</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>

### Pick-up Policy

Currently, Freebee drivers are able to pick-up passengers via three (3) ways, via the Freebee mobile app, flag downs, or dispatch. The majority of the ride requests are through the Freebee app, however, drivers are occasionally flagged down for a rides as they drive the coverage area. Additionally, Freebee riders that do not have a smart phone and/or need ADA accommodations call-in the Freebee directly and drivers are dispatched. Freebee drivers were able to select the riders that were queued on the Freebee platform for a ride. However, after bringing these concerns to their attention and having discussions with Freebee management, Freebee is scheduled to roll out an advanced feature in the Freebee app called “Auto Pair” in mid-October 2023, which will address the concerns. This feature will automatically assign one of the Freebee drivers in service to a queued rider based on the drivers’ drop-off status and proximity to the rider. Freebee drivers will no longer have the ability to decide which rider to pick-up on the Freebee platform.

**Tracking drivers through the City**

When a Freebee driver confirms a rider for pick-up, the Freebee rider is able to see the location of the driver on the Freebee app. However, the Freebee app does not provide an estimated time of arrival. Additionally, the Public Works Department (PWD) has access to the Freebee platform and is able to see the locations of the Freebee drivers at any time.

**Survey**

The PWD has not conducted any Freebee opinion surveys. However, as part of the new On-Demand Transit service which will be procured in the future, the PWD will be conducting surveys to determine how service may be improved.

If you have any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the City Manager's Office or Rita Carbonell, Assistant Public Works Director.

c: Carlos Arroyo, Public Works Director  
Rita Carbonell, Assistant Public Works Director