

FEATURE

The Later Gator is a helpful option

□ Late night bus service reduces worry.

By Jeremy Rottgen

The Gator Times staff

For students at the University of Florida, there is an easy and free alternative to drinking and driving.

If you drink, then let the Later Gator do the driving.

Rides on the Later Gator bus service truly are a unique experience. Pat Connors, a freshman in the Warrington College of Business Administration, said.

"It's a peaceful and crazy experience and you meet all kinds of people. We love it," said Connors while boarding a Later Gator bus with roommate Nick La Rossa.

At 2 a.m., when the pubs and clubs of the Gainesville close, the Later Gator is alive with passengers, as people are loud and boisterous from the effects of alcohol.

"Most of our riders like it, and I like it too, because you hear a lot of stories and it's fun," said Later Gator bus driver John Randy.

Randy has been driving the Later Gator Bus route since the Fall semester of 2000. Despite the antics of some of the passengers, he enjoys both the atmosphere and people who ride.

"You put up with things that you wouldn't tolerate on a normal bus route. We do everything we possibly can to accommodate within reason," he said.

While riding the Later Gator beats walking,



Photo: William C. Tarver

University of Florida students hitch a ride with the Later Gator from downtown to campus on Friday night. The Later Gator bus program offers free rides to University of Florida students all across town from Thursday night through Saturday night.

using the bus service is an even better alternative to driving after drinking too much, especially with regard to avoiding potential car accidents.

"You see fender benders or worse every night because some people drive crazy at this time of night," Randy said.

Student Government sponsors later Gator and those whom supported getting funds to the RTS service praise its intent.

Student Lobby Director Natalie Hanan said the Later Gator program is a positive asset to Gainesville and the university.

"Later Gator is an excellent service for students to use after going out in Gainesville," Hanan said. "The service will continue at UF, so students can still have a good time and stay safe."

The Later Gator service not only benefits students who lack their own mode of transportation, but to students in search of that special someone.

"It's a great place to meet girls," said UF student Greg Patronik.

Best of all, the service is free to UF students with a Gator 1 card, the identification system of UF. To students who forget their Gator 1 card, or to any others wanting to ride the Later Gator busses, the ride only costs \$1.

All routes end up at the Regional Transit System hub in downtown Gainesville, located conveniently next to the Downtown Plaza. The drop-off point is within walking distance to the majority of clubs and establishments.

While Later Gator busses provide convenient downtown access to students who live further away from campus, there still are some areas that do not receive the late night service. Later Gator bus service consists of three bus routes: Route A services the downtown area, Route B goes to Lexington Crossing, 3700 SW 27th St., and Route C takes riders as far as the Oaks Mall.

Later Gator A comes around every 10 minutes to the UF campus. Later Gator B goes to southwest Gainesville every 15 minutes and Later Gator C provides transportation to the Oaks Mall, by way of SW 20th and SW 62nd Avenue, approximately every 20 minutes.

"It's a good thing, but there should be more service to areas like Newberry Road and they should install beer tubs on each bus," said Later Gator passenger Shawn Wolowicz.

The new RTS service schedule can be found on RTS buses and at the J. Wayne Reitz Union information desk.

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