

# The Free Press

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OUR VIEW

## A GOOD FREE RIDE FOR MSU STUDENTS

A free ride will soon mean more to Minnesota State University students than a full scholarship.

The city of Mankato and the university have agreed to a partnership to start a bus route that will ferry students around town for free.

Of course "free" is not really correct. While the rides will not cost the students anything, the city has agreed to pay about \$40,000 of the cost and the university the remaining \$16,000.

### The Issue

The city of Mankato and Minnesota state University are poised to start a free bus service for students.

But that is really a small price to pay for the Stomper Express, as the bus is being dubbed. The bus — which will run Thursday through Saturday from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. — will likely take students to the River Hills Mall and the downtown area. That means these young people will have a chance to spend money at local establishments, which is good for everyone.

And if the students do have a drink or two, they can still get back to campus safely. That is also good for everyone.

Also, if enough students use the service, the state could eventually pick up 80 percent of the cost. City Manager Pat Hentges said that could happen if the state sees a value in the service.

The free ride could also become a ride students have to pay for after the service is in place for awhile and usage is evaluated.

But paying even a small fee will be worth it for many students, especially those without cars. For those with cars, it will be cheaper than driving themselves around. And the convenience of hopping on a bus on campus and taking it downtown to a hockey game, and then being taken back to campus will surely have many takers.

As Interim Mayor Mike Laven said, this is "a long time coming." It's up to students to make sure it lasts now that it is becoming a reality.