

Getting around: FRED turns 1. Wait. Who is FRED?

- By Jordan Pascale | The Virginian-Pilot | Mar 5, 2016



- Courtesy of Downtown Norfolk Council

Fred, a free on-demand transportation service downtown, started in 2009. But the newest version, an electric golf cart that seats six, had its one-year anniversary this week.



- Courtesy of Downtown Norfolk Council

The Downtown Norfolk Council photoshopped a birthday image for Free Ride Every Day's first birthday this week.

Have you heard about F.R.E.D.?

No, Fred is not a person.

Fred stands for Free Ride Every Day and is an on-demand transportation service run by the Downtown Norfolk Council since 2009.

The latest version of Fred (the Council talks about him as if he's a real person) turned 1 year old this week. [He got a cake](#) and everything for his birthday.

The teal-colored, six-seat, battery-powered electric vehicle picks up passengers and buzzes up and down Granby Street and around downtown.

Council marketing director Jessica Kliner says the service – sorry, “he” – gets used a lot: 33 passengers a day and 8,000 miles on the odometer this past year in just the 48-square-block downtown area.

Fred can pick you up if you call 757-478-7233. He operates Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; and Saturday, 2-10 p.m.

Trips on Fred must originate or end in the [Downtown Improvement District](#), generally bordered by St. Paul's Boulevard and Virginia Beach Boulevard.

Kliner said she broke her foot recently and has since been using Fred a lot. Then there are workers who want to get to lunch quickly, frequent users from the Freemason area who use it to get to the mall or restaurants, and visitors who will use it heavily during this week's MEAC basketball tournament, taking it from hotels to Scope.

The program started as a way to make it easier for downtown visitors to park in one place and get around. Other cities have similar services, but it's pretty rare.

Kliner said she doesn't have to market the service at all – and Fred is rarely sitting around doing nothing.

I haven't met Fred yet, but I'll have to think about him next time that sandwich from 3 Way Cafe sounds good, but I don't have the 28 minutes to walk there and back during lunch hour.