

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: K. Stephen Spade, Transit Director
Kenneth C. Pennoyer, Business Management Director

SUBJECT: Establishment of a Project Budget for a Job Access and Reverse Commute Grant and a Resolution to Approve Fees for Regional Express Bus Services

DATE: June 22, 2009

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to request that Council enact a project ordinance for funds to be received from the Federal Transit Administration under the Job Access and Reverse Commute program for the provision of express bus service to Chatham County and the Town of Pittsboro. This memorandum also requests that Council authorize the Town Manager to enter into a contract for bus service between Chatham County, the Town of Pittsboro and the Town of Chapel Hill and further requests approval of an adjustment to the fee schedule to include a fare for regional express services operated by Chapel Hill Transit outside of the Chapel Hill – Carrboro service area.

BACKGROUND

In June 2007, the Town Council directed the Manager and Staff to enter into discussions with Chatham County to discuss transportation issues and possible needs for bus service into Chapel Hill. Since that time, Chapel Hill Transit (CHT) staff has been working closely with representatives from Chatham County, the Town of Pittsboro, Triangle Transit and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) to identify the transportation needs for the area and develop service solutions. Following an extensive planning effort, which included planning meetings with the Chatham County and Town of Pittsboro Commissioners and a number of “Town Hall Meetings” for residents to provide comments and recommendations, the Chatham County Express Service was developed and approved by the Town, County and Chapel Hill Transit Partners Committee. The following is a brief summary of the service:

Service Description: This new service will operate between the Town of Pittsboro, a Park and Ride location at the Lowe’s on US 15/501 and US 64 (121 Lowe’s Drive, Pittsboro) and Chapel Hill during peak hours on weekdays. Passengers will also be able to board the express service at planned stops in downtown Pittsboro and Fearington Village. Additional boarding locations may be considered as the service develops. The destination in Chapel Hill will be the UNC campus with stops at the UNC Hospitals and the Student Store. The trip to and from downtown Pittsboro and Chapel Hill will take approximately 40 minutes.

Service Characteristics:

Area/City(s) Served:	Chatham County including the Town of Pittsboro
Days of Operation:	Monday – Friday
Hours of Operation:	6:00 a.m. to 7:40 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.
Service Frequency:	40-minute service
Ridership Estimate:	10,200 annually
Service Hours:	2,588 annually
Service Miles:	81,600 annually
Vehicles:	2 – 35’ or 40’ buses
Fares:	\$3 one-way or \$65 monthly pass

Service Benefits: This improvement will provide service to Chatham County, an area not currently served by CHT or “open to the public” transit services. The service will help meet the transportation needs of a significant number of employees from the Town of Chapel Hill, UNC and UNC Hospitals that live in Chatham County and beyond. As demand and growth occurs in the area, the service can be expanded.

Annual Cost Estimate:

Federal Share:	\$176,356
Local Share:	\$176,356 (Chatham County and Town of Pittsboro)
Total Operating Costs:	\$352,712 (18 months)

In September, 2008, CHT was awarded a Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant to cover up to 50 percent of the cost of the Chatham County Express Service for 18 months. The Pittsboro Board of Commissioners, at their May 18, 2009 budget work session, approved support of this service at \$2,000 per month for eighteen months beginning August 24, 2009. The Chatham County Board of Commissioners, at their June 15, 2009, approved support of this service at \$8,000 per month for eighteen months beginning August 24, 2009.

DISCUSSION

The Job Access and Reverse Commute grant for the provision of service between Chapel Hill, Chatham County and the Town of Pittsboro was provided through a call for projects by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. These funds are awarded annually to support projects that demonstrate a need for the service.

Chapel Hill Transit submitted an application in July, 2008 for operating funds to provide fixed route express service between Pittsboro and North Chatham County to the University of North Carolina and to the UNC Hospitals.

Matching Funds

Job Access and Reverse Commute program funding requires a 50% match. The 50% local match will be provided by Chatham County and the Town of Pittsboro.

Recommended Changes to the Chapel Hill Transit Fee Schedule

- We recommend establishing a fare for regional express service as follows:
 1. Cash - \$3 One Way
 2. Monthly Pass - \$65

Regional Express Service: Services provided by Chapel Hill Transit outside of the Chapel Hill – Carrboro service area, as agreed upon by the Partners. The Monthly Pass will be valid for unlimited rides on Regional Express Services during the month of issue. Fares for Regional Express Services operated by Chapel Hill Transit under contract for other entities may vary.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council enact a budget ordinance effective upon contract execution between Chatham County, the Town of Pittsboro and the Town of Chapel Hill and that the Council adopt the attached resolution amending the 2009-10 user fee policy to include a fare for regional express bus service operated by Chapel Hill Transit.