



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 17-176, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 2/8/2017

TITLE:

Albemarle County Public Transit Presentation

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Albemarle County Public Transit Service

ITEM TYPE: Regular Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Walker, Kampter, Gast-Bray, McDermott

PRESENTER (S): Kevin McDermott

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Douglas C. Walker

BACKGROUND: The Board of Supervisors, at their January 4th meeting, requested staff organize a presentation of information related to public transit in Albemarle County in preparation for the discussion with the City of Charlottesville at their joint meeting on February 14th. The goal of this presentation is to provide the Board with a background on previous studies, current and future funding scenarios, organizational options, and the vision, goals, and objectives for transit service in the County. This information will assist in developing a frame of reference with which the Board can enter discussions on transit with the City.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Infrastructure Investment: Prioritize, plan, and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs; Thriving Development Areas: Attract quality employment, commercial, and high density residential uses into development areas by providing services and infrastructure that encourage redevelopment and private investment while protecting the quality of neighborhoods

DISCUSSION: Albemarle County is in the process of reevaluating its public transit service and delivery in an attempt to insure that the current system is serving the public's needs in the most fiscally prudent and effective manner. This evaluation stems from many interests but they are primarily rooted in the documented benefits of a quality public transit system. These benefits include increased mobility and accessibility, congestion relief, economic development, community growth and revitalization, environmental sustainability, and community health.

The Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, Master Plans, and other guiding documents contain both explicit and implicit vision, goals, objectives, and strategies that relate to public transit service. A quality public transit system moves the County towards the principles of a healthy ecosystem, active and vibrant development areas, a physical environment that supports healthy lifestyles, and a thriving economy reflected in its Vision. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan contains the following Goal: *"Albemarle's transportation network will be increasingly multimodal, environmentally sound, well maintained, safe, and reliable."*

Currently the County has three service providers that operate within its jurisdiction. These are: University

Transit Service (UTS), which primarily serves University of Virginia students in the immediate area surrounding the University; Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT), which is operated under the Public Works Department of the City of Charlottesville and provides bus service to the greater Charlottesville area including Albemarle County; and JAUNT, which is a public transit organization providing rural, commuter, and paratransit services within Albemarle County. UTS operates entirely on student fees with no local, state, or federal transit subsidies.

CAT can be considered the primary deliverer of service in the County with ten of the thirteen CAT transit routes providing service across the City line into the County Development Areas. The County, in return, provides over \$1 million to the City for this service. Overall, the CAT operating budget is approximately \$7.6 million with \$1.6 coming from federal sources, \$1.7 million from State sources, and \$3.5 million coming from local sources including the County, UVA, and the City budget. The remainder is made up from fares, advertising, and other revenues.

Outside of the areas served by CAT, JAUNT delivers services through a rural program which provides approximately 4,000 hours of door-to-door service annually on a call and schedule basis and the 29 Express commuter route. Within the areas served by CAT, JAUNT also provides ADA compatible door-to-door service in a similar manner. JAUNT services in Albemarle County operate on a budget of \$3.1 million with the County providing \$1.5 million, \$776,000 from federal sources, and \$488,000 of state funds.

A number of factors should be considered regarding these budgets. Most importantly that these numbers reflect operating costs only but capital costs are another important budget consideration. These vary depending on the needs and include buses, shelters, facility development, support vehicles, etc. The state and federal sources tend to cover a high percentage of these costs but they do require a local match that can be significant. Another consideration is that within the urban area, which roughly aligns with the Development Areas, the federal funding source is the 5307 program. This program funds all of the ADA program and CAT federal source. What comes to the service provider in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area under this program is a set amount determined generally by the population of the Urbanized Area. State funds are intended to offset the local match but can fluctuate depending on the State budget.

As the County continues to grow, so to do our public transit needs. The implementation plans contained within the various Master Plans and the County transportation priorities identify many of these needs to address both in the near- and long-term. These improvements will require a financial commitment from the county, which is why this transit discussion is necessary. The most recent approved County priority list includes a significant expansion of transit including the following:

- Regular service to the Avon Street Extended/Mill Creek Drive area,
- Regular service to the Hollymead Area,
- Commuter service to Crozet,
- Increased service to the Pantops area, and
- BRT or Express service running in the 29 North Corridor.

These transit projects should be a consideration of the Board as it continues to evaluate the organizational, operational, and financial future of transit in Albemarle County.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no budgetary impact related to this presentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Board receive this presentation and use the information to engage in a conversation regarding the County's role in the provision of public transit.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Resolution in Support of Regional Transit

Attachment B: 10-4-16 Joint Meeting Minutes on Regional Transit

Attachment C: 2008 Final Report Charlottesville-Albemarle Regional Transit Authority Plan