



Waynesboro City Council Agenda Briefing

Meeting Date:	January 27, 2020	Staff/Council Member(s): City Manager
Agenda Item #		
Resolution#		
Department:	City Manager	
Subject:	Inter-Regional Transit Service- Afton Express- Commuter Bus Service Letter of Support for Grant Funding	

Background: Studies indicate that more than 3,000 individuals reside in Waynesboro, Staunton, and Augusta County and commute to work in Charlottesville, the University of Virginia and the UVA Hospital are employers of many of those commuters. Since 2013, planners have considered opportunities to reduce traffic on Interstate 64, support the movement of workers and the economic benefits accruing to individuals, employers and communities. Collaboration between the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, their respective Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and the Commonwealth’s Department of Rail and Public Transportation developed a proposal for Inter-Regional Transit Service, now named the Afton Express, to meet identified commuter needs.

The service plan includes two 32-passenger buses providing four AM peak hour trips and four PM peak hour trips. One-way fare is \$3.00; discounted passes will be available for frequent riders. Valley stops will be established in Staunton, Fishersville, and Waynesboro. Charlottesville stops include: UVA Bavarro Hall, UVA Health System, the Amtrak Station, and Downtown. Additional stops in Charlottesville and along the route will be considered.

Ultimately the service will be paid for by federal, state, and local funds. The majority of the service will be funded by grants which carry match requirements of 20% and 22%. Stakeholders propose that the local match be divided evenly between the Charlottesville/Albemarle stakeholders and the Valley localities. The current proposed cost-sharing plan anticipates Waynesboro’s contributions as follows: FY 2021 \$1,513, FY 2022 \$10,883, FY 23 \$11,094, and FY 2024 \$11,351. Staunton and Augusta County would pay equivalent amounts.

The initial grant application is due February 3rd.

Ms. Nancy Gourley, Transit Manager CSPDC will provide an overview of the service and business and Council will be asked to consider endorsing the letter of commitment.

City Manager’s Recommendation: I recommend approval and support, noting, however, that this is a new and will be ongoing financial commitment. The service provides specific benefit to a limited number of residents, but would nonetheless support employment and presumably household stability and income. Transit service would improve the competitiveness of the community which is a stated goal of the Comp Plan.

Suggested Motion(s): Move to endorse the letter of commitment.

Attachments:

- Fact Sheet
- CSPDC Letter of Explanation/Request
- Sample Commitment of Support



December 2, 2019

Mr. Mike Hamp
City Manager
City of Waynesboro
503 W Main Street
Suite 210
Waynesboro, VA 22980

Dear Mr. Hamp:

Examining the feasibility for inter-regional transit service between the Staunton-Augusta County-Waynesboro area and Charlottesville has occurred over the past four years. These planning efforts have been based on identification of the need for this service in multiple prior planning efforts. With the assistance of the MPO's, the local jurisdictions and the universities, a feasibility study exploring this concept was coordinated by the CSPDC and completed in 2017. This report was then provided to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for their review and guidance on potential next steps.

Earlier this year, DRPT contracted with consultant Kimley-Horn to complete additional study to confirm demand, to develop a detailed service plan and budget, and to identify potential funding sources. A stakeholder group representing multiple jurisdictions and University of Virginia was assembled to work with the consultant on what is now referred to as the proposed "Afton Express" transit service. This stakeholder group provided the consultant with commute-related information regarding their workforce(s) and participated in two meetings related to the development of the Service Plan.

The stakeholder group concurred with the following recommendations from the consultant:

- The initial phase of the service would originate from park and ride lot locations in Staunton, Fishersville and Waynesboro and serve multiple stops in Charlottesville proximate to the University of Virginia and the University of Virginia Medical Center, as well as downtown Charlottesville. Buses would stop (upon rider request) at the Charlottesville Amtrak station and on the reverse commute at the Waynesboro BRITE Hub.
- In the future, stops may be added in Crozet, the Pantops area and at Fifth Street Station (Wegmans in Charlottesville).
- The CSPDC would be the applicant and administrator of grant funds related to the service. Additionally, the CSPDC's existing service contract with Virginia Regional Transit (VRT) would be amended to include delivery of the Afton Express service. Under contract amendment, VRT would provide the drivers, buses, bus maintenance, supervision and customer service functions related to the service.
- DRPT guidance is that CSPDC should submit the initial grant application by February 3, 2020 for the initial two years of expenses under their Demonstration grant program. This program funds at an 80% level and requires a 20% local match. Subsequent years of



service would be funded under what is known as the 5311 Rural Transit program which funds at about a 78% level, requiring a 22% local match.

- The budget assumes that free rides would be offered for the initial thirty days of service to encourage commuters to try the service, followed by a ramping up period of ridership/fare collection the first year. Fares would be \$3 each way, with passes available at a reduced rate for regular riders of the service.
- The stakeholders considered various formulas for providing the local match funds and agreed that this obligation would be split fifty-fifty between the two regions (west of the mountain and east of the mountain), and the regions would then determine the level of funding from each of the participating partners.
- DRPT requires that a commitment of the local match funds from the partners be in place to accompany the February 3rd grant application. Revenues in support of the initial years of service are projected as follows:

Revenues	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Federal	\$ -	\$ -	\$192,757	\$196,918
State	\$36,320	\$261,209	\$49,395	\$50,481
Local Partners	\$9,080	\$65,302	\$66,568	\$68,107
<i>West-Side Partners</i>	\$4,540	\$32,651	\$33,284	\$34,054
<i>East-Side Partners</i>	\$4,540	\$32,651	\$33,284	\$34,054
Fare Collection	\$ -	\$38,157	\$55,501	\$55,501
Total	\$45,400	\$364,668	\$364,221	\$371,008
<i>Demonstration Period Total</i>		\$410,068		
<i>5311 Rural Funding Total</i>			\$735,229	

DRPT requires that commitment from the local partners accompany the grant application. This commitment indicates the intent to enter into agreement with the other local funding partners and to provide the local match share each fiscal year of this initial term of service starting in FY2021.

At this time, the CSPDC is requesting an expression of intent from the "West-Side" partners to continue to participate in service-related planning activities, to enter into agreement with the local partners, and to provide a share of the local funding each fiscal year of this initial term. Please sign and return the Attachment to me by January 15, 2020 in order for CSPDC to proceed with the grant application.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Riedesel
Executive Director

Afton Express Transit Service Plan – Fact Sheet

Background

- The idea of an inter-regional transit service connecting the Shenandoah Valley and Charlottesville has been discussed in previous transportation studies and plans, including the Virginia Intercity Bus Plan (2013), BRITE Transit Development Plan (2015), and I-81/I-64 Inter-Regional Public Transportation Feasibility Study (2017).
- The I-81/I-64 Inter-Regional Public Transportation and Feasibility Study proposed a bus service operating between Harrisonburg and Charlottesville with stops in Staunton and Waynesboro.
- The CSPDC submitted a Demonstration Grant application for FY 2019 asking for funding to implement the service design proposed in the I-81/I-64 Feasibility Study, with a scaled-back route to operate between Staunton and Charlottesville on I-64 to reduce overlap with the recently implemented Virginia Breeze service.
- DRPT did not fund the implementation of the service, but instead provided funding for additional study to refine the need and feasibility of a transit service connecting the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro (SAW) region and Charlottesville.
- The Afton Express Transit Service Plan reaffirms the need for intercity transit service in the region and demonstrates the feasibility of operating a bus route between the SAW region and Charlottesville to best serve commuter and rural transportation needs.

Regional Travel Patterns

- Transportation trends in the region indicate that traffic flows are mostly one-directional in the morning and evening peak periods.
 - During the AM peak period most trips are between the high working population areas in the SAW region and high employment areas in Charlottesville.
 - During the PM peak period most trips are between the high employment areas in Charlottesville and high working population areas in the SAW region.
- Number of trips between regions during the AM and PM peak periods:

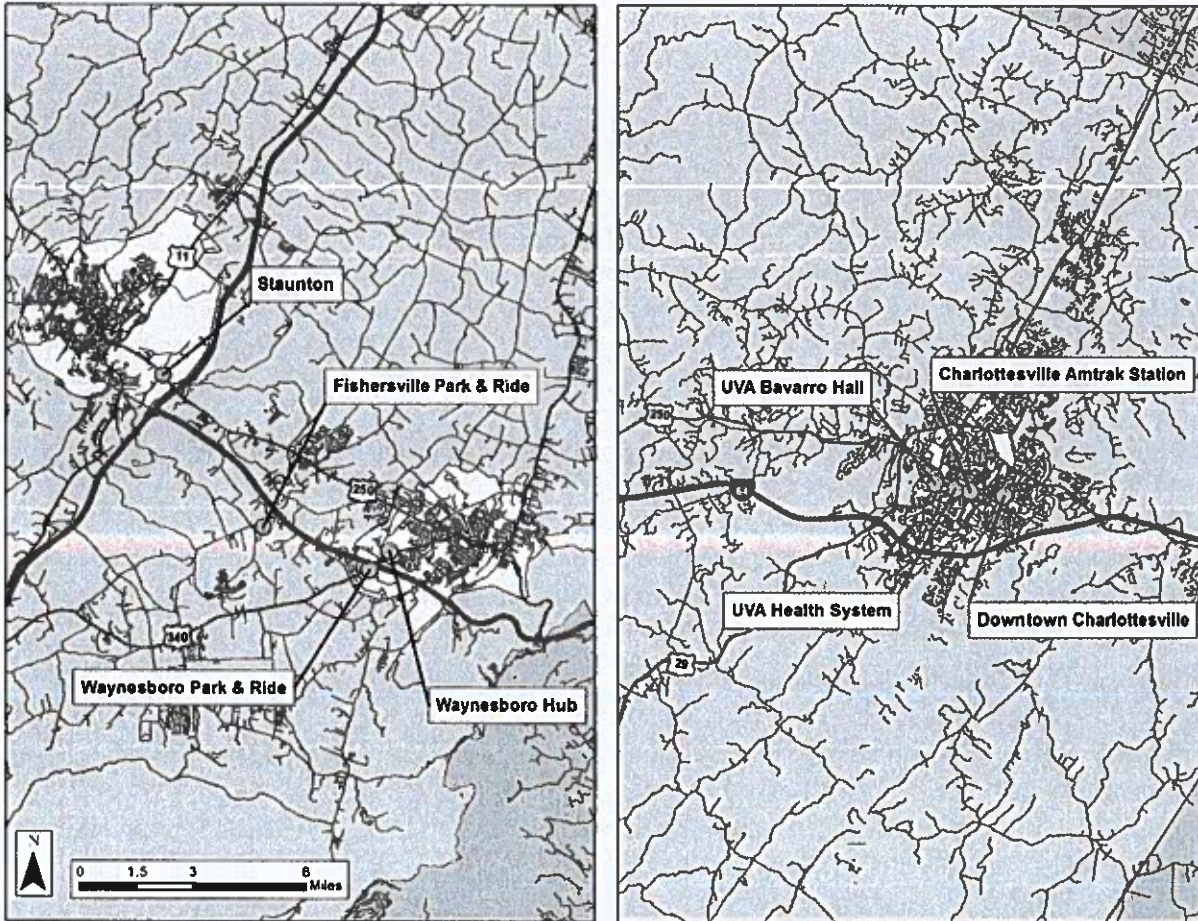
	AM	PM
Eastbound	3,373	1,413
Westbound	1,190	3,358

- Key origins identified include Waynesboro, Staunton, Fishersville, Stuarts Draft, and Crozet.
- Key destinations identified include, UVA, Downtown Charlottesville, Pantops, Crozet, and Waynesboro.

Service Plan Summary

- **Two 32-passenger buses** running on the route and one spare bus
- **Four AM peak period trips** (5:15 AM – 9:25 AM) leaving SAW region approximately hourly Monday - Friday
- **Four PM peak period trips** (3:00 PM – 7:10 PM) leaving Charlottesville/UVA approximately hourly Monday - Friday
- **14.2 daily total service hours**
- **81 projected daily boardings initially**
- **\$3.00 one-way fares** with discounted passes for frequent users

Proposed Stop Locations



Note: Crozet, Pantops, and Fifth Street Station could serve as possible future stop locations.

Projected Budget

Expenses	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Total	\$ 45,400	\$ 364,668	\$ 364,221	\$ 371,008

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