



CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT
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CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT PUBLIC TRANSIT COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE MEETING AND AGENDA

AUGUST 31, 2021 – 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. (VIRTUAL MEETING)

CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT – FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

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8. Adjourn	

MEETING SUMMARY OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT COMMITTEE

May 25, 2021 at 11:00 AM

Present: Michael Parker, Chapel Hill Town Council
Amy Ryan, Chapel Hill Town Council
Randee Haven-O'Donnell, Carrboro Town Council
Anne-Marie Vanaman, Town of Carrboro Management Specialist
Cheryl Stout, UNC Transportation & Parking
Cha'ssem Anderson, UNC Associate Director of Transportation Planning
Hongbin Gu, Chapel Hill Town Council
Zachary Hallock, Carrboro Transportation Planner

Absent: Nathan Knuffman, UNC Vice Chancellor of Finance and Operations, Damon Seils, Carrboro Town Council

Staff present: Flo Miller, Deputy Town Manager, Brian Litchfield, Transit Director, Rick Shreve, Budget Manager, Nick Pittman, Transit Planning Manager, Matt Cecil, Transit Development Manager, Jeffrey Sullivan, Community Outreach Manager, Amy Harvey, Deputy Town Clerk, Josh Mayo, Transportation Planner Town of Chapel Hill, Bergen Watterson, Town of Chapel Hill Transportation Planning Manager

Guests: Andrea Neri, Rayna Tyson

1. The Meeting Summary of April 27, 2021 was received and approved.
2. **Employee Recognition** – Committee members spoke about Flo and shared their appreciation for her hard work and dedication. Brian shared a letter to Flo from the Transit Employee Forum and a signed bus stop sign for her. Brian shared his appreciation for Flo as well. Brian announced that we will be dedicating our first-floor conference room to Flo.
3. **Consent Items**
 - A. March Financial Report– Provided for Partners information.
 - B. Holiday Schedule for Calendar Years 2021 – 2022 – Provided for Partners information.
4. **Discussion Items**
 - A. Future Meeting Schedule – July 2021 to June 2022 – Provided for Partners information.
 - B. FY21-22 Budget Development – Provided for Partners information. A committee member asked if anyone that was under the \$16 to \$16.50 new starting pay would they be moved up to that amount. Brian stated that yes, the existing employees that are under would be moved up to the new pay rate.
 - C. August Service Development Options – Provided for Partners information. A committee member asked about the printed materials for the route changes in scenario D. Brian

responded with printed materials stating the service changes can begin being worked on as soon as the committee agrees on the service scenario. Brian stated that we will inform the community of the upcoming changes as soon as possible. A committee member suggested that we should be cautious of the language we use when making these announcements and not to use “reduction” or like terms. The committee voted and agreed that scenario D will be the best solution.

5. Information Items

- A. Project and Update- Provided for Partners information.
- B. April Performance Report – Provided for Partners information.

6. Departmental Monthly Reports

- A. Operations Report - Provided for the Partners information.
- B. Director's Report – Provided for the Partners information.
- C. Community Outreach – Provided for the Partners information.

7. Future Meeting Items

- 8. **Next Meeting** – August 24, 2021 (11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Chapel Hill Transit)
- 9. Adjourn

The Partners set a next meeting date for August 31, 2021
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3A. August Financial Report

Prepared by: Rick Shreve, Senior Management Analyst

- The August Financial Report will be provided at the meeting on August 31, 2021.

4A. Potential Service Improvements

Action: 1. Receive information and provide staff with feedback.

Staff Resource: Nick Pittman, Transit Planning Manager
Brian M Litchfield, Director

Background

After much consideration and planning, the Partners Committee endorsed the staff service plan for this fall during the in May 2021. This plan assumed that a starting salary increase and recruitment efforts would help fill vacant operator positions (open due to retirements and a COVID response hiring freeze). While the salary increase has been helpful and served as a retention benefit for existing Operators most systems in our region and school districts have increased their hiring rates (we've also seen private sector companies greatly increase rates, offer guaranteed pay – some as high as \$75K and signing bonuses – some as high as \$10K).

Due to challenges in hiring, our vacant positions for full-time operators has increased to 36 and we have over 15 openings for temporary operators. We are proud of the work our team has done and the efforts they have undertaken to try and meet the fall service schedule, however, with the shortages we have this is not possible. Prior to the fall we implemented temporary changes to increase operator availability, including adjusting work hours and decreasing the number of operators approved off on a given day (the max # we allow is 5) – these items along with operators working more overtime have helped, however they are not long term solutions and lead to many negative issues, including: low morale, safety issues, increased work injuries, increased sick days, etc. As a result, you have likely seen or heard of some of the service challenges we are facing now that classes have resumed. We have not been able to meet our expectation or our customers expectations. Missed trips are causing service reliability issues and frustration for operators and customers.

After much consideration, we must recommend temporary service adjustments to make our service more reliable. We do not make these recommendations lightly as we understand that every change impacts our customers and creates challenges. As we evaluated options, we wanted to make sure that we focused on core service hours and from an equity and access perspective, to not fully remove routes or routes segments. While we do anticipate providing Tar Heel Express service for home football games at this point, we do not believe that we will have the staffing or ability to provide service for home basketball games. We are also looking at cashless options for Tar Heel Express and will provide some information during the meeting on this subject.

We know this is not where any of us want to be, however, with staffing trends we need to make some very hard choices so we can have services and schedules our customers can rely on.

Note – at this point the Health Department has not recommended capacity limits. However, we continue to stay in communication with them through our Emergency Management Team. If limits are required in the future, this could also further impact our ability to provide service and would likely require further adjustments.

Recommended Temporary Service Adjustments

- Adjust service hours to 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM weekday, (32.09 daily hours)
- Close Friday Center South Park and Ride (former Hwy 54 Park and Ride) and suspend the S Route (25.73 daily hours)
- Suspend mid-day services on G, F, and T routes (trips scheduled to assist with Chapel Hill – Carrboro City Schools schedules and provide peak commute options; 34.63 daily hours)
- Expand contract with Carolina Livery to operate the HS Route (26.06 revenue hours)
- Reduce NU route to 30 minute peak service (6.9 daily hours)
- Reduce CL route to 40 minute peak service (7.24 daily hours)
- Reduce two morning and two evening trips on 420 route, operated for GoTriangle (6 daily hours)

Weekends:

- Adjust service hours 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Saturday (3 hours per day)
- Reduce weekend J and NS routes to one (1) bus (22 hours per day)
- Suspend operation of Safe Ride Routes G, J, and T (11.72 hours on Thursday, Friday and Saturday)

Other Options that were considered but are not recommended at point:

- Weekday services
 - Reduce CW route to 40 minute peak service (5.04 revenue hours weekday)
 - Reduce D route to 40 minute peak service (7.24 revenue hours weekday)
 - Reduce J route to 30 minute peak service (10.36 revenue hours weekday)
 - Reduce NS route to 20 minute peak service (11.85 revenue hours weekday)
 - End NU, NS and J routes at 10:00 PM (6.25 revenue hours weekday)
 - Suspend: A, F, G, N and T (83.73 revenue hours)
- Weekend:
 - Suspend Saturday A, CM, CW, D, J, N and NS routes (79.84 hours). U and NU would continue to operate
 - Suspend Sunday A, CM, CW, D, J, N and NS routes (75.94). U and NU would continue to operate
 - Suspend A and CM routes (20.93 hours)

5A. North South Bus Rapid Transit (NSBRT) Project Update

Staff Resource: Matt Cecil, Transit Development Manager

State Funding Update and Schedule/Cost Impacts

The State (NCDOT) recently announced the discontinuation of SPOT 6.0, which means that State funding for projects like NSBRT may not be available until 2026. Our current schedule for NSBRT assumed State funding would be available in 2021-22 and BRT service starting in 2025-26. This announcement likely requires a significant change (delay) to our project schedule and cost impacts, due to inflation, cost of materials over time, etc. The current budget for the project is \$140M, with \$40M coming from Local and/or State sources. Our consultant team is updating the budget based on changes to stations and an extended schedule.

Based on this news, staff has worked with our consultants to develop a new project schedule assuming State funding in 2026 and the best case is that BRT service could start in 2028. The draft schedule was prepared with the assumption that we want to keep the project in the federal funding pipeline – with our current level of local match we have adequate funding to stay in, however, this requires continual progress on the project. The schedule can also be modified if funding opportunities at the Local or State level become available.

NSBRT Project Schedule:

- 09/2021 - Final Design Commencement
- 11/2021 - 60% Design
- 09/2023 - 90% Design
- 05/2025 - Final Plans and Bid Documents
- 03/2026 - Request for Evaluation
- 07/2026 - Full Funding Grant Agreement
- 07/2026 - Construction Commencement
- 10/2028 - Revenue Service

This schedule could also mean that our funding in the Orange County Transit plan may need to be adjusted to the appropriate years (\$10.1M) and the amount that would be used for construction could be moved toward 2026 (\$4M). We plan to discuss this with the County and GoTriangle after we've had time to evaluate the options below and discuss them with the Transit Partners.

Staff is evaluating funding and phasing options, including:

- TIFIA Loans (Transportation Infrastructure and Innovation Act)
 - Federal low interest loan available to transportation projects to cover funding gaps or to cover local/state match requirements until those funds are available. Would require commitment from the Orange County Transit Plan and/or Funding Partners.

- Local Debt Issue
 - Low interest loan, similar to what we used to finance replacement buses, to cover match requirements until State funds are available. Would require commitment from Funding Partners, local government(s) and Local Government Commission (LGC).
- Increase Federal allotment to 80% of total project cost (decreasing local match from \$40M to \$28M)
 - Options may include STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant Program), CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality or FTA (non-CIG funding) grants that could be used towards vehicles or other capital items. This still requires non-federal match beyond our current allocation.
- Project Phasing – options may include delaying construction of some dedicated lane miles and/or completing a shorter segment of the project (e.g. Eubanks to Hospital). While options like this could reduce the projects overall cost in the short-term, they would have impacts on the projects rating and viability, reduce project benefits and lead to higher costs in the future.

Staff is also working with DCHC-MPO to set up a regional group to discuss potential funding. The MPO Technical Committee has also approved a motion to send a letter to NCDOT, including language specific to NSBRT as a vital project in the region, requesting methods of assistance from NCDOT for NSBRT. The letter will be considered by the MPO Board on September 8, 2021.

NSBRT Final Design Consultant Selected

Earlier this year we issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a qualified firm(s) to complete 30%-100% design and construction documents. AECOM, our current consultants, submitted the only response to the RFQ. Based on our experience to date with AECOM and their work on the project we are moving forward with establishing a contract with AECOM. Note that the schedule for this work may be adjusted as noted above.

5B. Real-Time System Replacement or Upgrade Project Update

Staff Resource: Nick Pittman, Transit Planning Manager

Background

- Chapel Hill Transit has received real-time passenger information and vehicle location services from Cubic (NextBus/UMOIQ) since 2006.
- Our current contract with Cubic (NextBus/UMOIQ) expires in July 2022.
- Based on staff and customer feedback, we believe that we should explore options from a wide range of service providers, as technology and systems have changed since our initial install in 2006. Additionally, we have had concerns related to our current contractor's customer service, ability to resolve issues in a timely manner and the current system requires all edits/adjustments to be made by the contractor.
- Staff participated in a Triangle regional real time information RFP discussion in 2019 and 2020. Unfortunately, the project was discontinued in 2020 due to the variety of needs throughout the Triangle systems. Some systems have issued or will issue individual RFPs for their specific technology needs.
- As staff began discussing this project with agencies in the area, it was determined that many systems had similar desires to purchase a new turn-key Intelligent Transportation System (ITS). The agencies agreed that, if possible, contracting with a single vendor to implement, host, maintain, and provide long-term support for a Regional Real-Time Passenger information system using a Software as a Service (SaaS) model could be beneficial to the agencies and transit customers by allowing for a simpler/ faster implementation and more cost-effective approach for agencies.
- To ensure regional connectivity and the sharing of necessary data in both the Triangle and Triad, our RFP will require bidders to provide output data in common transit feed specifications (GTFS – Static and GTFS – RT). This will allow information to share across signs and mobile app platforms.
- Agencies that are participating in this project:
 - Piedmont Triad Agencies:
 - Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART)
 - Davidson County Transportation System (DCTS), Davidson County, NC
 - Greensboro Transit Agency (GTA), City of Greensboro, NC
 - High Point Transit System (HPTS), City of High Point, NC
 - Link Transit (Link), City of Burlington, NC
 - Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA), City of Winston-Salem, NC
 - Research Triangle Agencies:
 - Chapel Hill Transit (CHT), Town of Chapel Hill, NC
 - Orange County Public Transportation (OCPT), Orange County, NC

Fiscal Note: we have reserved stimulus funding to replace/upgrade our real-time passenger information system

Next Steps for Real-Time System Replacement

- PART staff in coordination with Transit staff will finalize specifications related to RFP.
- RFP will be released on August 30, 2021 (PART is the lead agency and their procurement staff will handle the release).
- Selection of preferred vendor(s) will occur in early 2022.

5C. Project Updates

Staff Resource: Tim Schwarzauer, Grants Compliance Manager
Katy Fontaine, Transit Development Manager
Peter Aube, Maintenance Manager

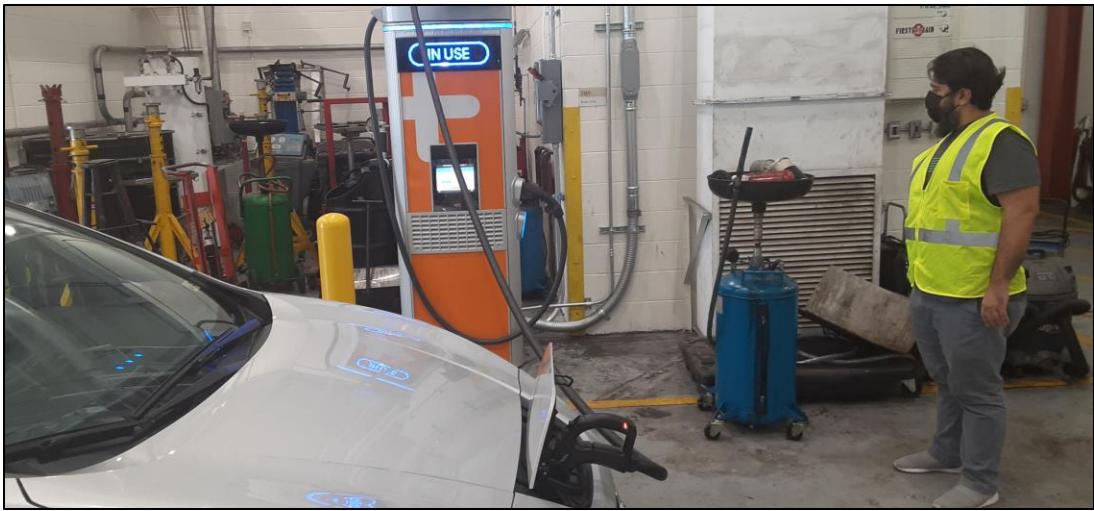
Solar Power Feasibility Study: Transit staff, with input from the Town's Sustainability Office and OWASA staff (who recently completed a similar project), have selected Optony INC as our preferred firm, pending contract negotiation. Optony INC is also currently performing similar work for the City of Durham. We are awaiting signatures on the contract.
<https://www.optonyusa.com/>

Bus Stop Accessibility Update: Chapel Hill Transit has completed construction on 14 bus stops, three (3) are under construction and another 69 in various stages of design. We are also coordinating with GoTriangle to improve seven (7) stops that are shared by both systems. Changes and improvements include shelter updates, solar-powered signs, altering the slope of the ramps, and adding landing pads, tactile warning slips, and sidewalks.

We have also added a page to our website to track our progress and share more information with the public about our efforts related to stop improvements. You can find the website at <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/transit/bus-stopupgrades>.

Our replacement shelters have been delayed by COVID and supply chain issues. Our previous shelter orders are scheduled to ship starting Wednesday, September 15th, with three (3) more shipments scheduled over the next two (2) months. These include the shelters to finish the locations we have contracted with the Town of Carrboro install, along with Fraternity Court and several other locations. We are requesting bids from contractors to install the shelters and hope to have a couple of firms under contract.

Electric Bus Procurement: Three Battery Electric Buses are scheduled to go online for the build in August and September with a delivery date in mid-October. Building charge stations have been installed and are operational (see picture) and the Charge Depot install is scheduled to start in two weeks.



6A. Operations

Staff Resource: Peter Aube, Maintenance Manager

Joe McMiller, Assistant Operations Manager – Fixed Route

Tim Thorpe, Training Coordinator

Mark Rodgers, Assistant Operations Manager - Demand Response

Joe McMiller - Fixed Route Division

- On time Performance (OTP) – August 2021 – 78%
- Fixed Route Supervisors are continuing their Leadership development through Reklis Coaching and Counseling
- Fall Service began Sunday, August 1st
- NAACP Youth Council Bus wrap unveiling was held Saturday, August 14th
- Safe Rides returned Thursday, August 19th
- Operators are continuing to get vaccinated
- Monday, September 6th, Labor Day (No Service)
- Preparing for return of Tar Heel Express for football.

Mark Rodgers - Demand Response

- Two new full time operators: Chance and Eli
- We have adjusted our reservation time to allow customer to book trips up to 14 days out consistent with other providers in the area.
- We plan to have the EZ Rider customer survey, that was developed in coordination with the EZ Rider Advisory Committee, out by mid September.
- In October we hope to be on line with the updated version of Trapeze.

Tim Thorpe – Training

- Pedestrian & Cyclists training occurred – early August 2021
- Nissan Leaf (electric car) Video training & Handouts – will be issued on Wed, August 25th
- Hiring Numbers Update – 9 Fixed Route candidates & 2 Demand Response candidates in process
- NC Works Job Fair – Aug. 27 @ Europa Center 9a-12p
- Fall 2021 Hiring events calendar being compiled
- 4 Operator Interviews this week – 3 Fixed Route, 1 Demand Response
- Operator Trainer Telephone Interviews to August 31

Peter Aube - Maintenance

- Demand response ran 27,558 miles in July
- Non-revenue vehicles ran 22,738 miles in July
- Fixed route ran 155,211 miles in July
- Maintenance performed (83) Preventive Maintenance Inspections in July (100% on-time).
- Maintenance performed (15) road calls in June, (10,347) miles between road calls for fixed route .
- Maintenance performed (0) road calls in June (211,332) miles between road calls for demand response.
- Maintenance continued twice daily deep cleaning (disinfecting) on all buses and LTV's in use and twice daily common area deep cleaning with CDC approved disinfectant.
- Collaborated with procurement to complete LED light upgrade for shop
- Electric bus procurement UPDATE
 - A) Three BEB build currently scheduled August-September 2021 Build date- Mid - October delivery
 - B) Bus inspection and buy American audit scheduled for Sept 6th thru 18th
 - C) Building Charge Stations -Installed and operational (see attached Picture)
 - D) Charge Depot Install Scheduled to start week from next Monday
- Maintenance continued twice daily deep cleaning (disinfecting) on all buses and LTV's in use and twice daily common area deep cleaning with CDC approved disinfectant.
- Maintenance collaborated with vendor to complete interior painting of shop and office walls.
- Maintenance collaborated with HRD to hire an assistant Maintenance manager and mechanic II .
- Maintenance completed year-end inventory . (Less than 1% discrepancy)

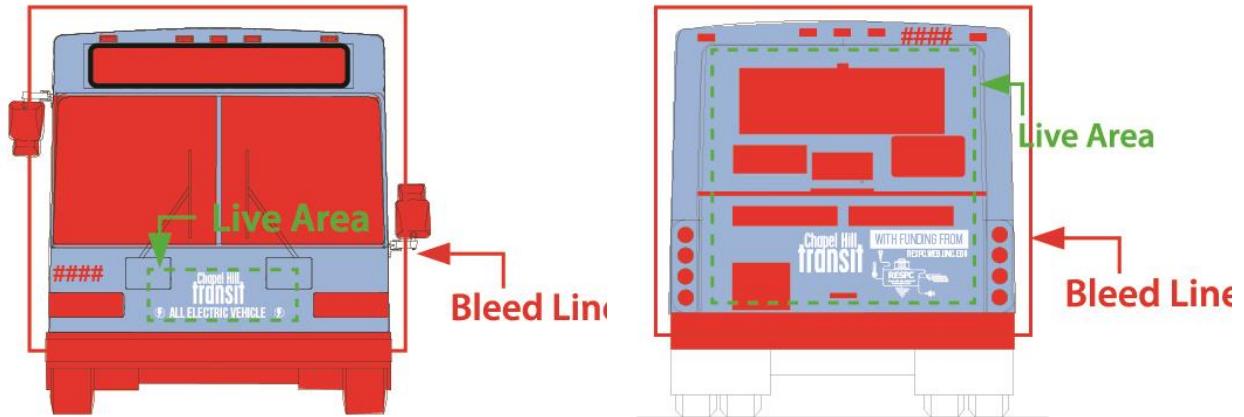
6B. Community Outreach Report

Staff Resource: Jeffrey Sullivan, Transit Director

Electric Bus Design Concept

Below is the concept art for the new battery electric buses scheduled to be delivered in October. The design was created by Jeffrey Sullivan and was developed with the input from our funding partners and UNC RESPC.





6C. Director

Staff Resource: Brian Litchfield, Transit Director

- The Director's Report will be provided at the meeting on August 31, 2021.

6D. August Performance Report - Ridership

Staff Resource: Matt Cecil

Weekday

Route	20-Dec	21-Jan	21-Feb	21-Mar	21-Apr	21-May	21-Jun	21-Jul	Average
A	2,469	2,642	2,521	2,388	2,929	2,843	2,826	2,990	2,590
B									
CCX									
CL	5,127	5,335	5,724	6,941	6,666	6637	7113	7241	5,959
CM	4,835	5,152	5,943	6,912	7,295	6334	7855	8670	6,027
CW	6,380	5,633	5,793	5,996	7,070	6272	7242	6918	6,174
D	7,402	7,467	7,762	7,811	7,621	8351	8226	5142	7,613
F									
FCX	19,491	18,190	22,157	24,173	20,913	18422	23260	21595	20,985
G									
HS	3,362	3,329	3,673	4,452	4,199	4394	5538	4775	3,803
J	19,146	20,090	21,438	23,247	24,538	23271	24755	24877	21,692
JFX									
N	2,139	2,064	2,413	2,456	2,899	2405	2552	3861	2,394
NS	29,013	31,242	36,590	39,064	37,480	35115	38950	39664	34,678
NU	7,912								989
RU	2,550	4,548	5,348	6,117	7,677	5209	6403	6426	5,248
S	5,233	5,208	5,567	6,373	6,171	5054	5421	5949	5,710
T									
U	3,470	5,083	6,397	8,654	8,737	5951	5431	5776	6,468
Safe G									
Safe J									
Safe T									
Trippers									
Total	118,529	115,983	131,326	144,584	168,733	153,529	170,327	143,884	

Saturday

A	342	379	345	318	349	439	328	540	347
CM	306	392	367	279	331	478	453	530	335
CW	496	678	651	618	662	671	720	0	621
D	775	823	914	964	572	623	612	655	810
J	1,099	1,723	1,650	1,589	1,550	2080	1305	2278	1522
N	214	235	267	248	448	500	278	115	282
NS	1,289	1,823	1,728	1,679	1,410	1870	1394	1590	1586
NU									
U	716	938	820	780	583	195	301	309	767
Total	5,237	6,991	6,742	6,475	5,905	6,856	5,391	6,017	

Sunday

A	310	335	360	385	352	439	236	319	348.4
CM	179	347	329	304	300	402	194	335	292
CW	409	534	565	542	567	564	447	523	523
D	515	621	514	488	512	567	531	552	530
J	863	1,085	1,092	1,014	1,013	996	1029	1088	1013
N	238	356	341	277	305	294	285	325	303
NS	879	1,137	1,152	1,190	1,133	1286	873	672	1098
NU									
U	254	1,165	712	492	496	624	276	302	624
Total	3,647	5,580	5,065	4,692	4,678	5,172	3,871	4,116	