



CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT  
Town of Chapel Hill  
6900 Millhouse Road  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-2401

phone (919) 969-4900 fax (919) 968-2840  
[www.townofchapelhill.org/transit](http://www.townofchapelhill.org/transit)

**CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT PUBLIC TRANSIT COMMITTEE**

**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE MEETING AND AGENDA**

**NOVEMBER 16, 2021 – 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. (VIRTUAL MEETING)**

**CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT – FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**

**PAGE #**

1. Approval of October 26, 2021 Meeting Summary	1
2. Employee Recognition	
3. Consent Items	
A. November Financial Report	3
B. Disposition of Vehicles	5
4. Discussion Items	
A. Radio/ITS Replacement Project	6
5. Information Items	
A. Transit Oriented Development Planning Update	7
B. North South Bus Rapid Transit – Update on Environmental Review	8
C. Compensation Options to Support Recruitment and Retention of Transit Team Members Update	9
D. Performance Report	14
6. Departmental Monthly Reports	
A. Operations	15
B. Community Outreach	17
C. Director	18
7. Next Meeting – January 25, 2022 (11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Chapel Hill Transit)	
8. Adjourn	

## MEETING SUMMARY OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE PUBLIC TRANSIT COMMITTEE

October 26, 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  
Cheryl Stout, UNC Transportation & Parking  
Chassem Anderson, UNC Associate Director of Transportation Planning  
Hongbin Gu, Chapel Hill Town Council  
Damon Seils, Carrboro Town Council  
Zachary Hallock, Carrboro Transportation Planner  
Anne-Marie Vanaman, Town of Carrboro Management Specialist  
Gordon Merklein, UNC Vice Chancellor for Real Estate and Campus Enterprises

Absent:

Staff present: Brian Litchfield, Transit Director, Rick Shreve, Budget Manager, Nick Pittman, Transit Planning Manager, Matt Cecil, Transit Development Manager, Jeffrey Sullivan, Community Outreach Manager, Josh Mayo, Transportation Planner Town of Chapel Hill, Kathryn McMillan, Transit Procurement Specialist

Guests: Fred Lampe, Molly De Marco

1. The Meeting Summary of August 31, 2021 was received and approved.
2. **Employee Recognition** – None for this month, hope to announce next month.
3. **Consent Items**
  - A. October Financial Report– Provided for Partners information.
4. **Discussion Items**
  - A. Compensation Options to Support Recruitment and Retention of Transit Team Members – Provided for Partners information. A committee member asked if our benefits package was better than other transit competitors in the area. With option 2, how would that impact the administrative staff? Brian responded that they would be eligible for the retention bonuses but would not receive a pay increase, the pay increase would be geared towards attracting more applicants for driving and maintenance. A committee member asked if we would be able to fuse resources to help the school system in the area as well? Further conversation can be had with the school system but their peak times are very similar to our peak times. Possibility of sharing work. A committee member asked if we could speak with our State and

Federal policy makers about different grant options. For this year, we are in good shape at the State level. Will keep an eye on this to ensure that we will still be in good shape in the long term. A committee member asked what the deadline would be to receive official feedback from the partners about the different compensation plans. Brian responded with the sooner, the better. Hoping that we can come back in December to decide on which option to move forward with.

#### **5. Information Items**

- A. Electric Buses Update – Provided for Partners information.
- B. Holiday Schedule Update – Provided for Partners information.
- C. North South Bus Rapid Transit Project Update – Provided for Partners information.
- D. Tar Heel Express Update – Provided for Partners information.
- E. Project Update – Provided for Partners information.
- F. Performance Report-Ridership – Provided for Partners information.

#### **6. Departmental Monthly Reports**

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

#### **7. Future Meeting Items**

- 8. **Next Meeting** – November 16, 2021 (11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Chapel Hill Transit)
- 9. Adjourn

The Partners set a next meeting date for November 16, 2021
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**October Financial Report**

Prepared by: Rick Shreve, Senior Management Analyst

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**October 2021**

- Expenses for the month of October were \$2,276,833. Along with the encumbrances, which are heavily weighted towards the beginning of the fiscal year, approximately 31.8% of our budget has been expended or reserved for designated purchase (e.g. purchase orders created for vehicle maintenance inventory supplies encumber those funds, and show them as unavailable for other uses).
- One significant caveat to note is that these data are subject to some changes, pending the Town of Chapel Hill's audit process for FY20-21. This process allows for identifying invoices that have been charged to the previous year that more accurately fall in the current fiscal year, as well as current year charges that will revert to the previous year.
- We will provide an update on the FY20-21 audited figures once we have final numbers; this will likely be available for the January Partners' meeting.

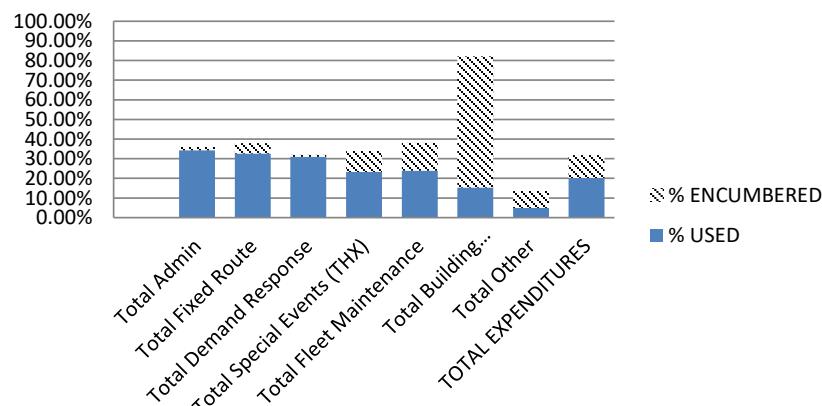
***Highlights***

- This aggregation of expenses and encumbrances for the first month of the fiscal year is consistent with years past and is perfectly in line with what we would expect at this point in the year.
- The attached data exhibits the financial information by division within CHT and should be a useful tool in monitoring our patterns as the year progresses, and is a high-level representation of the data used by our division heads.
  - It is worth noting that the "Special Events" line is mostly comprised of Tar Heel Express expenses, and the line labeled "Other" is comprised primarily of special grant-funded expense lines that are not permanent fixtures in the division budgets.

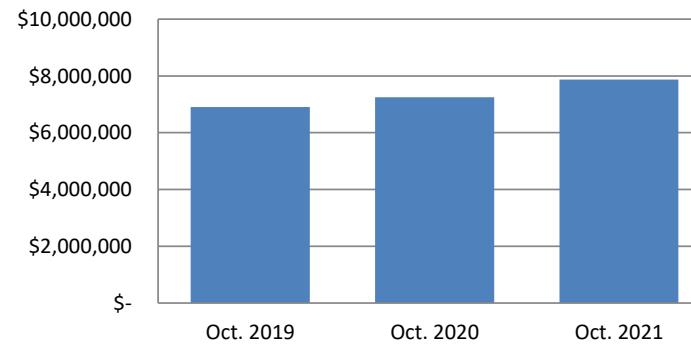
**Transit 640 Fund Budget to Actual at end of October 2021**

	ORIGINAL BUDGET	REVISED BUDGET	ACTUAL MONTH EXPENSES	ACTUAL YTD EXPENSES	CURRENT ENCUMBRANCES	BALANCE AVAILABLE	% USED OR ENCUMBERED Oct. = 33.33%
Total Admin	1,904,787	1,908,787	153,915	656,050	32,207	1,220,530	36.06%
Total Fixed Route	12,798,403	12,647,689	898,913	4,128,503	676,984	7,842,202	37.99%
Total Demand Response	2,472,428	2,468,428	191,299	764,269	25,404	1,678,756	31.99%
Total Special Events (THX)	309,653	309,653	43,851	71,822	33,187	204,645	33.91%
Total Fleet Maintenance	4,951,906	4,757,365	280,811	1,137,809	671,385	2,948,171	38.03%
Total Building Maintenance	893,409	2,734,614	248,326	420,621	1,824,849	489,144	82.11%
Total Other	2,969,460	14,003,157	459,717	689,936	1,213,008	12,100,213	13.59%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 26,300,046</b>	<b>\$ 38,829,693</b>	<b>\$ 2,276,833</b>	<b>\$ 7,869,009</b>	<b>\$ 4,477,023</b>	<b>\$ 26,483,661</b>	<b>31.80%</b>

**CHT October 2021 YTD Expenses as % of Budget**



**CHT Total YTD Expenses - Previous Years Comparison**



**3B. Disposition of Vehicles**

Action: Receive information provided by staff and approve staff to move forward with disposition of vehicles.

Staff Resource: Tim Schwarzauer, Grants Compliance  
Peter Aube, Maintenance Manager

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**Background**

Per Federal Transit Administration Circular 5010.1e, recipients of grant funds are required to maintain an Asset Management plan which includes a disposition schedule. As part of Chapel Hill Transit's ongoing effort to review and replace rolling stock, which has reached the end of its useful life, staff has identified the following service vehicles currently ready for disposition:

Vehicle	Year	Make	Model	Vin
M2	2010	Ford	F350	1FTWF3DR5AEA35074
S1	2010	Ford	Escape	1FMCU4K32AKA32613
S2	2010	Ford	Escape	1FMCU4K30AKA32612
S3	2010	Ford	Escape	1FMCU0D74CKB81102
S4	2010	Ford	Escape	1FMCU0D76CKB81103
S5	2010	Ford	Escape	1FMCU0D78CKB81104
749	2006	Ford	Escape	1FMYU96H46KB20790
1684	2016	Chevrolet	Impala	2G1WA5E31G1109548
1688	2016	Chevrolet	Impala	2G1WA5E38G1109000
1690	2016	Chevrolet	Impala	2G1WA5E38G1109966

All vehicles listed are beyond their federally defined "useful life." Staff recommends that we dispose of these vehicles in a federally compliant manner.

**Recommendation**

- Partners receive the information provided and approve staff to move forward with disposition of vehicles.

**4A. Radio/ITS Replacement Project****1. Receive information and provide staff with feedback.**

Prepared by: Brian Litchfield, Director  
Nick Pittman, Planning Manager

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**Background**

Chapel Hill Transit uses a two-way (UHF – ultra high frequency) radio system to communicate with vehicles in service and for standard operations. The system is installed in all vehicles (140+). The system is more than 20 years old and does not meet current or future needs. Transit/Town conducted a radio replacement feasibility study in 2011 and while some minor changes were made at the time to meet Federal Communications Commission (FCC) narrow banding requirements, funding was not available to implement the radio systems recommended at that time (~\$750,000-\$3.8M). The estimates at that time included fully replacing the systems used by Police, Fire and other departments of the Town. Since the initial study, Police and Fire must continue using the state operated VIPER system and all other departments, except Public Works have transferred to mobile phones or other basic push to talk technologies that meet their operational needs.

The age of the current system creates several serious operational and safety challenges, including coverage issues. The system is not able to perform basic operational functions, is not able to communicate directly with Chapel Hill Police and Fire or other emergency operators (interoperability), has no emergency backup system and is not able to support data, real-time monitoring or information archiving. Transit has secured a federal grant to conduct a radio system replacement feasibility study (which will be conducted in coordination with Public Works), however, funding is required to implement the findings of the study. The estimated cost is \$1.5 million and will be refined through the feasibility study. Transit is not able to directly utilize the state maintained and operated VIPER system used by Police and Fire.

**Recommendation**

- That the Partners Committee receive this report and provide staff with feedback.

**5A. Transit Oriented Development Planning**

Staff Resource: Matt Cecil, Transit Development Manager

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**North-South Bus Rapid Transit (NSBRT) Transit Oriented Development (TOD)**

Transit staff have coordinated the NSBRT TOD project with the Town of Chapel Hill's Unified Development Ordinance Visioning (UDO) work, to create a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) for both projects (<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/Components/RFP/RFP/1442/1130>). The RFP was issued in September 2021 and six (6) qualified firms responded with proposals. A review process was completed by Town of Chapel Hill Planning and Transit staff, to create a short list of four (4) firms to participate in an interview process the week of November 7, 2021, with nine (9) representatives from Transit, Planning, Sustainability and Managers Office. The TOD portion of the project will allow us to conduct station area planning work in coordination with the UDO work. The TOD portion of the project is grant funded and has an 18-month completion window. The combined projects put a significant focus on Public Outreach and Equity throughout the process. Staff anticipates a firm being selected in November and initial work getting underway around January.

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

Staff Resource: Matt Cecil, Transit Development Manager

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The NSBRT project continues to move forward in the environmental review (NEPA) process. The process is estimated to take around 18 months, and be completed around Fall of 2022, based on findings in the review process and reviews by State and Federal agencies.

The NSBRT consultant team has drafted the Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE) report and is waiting on natural resources information from the Army Corps of Engineers related to wetland and streams delineations. The draft DCE will be submitted for review once the information from the Corp of Engineers is provided.

The Section 106 Historic and Cultural Resources review is also underway. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) has been reviewed by FTA and, as of November 9, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has approved the APE. With the approval of the APE, the survey of architectural and archaeological properties will be completed and submitted to FTA and SHPO. To determine whether the project has any adverse effects on historic and cultural resources in the corridor, we have investigated all the properties within the APE to determine their age. The team is now reviewing all buildings and structures (properties) older than 45 years of age to determine whether they have historic significance. A property has historic significance when it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places or is eligible to be listed. If there are adverse effects to historic properties, FTA will likely enter into an agreement with the SHPO (or a Tribal HPO if applicable) that includes resolution measures agreed upon to resolve adverse effects. If there are no adverse effects, the Section 106 process concludes.

## 5C. Compensation Options to Support Recruitment and Retention of Transit Team Members

Prepared by: Brian Litchfield, Director  
Henry DePietro, Assistant Director – Operations  
Rick Shreve, Senior Management Analyst  
Nick Pittman, Planning Manager

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During the October 26, 2021, meeting, staff provided recommendations on potential compensation options to support the recruitment and retention of Transit Team Members. The details of the recommendations are shared below. Staff is happy to answer any questions that Partners may have related to the recommendations. As a note, we continue to attend job fairs and other events, and in addition to competition from peers, school bus operations and premium retailers, we are seeing many local restaurants and retailers offering \$15-18/hr. as starting rates.

### Background

As we have discussed many times over the last 18-months, Transit is facing a critical shortage of Bus Operators and applicants for front line positions (Operations and Maintenance). This is reflective of the national and regional trends for bus (school and transit) drivers, truck drivers, and many other industries with front line positions and we don't believe the instability in the labor market will change in the near future. While we saw some signs of this prior to COVID, the pandemic has impacted the labor market and wages in several ways and economic growth continues to provide a wide-range of jobs, including those with flexibility, ability to work remotely and generally at higher rates than those offered by local governments and similar agencies. As some reports have indicated the "U.S. does not have a pure labor shortage so much as it has a shortage of workers willing to accept the working conditions that today's economy often demands." Prior to the pandemic, Chapel Hill Transit would average between 400-500 applicants (with little to no advertising) for Transit Operators in a year, over the last 10 months we have received around 100 applicants (with aggressive advertising). Our current trends show that we are offering around 1 in 2 applicants, that 1 in 20 applicants turn into a new Team Member. While this has had the most visible impacts on front-line positions, we are also starting to see impacts to technical and professional level staff – especially as Transit systems and communities within the region and state move forward with investments in capital projects and planning efforts funded through County Transit Plans and other efforts.

Due to our staffing shortage we have already taken steps to reduce services, which has caused immediate and negative impacts to our customers, especially our most vulnerable customers, ***and could have longer-term financial impacts on our state/federal grants and Funding Partner contributions.*** Even with the service reductions, our trainers, supervisors and managers are all driving

buses on a regular basis, along with Operators working overtime, in addition to their standard job responsibilities to try to meet our scheduled service levels.

The labor market for Operators and Mechanics continues to be unstable and requires an immediate change in our compensation and retention strategy. While we have made some salary adjustments in past two years to try and be more competitive, our rates have not kept up with the market for public sector Operators and Mechanics and lags well behind most private sector opportunities in pay and flexibility (for example our starting wages from 2001-2019 only grew from \$11/hr. to \$13.70/hr. and currently sits at \$16 for non-CDL and \$16.80 with CDL).

Most systems in the region are currently starting Operators in the \$18.50-20/hr. (not including hazard or retention pay) range and we need to make adjustments that allow us to be competitive in this range and not lose experienced Operators who could easily jump to another system and be at \$24-27 within a couple years' time – personally I also think wages in the \$18.50-\$20/hr. range are just starting to reflect the skill and risk required to be Transit Operators and is more reflective of the professionalism and responsibility we expect and require from these positions. While we currently offer a Living Wage, we know that wage does not make it possible for Team Members to live in Chapel Hill/Carrboro, and is not attractive to those that may choose to commute to Chapel Hill for Bus Operator and Mechanic positions.

### **Options**

Transit staff explored a number of compensation scenarios, including monthly bonuses, substantial signing bonuses and other incentives. Based on what we are seeing in the market, we would like to share two (2) options to provide a sense of scale and what we think could be possible. We have also recommended these two options to the Town Manager for consideration:

Option 1: In this scenario we estimated what it would cost to consider matching Cary's \$20/hr. starting rate for Operators and moving up existing Operators and Supervisors in similar increments to avoid internal compression. We estimate this cost to be around \$1.3M per year (including FICA and Retirement). This would also require increases for Maintenance and some Admin staff to be viable for the Department, leading to an annual cost over \$1.5M, without including any signing or recruitment incentives.

Option 2: In this scenario we assumed a 7% hazard pay increase for all Operations and Maintenance Team Members that would be included as part of standard salaries starting with the remainder of this Fiscal Year, as a way to increase starting rates and help with recruitment, while also helping with retention of existing Team Members. This scenario would cost around \$1.6M over FY22 and FY23, allow us to phase in increases (make other adjustments along the way if needed) and move our starting rate for CDL holders to \$17.50 in FY22 and at least \$18.02 in FY23:

1. COVID/Hazard Pay – recognizes risk Team Members are taking and the skill required to operate/fix buses, helps with compression, helps with starting pay challenges and starts us on a path toward professional compensation that is more consistent with that of systems in the region. Estimate for FY22 is \$400,00 – assuming a December 2021 start time. Estimate for FY23 is \$650,00.
  - Increase base pay by 7% until July 2023 using ARPA/fund balance for Operations and Maintenance Team Members (Front Line to Managers).
    - Partners would need to cover increase by July of 2023 (FY24 budget) and may start phasing that into budget in FY23.
    - Market increases approved by Council/comp study prior to July 2023 would need to be added.
  - Increase starting pay to \$16.50 for non-CDL holders and \$17.50 with CDL – increase covered using ARPA/fund balance (minimum of \$17 and \$18.02 as of July 2022)
    - Partners would need to cover increase by July of 2023 and may start phasing that into budgets/contributions prior to that point.
    - Market increases approved by Council/comp study prior to July 2023 would also be added.
2. Retention Bonus – allow existing Team Members to earn up to three \$500 bonuses as a retention effort and reflect work during COVID and additional work while short on staff. These payments would be made over the rest of FY22, with payments in January, March and June – using ARPA/fund balance (estimate for FY22 is \$300,000 – includes FICA and retirement).
3. Sign on Bonus for Operators and Maintenance Positions below Supervisor: would help compete for new hires and is consistent with what we are seeing other systems (private and public offer - using ARPA/fund balance (estimate \$170,000 for FY22 and FY23 – includes FICA and Retirement)
  - \$2,500 for new Team Member (\$1,000 at 6 months and \$1,500 at 1 year = must meet safety and attendance goals)
  - \$1,000 for each Transit Retiree that returns as Program Support (\$500 at 6 months and \$500 at 1 year = must meet safety and attendance goals)
4. Referral Bonus: encourages existing Team Members to assist with hiring and recruiting - using ARPA/fund balance (estimate \$66,000 for FY22 and FY23 – includes FICA and Retirement)
  - \$1,000 per Team Member for each new Team Member they refer after the new Team Member has worked 6 months (with a cap at \$3,000 per year)
  - All Team Members are eligible for this referral bonus outside of Director, Assistant Director, Training Coordinator, Planning Manager and HRD.

While both options could initially be financed with ARPA/Fund Balance, we believe the 2<sup>nd</sup> option provides us additional flexibility and meets our equity interest – while also being able to offer recruitment and referral bonuses. While there is no certainty, we believe this option would help address the current challenges, while supporting current and future Team Members in the long-term. This of course, requires the Partners to assume the full cost by FY24, and it would likely make sense for them to start phasing in the cost in FY23 (likely requiring an increase to the Chapel Hill tax rate for transit). We would likely need to use Fund Balance first and then replace that as we are able to draw down grant funds. The COVID/Hazard pay would be funded as all regular salaries during FY24.

We continue to believe it would be helpful for the Town to consider hiring a recruiter to focus on filling and/or assist with filling front line positions – this is often times undertaken by Departments that are not staffed to do this work and by Team Members that are doing this work along with other significant job responsibilities. We have also suggested that the Town consider some additional retention/benefit ideas that could help the Town with its recruitment and retention efforts, including:

- Work 35 hours per week and get paid for 40 hours for non-exempt team members
- Allow overtime for any hours past 8 hours in a day (common in collective bargaining agreements) for non-exempt team members
- Vacation cash out – allow team members to cash out a defined amount of vacation each year (one-time election) as long as they have a defined amount of vacation on the books.
- Monthly housing stipend for team members who are at/below an identified annual salary
- Pay differential for evening and weekend shifts
- Day care or child care stipend
- Increase education stipend and/or allow education stipend to be used by spouses/partners/children
- Increase % of employer contribution on health insurance for family/child/spouse plans for fulltime team members
- Increase accrual rate for vacations
- Ability to earn additional time off with performance

### **Work Assignment Adjustments**

Chapel Hill Transit has long been focused on providing the most cost-effective and efficient services possible to our customers, Partners and the communities we serve. This interest, coupled with designing services around customer demand and travel needs, can create some challenging work assignments for many Transit Operations and Maintenance Team Members – including split shifts, late evening shifts, weekend and holiday shifts, non-consecutive days off, overtime for Tar Heel Express and covering open/extra work, etc. While these assignments meet cost and demand interests, they often conflict with work-life interests and other personal interests of Operations and Maintenance Team Members. We understand that split-shifts are not desirable for many Team Members and even

prior to the pandemic we were seeing a decrease in interest for overtime work, especially on weekends (Tar Heel Express and other special events). We have heard similar findings from regional and national peers.

We are considering how we adjust our work assignments (e.g. reducing/eliminating split shifts, providing more weekends or consecutive days off, pay differentials for evening/weekend/holiday work, etc.) to make them more attractive to the current labor force and more supportive of work-life balance interests. These are not likely immediate changes and will require additional staffing and resources. We will discuss this further as part of our future budget planning efforts, however, wanted you to be aware that we believe changes to our work assignment structures will also be necessary.

### **Other Recruiting Efforts**

We continue to work at the regional and state level on efforts that could improve recruitment. We recently had a discussion with Julie White, Deputy Secretary of Multi-Modal Transportation for N.C. Department of Transportation and shared the following suggestions/ideas:

- Have DMV to prioritize appointments for permits/licenses for transit systems.
- Could NCDOT work with partner agencies to share Transit operator career opportunities with CDL holders that may be on unemployment or other similar benefits?
- Allow current CDL holders to renew online and/or make address or other simple changes online.
- Waive the initial application fee (may be a barrier to some).
- Provide free prep classes to help study for the written CDL test (to obtain permit) perhaps through the various Tech schools throughout the state and/or virtual.

We are also working closely with GoDurham and GoTriangle to develop a CDL and basic transit operator training course at Durham Tech. Along with attending job fairs, advertising in papers, using social media, we are also using ads on buses (attached) and in buses and sharing postings with community partners.

### **Recommendation**

- That the Partners Committee receive the presentation and provide staff with feedback.

**5D. Performance Report - Ridership**

Staff Resource: Matt Cecil

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- Due to the meeting being held earlier than usual in the month, ridership data is not currently available. The November Performance Report will be provided as part of the January meeting packet.

**6A. Operations**

Staff Resource: Joe McMiller, Assistant Operations Manager – Fixed Route  
Mark Lowry, Safety Officer  
Mark Rodgers, Assistant Operations Manager - Demand Response

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**Joe McMiller - Fixed Route Division**

- November 5<sup>th</sup> – Fixed Route open the Tarheel Express Basketball season, running from the FCX Lot only.
- November 10<sup>th</sup> – Supervisor Javius Newman and Operator Thomas Dodson were recognized by Chief Blue for assisting a passenger needing transport after hours with a disabled mobility device.
- November 11<sup>th</sup> – Chapel Hill Transit honors team members who are Veterans.
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Chapel Hill Transit will host its Annual Thanksgiving Dinner with strict social distancing practices in place.
- November 26<sup>th</sup> – Fixed Route will operate a Sunday Level Service day after Thanksgiving.

**Mark Rodgers - Demand Response**

- Our veteran operator Tony Combs who has been with us 26.5 years will be retiring as of December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- We currently have two full time positions available with one more coming when Tony leaves.
- The EZRAC Committee was pleased with the EZRIDER survey response rate. We will provide a summary of the findings in January.
- EZRIDER is still running at a 97% On Time Performance.

**Mark Lowry – Safety**

- October accident summary.

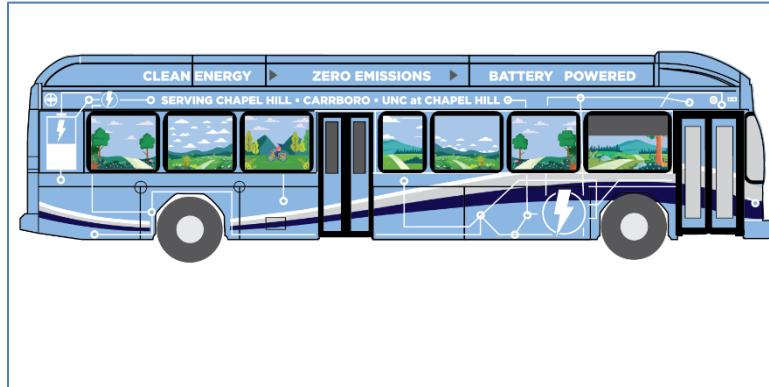
DIVISION		Oct-20	Oct-21	Year to Date
<u>FIXED ROUTE</u>				
Preventable		3	1	20
Non Preventable		2	2	26
<u>DEMAND RESPONSE</u>				
Preventable		0	0	1
Non Preventable		0	1	5
<u>MAINTENANCE</u>				
Preventable		0	0	1
Non Preventable		0	0	0
			TOTAL YTD	53

## 6B. Community Outreach

Staff Resource: Jeffrey Sullivan, Community Outreach Manager

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- Continuing to work with maintenance and vehicle wrap vendor on the electric bus wrap.



- On-going communications around service impacts from our operator shortage and Tar Heel Express.
- Celebrated veteran team members for with lunch and social media communication. Team members who have served include: William Barnett, Joseph Butler, Tony Combs, Robert Earhart, TY Edwards, Mike Fox, Terence Gentry, Larry Gray, Anita Hackett, Randolph Hagans, Tommy Hawkins, Torri Holbrooks, Mark Lowry, Joe McMiller, Jeffrey Owensby & Timothy Peterson.
- Planning Transit Thanksgiving celebration.
- Preparing for upcoming communications
  - Thanksgiving – public communication about our holiday services and planning our internal holiday celebration.
  - Winter Break – service changes (dependent upon the Partner's conversation around holiday service).
  - Winter Holidays – public communication around service changes and planning for internal celebrations.

6C. Director

Staff Resource: Brian Litchfield, Transit Director

**Electric Buses**

We have taken delivery of three (3) 40-foot Battery Electric Gillig buses and have started post-delivery inspections and testing. We are working with a vendor to schedule the bus wraps. Once the wrap schedule is finalized, we will move forward with scheduling an unveiling ceremony. We have also started training, including hosting a recent session for some public safety/EMS partners. We are planning to host additional sessions.



Work on the charging infrastructure continues. Cement was poured this week and the CP250 chargin stations arrived and are being prepared for installation.



### **Town of Chapel Hill 5-Year Budget Strategy**

The Town of Chapel Hill is preparing a 5-Year Budget Strategy to help accomplish the following:

- Build connections between strategic work plans and budget program expansions
- Strengthen department operating budgets to meet operational needs
- Promote environmental resiliency
- Restore pay-go capital and vehicle replacement programs
- Expand building maintenance and street paving programs
- Sustain enterprise funds

Chapel Hill Transit will be featured in the Transportation Section of the plan, including our North South BRT project. We plan to use our adopted 2019 Capital Plan and Short Range Transit Plan as the basis for our needs. Noting that these needs will be updated with our next Capital Plan (FY23) and subject to federal and state grants.

### **Carrboro Racial Equity Commission**

We have been invited to attend a Carrboro Racial Equity Commission meeting on November 17, 2021, to discuss Carrboro bus shelter locations, maintenance/upkeep and how stops are selected for improvements. We have shared the attached with the Commission in advance of the meeting.



**Chapel Hill**  
**transit**

CHAPEL HILL TRANSIT  
Town of Chapel Hill  
6900 Millhouse Road  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-2401

phone (919) 969-4900 fax (919) 968-2840  
[www.townofchapelhill.org/transit](http://www.townofchapelhill.org/transit)

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Carrboro Racial Equity Commission  
**From:** Brian M Litchfield, Director  
**Date:** November 11, 2021  
**Subject:** Update on Chapel Hill Transit's Bus Stop Improvement Project

Thank you for your interest in the Chapel Hill Transit's Bus Stop Improvement project and our efforts to improve mobility and access in our service area. I also understand that you have recently discussed improvements to bus stops along Jones Ferry near Barnes and Bim Streets. The following will provide an overview of our bus stop improvement efforts and some information on our efforts to coordinate improvements on Jones Ferry near Barnes and Bim Streets. I hope this information is helpful and look forward to joining you on the November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to discuss this important topic in more detail.

### **Overview of Bus Stop Improvement Projects**

Chapel Hill Transit manages over 500 bus stops in the Chapel Hill, Carrboro, UNC Hospitals and University of North Carolina area. While we strive to have all our bus stops be accessible to people of all mobility levels, most of our stops were installed before 1990 and ADA requirements. We also believe that a shelter is not a luxury; it is a basic level of comfort and dignity for our customers.

The Chapel Hill Transit Partners Committee agreed to undertake a Bus Stop Improvement effort in 2019 and identified the following priorities for improvements (<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/transit/bus-stop-upgrades>):

- Upgrade existing stops with shelters to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
  - We currently have 120 shelters at 100 stop locations (some locations have more than one shelter).
- Coordinate improvements with existing development projects and/or planned sidewalk/greenway improvements.
- Address safety concerns and customer concerns.
- Target improvements along routes that serve neighborhoods/areas where public housing and community services are located.

The Transit Partners also agreed that before investing in adding more shelters (unless provided by a development agreement or payment in-lieu), due to limited funds, that our focus should be on replacing and upgrading existing shelters that don't meet ADA requirements (legal obligations) - we have 527 bus stops, 100 have shelters and most of those have ADA issues that need to be resolved. The next phase is for us to work on those stops that lack even basic sidewalks and landing pads - which there are several in Carrboro and Chapel Hill. Since 2020, 14 stops have been upgraded to meet ADA requirements and over 70 stops are in the design phase. The total investment for the first 14 stops is ~\$500,000.

Equity plays an important role in all of our decisions and recommendations to the Chapel Hill Transit funding partners - for shelters and bus stop improvements we use several factors (along with ridership), including benefits to low-income and minority populations/neighborhoods, ridership by persons with disabilities, ridership by seniors, proximity to public facilities, share of no-car households nearby, etc. Along with feedback from residents, neighborhoods and community groups.

We have also worked closely with the Town of Chapel Hill's Building Integrated Communities Committee and other organizations including Refugee Community Partnership, El Centro Hispano, IFC, etc., to help guide investments on stop improvements and real-time sign installations. The solar real-time signs show the same information as our NextBus signs, including basic service messages in Spanish and English (and we are working to expand language options). All a customer needs to do is push the button and the sign will show the routes and the times for the next buses to serve the stop. The following criteria were used to select the 25 locations (see attached map for locations) and are similar to what we use to help select investments in stop improvements:

- Ridership
- Proximity to Town/Community facilities
- Number of routes served
- Title VI considerations (i.e., balance between Low-Income/Non-Low Income and Minority/Non-Minority areas)
- Customer requests
- Waiting times between buses
- Input from the Town's Building Integrated Communities Committee, El Centro and Refugee Community Partnership (focus on customers with limited English proficiency and/or those without access to web enabled devices)



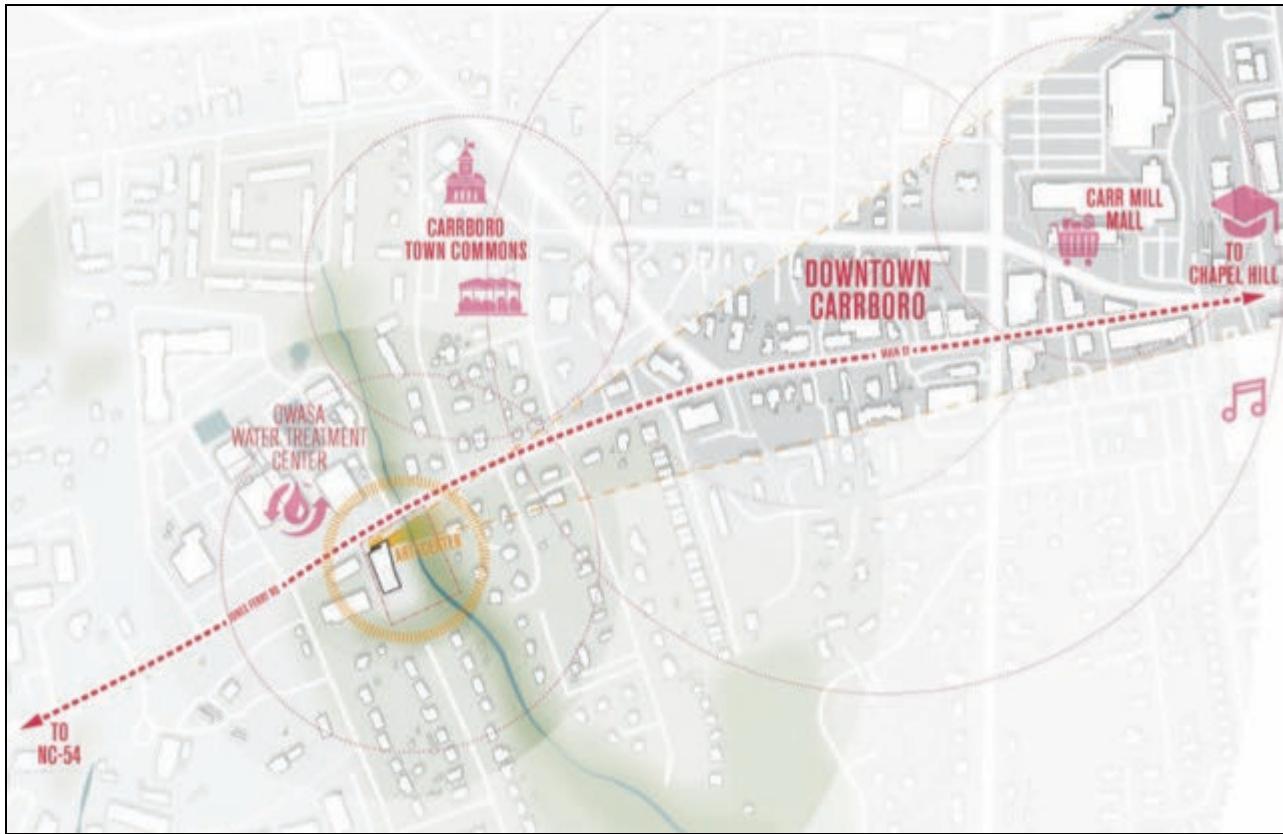
We have 10 additional signs on order and they will be placed at additional stops using the same criteria.

Prior to 2020, decisions about investments in shelters or other amenities at stops in the Town of Carrboro were not managed by Chapel Hill Transit. Thanks to efforts by the Carrboro Town staff and approval of Carrboro Council, we have recently moved Carrboro's existing shelters and stops into Chapel Hill Transit's stop program and taken the following steps:

- Completed an assessment of all stops in Carrboro and prioritized replacement of current damaged shelters at existing stops (Collins Crossing, Carolina Apartments, Royal Park, BPW Club and Carrboro Post Office). Installed shelter at Rogers Road and Purefoy Road and started to replace damaged wooden shelters at agreed upon locations and have completed Carrboro Post Office and Carolina Apartments – the remaining shelters will be replaced as supply chains stabilize.
- Secured over \$1.5M in funding to improve the safety and pedestrian access at six (6) stops along the Bypass – Carolina Apartments, Royal Park and Laurel Ridge, in coordination with NCDOT – that have had long-standing safety issues.
- In the process of jointly designing improvements for the stop on the Bypass at Carrboro Plaza (in front of ABC store) with Town staff - based on community input and the factors noted above. Due to site issues, this will be a significant investment.
- We are completing design work on several additional Carrboro stops that need ADA improvements (see map in link above) and as we receive NCDOT approval and shelters, we will start making those improvements.
- Submitted a \$1M federal grant request to improve stops along routes that serve neighborhoods/areas where public housing and community services are located and low-income/minority populations.

#### **Stops at Jones Ferry near Barnes and Bim Streets**

Transit staff has discussed the stops on Jones Ferry near Barnes and Bim Streets with Town of Carrboro staff as we have reviewed the Art Center project and discussed how best to serve this area as the new Art Center is being planned and located in this area. The most recent concept was to consolidate the existing stops to a location at/near the new Art Center (possibly near a proposed plaza gathering space, as part of the project - map below shows general location), where a crosswalk could also be added to connect the OWASA side of the street. If construction is likely in the near future, we can address the improvements through the Art Center process. If construction is more long term or TBD – we can discuss other options. As funding is limited, we like to coordinate, where possible with other projects and want to avoid making duplicate investments and/or investing in an improvement to move the stop. We would be happy to talk further about this and the many other stops in Carrboro that are slated for improvements.



Bottom line is that while we have made progress over the past few years - we still have a lot of work to do on meeting basic ADA needs and basic stop improvements, based on decisions that were made many years ago. Personally, my standard for a stop is, would my wife and child be safe and comfortable waiting there - if not it needs to be improved and by that standard, we have a lot of work to do. And, as a regular rider, stop improvements will continue to be a priority for me and Chapel Hill Transit.

Thank you for your interest in our stop improvement projects and interest in improving access/mobility. I look forward to talking further with you on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

# Real-Time Information Signs

