

December 20, 2019

The Honorable Nikuyah Walker
Mayor
City of Charlottesville
PO Box 911
Charlottesville, VA, 22902

The Honorable Ned Gallaway
Chair
Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA, 22902

Dear Mayor Walker and Chair Gallaway:

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 Staunton Augusta Waynesboro and Charlottesville Albemarle MPO's, the local jurisdictions and the universities, a feasibility study exploring this concept was coordinated by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (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 the Charlottesville area to include an Albemarle County stop on Fifth Street Station Parkway and areas 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 the Crozet and Pantops areas.
- 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>	<i>\$4,540</i>	<i>\$32,651</i>	<i>\$33,284</i>	<i>\$34,054</i>
<i>East-Side Partners</i>	<i>\$4,540</i>	<i>\$32,651</i>	<i>\$33,284</i>	<i>\$34,054</i>
Fare Collection	\$ -	\$38,157	\$55,501	\$55,501
Total	\$45,400	\$364,668	\$364,221	\$371,008
<i>Demonstration Period Total</i>		<i>\$410,068</i>		
<i>5311 Rural Funding Total</i>				<i>\$735,229</i>

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.

The University of Virginia through its University Transit Services has proposed committing a total three-year contribution of \$69,655. The balance of the match, \$34,878 would be required evenly from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County or \$17,437.

At this time, the CSPDC is requesting an expression of intent from the “East-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,

Charles P. Boyles, II
Executive Director
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

Afton Express Transit Service
Commitment of Support

The _____ of _____ is pleased to lend support to the Afton Express transit service project and intends to continue to participate in related planning efforts, to enter into agreement with the other local partners and to provide an agreed-upon share of the local match funding for each fiscal year of the initial service period beginning in FY2021.

(Signature) (Title) (Date)

Local Match Levels:

	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
UVA	\$3,000	\$21,765	\$22,190	\$22,700
City of Charlottesville	\$770	\$5,443	\$5,547	\$5,677
Albemarle County	\$770	\$5,443	\$5,547	\$5,677
Total	\$4,540	\$32,651	\$33,284	\$34,054