

May 13, 2020

To: Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO Board
 From: Aaron Cain, Planning Manager, Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO
 Re: Material Changes to the Durham County Transit Plan

Summary. During the development of the FY21 Work Plan, several items were proposed by transit providers in Durham County that will substantially increase the budgets of those projects, or that are new projects, than was envisaged when the Transit Plan was adopted in 2017. Funding is available for these projects because of the discontinuation of Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) in March 2019. Per the interlocal agreement (ILA) that governs the Transit Plan, expenditure increases of more than \$500,000 on bus services are considered “material changes” and must be approved by all three governing boards of the ILA.

The projects that are deemed to be material changes are:

- Fayetteville Street Transit Emphasis Corridor – scoped and budget enlarged
- Bus Stop Access Improvements – new project
- Bus Speed and Reliability – new project
- Electric Vehicle Acquisition – new project
- GoDurham CAD/AVL – new project

The Durham County Board of Commissioners reviewed this request at its May 11, 2020 meeting. The GoTriangle Board of Trustees will review this request at its May or June meeting.

Background. In 2013, the Durham County Board of Commissioners, the DCHC MPO, and GoTriangle adopted an ILA to govern procedures for amending the Bus and Rail Investment Plan, which was originally adopted in 2011. In 2017, a new Durham County Transit Plan was adopted, and the ILA procedures extended to the new Transit Plan. The ILA stipulates that a change of more than \$500,000 to bus services is considered a material change, and therefore must be approved by all three parties to the ILA.

Several items are considered material changes because of the amount of funding increase that is requested in the FY21 Work Plan. All of these funding requests have been deemed to be within budget in FY21. The FY21 Work Plan was released for public comment by the Staff Work Group (SWG) on April 15, 2020. A short description of each project is given below, and the project sheet for each project is attached.

Fayetteville Street Transit Emphasis Corridor – a Transit Emphasis Corridor (TEC) is a set of infrastructure improvements to provide additional amenities to transit riders, upgrade pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities to improve access to transit, and roadway construction to improve the reliability of transit vehicles. The 2017 Plan only budgeted \$2.6M for TECs. However, in order to fully realize the benefits that TECs can provide to transit users and providers, as well as address increasing costs of pedestrian infrastructure, the amount requested by the City of Durham is significant. The City of Durham proposed to expand the scope of the Fayetteville Street

TEC to encompass the length of the street from Lakewood Avenue to Riddle Road. The budget will increase to a total of \$10.78M, \$2M of which will be budgeted in FY21.

When the Staff Working Group (SWG) reviewed the proposed material changes on April 15, 2020, and the Technical Committee (TC) reviewed them on April 29, 2020, there were three Transit Emphasis Corridors (TEC) considered: Fayetteville Street, Holloway Street, and Chapel Hill Road. The SWG and TC both recommended all three material changes unanimously. However, upon review by the Durham Board of County Commissioners on May 4, 2020, the Commissioners were concerned about the financial health of the transit tax fund, particularly in light of current economic uncertainty. The Commissioners requested that the Holloway Street and Chapel Hill Road TECs not move forward for multi-year funding at this time. City of Durham and MPO staff agreed that it is feasible to move forward without multi-year funding for those two projects at this time. Therefore, the Holloway Street and Chapel Hill Road TEC material changes are not before the DCHC MPO Board at this time.

Bus Stop Access Improvements – this project is complementary to the bus stop improvements being managed by GoTriangle. This project will enhance the pedestrian infrastructure around the improved stops to increase access, such as filling in sidewalk gaps, crosswalks, signals, and signage. \$125,000 was approved in FY20 for design, \$1,125,000 is requested in FY21 for construction.

Bus Speed and Reliability – this project will identify locations where buses experience delays, slow travel speeds, safety concerns, conflicts with other vehicles or infrastructure, and construct treatments to improve bus speed and reliability. In FY20, \$500,000 was provided to conduct reviews and design improvements. In FY21, \$1.5M is requested to implement the improvements, such as signage, pavement markings, flexible delineator posts, or equipment needed for vehicles, traffic signals, or other infrastructure to enable improved bus performance. Efforts will be coordinated with other projects such as transit emphasis corridor planning, roadway resurfacing, transit center improvements, access to transit for pedestrians and other users, and other vehicle and roadway projects related to bus service in Durham and for related project management and administration expenses.

Electric Vehicle Acquisition - in anticipation of the update to the Durham County Transit Plan, additional expansion vehicles will be needed to provide new peak service. Purchase of electric buses is the preferred option because the City of Durham adopted a resolution endorsing the development of a fundable action plan toward a road map to carbon neutrality in City operations by 2040. The proposed vehicles will be deployed to new service to address crowded trips on the GoDurham system that reduce comfort, speed, and reliability of the system. Ordering in FY21 will ensure vehicles are delivered and additional charging infrastructure is in place upon implementation of expanded service. The 2017 Plan only proposed the purchase of one vehicle for GoDurham since buses were to be redeployed and complementary to light rail service. However, with the discontinuation of D-O LRT in the immediate future local bus service will be the primary form of transit. This is a multi-year project requesting \$6,444,000 over two years, split evenly between FY21 and FY22.

GoDurham CAD/AVL – this project will cover the one-time cost associated with the purchase and installation of Computer-Aided Dispatch/Automated Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) technology for GoDurham buses. The project request aligns with the recommendations of the Regional Technology Plan, which was developed by the regional partners to ensure that they would optimize future technology investments. GoDurham has requested \$1.5M for this project.

Issues. These projects would add approximately \$21.3M in spending over the next several years on bus services and capital from the Durham Transit Tax Fund. This amount could affect the availability of funding for other major capital investments in the next 2-4 years. No particular project, if any, has been identified. Any major capital projects will come from the development of a new Transit Plan.

Development of the new Transit Plan will begin this summer. Initial community engagement for the new Transit Plan has shown a desire for improved bus service in Durham; further engagement is required to receive more specific input.

Alternatives. The DCHC MPO Board could choose not to approve the material change for any or all of the projects discussed in this memo.

Contact. Aaron Cain, Planning Manager, DCHC MPO, 919-560-4366 x36443, aaron.cain@durhamnc.gov

Attachment.

Resolution Approving Material Change Requests