



CITY OF DURHAM | NORTH CAROLINA

**Date:** February 14, 2011

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager  
Mark D. Ahrendsen, Transportation Director  
Harmon Crutchfield, Assistant Transportation Director

**From:** Pierre Osei-Owusu, Sr. Transportation Planner

**Subject:** Grant Acceptance for DATA On-Board Customer Satisfaction Survey and Adoption of Grant Project Ordinance

**Executive Summary**

Triangle Transit, which currently manages DATA on the City’s behalf, desires to conduct a systematic on-board customer satisfaction survey. The survey will facilitate the management of DATA by enabling Triangle Transit to identify the actual DATA clients, determine how best to communicate with them, evaluate the quality of the current services and compile and analyze transit service information required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The survey will be conducted by an on-call firm already selected by the Transportation Department and approved by City Council. The total cost of the survey is \$64,000.

In August of 2010, the North Carolina Department of Transportation approved \$52,000 (81.25%) of the cost in a State Grant to be used toward the proposed on-board survey. Durham’s portion of the project cost is \$12,000(18.75%).

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that City Council authorize the City Manager to accept the State Grant to conduct an on-board customer survey for Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA) by executing the grant documents; and adopt the City of Durham and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Grant Project Ordinance, in the amount of \$64,000 to fund the survey.

**Background**

Triangle Transit, which currently manages DATA on the City’s behalf, desires to conduct a systematic on-board customer satisfaction survey. The survey will facilitate the management of DATA services by enabling Triangle Transit to identify the actual DATA clients, determine how best to communicate with them, evaluate the quality of the current services and compile and analyze transit service information required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The survey will be conducted by an on-call firm already selected by Transportation Department and approved by City Council. The total cost of the survey is \$64,000.

In August of 2010, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (Public Transportation Division) approved \$52,000 (81.25%) in a State grant to be used toward the proposed on-board survey. These

funds will support the data gathering and analysis needed to provide seamless transit services in the Triangle region. Durham's portion of the project cost is \$12,000 (18.75%) bringing the total funding to \$64,000.

### **Issues/Analysis**

To successfully serve the Durham market, Triangle Transit needs to understand the DATA customers and their needs. A systematic on-board customer satisfaction survey hasn't been conducted since 2006. The benefits of this type of survey include: (1) Triangle Transit staff will get an understanding of who is using the DATA system (race, gender, age, and income); trip purpose and motivation; as well as frequency; (2) Triangle Transit staff will get an understanding of how DATA riders perceive service quality; and (3) the results of the survey will be statistically valid at a system level and on a route-by-route basis.

The City intends to have a consulting firm under contract by March 2011 and to have the firm administer the survey on-board DATA buses in April of 2011. The results would be compiled and made available in a final report to the City by June 2011. Triangle Transit will serve as the Project Manager for the survey.

### **Alternatives**

- 1) The City can choose not to authorize the on-board survey. Without the survey, Triangle Transit will continue to rely on the 2006 on-board customer satisfaction survey with very little understanding of the current needs of the DATA customer. Failure to approve this purchase will result in the forfeiture of the State dollars approved by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for this project. This alternative is not recommended.
- 2) Conduct survey without State funding. City would pay full cost of the survey or \$64,000. This alternative is not recommended.
- 3) Conduct survey with financial assistance from NCDOT resulting in a City cost of \$12,000. This alternative is recommended.

### **Financial Impact**

The proposed on-board survey is in the amount of \$64,000. Of this amount, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has approved a portion (81.25%) of the funds needed for the project in the amount of \$52,000, while the local portion (18.75%) is \$12,000. This required local portion has been identified in the Transit Fund.

### **SDBE Summary**

The Equal Opportunity/Equity Assurance Department has already reviewed the proposals of the recommended firms for on-call transportation and consulting services and found them to be in compliance with the City's Minority and Women Business Enterprise Ordinance. One of the approved firms will be selected to conduct the survey by the March 2011 deadline.