



**Date:** March 6, 2012

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Theodore L. Voorhees, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Mark D. Ahrendsen, Director of Transportation  
Harmon Crutchfield, Assistant Transportation Director  
John Tallmadge, Triangle Transit, Director of Regional Services  
Development  
Jennifer Rogers, Triangle Transit, Transit Service Planner  
**Subject:** Request Public Hearing for Designing Better Bus Service in Durham –  
Draft Plan

### **Executive Summary**

Triangle Transit, the City of Durham, and the consultant, Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), have been working on a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) of the Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA) bus system. This project is called Designing Better Bus Service in Durham. The project will be completed in June 2012 and the result will be a 3-year plan for DATA services that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system in meeting the needs of Durham residents and workers.

Extensive public outreach has been conducted since the project began in March 2011. A survey was distributed to passengers and the general public. The consultant who was hired in July 2011 prepared an existing conditions report and presented it in November 2011 for public comments. The initial recommendations for DATA service changes, developed by Triangle Transit and PB and vetted by key stakeholders, were presented for public comment in January 2012. Triangle Transit and PB will present the Draft Plan to the public in March/April 2012.

The recommendations in the Designing Better Bus Service in Durham - Draft Plan constitute a major service change. Federal guidelines require a public hearing to be held by the City Council for any major service change. Triangle Transit recommends that the public hearing be held by City Council on April 16, 2012. Triangle Transit and PB will attend the April 5, 2012 work session to give a presentation on the Draft Plan and to answer any questions that Council members may have.

Once the public comments on the Draft Plan are collected and reviewed, Triangle Transit and PB will develop the Final Plan. The Designing Better Bus Service in Durham - Final Plan will be presented to City Council for a decision in June 2012. If the Final Plan is adopted in

June 2012, service changes will be implemented starting in October 2012 with another round of changes going into effect in January 2013.

### **Recommendation**

Triangle Transit recommends that the City Council hold a public hearing at the City Council meeting on April 16, 2012 to collect comments from the public on the Draft Plan prepared by Triangle Transit and consultants as part of Designing Better Bus Service in Durham.

### **Background**

Triangle Transit, the City of Durham, and Parsons Brinckerhoff have been working on a Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) of the Durham Area Transit Authority (DATA) bus system. This project is called Designing Better Bus Service in Durham. The project has included extensive public involvement and a technical analysis of the DATA system to identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system in meeting the needs of Durham residents and workers.

Extensive public outreach has been conducted. The project began in March 2011 with an on-board survey and community survey to identify the needs of Durham residents and workers. The consultant was selected in July 2011 and completed an existing conditions report to evaluate the DATA routes and system. A series of public meetings were held in November 2011 to present the existing conditions report to the public and to collect ideas on how the DATA system could be improved.

Triangle Transit worked with the consultant to develop initial recommendations for service changes, which were vetted by the Transportation Department, DATA bus operators, and Durham City Transit Company (DCTC) management before being presented to the public in January 2012. Changes to every DATA route were presented to the public. The initial recommendations were presented at five (5) public meetings in January 2012 with one event held at El Centro Hispano with Spanish interpretation. All materials were in English and Spanish. Triangle Transit staff met with over 30 stakeholder groups and community groups such as Durham Tech administrators, NCCU administrators, Durham Public Schools, Durham Housing Authority tenants, and Community Development.

Changes to the initial recommendations were incorporated into the Draft Plan based on comments heard from the public. The Draft Plan will be presented at a public meetings starting on Wednesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Triangle Transit and PB will attend the April 5, 2012 work session to give a presentation on the Draft Plan and to answer any questions that Council members may have. The public hearing with City Council will conclude the public comment period on the Draft Plan.

The Final Plan will be presented to the City Council in June 2012 for a decision. If the Final Plan is adopted in June 2012, service changes will be implemented starting in October 2012 with another round of changes going into effect in January 2013.

### **Issues and Analysis**

The recommendations in the Designing Better Bus Service in Durham - Draft Plan constitute a major service change because the proposed changes would affect more than 25% of the system-wide passenger boardings. The Durham Transit Service Change Approval Process states that federal guidelines require a public hearing to be held by the City Council for any major service change. City Council has the authority to approve the recommendations

included in the Final Plan. The Final Plan will be presented to City Council in June 2012 for a decision.

Should the City Council defer the public hearing on the Draft Plan to a later date, Triangle Transit and the consultant may not be able to present the Final Plan by the end of the fiscal year 2012. This would delay when the service changes would be implemented.

Should the City Council decide not to hold a public hearing, the Designing Better Bus Service project would not continue to the Final Plan stage. Federal guidelines require the City Council hold a public hearing given that this is a major service change.

**Alternatives**

1. Hold a public hearing on April 16, 2012 to collect comments from the public on the Designing Better Bus Service in Durham - Draft Plan.
2. Hold a public hearing at a later date.
3. Do not hold a public hearing.

**Financial Impact**

There is no financial impact associated with holding a public hearing to collect comments from the public on the Designing Better Bus Service in Durham – Draft Plan. However, a decision to approve the recommendations in the final plan will have an impact on the City's transit budget.

**SDBE Summary**

Due to the nature of this agenda item, an SDBE summary is not needed.

**Attachments**

1. Durham Transit Service Change Approval Process