

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Date: October 17, 2007

Subject: Apple Country Transit Blue Route Funding

Attachments: 1. Staff Memorandum
2. Route Map

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The County has been notified by the NCDOT Public Transportation Division that its Intercity funding allocation for the Blue Route will be discontinued after December 31, 2007. The amount appropriated for FY 2008 was \$88,638 and approximately half of that amount will be available to subsidize costs through the end of this fiscal year. The Public Transportation Division has not formally notified the County regarding the reason for this decision. The Board is asked to determine the policy for replacement of the InterCity funds and/or any necessary adjustments to the levels of transit service on Henderson's three fixed routes. The attached memorandum outlines the details and 3 options.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Planning Staff requests the Board of Commissioners discuss the issue and direct staff regarding a preferred alternative.

Suggested Motion:

I move the Board implement Alternative A by funding the route through the end of the current fiscal year and direct staff to search for additional revenue from the municipalities and grant opportunities.

Alternative Motion 1:

I move the Board implement Alternative B, discontinue the Blue Route effective December 31, 2007 and that this Board schedule the required public hearing.

Alternative Motion 2:

I move the Board implement Alternative C, fund the shortfall through additional municipal and grant funding only.

HENDERSON COUNTY
Planning Department

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Phone 828-697-4819 • Fax 828-697-4533

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Commissioners
Steve Wyatt, County Manager
Selena Coffey, Assistant County Manager

FROM: Anthony Starr, Planning Director

DATE: October 10, 2007

SUBJECT: Proposed NCDOT Funding Cut of Inter-city Bus Funds for Blue Route
(Hendersonville-Fletcher)

The Planning staff has been verbally notified by the NCDOT Public Transportation Division that WCCA's Intercity funding allocation for the Blue Route will discontinue after December 31, 2007. The amount appropriated for FY 2008 was \$88,638. We expect to receive approximately half of that amount. The net cost of operating the "Blue" route averages over \$117,658 annually. No local match is required for the funding.

Ridership on the Blue Route (one of Henderson County's three fixed routes) totaled about 19,382 last year and has doubled since the route's inception in July 2003. Whereas monthly productivity is less than the other two routes which serve Hendersonville, the route is an important regional connector with the Fletcher Community and with Asheville Transit System Route #6. The Blue route supports Henderson-based students who commute to UNCA and numerous riders going to and from work in Asheville and Fletcher. The route will be identified in NCDOT's 2007 Comprehensive Transportation Plan as an important aspect of regional connectivity.

The cost per trip for the Blue Route is about \$6.42 compared to \$4.22 and \$3.51 each trip for the Red and White Routes respectively. The Red Route generated about 29,452 passenger trips and the White Route generated about 35,471 passenger trips last year. The system average cost per passenger trip is about \$4.42. With increased ridership, these costs per trips can be reduced.

NCDOT's explanation for the cut is an overall reduction in intercity bus funding, coupled with a preference to provide funding elsewhere in the State although Planning Staff has received conflicting reasons for the cut to Henderson County. We have not yet received the Public Transportation Division's letter fully explaining reasons for the decision. Planning Staff was not verbally informed of this decision until after the FY08 budget was adopted. The alternatives are:

- A) Continue the Route and Fund the Shortfall The net actual loss to the budget this year is 44,319. We believe that this year's cost may be off-set by deferring other projects in the planning and bus stop shelter line items. Deferment of these items may require a replacement appropriation in the next fiscal year. The decision to fund the route for the next fiscal year may require an increase of about \$90,000 annually in County and Municipal funds to offset this cost in future years. This amount may be less if we obtain additional SMAP grant funds (a different state grant).
- B) Discontinue the Route This alternative requires the County to hold a public hearing on the service reduction. This would result in a renegotiation of the existing WCCA contract which may lead to higher hourly operating costs for the other routes. Currently, WCCA's administrative costs are spread across the 3 routes and these costs would likely remain unchanged. However, there

will be ridership reductions that can affect future funding and also many citizen complaints will result.

- C) Fund the Shortfall through other grant and local share funding Staff is currently searching for other federal and state grant opportunities. Another possibility is to ask for increased contributions from the Town of Fletcher and the City of Hendersonville to off-set Henderson County's costs.

Planning Staff recommends option A to absorb this year's shortfall with the deferment of the shelter improvements and other costs. In the mean time staff will seek additional funding from Hendersonville and Fletcher to partially offset the County match for FY09. If no additional municipal or grant assistance becomes available prior to the FY09 budget consideration the Board could then decide to discontinue the Blue Route service.

BUNCOMBE CO.

HENDERSON CO.

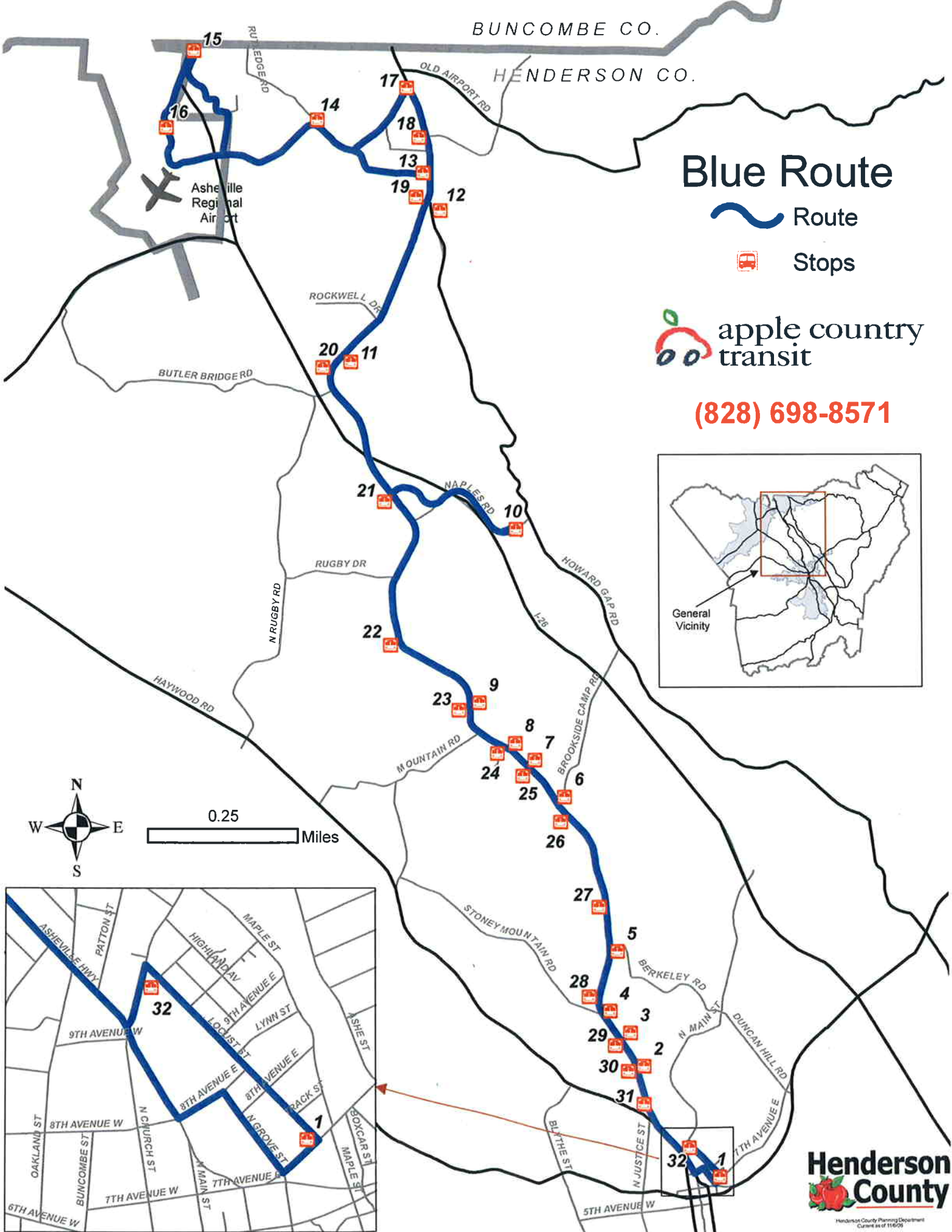
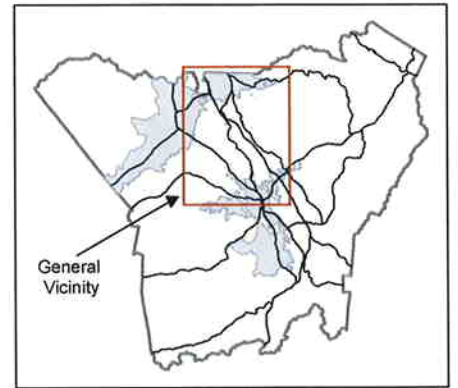
Blue Route

 Route

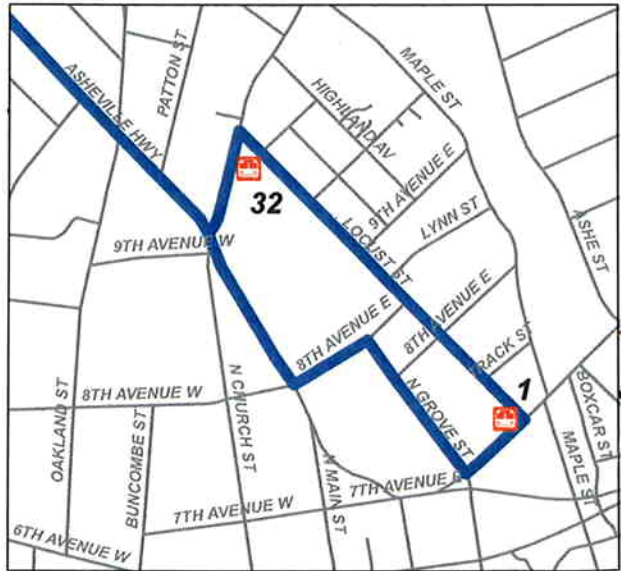
 Stops



(828) 698-8571







0.25 Miles



Henderson County Planning Department
Current as of 11/6/09

White and Red Routes

-  White Route
-  Red Route
-  White Route Stops
-  Red Route Stops



(828) 698-8571

