

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

**HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: October 15, 2014

SUBJECT: Surface Transportation Program Direct Attributable (STPDA) Funding for Henderson County Transit Station/Transfer Center

PRESENTER: Matthew Cable, AICP, Transportation Planner

ATTACHMENTS: Staff Memo

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The Board of Commissioners, at its April 16, 2014 meeting, authorized staff to request the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) amend the NCDOT State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) to adjust the release of previously awarded STPDA funds from FY 2015 to FY 2016. This authorization provided staff additional time to consider use of the funds for the previously submitted transit station proposal.

Staff reviewed the transit station project related to site selection regulation compliance, project location, project purposes, grant funding requirements/restrictions, existing transit system use, and transit ridership.

Staff assessed existing County facilities (office space and parking facilities) and supports using existing underused facilities to meet the needs of the transit system. Using existing facilities to house contracted employees and store vehicles would not subject the County to federal funding requirements/restrictions and would alleviate the need for supplying the substantial required local match.

Staff recommends the County not accept the existing awarded STPDA funds for the transit station project (see attached memo). Henderson County would continue to be eligible to seek STPDA funding for transit/transportation projects in future STPDA award cycles.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

Staff requests the Board of Commissioners determine its intentions with regard to STPDA funds.

Suggested Motion:

I move Board rescind the FBRMPO awarded STPDA funding at this time.



Planning Department
Transportation Division
100 North King Street
Hendersonville, NC 28792

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Mitchell, Business & Community Development Director
FROM: Matthew Cable, AICP, Transportation Planner
DATE: October 15, 2014
SUBJECT: Staff Recommendations Regarding the Existing Transit Station Proposal

Current Transit Operations

Transit routes originate from and transfer along North Grove Street, in the bus lane southeast of the intersection of 4th Avenue East and North Grove Street. The contracted provider (WCCA) uses its own office space, meeting rooms, break rooms, and secured parking located at the corner of Ashe Street and 7th Avenue. The County reimburses WCCA for the cost of these facilities through its contract. Customers can acquire transit brochures from holders inside each vehicle, WCCA's transit offices, and the County Planning Department. WCCA operators (drivers) and office staff sell passes on transit vehicles and at WCCA's offices.

Existing Transit Station Proposal: 4th Avenue East

The STPDA application suggests a transit station will provide: (1) a central location for customers to transfer between routes, acquire information/passes, waiting areas, and restrooms; (2) office space, dispatching facilities, meeting rooms, break rooms, and restrooms for our contracted provider and its employees; and (3) securable parking/holding facilities for eight (8) buses. The transit station would improve customer service, reduce costs of contracted services through reductions in reimbursements for WCCA owned facilities, and provide for a more competitive bid process in future fiscal years (as additional agencies would more easily compete to operate the system) . For purposes of pursuing the STPDA funds, the County identified a site at 4th Avenue East between the CNG station and Jackson Park.

Awarded Funding and Local Match Requirements

The FBRMPO awarded the County \$1,672,000 in NCDOT Surface Transportation Direct Attributable (STPDA) funds with a required \$418,000 local match. The STPDA application indicates the project will be at the 4th Avenue East site and include an office building. Modifications to this project scope would require reconsideration by the FBRMPO.

The funds are currently available and NCDOT expects the County to begin accessing these funds quickly. Should the County choose to rescind the funds, the funds would remain in the FBRMPO region for use on other eligible transportation projects.

Construction Costs and Concerns: 4th Avenue East

The County must first select a consultant to perform an FTA required site selection process meeting all Title IV Environmental Justice/Equity Analysis requirements. This process may eliminate the 4th Avenue

East project as a location should the site selection process not identify it in the results. Where the site viable following the site selection process, to use the site the County will need to: (1) request a rezoning through the City of Hendersonville and be granted the request; (2) enter into an agreement with NCDOT to ensure compliance with NCDOT and Federal Highways (FHWA) requirements; (3) engage consultants to perform NCDOT/FTA required pre-construction studies including, but not limited to an Environmental Analysis; (4) conduct FTA compliant bidding for engaging an architectural and engineering firm for station design; (5) work under the guidance of NCDOT Local Programs Management Office during the planning and design phase of the project; (6) engage NCDOT Division 14 during station construction; and (7) engage consultants to work with NCDOT to ensure record keeping is compliant with FHWA requirements for the anticipated audit.

Actual costs not provided for in the grant funding include: (1) City of Hendersonville application and permitting fees; and (2) engaging consultants to perform NCDOT and FTA required studies and monitor FHWA compliance. Concerns include project delays or loss of grant funding should the site be infeasible.

The site would not be feasible if: (1) an NCDOT or FTA required study eliminates the site as a permissible location, or (2) the City of Hendersonville denied the rezoning request.

Should FTA, NCDOT, or FHWA determine the County violates any of its regulations, requirements or guidelines these entities could suspend the project or recall any or all of its awarded funding following project completion.

Staff Recommendations Based on Transit System Needs

Staff reviewed current transit system operations and the original transit station proposal to determine needs. Staff recommends the County not relocate the existing transfer site from North Grove Street because the site is well established, highly visible, convenient, and well frequented by a growing base of transit customers. Staff suggests locating transit offices immediately adjacent to the transfer site is not vital to the success of the transit system.

Staff continues to recommend the County establish the following: (1) office space, dispatching facilities, meeting rooms, and break rooms for the transit system's contracted provider; (2) a parking and holding facility for the existing fleet (seven (7) buses and two (2) paratransit vehicles) of which 5 vehicles are County leased/owned; and (3) a convenient site for customers to acquire information/passes;.

Addressing these needs would improve customer convenience, provide better security for County vehicles, reduce contract costs attributed to provider supplied office and parking space, and potential cost savings through a more competitive bid process in future fiscal years.

The County should consider using its existing underutilized facilities to meet transit system needs.