



CITY OF ASHEVILLE MEMO

TO: Matt Cable, Community Development Division Manager

FROM: Jessica Morriss, Assistant Director of Transportation

CC: Debra Campbell, City Manager; Cathy Ball, Assistant City Manager; Ken Putnam, Transportation Director; Eunice Lovi, Transit Planning Manager

DATE: September 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Funding Request for ART Expansion into Buncombe County

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to request funding support in the amount of \$28,934 from Buncombe County in the current fiscal year (FY 20) to assist in the extension of the City of Asheville's existing W4 Route into Buncombe County as recommended in the recently adopted City of Asheville 2018 Transit Master Plan.

Background

The W4 Route currently operates between downtown Asheville and along Patton to New Leicester Highway, ending at Old County Home Rd. The Transit Master Plan analyzed and recommended that the W4 be extended by approximately 2.0 miles into Buncombe County in order to support a growing area of the County, as well as existing residential and commercial development, and existing schools.

The proposed extension would provide service along Old County Home Road as part of a one-way loop to the Erwin schools area, the Ingles at 575 New Leicester Highway, and the Walgreens located at 578 New Leicester Highway, before returning to the downtown station. The Transit Master Plan calculated that the route extension would serve an additional 620 residents and 190 jobs, however, there are additional residences and commercial development in the development pipeline that are expected.

Funding Request

The City is requesting \$28,934 in County funds to support the expansion of service into Buncombe County beginning on January 5, 2020 as part of the City's larger expansion of service to implement portions of the Transit Master Plan. The funding request is based on the number of trips (both directions) multiplied by the time the route operates in the County (in proportion to the rest of the route), times the revenue hour rate the City pays to the transit contractor. It should be noted that this funding request is for half of the fiscal year - from January through June 30, 2020.

The request does not include additional costs for paratransit service that would be provided associated with the fixed-route extension at this time. It is expected that paratransit costs will be approximately 5% of the fixed-route extension cost.

Going forward, the budget request for future fiscal years would be increased to reflect the annual cost, which is estimated to be \$61,291 for FY 2021, including paratransit costs originating or ending in the County associated with the fixed-route extension. The City would continue to seek funding support from Buncombe County on an annual basis to ensure that the extended route service continued to operate.

Anticipated Benefits

The Transit Master Plan estimated that an additional 690 residents and 190 jobs would be served within a quarter mile of the route extension. This estimate is based on census data available when the master plan was being developed in 2017. Since then, additional development has occurred and is likely to continue, with planned multifamily housing projects currently being proposed in the vicinity. The extended route would provide an alternative mode of transportation to this area of the community and improve job access.

With the extension, the City plans to add five additional bus stops along the route to serve County residents. Below are the proposed stop locations shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. These stops would provide access to communities in the area, including but not limited to: Clyde A. Erwin High and Middle Schools, The Villas at Fallen Spruce Apartments (affordable housing for seniors), and businesses along New Leicester Highway.

Table 1. Proposed Bus Stops on W4 County Extension

Route	Stop	GPS Coordinates	Direction
W4	Old County Home at Exxon	35°36'31.0"N 82°37'35.5"W	Outbound
W4	Old County Home Rd at Erwin Hills Road	35°36'56.6"N 82°37'49.9"W	Outbound
W4	New Leicester Hwy at Walgreens	35°36'45.3"N 82°37'57.4"W	Inbound
W4	New Leicester Hwy at Tradewind Dr	35°36'37.9"N 82°37'42.9"W	Inbound

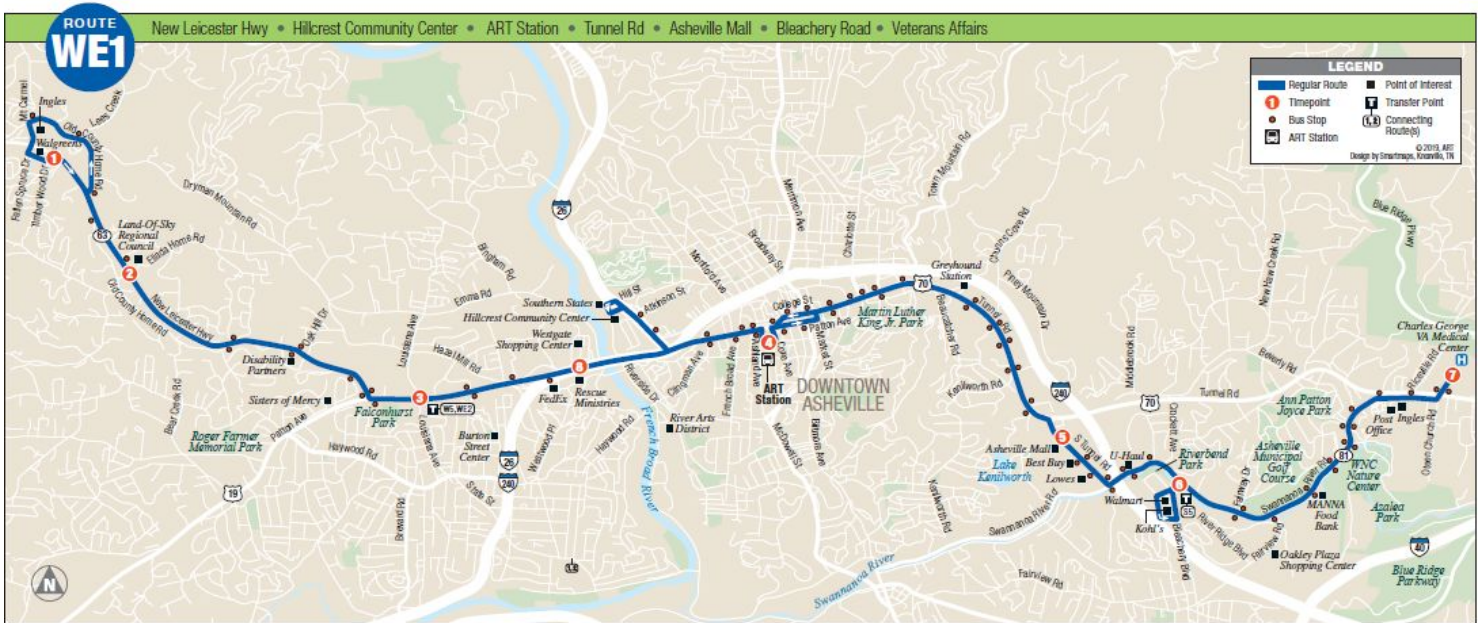
Figure 1. Proposed County Extension



At this time, the City of Asheville has not included costs associated with new bus stop infrastructure in the request. Initially, the City plans to install basic transit signage at each new stop, however additional infrastructure, such as benches, shelters, and sidewalks may become necessary in the future, at which point the City would work with the County to identify funding partnership opportunities.

An additional benefit that will be available to riders of the extended route is that the route will be part of a crosstown route directly connecting to the E1 (with service from downtown to the Asheville Veterans Affairs Medical Center). This crosstown route will be renamed the WE1 and will allow riders to go from the New Leicester Highway area to eastern Asheville without having to transfer at the downtown transit station.. Figure 2 shows the WE1 route, including the extension on New Leicester Highway.

Figure 2. Proposed WE1 Route Map



Conclusion

The City of Asheville respectfully requests FY 2020 funding support for this important public transit extension. The route extension was one of the primary recommendations of the City’s Transit Master Plan, that seeks to improve transit service to the community, both inside and outside city boundaries. It is expected that the extension of service into this area will provide significant benefit to residents and employees in the area.

Please let us know if there is any additional information that we can provide to support this request. We look forward to working with the County to improve transit service for both City and County residents over the foreseeable future.